

In sight of the Southern Cross,
12th, July, 1919.

Dear "Canary Legs,"

My last letter (which was written to a fair damsel named Sadio) gave an account of the wanderings of this mob until the occupation of LOBBES, Belgium. We blew in on 11th, March and held that front until 30th, April. In fact the last of the Brigade did not leave until well into May. Several drafts left for England during our stay, and by the end of April only a mere handful of the 7th remained. LOBBES was anything but a lively joint and we had to make our own fun. Dancing in the estaminets with the Belgian "tabs" to the rasping strains of automatic "blood organs", hopping the tram to Anderlues to the colliery baths, where one enjoyed a first rate hot shower, and consuming "oeufs and chips" were our chief pastimes. The "Heads" gave us a very fair "burl" as far as buckshee leave was concerned. The last day of April saw a large draft consisting of 3rd, Div. Artillery and Sigs., Siege Artillery, 6th, Mobile and 2nd, Div. Artillery, trucking at CHARLEROI for LE HAVRE. The Yandoo Management and Outfit were on the strength of the draft so my letter will now deal only with the doings of the 7th, boys who were on that draft. We shunted, bumped and jerked our way to LE HAVRE and after going through the "delouser" camp marched into No. 2 Australian Divisional Base Depot. From 2nd, to 6th, May we stayed in this camp playing our national game of "Two-up," exchanging old uniforms for new and receiving new underclothing. I must not forget to tell you that each man was issued with a beautiful bright new jack-knife and was told by the Q.M. not to spoil it because it had to be handed in to the Camp Q.M. in England as soon as we arrived. We are still wondering if that was a little joke by the Military Authorities or just a cunning means of saving transport?

We crossed the Channel during the night of the 6th, and entrained at SOUTHAMPTON for SUTTON VENY, Wilts. on the 7th. SUTTON VENY camp is very similar to any other permanent military camp, simply acre after acre of corrugated iron huts, concrete pathways and ragged cabbage patches. The nearest town was WARMINSTER, two miles away, but after spending an afternoon there one was quite fed up. However the surrounding country was beautiful, the season being Spring. Tender green crops were showing and the hedges and woods were covered with new foliage. The beauties of Nature ceased to appeal on the morning of 14th, May, for it was then that the quota went, on its final fourteen days leave, and if you turn the pages and scan our columns carefully, you will glean considerable information regarding the doings of those "bold bad Aussies" of the 7th, Brigade. Those days went at "the toot" but on return to camp some of the more fortunate, or should I say the biggest liars contrived to scrounge a few extra days. Then things became monotonous, the general routine being "beaucoup dormi" one parade and three meals per diem plus "several" visits to the "Salvos" or "Y Emmas" for morning and afternoon tea, and a stroll to "Greenhills" or "The Manor House" finishing up the day with "a couple o' wheels on 'is 'eads" or a "deener" on the "old Sergeant Major." As you will not "compree" the above I'll take the trouble to explain that they are merely expressions used in "Two-up" and "Crown and Anchor."

By the way old dear we did have excitement sometimes. That was when there were inoculations and inspections by the "Quack" for whooping cough, sandy blight and similar complaints, and also at rare intervals there were pay days.

Our boat roll was made up on 30th, June and at 2 a.m. on the 1st, July reveille blew us out of bed (those of us who got there) and we toddled off to WARMINSTER at 4.30 with packs up in the drizzling rain. Had a comfy trip to DEVONPORT and marched on board S.S. "KARMALA" the same day. Approximately 1500 men boarded her altogether and the next morning we cast off and steamed out into the stream where we dropped anchor for three or four hours. DEVONPORT and PLYMOUTH HARBOUR were studded with war-ships of all classes and as we steamed by them, the "lads in blue" lined up and gave us three hearty British cheers. On shore bugles blew and flags dipped and taking it all round we got quite a decent send off.

The "KARMALA" jerked up the old "mud hook" at noon and passing through the breakwater faced the open sea, and we drew deep breaths of fresh salt air and said to one another "At last we're in the straight." The shores of England slowly receded and by five o'clock were out of sight.

(Over)