

IN GOOD OLD AUSSIE,  
18th. August, 1919.

My Dear Jess,

Here is my last letter to you, and believe me I'm not sorry. I just want to give you an outline of our doings since I last wrote. That was on 12th. July when we were steaming down the west coast of Africa. On 20th. July, we sighted land and the same day entered Table Bay. It was a fine clear day and camera fiends were busy all over the ship snapping different views of Lion's Head and Table Mountain as we slowly passed into the Harbour. Eventually we tied up to the wharf and about 3.p.m. word went round that leave was granted.

Every one at once hopped into their "Glad rags," in fact I think many of them got dressed overnight and wandered about the ship "All dressed up and no where to go." We remained at Cape Town until the 24th. and had general leave each day till midnight. For the first two days we had torrential rains, so we made the rounds of the Theatres and Cinema Shows, but immediately the weather became we set out to see the country. Two of the most popular trips were to Grootte Schuur to Cecil Rhode's Estate and Memorial, and to Camp Bay. At least 50% of the troops on the Karmala visited these two places - may be the other 50% had appointments to keep, appointments made during our stay at the Cape whilst en route for England and The War, What? On those Aussies

On the morning of our departure the town was gay with flags and bunting, not because the inhabitants were glad to get rid of us, but in honor of the arrival of Gen. Botha. The batteries on Signal Hill fired salutes, and I saw a couple of diggers sneak down below for their steel helmets. I guess the noise brought back memories.

Durban was not on the Karmala "menu," much to our disappointment so we did not sight land again till we reached Fremantle on the 8th. August. That was quite a fitting date on which to get the first sight of our Homeland. The 8th. August of the previous year was really the commencement of our "Homeward Journey" when the Allies launched The Great Offensive. The sixteen days which it took to cover the distance between Africa and Australia, were for the most part, cool and squally, but luckily the seas were behind us. We arrived at Fremantle about 11.a.m. and after our temperatures were taken and the ships inspected, flu regulations, went in to the wharf. Of course you could pick out a W.A. man on the ship without difficulty. This was "his day," and the prospect of seeing relatives and friends again and putting foot on Aussie soil after being absent so long was a matter to rejoice over. A band played us in, steamers and trains blew their whistles and the waiting throng waved and yelled themselves tired. It did not take long for the "W.A.'s" to be engulfed by the crowd, and then our turn came. Leave was granted and off "at the toot" we went.

Fremantle did not take long to inspect and the majority took train to Perth, which is about twelve miles away. Next day we had leave again. It was not hard to realise that we were in Aussie. Once more we saw the old post and rail fence, the gum trees and the wattle, and the male members of the community wearing cigarettes in their faces and soft collars round their necks, and leaning contentedly against the verandah posts. So we said to oneanother, "This will do us."

The Karmala left for Adelaide on the morning of the 10th. August, and arrived on the eve of the 13th. "Lay off" in the outer harbour that night (much to the disgust of the S.A.'s) and berthed the following morning. Whilst the S.A.'s were disembarking the crowd on the wharf "hopped the bags," in other words, broke the barriers and rushed to the side of the ship. After the "loving up" process the people dispersed and the remaining troops on the vessel were given shore leave until 8 O'Clock. Special trains took us to the capital, and after a look round and a feed, it was time to return.

We steamed out at 9.p.m. that night and 36 hours later entered Port Phillip. What a different scene met our gaze when the ship tied up. There was no one to meet us. Not a whistle blew, not a flag flew, and the only persons on the wharf were half a dozen officials. We learned later on, that our transport had arrived before time. There was much delay in disembarking the Victorians, and by the time that was done, a large crowd had collected at the wharf barriers. The N.S.W. and Queensland troops were to go overland after the Victorians had moved off, the Queenslanders by the first the N.S.W. followed half an hour later.

Two trains took the troops and in a short while we were bowling along through open country. First stop Seymour, where an excellent hot meal was waiting for us, then on to Albury and there we changed with Red Cross sleepers. Each man had a comfortable bed and clean linen, and the comment heard on every side showed the satisfactions the men felt at receiving such good treatment.