

HISTORY OF THE SEVENTH F.A.B. A.I.F.

CHAPTER 1.

SYDNEY - TROOPSHIP.

In writing a history of any military body, it is well to gather some facts as to the reason why the men enlisted and the spirit of the country from which they enlisted. This may be done by picturing a scene.

Let us imagine that it is a spring morning and the whole of Australia is picnicing by the beach or lolling on the green banks of the near-by river. These pleasure loving Australians have never nationally known sorrow, have rarely known distress. They have spent their leisure, of which they have had goodly quantities, in sport and pleasure, and they have earned their money easily by comparison with wage earners of other nations, and this spring morning, they are gambling on the sands in bathing costumes, youth is making love to youth; horses are galloping in races along the green sward; cricket balls are being skied; a football soars above the tree tops; coins are spinning upward in the enchanting game of "two-up." All is joy, all is enthusiasm; everyone is nationally care-free and nationally secure. Separating them from the old world, the cauldron of perpetual trouble, is an ocean expanse of ten thousand miles! What security! What peace! War could never scar them and theirs at such a distance. Now and then knots of men gather about the booth and toast each other in foaming glasses, while music from sweet voiced women and children float to them on the gentle breeze, and all the while youth is dancing it's joyful dance over the golden sands; but as the afternoon wears on, a black cloud, little more than a dark speck at first, starts out over the horizon and slowly makes across the sky. It is the trouble with Servia. Following that came other clouds, and then a sudden, though very distant rumbling as though one of the outposts of the world is suffering. Then the sky becomes overcast and the men cease their sports, golf clubs are laid down, the two-up pennies cease to spin, the cricketer sits on his bat, the dreamy youth releases the maiden's hand, the women and children hurriedly seek shelter, old men are grouped together, and according to their education and dispositions, are discussing the chances of war. "Even if war comes we are safe" is the general note, "Britain will show 'em." Then suddenly out of the dark clouds swoops the fearful, ill-boding Eagle of Prussia, sinister and scornful, and as it appears the heavens are rent with lightning, thunder roars the ocean rises to fury, and a deluge of stormy rain bursts over the picnic through all of which the Prussian Eagle seems only to grin as though it knows it is the only living thing that can weather such a phenomenal disturbance.---- The picnic is abandoned, postponed indefinitely, and the men go home to think, and the women go to homes that are not to be free of anxiety and ofttimes sorrow for four long years.-----That was Australia before the war, a Picnic Ground. The storm burst, and instead of deluging Australia, conquering and subduing and drowning it's people, it only had the effect of washing away the dross and revealing the true mettle of the people and the stamina, endurance of pluck of it's manhood.

Many men hesitated before enlisting, "The war would soon be over, it could not possibly last long" but it had not ended in 1915, and towards the end of that year it gradually dawned on Australians that the Allies were up against it and that every man would be required to beat the enemy. It was while this feeling of desperation was in the air, that the 7th. F.A.B. came into life. Generally speaking, they were young men, boys almost, who were not anxious to sacrifice a career in the professions or in business or on the land for a mere pleasure jaunt, but when the feeling of seriousness spread through the Commonwealth and the daily papers dropped their lying, optimistic, foolish ways, these men hastened to the Flag and gave themselves gladly and freely.

Their first home was at "The Warren" Sydney. There the 7th. Brigade was chosen out of the men then in camp, the original composition being four batteries of four sub-sections each, which composition was later changed.

And now, another writer will tell you of doings in this Artillery Rendezvous, in articles entitled "First day in the A.I.F." and "Life at the Warren."

FIRST DAY IN THE A.I.F.

"What are you in civil life?" sharply asks a little grey haired man with a star and a crown on his shoulder? He is the Artillery Colonel who is endeavouring to select the personell of a Brigade from among Sydney recruits which will be second to no unit that has ever left Australia.

The recruit realises that he will require to lose no chances to secure inclusion in the Artillery which as an arm of the service was probably the most popular at that time, certainly in Sydney.

"Bank Manager, Sir" was his reply.

"Can you ride?"