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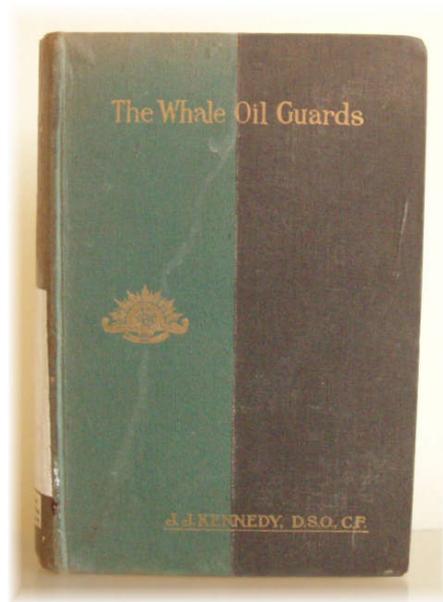
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Whale Oil Guards

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THE
WHALE OIL GUARDS

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"CARRIGMORE"; "THE INSEPARABLES";
"GORDON GRANDFIELD"; ETC.

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1919

THE WHALE OIL GUARDS

THIS is a story of an Australian battalion. We Australians do not boast ; therefore, though I may think it, I do not say it is the story of the bravest or the best Anzac battalion.

Incidentally, this is the story of Oswald Croshaw and other gallant men. Some have gone over the Great Divide and no crosses mark their graves. Others have gone Beyond, but white crosses mark their resting-places near the battle-line in the Western Front. A few have returned to Australia maimed and crippled. The medals they wear bear testimony to their gallantry. Let us hope that their countrymen will honour them for what they have dared and achieved, and that the Australian Government will be benignly zealous for the comfort of those battered heroes who have won glory for the Southern Cross.

SECTION III.

On the 19th of June, at 7 a.m., we embarked at Alexandria on the good ship *The Royal George*.

This transport had been, before the war, a liner "de luxe," specially built for those British and American plutocrats who follow the summer, so to speak. Having escaped the inclemency of the Northern Winter, they used to enjoy life on the Riviera and then cross on gilded floating palaces, such as this ship of ours, to love and revel, flirt and intrigue at Cairo, Luxor, Assouan, and other enchanted cities of the Purple East.

On this boat the men had very comfortable quarters. As for the officers, they lived in luxurious state-cabins. Every two officers shared a suite comprising bed-room, sitting-room and bath-room. The catering, too, was excellent.

What a change from the fly-infested camps of Egypt!

Constant companionship with Oswald Croshaw during that most pleasant of voyages gave me a complete understanding of the man's nature. There were many matters

SECTION VI

After Fromelles, Major Croshaw was appointed C. O. of the Green and Blacks. Oswald realized what arduous work his promotion entailed. He had to re-constitute from the remnant of the old battalion and from reinforcements a new fighting regiment. But it was work he relished. His wonderful organizing powers now obtained full scope, his energy was indefatigable, his personality made itself felt and the result was, after a few months, a magnificent unit comprised of splendidly-trained officers and men, who took a soldierly pride in their battalion, and were eager to find opportunities to gain for it further renown and glory.

I have rarely met men of such charm of manner as Colonel Croshaw possessed. He could be brusque and harsh with people whom he deemed rotters. On parade he was strict and soldierly but never over-bearing. At mess he was an English gentleman, always courteous, a delightful host, a brilliant conversationalist, with a keen appreciation of humour, quick at repartee, a lover of music and song, always assiduous in his endeavours to make

We marched back from La Motte to Fleurbaix on the 18th of September. From the 21st to October the 8th, we were in the front line. On the 13th of October our whole division moved *en route* for the Somme.

SECTION VIII.

When we left the Fleurbaix sector, we had only a very vague idea regarding our destination. Various wild rumours, "Furphys," as the men styled them, were current. We soon discovered that we were bound for the Somme area, and were to join with other divisions in a grand offensive. An order was issued that only what was absolutely necessary in the shape of kit was to be taken, the residue was to be stored at Saily under guard.

We travelled on motor-lorries to our new billets near the village of Outterstene. Here we remained until the 16th. It was a treat, this short sojourn in a charming country district away from the din and traffic, and the crude, stern realities of the forward area. All of us, officers and men, realizing that there was another sharp ordeal ahead of us, forgot our cares and worries, and made the most

as well as the glory of his Anzac comrades. Wounded twice during my career in the battalion he returned last April only to be severely wounded again. He, too, was one of those grand fellows who, though a soldier, was always a true Christian. Would to God we had many more such as he and Jack Ridley.

SECTION XII.

We left Mailly on the 16th July, and marched to a village called Rubempré.

Captain Pearson and I rode on ahead of the battalion by some hours. The day was warm and sunny. The country through which we cantered was very beautiful with its rolling downs, white villages, and spire-topped churches. Calm and pastoral it looked, and one found it hard to realize that some thirty miles away the war was raging and taking its toll of thousands of lives.

During our short stay at Rubempré we celebrated the anniversary of Fromelles. General Hobbs addressed us and gave us a hint that we were destined for fierce fighting in the North very soon. He also congratulated us on our achievements and told us that we would soon have an opportunity to avenge

SPECIAL ORDER

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL W. J. R. CHEESEMAN,
D.S.O., M.C.

Commanding 53rd Battalion A.I.F.

8th December, 1918.

Under authority granted by His Majesty the King, the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has awarded the following decorations—

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Lieut.Colonel W. J. R. Cheeseman, M.C.
Lieutenant R. V. Hill.

MILITARY CROSS.

Lieutenant J. G. Ridley.

DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

1737. Sergt. Smith, C.
3502. Sergt. Callaghan, R. L.
2217. Pte. Newland, A. G., M.M.
5371. Pte. Grocott, F. T.

The Corps Commander has awarded the following decorations :—

BAR TO MILITARY MEDAL.

3489. Sergt. Croker, J. E., M.M.
3259. Pte. Barron, E., M.M.

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All of this and more may be available in a seemingly mundane book such as a directory. Learn much of the background of life at the time, even if your ancestor is not listed there.