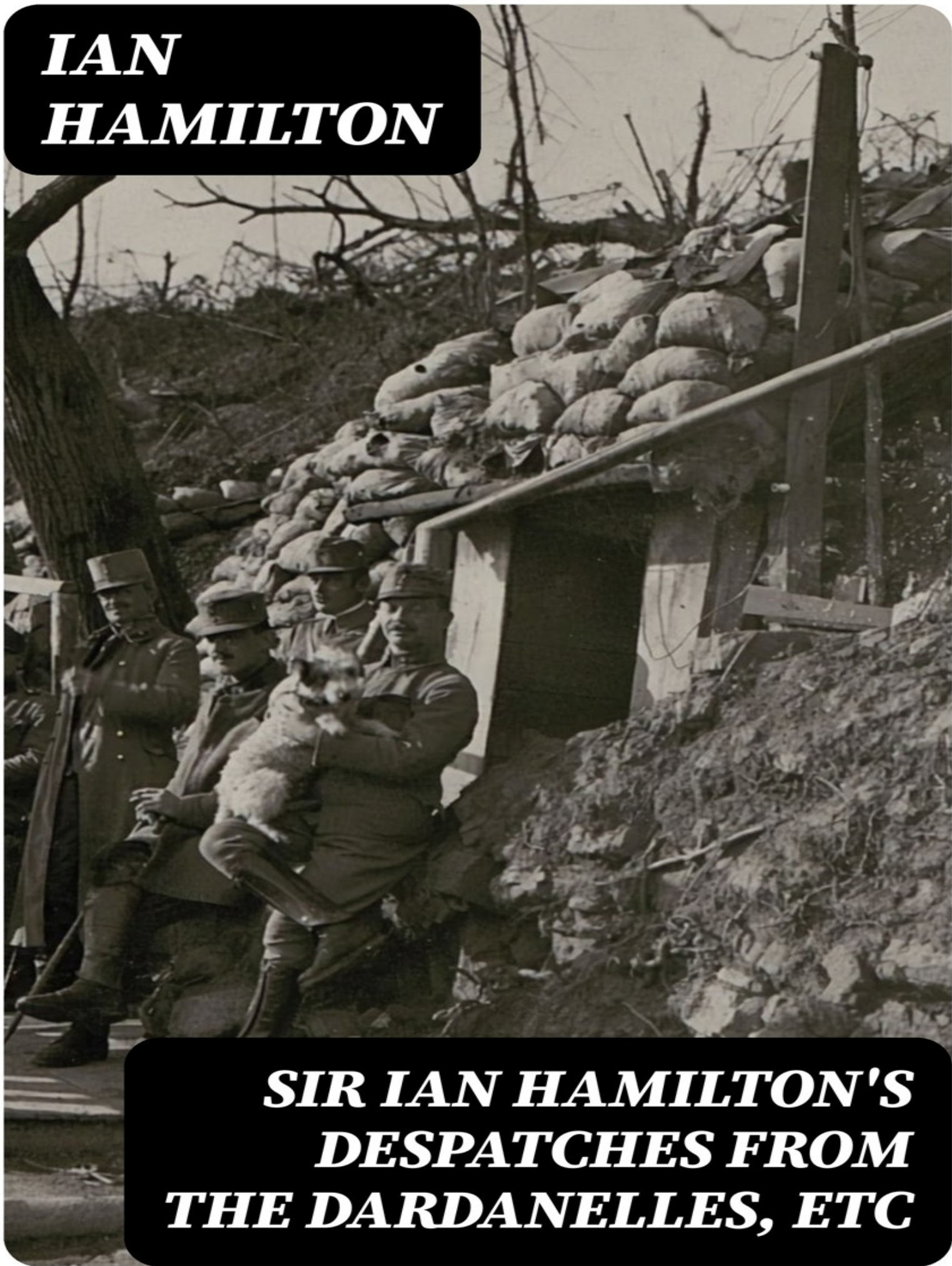


***IAN  
HAMILTON***



***SIR IAN HAMILTON'S  
DESPATCHES FROM  
THE DARDANELLES, ETC***

**Ian Hamilton**

# **Sir Ian Hamilton's Despatches from the Dardanelles, etc**

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**INTRODUCTION BY FIELD-MARSHAL  
SIR EVELYN WOOD, V.C., G.C.B.,**

# **G.C.M.G., ETC., ETC.**

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"What's brave, what's noble, let's do it."

I was serving in the Royal Navy when Lieutenant Lucas, H.M.S. *Hecla*, earned the first Victoria Cross that was gazetted, for having thrown overboard a live shell. I was in the 21-gun battery before Sevastopol sixty-one years ago when Captain Sir William Peel, R.N., picked up from amongst a number of powder cases, and carried resting on his chest, a 42-pounder live Russian shell, which burst as he threw it over the parapet; and having seen many extraordinarily gallant deeds performed by men of all ranks in both Services, I think that I am a fair judge of fighting values.

Just sixty-one years ago an Ordinary Seaman, H.M.S. *Queen*, was one of a detachment of a Petty Officer and six Bluejackets who had left our advanced trenches carrying a heavy scaling ladder, 18 feet long, to enable the soldiers to cross the ditch of the Great Redan at Sevastopol. When the only surviving ladder-party was close up to the abatis, three of the men under the Rear part of the ladder were shot down, and a young midshipman then put his shoulder under it. The boy was young, had already been wounded, and was moreover weak, being officially on the sick list, so doubtless was an inefficient carrier. The Bluejacket in front was unaffected by the storm of missiles of all sorts through which he had passed in crossing the 500 yards between our trenches and the Redan, although in his company of sixty men, nineteen sailors had been killed and twenty-nine wounded within twenty minutes.

The fire was vividly described by Field-Marshal Lord Raglan, who was looking on. He, with the experience of the Peninsular War, and having witnessed the assaults of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, thus portrayed it: "I never before witnessed such a continuous and heavy fire of grape and musketry"; and again: "I had no conception of such a shower of grape." The Bluejacket had remained apparently unconcerned by the carnage, but he realised that the now one-surviving carrier at the Rear end of the ladder was not doing much to help, and thinking that he was addressing a messmate, exclaimed encouragingly, as he half turned his head: "Come on, Bill, let's get our ladder up first," being shot dead as he finished the sentence.

I was often asked in the early days of the War whether I thought that the men in the ranks were of the same fighting value as those of two generations ago, and invariably answered confidently as follows: "Yes, just the same at heart, but with better furnished heads." The contents of this Booklet clearly attest the accuracy of that opinion.

Education has done much to improve the "Fighting Services," but the most potent magnet for bringing out the best of the Anglo-Saxon Nation is the fuller appreciation of Democracy. The officers, not content with leading their men gallantly, which they have always done, now feel for them and with them as staunch comrades. All ranks are now nearer, geographically, mentally and morally, than they have ever been before to the heart of England.

Sixty years ago a brave officer could think of no better prize for the reward of gallantry than money, and a General



about to assault Sevastopol on September 8, 1855, offered £5 for the first man inside the Great Redan.

When, in the winter 1854-5, the institution of the Victoria Cross was suggested, the Royal Warrant for which was not issued until 1856, nearly all the senior officers disliked the innovation, and our Government, realising this feeling, hesitated to entrust them with the selection of the recipients of the distinction. In one battalion the men were instructed to nominate a private soldier. They, as in all good regiments, reflected the views of their officers, as regards the innovation, and unanimously elected a comrade who, being trusted for his sobriety and honesty, used to carry down the grog-can at dinner-time to the trenches, and so, not only enjoyed a "soft billet," but was never under fire except for one hour in twenty-four.

A perusal of the despatches and of the *London Gazette* announcing the bestowal of decorations is like reading of the mortal combats described in Virgil's Twelfth Book of the "Æneid," and fills the mind with admiration.

It is perhaps only soldiers who can fully appreciate the enduring courage of the Munster Fusiliers, who, after losing half their numbers by drowning, and by fire of shrapnel and bullets, with their Brigadier-General, his Brigade-Major, and most of their Regimental officers down, could reform into remnants of Companies, and after a night without food, follow a Staff Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Doughty Wylie, from the beach up to the Old Castle, and assault successfully Hill No. 141. These men are, indeed, worthy descendants of their predecessors who carried the walls of Delhi in 1857.

No soldiers can read the story of the heroism shown by the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers commanded by Major Bishop; how they jumped ashore under a hurricane of lead which was rained on Beach W, and how they broke through the wire, and had by 10 a.m. carried three lines of hostile trenches, without feeling proud of the people of the "Clothing Towns." The men are worthy of their forefathers, who at Minden in 1759 advanced in line with "Colours flying and Drums beating" against a mass of hostile cavalry, which they defeated.

I hope that the young soldiers of the King's Own Scottish Borderers may be taught to recall, not only the deeds of their predecessors at Namur, 1695, and the glorious victory of the infantry over a mass of hostile cavalry, which they shared with the Lancashire Fusiliers; but also what their battalion did on Y Beach of the Dardanelles on April 26 last, when after many hours of fighting, causing the battalion a loss of 50 per centum, the survivors held with determination a trench which had been constructed for four times their number of effectives; and then, when orders were given to abandon the position, how the courage of a small Rear-guard enabled all the wounded, ammunition, and stores to be safely re-embarked.

The burning courage of the Australian and New Zealand Division must make any soldier proud of his Colonial brothers. They were disembarked at night, and the units became unavoidably mixed up, for some of them had in their ardour followed up the Turks, whom they had repulsed, further than had been intended. It seems from a perusal of the despatch, that in spite of their short military training,

the self-reliance naturally acquired by men who lead a less artificial life than those brought up in cities and towns in England, enabled our Colonials, inspired by their personal courage, to resist successfully for hours the attacks of a vastly superior number of Turks.

In a number of glorious deeds recorded in the *London Gazette* it is somewhat difficult to select any deed standing out beyond the rest, but it seems probable that the personal prowess of Lance-Corporal Albert Jacka, 14th Battalion Australian Imperial Forces, can scarcely ever be surpassed. During the night of May 19-20 he, with four other Australians, was holding a trench which was heavily attacked. The five men accounted for many Turks, but when Jacka's four comrades had been killed or wounded, the trench was rushed, and occupied by seven Moslems. Lance-Corporal Jacka attacked and killed all seven, five by successive shots from his rifle, and two with his bayonet.

Commander Unwin's exploits were remarkable. He had fitted admirably for the work in view the *River Clyde* steamship, and successfully beached her; and although hit by three bullets, he worked for hours in the water to save wounded men, and continued his self-sacrificing efforts until he became inanimate from cold and exhaustion.

One of Commander Unwin's subordinates, George Samson, who vied with him in tasks of enduring gallantry, belongs to the Royal Naval Reserve, and is mentioned for having worked on a lighter all day attending to the stricken until he was dangerously wounded. Yet at the annual dinner last week of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, when Samson, apparently now a Petty Officer, as modest as he is

brave, was presented with a gold watch and chain, in returning thanks, said: "I would sooner land again in the Dardanelles than have to make a speech."

Commander Robinson is a remarkable instance not only of calculating courage, but also of the thorough training which Naval officers receive. "He refused to allow anyone to accompany him on his dangerous mission, as his men's white clothing made them very conspicuous. After having penetrated alone into a two-gun battery of the enemy, on the 26th February, he destroyed a gun and then returning for another demolition charge, wrecked the remaining piece."

The Commander-in-Chief at Gallipoli, affectionately termed by his friends in the Service "Johnnie," being a very brave man, appreciates the courage of those under his command. He showed great determination in the unhappy war in South Africa in 1881, when he was severely wounded, and in the battle of Eland's Laaghte in October, 1899, led so determinedly in front that he would have been recommended for the Victoria Cross but for his senior rank.

The Services in the Dardanelles are fortunate in having a scholarly General to narrate their stirring deeds, for many of our commanders, from Marlborough to Clyde, have felt more difficulty in writing a description of a victory than they had experienced in winning it.

In the last half century the power of appreciating noble deeds and the merits of capable officers has increased. The days are fortunately passed since our senior generals said: "We find all our officers are much of a muchness."

There is now a more generous acknowledgment of the fact that the life of a labouring man is as much to him as is that of a peer to a duke's son; there has grown up amongst our soldiers a deeper sense of appreciating valour apart from natural or acquired advantages.

As Admiral Holmes and his Squadron in the St. Laurence enabled General Wolfe to capture Quebec in 1759, so Admiral John de Robeck has enabled General Sir Ian Hamilton to land his troops and hold the western coast of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and Hamilton, happier than Wolfe, lives to acknowledge his debt to the Senior Service, describing it affectionately as "The father and mother of the Army."

*October 1. 1915 Evelyn Wood*

October 1. 1915 Evelyn Wood

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## **THE FIRST DESPATCH**

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From the General Commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to the Secretary of State for War, War Office, London, S.W.

General Headquarters,  
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force,

*May 20, 1915.*

MY LORD,