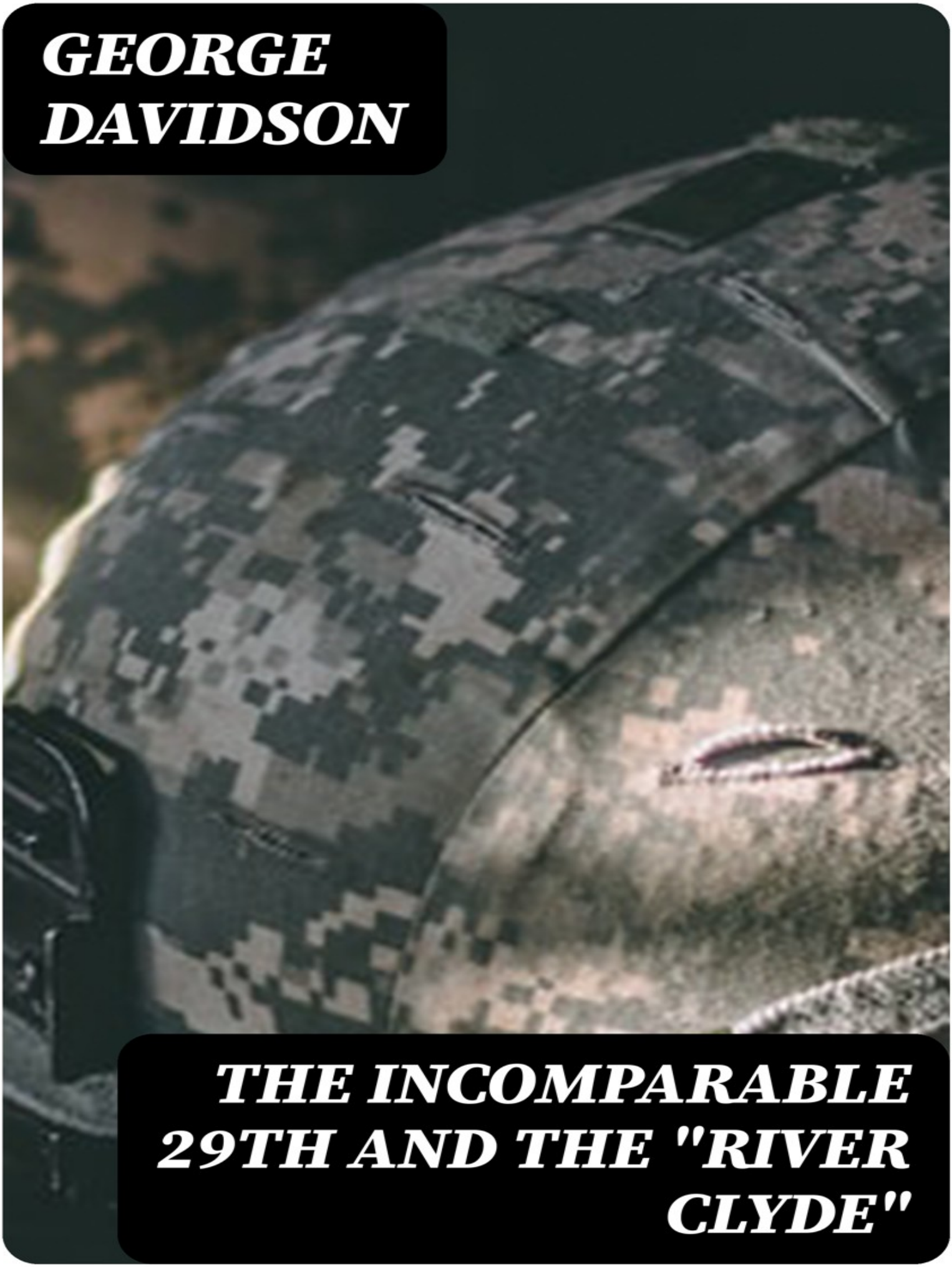
GEORGE DAVIDSON
THE INCOMPARABLE 29TH AND THE "RIVER CLYDE"

George Davidson

The Incomparable 29th and the "River Clyde"

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IN WARM ADMIRATION OF THEIR CONSTANT ZEAL AND PLUCK AND IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE MANY EXCITING TIMES WE HAD TOGETHER

PREFACE.

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I had not the slightest intention of ever publishing these notes in book form while jotting them down for the sole purpose of giving my wife some connected idea of how we at the Front were spending our time. I found, to my surprise, that keeping a diary was a great pleasure, and I rarely missed the opportunity of taking notes at odd times—and often in odd places.

Several of my friends read the parts as I sent them home, and it is on the valued advice of one in particular that I now offer these scraps to the public. I make practically no change on the original, but in a few places, for the sake of

sequence, or more fulness, I have made additions. These are always in brackets.

Some of the remarks in the original might safely be published fifty years hence, but at present the war is too recent for these to see the light of print.

GEORGE DAVIDSON,
R.A.M.C.

Torphins, Aberdeenshire,
June, 1919.

DIARY.

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March 16th, 1915.—After serving for five months as a lieutenant in what was at first known as the 1st Highland Field Ambulance, and afterwards, as the 89th Field Ambulance, I left Coventry, our last station, to do my little bit in the great European War, our destination being unknown. We had heard well-founded rumours that we were going to the Dardanelles, or somewhere in the Levant, and our being deprived of our horses and receiving mules instead, and helmets (presumably cork) being ordered for

the officers, all pointed to our being sent to a warmer climate than France or Belgium, where the war is raging on the west side of the great drama.

Leaving Coventry at 1.50 p.m. we reached Avonmouth about 5, to find that our boat was not in. The men were put up in a cold, draughty shed for the night, where they had little sleep, while the officers took train to Bristol, nine miles off, where we dined excellently at the Royal Hotel, but, there being no vacant rooms, we went to the St. Vincent's Rocks Hotel, overlooking the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the great gorge of the Avon.

March 17th.—Returned to Avonmouth and wandered about inspecting the huge transports lying in the docks, and H.M.S. "Cornwall," just returned for repairs from the fight at Falkland Islands. She had received three shell holes in her hull, one under the water line, and a large number of perforations in one of her funnels.

We then got on board our boat, the "Marquette," of the Red Star Line, built by Alexander Stephen & Sons, Glasgow, of over 8000 tons, and said to be a good sailer. We lunched with the captain, a Scotchman of course, hailing from Montrose. At 5.30 we got the men on board, and all spent the night in our new quarters.

March 18th.—After getting numerous details on board during last night and to-day, amounting to about 1300 men, 60 officers, about 700 horses and mules; besides 20 tons of explosives and 50 tons of barbed wire, and wagons by the hundred, we set sail at 10 p.m. under sealed orders. No

lights were allowed owing to the danger from submarines which had been busy within the last few days in the Bristol Channel and about the Scilly Islands. As escort we had two torpedo-boat destroyers, one on each side and slightly ahead. These left us after twelve hours, when we were in less danger, and 100 miles west of the usual course, sailing W.S.W. into the Atlantic.

March 19th.—Beautiful day with slight breeze, but biting cold at first; ship pitching and rolling moderately, a few officers a little sick early, and about 80 per cent of the men, the latter suffering badly from the close atmosphere in their deck, in which their hammocks are slung as close as sardines in a tin and all port holes closed. The electric light had been shut off so that no one might be able to show a light.

Dr. K——, the ship's ancient doctor, is a curious customer, full of stories and quaint remarks. Captain Findlay is very communicative but will not reveal any private orders. He is directed to steer for the Mediterranean by a certain course. About 5 p.m. to-day he altered his course from W.S.W. to S. At 5 an order was issued to have the iron shutters put over the port holes, otherwise no lights to be allowed.

Very little shipping has been seen to-day, although several ships of a small size have passed at a long distance on our port side. One of the reasons for choosing this course was to avoid ships that might carry a wireless installation and signal our movements to the enemy.

The captain, when swearing at the head steward about some forgetfulness, gave what he considered proof of the superiority of the memory of the lower animals over the human in a little story. He had carried Barnum and Bailey's menagerie once from America and occasionally fed a young elephant, Ruth by name, after President Cleveland's daughter, she taking apples from his pocket. After three years he came across her again, and calling her by name, she came up and put her trunk into the same pocket as of old. On the trip over he carried 1200 animals, only two dying, one being the giraffe which fell down a hatchway and broke his neck in two places—somehow a very fitting death for a giraffe.

Saw several porpoises playing and jumping beside the boat. A wireless message to the captain tells of the appearance of a German submarine at Dover last night.

Towards 6.30 two very large steamers crossed our bows, coming out of the west, while we went slowly to avoid them. One carried no lights and was probably carrying troops from Canada.

Had an amusing talk on the boat deck with the old doctor. He was telling us about three padres who left our boat just before we started, preferring to go by another as they did not like travelling with so many animals. There being no parson for the coming Sundays they requested him to hold the services, but he replied that there was no use asking him, he could not pray worth a damn. He explained that a ship rang eight bells at 12, four at 8, and one for each half-hour after these, as one bell at 4.30, two at 5, three at 5.30, and so on.

Beautiful night, stars clear, and sea very smooth for the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay, where we now are. The equinoctial gales usually begin on March 20 (to-morrow), so the captain says. We have averaged 12½ knots since we left Avonmouth. A small bucketfull of water is taken from the sea every two hours, and its temperature taken to see if we are near ice.

March 20th.—Weather to-day typical of the Bay of Biscay, half a gale all day, and blowing furiously at 7 o'clock, bottles, glasses, etc., flying off the dinner-table. Sea-sickness very rife, almost every one suffering more or less. Saw only two passing ships to-day. The captain prophesies warmer weather to-morrow if the wind remains in the east as at present. It will then be off the land, we being opposite Finisterre about 8 a.m. to-morrow.

The orders to the captain are to remain sixty miles off land while skirting Spain and Portugal. By wireless we hear the Allies still gain ground in Flanders, and of a railway collision in Lancashire.

March 21st.—Sunday.—Good news by wireless of the progress of the war. Wind changed to S.E., showery in the morning, and pleasantly warm. Church parade at 10. "Old Hundred" by the congregation, led by Serg. Gibb, the Lord's Prayer by Serg. Gaskin—as much of it as he could remember—a chapter of Matthew by Capt. Stephen followed by some words of advice, when the attempts of the audience to look solemn were all in vain—then off to the deck with "The Innocents Abroad".

During the day the weather has been very variable, occasionally very heavy rain showers, but very mild; strong gale all day right in our teeth which must retard our progress. At dinner—7 p.m.—the captain said we were not quite opposite Lisbon, but nearly. With a few exceptions all have found their sea legs.

March 22nd.—Being Orderly Officer I was up at 6.45 and inspected our unit's breakfast at 7.15, expecting a repetition of the grousing about their food which has gone on since we came on board, but to-day all are satisfied for the first time. They began with porridge which looked palatable, though sloppy for a Scotchman's taste, and was said to be without salt, which would certainly be the case were the cook an Englishman. Then each had a cup of coffee which looked fair enough and smelt good to a hungry man like myself, with two thick slices of bread with salt butter and jam. I feel as fit as a fiddle, and believe the equinoctial gales at their worst would be none too much for me. The feeling that I am to sink to the bottom of the ocean when the boat pitches has entirely gone.

Stephen and I are wondering what our folks at home are doing, and if they are always looking for letters from us by the next post. If so they will be disappointed for many days yet. A good many of our horses are sick, and two died yesterday and were thrown overboard. The poor brutes have very cramped quarters.

The sea was fairly rough during daylight and the ship rolled so badly that at lunch and dinner "fiddles" had to be put along the tables to keep the dishes in their places. In

the evening the wind fell to a very gentle, balmy breeze, when a number of us spent some time on the boat deck watching the phosphorescence of the jelly fish, which we saw in many hundreds.

March 23rd.—Got up early and on going on deck at 7.30 found we were making straight for the sun. Most glorious morning, sun bright, sea, except for the eternal swell, perfectly calm. We had changed our course and were heading 8 degrees S. of E., making for the Straits of Gibraltar. At 8 the captain, wishing to be sure of his longitude, began bawling out to some unseen person, "Mark 23, 22; mark 23, 19, add another 1; mark 23, 25". He explained that he took the reading three times then struck an average.

In time land hove in sight, faint at first, but gradually the rocky coast of Spain, north of Cape Trafalgar, became distinct, then this cape itself came out of the mist as white as snow—so white that the purser said he believed it actually was snow. Then higher hills beyond appeared with others of a similar nature on the African coast. All looked forbidding and barren. Swallows were flitting about, and would have meant summer at home, but I fancy they are here all winter. The heat of the sun was intense, and I observed that his altitude seemed as high as I was accustomed to see him in midsummer.

The captain soon pointed out "The Rock," and after passing the white town of Tarifa on the Spanish main it got clearer and clearer, but to our disgust our boat kept towards the south side of the Straits, and all were disappointed we

were not to have a chance to post letters here as we expected. Tangier in the outer part of the Straits was invisible from mist. The Rock was not quite as impressive as I expected, nor could I with certainty make out more than one gun position, although I saw several black spots where guns may have frowned at us.

A gunboat came after us and made us turn about in a circle till she was satisfied of our identity, the ship's number being invisible through the mist to those on shore. Ceuta with its snow-white houses lay on the south coast almost opposite Gibraltar. Some large buildings could be plainly seen, and between the town and the sea, on the north-east side the fortified hill held by the Spaniards since they lost Gibraltar.

Later I found we sailed directly east, our next halt being as yet unknown. All roll has entirely departed from our ship, which almost seems unnatural after the tossing we have had. What struck me most to-day was the rocky nature of both sides of the Straits—we might have been among the rugged mountains of Ross-shire. Apes Head seemed to be made of rugged and split masses of limestone. The rocks with their bright colours were a great relief to our eyes which had rested on nothing but water for five days.

March 24th.—A quiet uneventful day; colder than yesterday in the Atlantic. I find that all along we have sailed with only two lights showing, both faint, one on either end of the bridge, red to port and green to starboard. In the last twenty-four hours we covered 286 miles, and going east fast, the clock being now advanced twenty-three minutes

daily. We left Avonmouth with 1500 tons of coal on board, and we use sixty-five tons daily. We carry a poultry yard and get fresh eggs for breakfast, one some one had to-day was so fresh that according to the date written on it it was laid to-morrow (25/3/15). We have a lot of Irishmen on board which explains this Irishism. We had a concert in the evening, got up by Col. O'Hagan, the O.C. the West Lancashire Field Ambulance, when we had many amusing songs and tales. The sea was as smooth as a duck-pond all day. Towards night the wind rose, strong enough to cause a big pitch had we been still in the Atlantic, but here it is hardly noticeable. The south-east corner of Spain was seen in the morning and a peep of Africa got in the afternoon.

March 25th.—Just returned from the engine room, having made up to the chief engineer, who took me over the machinery and stokehole. The three cylinders develop 4500 horse-power. The largest is 96 inches in diameter.

All day we have been in sight of the African coast, the Atlas Mountains making one continuous range. They reminded me strongly of Ross-shire, the whole outline being rough and rugged. Mount Atlas, which we did not see, is 14,740 feet high. About 9 a.m. we were said to be near the town of Algiers. Great snowfields were visible on most of the highest mountains. These were very picturesque with the sun shining on the snow. We have seen little shipping, one large oil boat passed west. All are taking the lack of news philosophically, nothing, as far as I can make out, being heard to-day. Code messages from battleships speaking to each other are received but are unreadable.

Helmets were issued to the officers to-day, but the wind is too cold to make these necessary.

As Sanitary Officer for the day I had to go over the whole of the horse decks with the Military Officer of the ship, Lt.-Col. Hingston, R.E. The alleys between the horse lines, all of which had to be traversed, must be nearly half a mile in length, all the heads of the horses projecting in double lines into the narrow passages, which makes tramping along these dark ways anything but pleasant. The close stench is very sickening, and I was glad when our journey came to an end. We have lost four horses so far. The mules are hardier and have stood the voyage well. They are besides accustomed to the sea, all having come lately from the Argentine.

March 26th.—An ideal day and the sun delightfully warm. We had the African coast in sight the whole time till early afternoon. Passed Cape Blanco, which in the distance might have been part of Deeside, hills with stretches of verdure which looked like forest with brown spaces between which were probably sand.

Helmets were issued to the men to-day. These with their broad brims look very serviceable against the sun. One man coming on a friend who had just donned his, yelled: "Hello, man, come oot o' that till I see yer feet".

At the present speed we should reach Malta at 6 a.m. to-morrow where surely we'll be able to post letters, but they have a long way to go to reach home. At 5 o'clock we were opposite Pantellaria, an Italian penal settlement, and about 140 miles from Malta. On the north coast of the island the

settlement is visible, big white houses at different levels on its rocky face. There are very steep rocks on the east side rising straight out of the sea.

March 27th.—My first peep at the East—although it is perhaps not the East proper. I rose at 5.30 to find Malta right ahead, and Valetta only a mile or two distant. The sight was gorgeous, the rocky land all tints of yellow, and the houses of divers colours, flat-roofed, domed, and altogether Oriental.

Two warships, which turned out to be the "Prince of Wales" and the "Paris," were steaming rapidly from the north-east, and we were ordered to lie to till they entered the harbour, then to follow. The scene on entering this harbour baffles description, with its cliffs, forts, and frowning guns and numerous warships. There were signs of war preparations everywhere. The entrance to the harbour was guarded by booms, only a small opening being left where they were folded back. A short way inside came another row of booms. Then came a French warship on our port side, coaling at its hardest, from which came shouts to our decks crowded with troops of "where are you going"? The reply had to be "We don't know". Immediately to starboard we had another French ship which turned out to be the largest in the harbour. All her crew and band were drawn up on deck, and the latter struck up "God save the King". We at once stood at attention, all in silence, but when the strains ended every man hurrahed at the pitch of his voice. The band then gave us "It's a long way to Tipperary".

On going a little farther we were moored to a buoy in the middle of the waterway, with all sorts of shipping round us, mostly French warships, there being at least a dozen of that nationality, the only British men-of-war being the two we saw enter. The transparency and greenness of the water are remarkable. The whole harbour is dotted over with "bum boats" which are said to be peculiar to Malta, and have high boards at their stem and stern, and are worked by one or two men standing upright. Most sell fruits and odds and ends to those on board, while others convey passengers to and from the land. The houses about the harbour are largely forts or connected with the army and navy. They rise tier upon tier to the top of the surrounding rocks which may be about 150 feet high.

After lunch permission was given to the officers and N.C.O.'s to go ashore. There was great excitement of course, and all asked for leave forthwith. Being "Officer of the day," whose duties applied to the whole ship, I decided not to remind the C.O.—Col. Hingston—of this, but our C.O. mentioning at lunch that I need not look for leave I could not sneak off as I had intended, and was to be permitted only if I found a substitute, which, of course, I failed to do. Every one has gone to stretch his legs on land except the "Captain of the day" and myself. Still I hope to get a short turn ashore before we sail at 6 p.m. which is announced as the hour of our departure—and our destination? we wish we knew.

8.30 p.m.—Fiddes very kindly returned early to relieve me and I spent two very enjoyable hours in Valetta, wandering about its narrow and stair-like streets. There were goats everywhere, many being milked on the doorsteps as I

passed. I bought some pieces of Maltese lace, which is pretty much of one pattern, generally a Maltese cross surrounded by flowers. The inhabitants are plainly of Italian descent, but if you ask if that is their nationality, they always deny it and say they are Maltese. The shops are totally different from anything I have ever seen, and except in the best streets, have no windows, merely a huge, gaping doorway. The weather was very close and many of the inhabitants and the children generally, were bare legged and well bronzed. The women's dress was very peculiar, all being in jet black with a strange lopsided head-dress. The edge has a stiff hoop and projects well in front of the face.

The plants were all tropical—palms, cacti of many sorts, and masses of a deep purple flower that covered large expanses of wall. All trees were in full leaf, but they would be mostly evergreen. Worthy looking padres in their shovel hats were plentiful, also monks in dark brown cloaks, rope girdles and sandal shoon, and usually bareheaded, although a few wore a tiny cap, little bigger than the top of an egg, which it resembled in shape.

I was much interested on discovering the reason why all the women in Malta wear black, which seems to be commenced about the age of eleven or twelve. Napoleon and his army had exercised great liberties with their sex during a visit, and in consequence it was decreed by the Pope that all women in Malta should go into mourning for the period of a hundred years. This time is up but they seem to know that their mode of dress is very becoming, and it looks as if the decree was to hold good for all time.

It is impossible to go round the stair-like streets, which abound in Malta, with a milk cart, hence you find all over the town a man or boy with about half a dozen goats, shouting something or other, when the women appear at their doors with jugs into which the men milk the quantity required, as they sit on the doorstep. This is all very quaint and picturesque, especially when combined with the bright clothing of the men and children, the bright projecting upper windows, and the altogether foreign and tropical appearance of the whole town and island.

All the officers thoroughly enjoyed what was a new experience to most of us, all returning to the boat laden with parcels, and being unusually lively at dinner, and the wine flowing more freely than usual among a body of men who rarely drink anything but water—and very flat and unpleasant water it is too.

We left Malta at 6 p.m. *en route* for Alexandria, as I am told by the captain, who says it is no longer a secret. This is evidently to be the place of concentration of the 29th Division. Another transport, the "Kingstonia," left half an hour before us, amidst great cheering from the warships and us. We too had a right royal send-off from all the warships we passed, their decks being packed with cheering multitudes, and our French friends of the morning played the National Anthem again in the usual silence. We half expected it this time, but its coming so unexpectedly in the morning made it most impressive. Eleven powerful searchlights were playing at the entrance of this important harbour—a harbour which must be one of Britain's greatest

assets. When thrown on us even a mile off the light was absolutely dazzling.

March 28th.—Churning all day through a sea of ultra-marine hue, with a brilliant sun overhead and a fair breeze behind. We are now a long way east of the longitude of Greenwich, the clock at noon yesterday being seventy minutes before G.M.T. This means a daily loss of sleep and consequently much swearing. At one time in the Atlantic we were between fifty and sixty minutes behind G.M.T.

There was a great fuss last night over the supposed discovery of six cases of measles in our unit. This morning a Medical Board sat and pronounced all the cases to be merely erythematous rashes following vaccination four days ago, and consequently the quarantine instituted last night has been relaxed, but only in a modified form, so as to let the guilty party down gently. As a result of all this unnecessary fuss the two field ambulances on board were nearly split into two camps.

March 29th.—Another quiet day and a calm sea.

Three interpreters joined our boat at Malta, they leaving home two days after us by a P. & O. boat. These men have a thorough knowledge of Turkish, Greek, and French.

The heat of the sun has been intense to-day, and a number of us were glad to don our helmets. These are not altogether a success, they are too heavy.

We had a short lecture on "Turkey" by one of the interpreters, when he spoke about the roads, which seem to be few, woods still fewer, water supply and some other

points likely to be of practical interest to us shortly. Rains usually cease in the end of March, and, except for an occasional shower, the heat of summer lasts till the middle of September, the temperature being just under 100° F.

March 30th.—Lying in the harbour of Alexandria, where we arrived about 3 p.m. The day has been perfect, the temperature moderate till we came near land when the sun simply scorched us. At sea there is always a breeze, but as we now lie at anchor in the middle of the harbour the air is absolutely still and oppressive. We seemed to describe the letter "S" as we approached from the sea, this course being likely due to sand bars. To one who has never been in the East before the sight of this town with its huge commercial buildings, its great palm trees which are visible not far from the water's edge, and a harbour full of great liners, and looking big enough to hold all the shipping of the world, is a great education. Three ships have entered since we came in, one being the "Kingstonia," one of our divisional transports, another full of French troops. We were, of course, surrounded by boats trying to do a little honest trade with us, but our men were strictly forbidden to purchase anything from them owing to the risk of infection.

These boats were manned principally by Arabs in their peculiar dresses of brilliant hue and many wore the fez. All were burned as dark as an old penny. Owing to our being supposed to have had measles on board, although it was proved to every one's satisfaction that there was no reason for this suspicion, we had to enter with the yellow flag flying at the foremast. We had visits from official boats, one with

the police flag, very likely expecting to hear that we had cholera or smallpox among us. At any rate the objectionable flag was soon hauled down and we half expected to get permission to land, but so far no orders have come from shore.

The deep blue of the Mediterranean has been left behind for a time, which may be very short, and certainly cannot be long, and we now float on the light green waters of the Nile. The bugle has just sounded "the officer's mess," a sound that is welcome to me; the heat has not yet taken away my appetite.

March 31st.—We were towed to the wharfside at 3 p.m. Then the unloading of our great sea monster began, men trooped on shore, followed by the horses which, unused to daylight in the miserable dens they had just left, looked terrified and floundered down the gangways. It took hours for this procession of animals to end, the exit from Noah's ark must have been a poor show in comparison.

Our men set off for their camp at Mex, three miles away, about 6 p.m., I being left with a fatigue party of twenty-seven men to finish the packing of our stores on railway trucks, and see them despatched in time to arrive at Mex before the men, so that on their arrival they could set to and pitch their tents on the piece of land allotted to them, and which is said to be composed of equal parts of sand and lice! I feel that I have scored in having one night's relief from this plague—but we are in the land of plagues, the home of the Pharaohs.

About 8 p.m. I set off on a visit to Alexandria, and from the docks passed up a street lined on both sides with our animals tied to picket ropes for the night, and at the top of the street came on a grove of many acres of towering palm trees. After a mile or a mile and a half, seeing no newspaper shops, nor anything resembling a British shop, I asked an Egyptian where a "journal" was to be had. We could not understand each other, even signs were of no use, so I tried again and the next man understood me, and directed my black Soudanese friend, who had attached himself to me as my guide, where to go, but from the deviations he took into narrow and remarkably gay by-streets, he plainly thought that this newspaper hunt was a ruse for seeing Alexandria by night. All this was very interesting all the same. I rubbed shoulders with many an Egyptian "nut" who made no pretence about his errand to this questionable part of the town. The many streets I passed through, and I must have penetrated about three miles into the town, seemed very familiar to me, they were so very like pictures one sees of this part. The cafés were crowded with Egyptian revellers, and occasionally I saw groups of our Tommies enjoying a drink among them. The former were all in their brilliant robes, and as they stood or squatted about, smoking their long pipes, they formed a most interesting picture. Their big pipes even blocked the pavement at times, the men squatted on their haunches with their pipes a couple of feet in front and a passer-by had to be careful not to upset and smash them. A fine picture was made by two old fellows squatting on a rug in the open window of a small shop, smoking and drinking coffee, and looking as if they could

curse to fourteen generations any customer bold enough to disturb them in their innocent enjoyment of doing nothing. One of our officers who knows this town and its inhabitants, says if you curse a man he will only laugh in your face, but when you begin cursing to all eternity his brothers and sisters, father and mother, he begins to wax wroth, and by the time you reach the tenth to the fourteenth generation he dances about with fury and gnashes his teeth.

April 1st.—Up early and breakfast at 6.30. By this time the engines were rattling and new ropes creaking, while stores of all kind were being landed. Some acres of quay and side streets were covered with these, the horses and mules having been mostly landed yesterday. Then began the scramble for wagon poles, crossbars, etc., any unit finding itself short just seized the first it came across. We lost odds and ends and followed the recognised custom, known as "skirmishing," and in the end were only short of our full complement by a crossbar and a bicycle. I had a very busy day up to 3 o'clock when we started for Mex camp. We marched out, reaching this at 4.45 after a very warm tramp, tempered by a gentle breeze off the Mediterranean. The country through which we passed was barren in the extreme, honey-combed all the way from quarrying the soil, which is full of salt and soda with a white chalky base. There are everywhere deep holes full of salt water with salt-loving plants about them, practically the only vegetation to be seen; between these there is a mass of hummocks, and pinnacles, with occasional sheep that look like goats, feeding on I do not know what, unless it be a

tuft-headed small grass which is found sparsely on the higher grounds. In front of our tents are larger mounds on which four camels are nibbling at this grass, these being kept by some Bedouins for giving milk. Seeing some dark-skinned rascals having a ride on them I went up to them and was offered a mount for a penny; then the urchin, who had an early training in fleecing, thought he might double his charge and held up two fingers to designate the amount and marched off his camel till I consented. The brute nearly broke first my neck and then my back, but I greatly enjoyed my short ride.

Immediately after this an Inniskilling Fusilier raced Thomson and myself over these terrible salt pits to the sea edge where an unconscious man was lying, having been dragged out of the water after disappearing like a stone, although said to be a strong swimmer.

April 2nd.—A day of great heat, were it not for an occasional air from the Mediterranean. The whole of our camp is covered with ordinary soft sea-sand, and it gets very hot and very glaring. Immediately behind the more or less level ground on which the 29th Field Ambulance is encamped the pure white, chalky higher ground commences, peopled by camels, goats, and sheep. The last two are so much alike it is difficult to say which of the families they belong to.

About 6 p.m. I set out for Alexandria with four of our officers. After a little shopping and haircutting we had an excellent dinner at the Grand Restaurant du Nil, all considering some fried mullet to be the finest fish we had

ever tasted. With a fairly liberal supply of wine the dinner for the five of us cost only about 17s. Then to the Moulin Rouge, which I should say is the counterpart of its better-known namesake in Paris. The newness of the whole show made it amusing.

April 3rd.—Apparently it never rains here after summer has commenced. I have been studying the ornithology of these bare chalk mounds, and find the birds are practically the same as our commonest ones at home—swallows, stonechats—which have been very busy to-day—our two water wagtails, and the wretched little sparrow. I thought the flamingo was to be found along the coast but have never seen a specimen on this inhospitable shore. I have also seen a bird not unlike a thrush, and a few small things apparently of the linnet family. Creepy animals are only too plentiful, the most objectionable at present is the common housefly which is a perfect plague. They are everywhere and are specially fond of the rope suspending my lantern. Unfortunately the place that is second favourite is one's nose. Locusts are said to be in greater abundance in Lower Egypt than was ever known before. Here I have seen but a few dozen, and at first I took them for small dragonflies. They have the same beautiful wings, but their style of flight is quite different, the locust alighting every few yards to have a look at you. Ants, great and small, are everywhere in the morning, but when the sand gets too hot most of them disappear. One big ant has a huge head, a fairly broad tail piece and small body. Lizards are very common on the chalk

mounds, and yesterday I watched four huge specimens basking in the sun half-way down an old lime kiln.

April 4th.—Easter Sunday. We had a service suitable for the day from a Presbyterian Chaplain on the hillside, when there were 700 to 800 present from different units. During the sermon we all lay on the sand, while overhead a lark carolled forth in notes more mild than are uttered by our British lark, but the habits of the two are similar, but ours soars highest.

We have improved our field mess, stores having been got privately among us. By this means we had a very good one o'clock dinner, followed by a snooze by some of us, while others slept straight on till tea-time. I set out alone for a walk into a part I had not visited before, namely, along the seashore west of Mex Camp, to Dakeilah village. I passed an old fort with three very old cast-iron guns of 9-inch bore, lying uselessly on their sides, one labelled "loaded—dangerous". Beyond that the sand is a great depth, and the natives seemed to have it divided into allotments, each piece dug into a deep, wide trench from 6 to 12 feet deep, and along the bottom they have a row of tomatoes. These grow luxuriantly, apparently in pure sand, but there is probably a liberal supply of manure below. Figs, dates, and grapes seem to be the chief fruits grown.

I passed in a corner shaded by tall palm trees a large well which formed a perfect picture—children frisked about, while women drew water, and all about were their big water jars. Just beyond that my walk took me through a native cemetery, all the tombs exactly alike, a big base about five

feet long and nearly three high, and a five foot column on each end. These were the more recent ones, the old graves were merely rough hillocks of stones and clay, as the modern ones will be some day.

I was much astonished to-day at the large number of botanical specimens I came across. For such a sterile part it is most remarkable. I should say 200 species could be picked up in a forenoon's walk.

On returning we all had a talk with a very intelligent Arab boy of about twelve summers, and got a number of words and a few phrases from him. All the native children are very pretty, they have good features, splendid eyes and teeth, and look as sharp as needles. If you dare speak to one it at once gives him an opening to demand backsheesh. I omitted to mention that the only Moslem minaret I have seen so far was in Dakeilah. These may be plentiful in Alexandria, but I have never been there in daylight.

The following are some of the words taught us by the young Arab, but I found it impossible to find a satisfactory spelling for most of them:—

Gatusheira	Thank you.
Daphtar	A book.
Chaima	A tent.
Muphta	A key.
Sigara	A cigar.
Salama lecho	Good morning.
Dasoyak	Good-bye.

Homar	A donkey.
Asioa	Yes.
La	No.

The following Arabic words and phrases are from a piece of paper I picked up in Cox's Bank, Alexandria:—

1. Wahed.	6. Setta.	11. Hidashar.
2. Etneen.	7. Saba'a.	12. Etnashar.
3. Talata.	8. Tamanya.	13. Talatashar.
4. Arba'a.	9. Tessa.	20. Ashrin.
5. Khamsa.	10. Ashara.	100. Miya.

Naharak said	Good morning.
Sa'a kam	What time.
Sa'a waked	One o'clock.
Maragsh Arabi	I don't speak Arabic.
Kam tamanu	What does it cost?

April 5th.—This has been a day of exceptional heat, and curiously is the religious day of the Moslems called Shem-el-nessim, which in Arabic means "breathing the cool breeze". To-day all their shops are shut, and the whole day is spent in the country. What is celebrated is the first of the hot simoon winds which last fifty days, and apparently the day for their commencement is most accurately gauged. We were all