

I am sending this and hoping Dad, that the girls don't get to see what is truly going on behind the scenes.

I would rather them believing God is here protecting me – than to know that we were blown to smithereens.

We were confident of victory and were spoiling for a fight, as the Ninth and Tenth Battalions paved the way... the Eleventh copped a hiding though, in spite of all their might, when they disembarked just north of Suvla Bay.

We were sure the Turks would turn and run from the mighty Third Brigade and that we could take the Dardanelles with ease.

But apparently they'd seen behind our fearsome masquerade, and refused to yield or bow on bended knees.

I was with the second wave of troops that had scrambled two abreast from the rowing boats the tugs had towed ashore.

We had landed in the middle of a flamin' hornets' nest – in a blazing hell of blood and guts and gore!

There were bodies strewn like bits of wood all along the stony beach, where the withered kelp lay stranded, rank and dried.

There were others floating shoreward through the shallows out of reach, as they drifted in like flotsam on the tide.

If we'd only taken Chanuk Bair, in that very first advance, then the sacrifice may not have been in vain.

If the landing hadn't gone amiss, we may have stood a chance of achieving something from this whole campaign.

We have bitten off a little more than we'll ever get to chew, and have opened up a can of worms it seems.

For the Turks are worthy warriors, and jingoistic too... but misguided by the Kaiser's crazy dreams.

They're persistent little buggers though, I have got to give them that... for they like to do their fighting tete-a-tete.

They've been culling us like rabbits, in a game of tit for tat – and can give about as good as what they get!

We have names for every mountain top and for every cliff and ledge, and for every gully, gorge and hidden trek.

There is Baby Seven Hundred, Walker's Ridge and Razors Edge... and of course you would have heard about the Nek!

It was where the Third Light Horse Brigade were bereaved of half their men in a suicidal bayonet attack.

They were slaughtered there like cattle in a butcher's holding pen, till the Brass had intervened and called them back.

They were used as common infantry by the British High Command and should never have been taken from their Corps.

For the Light Horse are our cavalry, who fight on open land... as you did against the Afrikaner Boer.

✓ We have called it Godley's abattoir, as it's tainted with the blood
of the hundreds who have died to no avail –
for a lousy bit of wilderness and acreage of crud,
with a spattering of broken rock and shale.

When I look around, I wonder now... why I volunteered for this,
when I could have been at home in Inverell.
I would just as soon be playing cards with Mum and Little Sis,
as be playing devil's advocate in hell.

I have comforted a dozen blokes in the trenches where they lie,
and assured them they would soon be homeward bound.
I have honoured them with prayer and salutations when they die,
and then buried them in desecrated ground.

✓ It's the Sydney blokes who do it tough, in the scorching midday heat...
as they've never had to rough it in the scrub.
They would rather be at Bondi, chasin' sheilas down the street,
or be sipping grog in some suburban pub.

But they're eager in a donnybrook, when the chips are really down,
and are partial to a bit of fuss and strife.
They have learnt the art of fighting on the streets of Sydney Town,
and are handy with a bayonet and knife.

They are generous with cigarettes, and have taught us how to smoke,
and are full of wit and clever repartee.
They are always stirring mischief and they love to share a joke,
and have been a calming influence on me.

We've been fighting here since April Dad, with our backs against the wall,
and our senses numbed by nauseating stink.
I suppose I should be grateful that I'm even here at all –
I'm alive and breathing oxygen...(I think!)

What a God forsaken, bloody mess! It is hard to verbalise
and explain the dreadful things we've seen and done...
for the trenches here are swarming with mosquitoes, rats and flies
from the corpses that lie rotting in the sun.

✓ If you think the flies at home are bad, you should see them over here!
They're as thick as ours, but not as purely bred.
They will hang around till evening and then seem to disappear,
when the mozzies come and hassle us instead.

It's the smell that driving me insane, and the thirst I cannot slake...
from the putrid taste of ruin and decay.
It's the overwhelming pungency in every breath I take,
and the thought of you and Mum so far away.

I am signing off and hoping Dad, that the girls don't make a fuss,
when they get to hear there's nothing much to tell.
I would rather have them thinking God is here protecting us –
than to know that I've been damned and sent to hell.