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EL ALAMEIN ATTACK

Wounded Men's Stories

Men who took part in the early stages of the Eighth Army's push at El Alamein, and have now returned wounded to the Dominion are loud in praise of the support given by the Allied air forces in the battle. "We seldom saw a Jerry," said one of the men, "but we saw squadrons after squadrons of our own planes passing to and fro overhead as they carried out strafing attacks on the enemy. We used to count the numbers in the squadrons as they went forward, and counted them again on the way back. That told us they were encountering little effective opposition in their work."

Another man said that the position in the air had been greatly aided by a useful happening a week or so before the attack. The German aerodromes had been drenched with rain and their planes bogged down. While they were in this condition, they were caught by our bombers, working from better cared for aerodromes, and smashed up. It was probable, the soldier said, that reports of large numbers of aeroplanes found by the advancing troops on landing grounds captured from the enemy, told of the aeroplanes destroyed under these conditions. "The American Sherman tanks are honeys," said another returned man. "They are much better than the Generals Grants and have been doing some wonderful work."

The same man, an anti-tank gunner, said the organization of the attack was excellent. His gun had more ammunition available than before, and if one gun was knocked out a replacement seemed to come from nowhere immediately, transport and supply being so plentiful and well-arranged. He was only two days in the attack before receiving his wound, the top of his skull being creased by a bullet, and his great regret is that he can not drink any New Zealand beer now he is back as it is against medical instructions.

The noise made by the artillery in the barrage which opened the attack, he says, was terrific. Anyone who was not there could not imagine the din of the 800 or so guns in action. "Our battery," he said, "advanced through the gun lines as they were firing, and they were magnificent to watch." This anti-tank gunner also tells of an experience he had during some fluid tank engagements. His gun was caught between the opposing tanks, and things got very hot while it lasted.

Among those who returned was an officer of a New Zealand railway operating unit. He says that from what he heard—he had been in hospital since the spring of last year—the railway units were hard at work as the Eighth Army advanced restoring the railway line, which before the retreat last year had almost reached Tobruk. The line had been wrecked by our men during the retirement, but the Germans restored it and were using Diesel engines to draw supplies forward to their lines at El Alamein. The R.A.F. then wrecked it again, and it has to be restored again for our own use now it has been recaptured. The officer stated that only one locomotive was left behind in the retreat last year. That could not be moved through damage, and was blown up before the Germans captured it.

CRASHED AMERICAN PLANE

N.Z. Pilot Picks Up Distress Signals

How the detection by a New Zealand air pilot, on patrol in the islands of the South Pacific, of the faint signals from an emergency radio transmitter rigged by the passengers and crew of a United States aeroplane which made a forced landing on a coral reef led to the rescue of the party, which had been marooned for 11 days, is told by States Marines now recuperating in a naval hospital in New Zealand.

The United States plane was on its way from an advanced area to a forward base when it met trouble and

OUR WET CANTEEN

You've heard of the Sahara
And how dry it is in Perth,
But they've got nothing on our flamin' camp
It's the driest place on earth.

We used to have a wet canteen
In the good old days gone by;
But the Terries came and they closed it up,
That's why our camp is dry.

We never got our licence back,
I think it is a sin,
We have to walk a good two miles
To visit Welch's Inn.

Now if they'd only realise
What a saving it would mean
If the boys could have their pint of beer
In the good old wet canteen.

We wouldn't have to walk two miles
And brave the dirty weather,
The Army would be better off,
Look what they'd save in leather.

There wouldn't be the wear and tear
Upon the battle-dress;
The tunic holds a good eight pints
In quarts you'd carry less.

So you see it is quite obvious
A waste that should not be;
Why not open up the wet canteen
And have a little spree.

We've often heard it rumoured
That we'd have a wet canteen,
But you can't get drunk on rumours
'Tis impossible old bean.

At times we've been quite hopeful
And saved up every bean,
But what's the good of money
Without a wet canteen?

The boys are all disgusted,
And everyone complains;
Because the only time our canteen's wet
Is when it damn well rains!
—J.P., Ngaruawahia.

was forced to make a crash landing on a coral atoll. It carried little food and water, and the crew and their passengers were soon in dire need. The emergency radio was rigged and SOS signals sent out repeatedly. On the eleventh day after the crash landing they were heard.

A New Zealand pilot on patrol in the area picked up faint signals which ran as follows:—

"SOS . . . U.S. plane" (description given) "down on reef" (giving position) . . . "Help . . . We are starving. . ."

The marine describes how the New Zealand plane flew over the atoll a little while after and dropped some supplies. Food, cigarettes and tobacco, with medical supplies and a bottle of whisky brought much-needed relief to the distressed party, which was later picked up from the reef and taken to a South Pacific base.

"I got drunk on one mouthful of the whisky," says the marine. "I blame that on my empty stomach," he added.



A Boston III. air crew discussing the day's operations with a R.A.F. Intelligence Officer.

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