

Ships were wanted for evacuation instead of for reinforcements. Bad luck!

Then came Crete, and we felt happy that you managed somehow to return, and with you your "Frey"—as we called him—alive and unscathed.

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To be frank, I thought after these two campaigns you would not be anxious to fight again. We also had two lost campaigns behind us—one in Poland, another in France—but for us people from overcrowded Europe, tucked in between great imperialistic countries, misfortunes had become daily bread. But you who came from happy and beautiful islands so far away in the Pacific, islands with a lovely climate and up-to-date towns full of kind civilized human beings, why should you care for a scrap with European gangsters?

Yet you haven't changed. You remained what you were—quiet, determined soldiers—and you waited patiently for the opportunity to pay back. It was then that I met you, Johnny. We

were drinking whisky—there was still whisky in the Middle East during 1941—in the "Phaleront" in Alexandria. The little Cleo, half-Arab, half-Greek, was sitting between us. We nearly came to blows over her. Afterwards we talked about everything and nothing, mostly by signs, very little about war. Only one thing we knew quite well—that this war business would be settled somehow, and whatever might happen eventually, we would have our way: we would . . .

Not very long after this I was sent into the desert as a despatch-rider carrying some reports, which they always seem to have such a lot of in the Army. There for the first time I met impolite New-Zealanders, near Burg-el-Arab. As I remembered you fellows in the great cities of the Middle East, you were always the quietest and most polite of all troops. Your shorts were always properly pressed. A drunken New-Zealander always sang a bit softer than any other soldier.

You seldom started a row, but on the signal "Come on, boys," you always rushed first into the thick of it. You looked a trifle queer in your peaked hats, somewhat reminiscent of that of Baden Powell, but you were nice to know.

In Burg-el-Arab, however, you behaved quite differently. You camped on a desert track, so that I had to make a detour and nearly broke my neck. You stopped me, and you started to shout and to jabber pretty fast. I could not understand—although you speak perhaps more distinctly than any other Anglo-Saxons—because my English at that time was still very poor. I could hardly believe that these excited, shouting men were New-Zealanders. But I explained to myself that this must be some inferior tribe, because instead of your Baden Powell hats you had those small glen-garries which are always falling off. Afterwards, however, you gave me hot tea—with milk, which I don't like—but plenty of it and biscuits covered an inch thick with jam. Eventually I learned with difficulty the reason for your annoyance when I arrived. It so happened that you had been waiting all day long for a promised contingent of beer, and, instead, I had burst in unannounced, carrying some useless despatches. That was too much, even for you.

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Several months later I found myself in besieged Tobruk, and you were coming to our rescue. We knew about it, and when you advanced sufficiently close, we moved together with the English to meet you. With great effort our extended arms were slowly closing at Sidi Resegh—yours from Egypt, ours from Tobruk. We reached Bel Hamed and advanced towards El Duda. You were approaching Zafran.

Do you remember the Pass of Zafran? Before our very eyes all your battalion was wiped out, together with your Brigadier, and we could not give you any help. Our extended line from besieged Tobruk was already too thin and our motorized forces after the long siege were not in the best of trim. We could only clench our fists. However