UNIT 10

The Australian Soldier

Before you read

1. Australians have been involved in five major conflicts in the last 100 years. Can you match the five conflicts with these dates?
   a 1899–1900
   b 1911–1918
   c 1939–1945
   d 1950–1953
   e 1965–1972

Now read...

Sir John Monash (1865–1931) was the Australian-born commander of the Australian forces at Gallipoli and in France during World War I. Douglas Haig (1st Earl of砒nersyde) was a British Field Marshal during World War I.

'The Australian Soldier'

From The Australian Victories in France in 1918 by General Sir John Monash (Lorrimar Book Co. Melbourne 1935, pp. 316–17)

There are some aspects of the Australian campaign to which, before closing this memoir, I should like to draw brief reference. Success depended first and foremost upon the military proficiency of the Australian private soldier and his glorious spirit of heroism. I do not propose to attempt here an exhaustive analysis of the causes which led to the making of him. The democratic institutions under which he emerged, the advanced system of education by which he was trained — teaching him to think for himself — and to apply what he had been taught to practical use — the outbreak of sport and adventure which is his national heritage, his pride in his young country, and the opportunity which came to him of creating a great national tradition, were all factors which made him what he was.

Physically the Australian Army was composed of the flower of the youth of the continent. A voluntary army — the only purely volunteer army that fought in the Great War — it was composed of men carefully selected according to a high physical standard, from which, happily, no department was made, even although recruiting began to fall off in the last year of the war, and there were some who had proposed a more lenient recruiting examination. The cool in Australia of discovering each fighting man, fully trained, in the battle front was too great a point of at once whether the physical quality of the raw material would survive the wear and tear of war. Mentally, the Australian soldier was well endowed. He had a personal dignity all his own. He was always a keen critic of the way in which his battalion or battery was run, and of the policies which guided his battalion from day to day.

His intellectual gifts and his 'business' made him an apt pupil. It was always a delight to see the activity with which he mastered the technique of the weapons which were placed in his hands. Machine guns, Lewis guns, M.M. guns, bombers, 'looters' mortars, rifle grenades, flares, fuses, detonators, Very lights, signal rockets, German machine guns, German stick bombs, never for long remained a mystery to him.

At all schools and clauses he proved a diligent scholar, and attended his instructions by the speed with which he absorbed and understood his instruction. He was always mentally active and adopt new ideas are often invent them.

His adaptability speed him a great advantage: he knew how to make himself comfortable. To light a fire and cook his food was a natural instinct. A sheet of corrugated iron, a shanty or two, and a few strands of wire were enough to enable him to fabricate a house in which he could live at ease.

Psychologically, he was easy to lead but difficult to drive. His imagination was readily kindled. War was to him a game, and he played for his side with enthusiasm. His bravery was founded upon his sense of duty to his同胞, a wish to uphold his traditions, and a combative spirit to avenge his hardships and sufferings upon the enemy.

Taking him all in all, the Australian soldier was, when once awakened, not difficult to handle. But his required a sympathetic teaching, which appealed to his intelligence and satisfied his instinct for a 'square deal'.

Haig Comments on the Troops


1918, February 28. Haig to Lady Haig. I spent some time to-day with the Canadians. They are really fine disciplined soldiers now and so smart and clean. I am sorry to say that the Australians are not nearly so efficient. I put this down to Blighty, who, instead of facing the problem, her keen for the easier way of saying everything is perfect and making himself as popular as possible. We have had to separate the Australians into Cameronian Corps of their own, because they were giving so much trouble when along with one row and put such revolutionary ideas into their heads.

Many thanks for all you say in years of yesterday about the 'sporty way in which I tackle all.' I must say that I feel quite confident, and so do my troops. Personally, I feel in the words of 2nd Chronicles, XX Chap., that it is 'God's battle' and I am not dismayed by the number of his enemy.

1 Write dictionary definitions for the following words.
   a memoir
   b proficiency
   c lenient
   d convalescent

2 Select a suitable suffix to add to the following words.

   -ism -ary -ion -ive -ous -ure

   a glory
   b institute
   c exhaust
   d hero
   e depart
   f examine
   g imagine
   h combat
   i revolution

3 Which proper nouns, from the text, are these?

   a I am the collective name for people from Canada.
   b I was an Australian General and Knight during World War I.
   c I was married to a British General who wrote to me on February 28 1918.

4 Match the words in Box A with their synonyms in Box B.

   diligent
   fabricate
   analyse
   avideity
   combative
   endow
   perimt
   pay back
   hard-working

   allow
   manufacture
   possessed of
   aggressive
   enthusiasm