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GENERAL BIRDWOOD.

By "X," in the Sydney "Mail."

Unless in secret, General Birdwood never smokes. He has never been heard to swear. He drinks so little that it would be not unjust to call him a teetotaler. No one in the A.I.F. has ever seen him angry or even excited. His calm and business are his most natural characteristics. He is instantly sensitive to an impression, and he has remarkable natural intuition. He can select men, and is free from all jealousy towards them; inside that circle of his choice he trusts all men implicitly. He has an abiding faith in the essential good of human nature, ready to believe, against any hasty conclusions, that every man does his best, more or less energetically. He has no sympathy with politicians, and quite probably does not really understand politics. The "push-and-go" sort he loathes. What he might have been in any other walk of life than the army is hard to say. The army has contributed a good deal to his character, for that has been moulded, a little here and a little there, with every years of his life. It gives a touch of youth and versatility to him even at the age of 55 years, which is saying a lot for a full General, risen by steady promotion, of the British Regular Army. Many other Sahibs—and he is still unmistakably a Sahib—have become hard and bigoted. "Birdie" could never possibly become either if he lived for a thousand years. His unflinching vocative at the opening of an address to the Australians was "Well, boys!" What he proceeded to say after that might not always have been eloquent or enlightening, or worth repeating—indeed, it was generally hard to find afterwards anything of "Birdie's" address to repeat—but he always manifested, sometimes conveying with rather too much sentimentality, perhaps, that simple, enduring affection for the "Diggers" which, even when they scoffed at it, never failed to please them. This method became easier for him as his acquaintance with them lengthened. That same genuine affection made him approachable by any man, able to talk with any man, among them; and, though at times these unorthodox soldiers took extraordinary liberties with him in the matter of casual speech and address, he never gave any sign of noticing it. What sense of dignity he has is always well under control.

General Birdwood came to the A.I.F. at a difficult time. The men had grown restive under tedious training in Egypt, away from the sound of the war which they wished to take part in, and there had been several high-spirited riots in Cairo. This was before the time when the mettle and discipline of the Australians had been put to the test; it would have been easy for Regular Army general to take a wrong view of this decidedly new and independent type of soldier. It is to the eternal credit of "Birdie" that, coming from such an environment as the Indian Army, he sized up the situation, took careful measures (and good advice) of the men he had to deal with, and with his natural facility made the right decision. He perceived at once that in the Australians and New Zealanders he had such raw material for soldiers as few generals must ever have had before, that an effective army could be made of it only if it were trained and developed along its own natural lines, and that any other plan would meet with nothing but disaster. The unruly element he must have felt in that raw force could not have pleased him as commanding officer; but with his experience of men and things, and of soldiers, white and brown, the superb manhood and the high level of intelligence throughout those rough colonial ranks impressed him at once. Not a captain of all the great ones in history but would have given his private fortune for such an army.

He took them to Gallipoli, and there "Birdie" and the Australians first got to know each other. "Birdie" saw his intuition confirmed at once on the day of the landing; the fame of the (later) Anzacs was being flashed all over the world after that first grim day; they were a new military wonder. And the command of them was his, Birdwood's. If "Birdie" ever said to himself in a private moment at that time that the leadership of those wonderful Dominion troops was his golden chance to win great personal fame, who can blame him? The ecstasy of such great moments is not for any man to analyse afterwards in cold blood. His sensitiveness to impressions is so keen that some such thought cannot have escaped him; he would not be human if it had. What over he thought, his actions spoke clearly enough. War is fame, perhaps ultimately, but it is life or death in its present, and great-hearted exaltation in the swift gusts of crisis. "Birdie" made up his mind (though he never said so) that if he had to die on Gallipoli there could be no nobler

death than in such company. To that first little force at Anzac he felt and behaved as a father or a close brother. He lived as much in the trenches as in his camp. He is a gallant little man naturally, and here was every incentive to gallantry. The men respected him at once, and grew to intimate affection for him. The stories of "Birdie" on Anzac are legion. No ordinary general preserving the more normal headquarters habits could have written such a message to the Australians as "Birdie" wrote after the Anzac campaign was over. The very intimacy and comradeship of his words tell their own tale:—

"Our eight months at Anzac" (he said) "cannot help stamping on the memory of every one of us days of trial and anxiety, hopes, and perhaps occasional fears, rejoicings at success, and sorrow—very deep and sincere—for many a good comrade whom we can never see again. I firmly believe, though, it has made better men of every one of us, for we have all had to look death straight in the face so often that the greater realities of life must have been impressed on all of us in a way which has never before been possible. Bitter as has been my experience in losing many a good friend, I personally shall always look back on our days together at Anzac as a time never to be forgotten, for during it, I hope, I have made many fast friends in all ranks, whose friendship is all the more valuable because it has been acquired in circumstances of stress and often danger, when a man's real self is shown."

If the General who wrote that had not himself gone as a regular habit into every post of danger to proclaim those great sentiments he describes, and to win for himself a reputation for the same courage and endurance which he perceived so clearly in his troops, he could never have addressed those words to his command. They indicate how mutual were the esteem and affection between the commander who moulded the A.I.F. into a fighting force and the force whose exploits made the fame of their General. Those bonds have never been broken. Even after the original force had expanded into an army five or six times its size, General Birdwood still strove to maintain his achievements of knowing (or believing that he knew) nearly every man in it. Men were sometimes astounded in the trenches at hearing "Birdie" walking along towards them, suddenly address them by their correct names, and with every appearance of having come there specially to see them. The General occasionally honestly did remember their names and a previous meeting with them—his memory for the names belonging to the faces which the photograph in his receptive brain was phenomenal—but where he did not it was always easy to ask an officer beforehand. The little subterfuge would raise a smile later, but always with it a comment of the most generous affection, for no one ever doubted that "Birdie's" heart was in its right place. To speak to his men by name, with a most easy informality and with genuine personal interest, was one of the earliest habits in the A.I.F. He tried to keep it up to the end, and he must in kindly appreciation be allowed some occasional recourse to outside aid.

General Birdwood left the command of the Australian Corps in May, 1918, but retained the office of G.O.C., A.I.F., where he superintended the higher administration of all Australian military forces in France and Palestine. As each batch of men left for home, in early repatriation on long leave of 1914 and 1915 men, he made a point of bidding them farewell on parade, and of speaking to them right from his heart.

TO THOSE WHO SLEEP IN FLANDERS FIELDS.

(A Canadian Response).

Heroes, sleep on! in that long row
Of graves where Flanders poppies grow;
The larks, with hearts undaunted sing.
And, rich in hope, their music fling
Where guns have scattered death below.
Men call you dead; ye are not so,
For you the Unsetting Sun will glow;
Your deeds will kindred souls inspire
And fill with patriotic fire;
Grief on your graves her tribute lays,
And Gratitude her homage pays,
And Love, with proud yet wistful eye,
Keeps vigil, where ye sleeping lie

In Flanders fields.
Still more now is your fight our own;
The torch that from your hands was thrown
Shall not be quenched, but held on high
The faith ye teach us shall not die.
Then take your rest in slumber deep.
Doubt not that we the trust will keep,
Nor dream that ye in vain have died:
FREEDOM shall not be crucified;
Through summer shine and winter snow
Sleep where the drowsy poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

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MUSINGS OF A CYNIC.

It's a long head that has no turning.

Marriage is serious only when it's for life.

The egotism for women is always for two.

Without money all is vain; with it, all is vanity.

If you want to make light of trouble keep it dark.

He who lives without folly is not as wise as he fancies.

Some women's motto—It's never too late to pretend.

Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it becomes due.

Always pay debts and compliments and you will always succeed.

Love makes the world go round, and that's what makes us giddy.

All easy ways are downhill. You don't notice it till you try to climb back.

The man who does what he pleases, is seldom pleased with what he does.

Don't marry a saint. They're better to try to live up to than live with.

A snapshot photograph often demonstrates that truth is stranger than fiction.

If politeness costs nothing, why is it that so few men give any of it to their wives?

At a wedding a bride weeps because it's hers, and her friends because it isn't theirs.

Experience is what a wise man gets at the expense of others, and a fool at his own.

A bridegroom is like a microbe on an elephant—about the most insignificant thing there is.

It is difficult for any grown man to realise that he was once the prettiest baby in the world.

In the game of life the handsome woman scores by honours, and the plain woman by tricks.

Love is like debt—the satisfaction of falling out is only less than the fun of falling in again.

A widow's advantage is that she can give reference which cannot be disputed by the departed.

Every cloud has a silver lining, but that is poor consolation when you can't see through the cloud.

No one really understands how to manage a man except a spinster. That's why she so often remains one.

Women give to men the very gold of their lives; but they invariably want it back in such very small change.

The only difference between a grass widow, and a real one is that the former is in clover, and the latter in weeds.

Some women regard their husbands as they do the Ten Commandments—something to be studied, but not obeyed.

Women are always finding each other out, which accounts for the appalling mortality among feminine friendships all the world over.

Never believe a woman can't do without you—she can; but if she does, she's afraid you'll find out you can do without her too.

A LITTLE CHILD IS
VERY OFTEN
FASTIDIOUS
IN HIS TASTES.

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