

DARDANELLES LETTERS.

TERRITORIALS UNDER FIRE.

SOME VIVID STORIES.

A private in the 6th Manchesters, Territorials, in a letter to his home in Bramhall says:—

On our way up to the reserve trenches we came under a perfect hail of spent bullets. They came all about our ears. I lay down in the regulation way (never more gladly), and pushed my greatcoat in front of my head. To lie still on the ground on a dark night, lead whirling all round, and no chance of replying, is most agonising and nerve-racking. Three fellows were wounded round me, and one ball dropped plonk between my heels. However, we were to be tried more sorely than that. The order came round to dig trenches while bullets whizzed all round. This was carried out without a single casualty. The fellows behaved splendidly.

The countryside is beautiful, but, alas! the trees are shot and torn. Gigantic exploded pieces of shells lie about (fired from warships) and shrapnell bullets as big as tennis balls. Dead Turks lie rotting amongst the scarlet poppies. Several Turkish snipers were shot near our reserve trenches.

We were ordered to relieve the New Zealanders in the firing line. I thought all was over. The guide, to cap it all, took us the wrong way. We seemed to come right near the enemy's lines, for all of a sudden a star shell went up, disclosing us. Everybody fell flat. A machine gun and thousands of rifles blazed like fury at us, but their shots went high in the moonless night. However, to get out of it, we had to rush up while under the murderous fire. The miracle was that only six fell wounded. Nobody was killed. I rushed blindly into one of the — trenches near to, and was nearly bayoneted by the outraged inhabitants. I shouted out "Friend, 6th Manchesters" and was saved, but jumped on some fellows who were sleeping and was heartily cursed. Another of our fellows did the same thing, but jumped on to a bayonet, which went through his thigh.

It wasn't all over, however. Another field to cross under terrific musketry fire, and those fearful words "Stretcher bearers," and "Medical officer" ringing out now and again, and then we were in the trenches.

It started to rain, and poured in torrents all night. The Turks, contemplating an attack, blazed furiously away. Grenades came along at regular intervals. I thought discretion was the better part of valour and crawled into a muddy hole. Cold, wet, and slush all night. Dawn broke, and all things were quiet. I wish I was at home to describe that terrible night, but I tell you the 6th did their duty in a praiseworthy manner and were complimented on the way they got into those trenches. Several chaps lost their rifles, including myself. A bullet cut the straps of my water bottle, and that went too. There is no shame in being afraid. Everybody confessed they were. When the sword of Damocles suddenly hangs over your head and you see men cut off in the flower of youth it's very heart-breaking.

Our platoon was in the support trench, but I had several pops at the enemy all the same. Our chief duties were to fetch up the rations from headquarters — a highly dangerous job. We went up one morning, and the snipers worried us horribly. They caused us to wade knee deep in mud and water. I had a big cheese to carry up, all slimy and slippery. Never had such an exciting time. This happened in broad daylight. Now we go at eight o'clock at night, and are sometimes bothered by shrapnel. The cunning dogs get to know what time we go down, so we change the hours.

Another of our duties was to guard a gully that bisected our firing line. A machine gun backed us up, and in front we erected barbed wire. They shelled our right and left wings pretty frequently. Bullets were all we had to fear. They make a crack like a whip when they pass you. You never hear the bullet that hits you.

Our dear Captain Bazley was hit yesterday in the head and died to-day. It nearly broke my heart when they brought him along on the stretcher. He was looking through his field-glasses at the time he was hit. He will be buried tomorrow. In the eleven days we've been in the line we've had about eight killed and 50 wounded. Dear people, believe me war is hell on earth.

Every cloud is silver lined. I have nothing but praise for the splendid organisation of the British army. The food is extra — bacon, jam, biscuits, bread, cheese, bully beef, tea, baccy, cigarettes, the blue sky, a roaring sea breeze, and a healthy appetite, and a happy-go-lucky way. What more could a man desire? Nothing. I am very happy to-day. I've come through my ordeal safely, and am now at the base, which is shelled and coming frequently. You can hear them coming

through, and everybody ducks down in their dug-outs. Keep down is the motto. Life is very sweet.