

## LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

### ----- AT SUVLA BAY

We have received the following account of the landing at Suvla Bay and the subsequent fighting from an officer who took part in the operations:-

We arrived at Suvla Bay, a motley but workman-like fleet of cruises, monitors, destroyers, transports and trawlers, just before midnight on August 6.

The night was dark, the sea calm, and the air tropical in its sultriness. The landing of troops took place almost immediately after the ships had anchored, and continued without cessation throughout the night.

There is a reason to believe that our arrival was not altogether unexpected, for after a brief delay, search lights from the ridges in front of Anafarta village were brought to bear upon the beach, thence forward until daybreak the enemy kept up a moderate rifle and machine gun fire. At daybreak the Turkish Shore batteries came into action, shelling our men who were now advancing both north and south of the Salt Lake and from Sea Beach, where landing had also taken place during the night, in the direction of the general objective, Kuchuk Anafarta. The troops operating south of the lake were thrown in a southerly direction in order that our right should keep in contact with left of the Australian position at Anzac. The landing at Sea Beach was affected with very trivial losses, and those suffered by our forces during the night disembarkation at Suvla Bay were slight.

As soon as it was light enough to obtain an accurate range the fire of the cruisers, monitors, and destroyers in the bay was brought to bear on Turkish batteries and one soon completely knocked out by shells from a cruiser. Throughout the morning despite the suffocating heat and total lack of water, our troops continued to advance in the most gallant fashion. Our left tore over the sand and scrub in the direction of Kizlar Dagh, driving all before them by rifle fire and the occasional use of cold steel. Chocolate Hill was practically in our possession by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Contact had been established with the Australians, and nowhere was our force *en l'air*. The general advance was in progress; our prospects looked very rosy indeed and we were certainly thought that this time we were going to get right across.

Suddenly there came a halt. It was evident that the enemy had brought fresh artillery and fresh infantry into action. The fire of the Turkish batteries redoubled in intensity and volume, and we were painfully aware of the existence of a far greater number of machine guns than had hitherto been brought into play. It was afterwards reported that the Turkish forces had been largely reinforced by troops which, at the time of our landing, were proceeding along the main line of communication behind Anafarta to Achi Baba. These were stopped by their German officers and immediately brought into action against our front. Thus the movement from which so much had been expected appeared thus early in the operations to have been brought to a standstill. The terrain consisting of sand, scrub, and stunted oaks, and which as we approached Anafarta, partook of a forest character, intersected by deep gulleys gave every advantage to the enemy.

Anafarta itself is situated on the highest ridge in the vicinity, and from the village and surrounding hills the enemy kept up a heavy cannon, machine-gun, and rifle fire on our men who were exposed on the plain below. Here we suffered very heavy losses, and trenching was vigorously proceeded with. Meanwhile, severe fighting was also taking place on our left, where we succeeded in driving the enemy out of all his positions on Kizlar Dagh, except at one point at the extreme end of the ridge. Had we been able to secure this particular point we should have been in a much better position to deal with the enemy trenches about Turchen Keui. The Turks could then have been enfiladed by our guns.

We entrenched ourselves so strongly at Kizlar Dagh and generally along our front that prisoners and deserters have told us that both the Germans and the Turkish officers consider our positions practically impregnable. During our rapid advance we had unfortunately left many snipers behind us, most of them concealed in the trees (dwarf oaks) and scrub. They occasioned considerable losses to the advancing troops, and it became necessary to dispose of them. For this purpose picked Australian marksmen were brought up from Anzac to help us.

All through the day of the 7<sup>th</sup> large bodies of supports were been landed in the bay, but further advance was practically impossible, and we felt somehow when the sun went down that what promised at the outset to be a glorious and triumphant advance had meet with a definite check.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> we attacked at various points, gaining a little more ground. The enemy, though never seen in large numbers, showed fight in the open from time to time, but were easily put to flight when threatened with the bayonet. Meantime our own losses continued to be very heavy. Our sufferings were by no means caused entirely by the actions of the foe. Hundreds and hundreds of men fighting under tropical heat, dropped out of the ranks after atrocious suffering caused by lack of water. Apart from any question of the command, two causes contributed mainly to the lack of success which attended the expedition. The scene of combat presented extraordinary difficulties to the advance of the attacking force. On the other hand, a body of perfectly green troops, who had never been in action before, was called upon to undertake a task under the most nerve-trying conditions, which could only have been successfully achieved by men inured to the conditions existing in connexion with the most recent and bloodiest wars. But such is the amazing quality and warlike spirit of the British soldier and seaman, that when I left a fortnight ago they were all longing to have another go at the enemy..