

FROM OUR "OTHER" CAMP

A visit to a Field Camp of the Battalion was made recently by the Brigade Major, followed a week later by the Staff Captain. Just why this sudden interest in the Battalion's affairs should have been taken by our friends from Brigade Headquarters is a close secret, but we presume it was to ascertain whether we were still in the land of potatoes, cabbages and cows. If that was so, then the visit must have been highly successful, for everybody was present, and what was more fortunate, they were working busily. (It's just as well our secret service is on the alert sometimes).

"The Dragon's" representative was early on the scene, and in order to secure a scoop, he set out to interview the Battalion's brain trust immediately after the departure of the distinguished guests. He wanted to find out for his readers any of the "dinkum ol'" that was floating about.

He didn't know who to interview first, so he went about his job alphabetically. His first victim was the Adjutant. "Hello Wildcat," he said to the Adjutant as he stepped breezily into his room. "Can you give me any dope on the visit of the heads from down yonder?" There was no reply and the reporter noticed that the Adjutant was looking very intently out of his office window. Thinking the centre of attraction must have been one of our many W.W.S.A. friends going by in a heavy wind, the visitor hurried to the window also, but all he saw was a row of Valentines. Then the Adjutant began to mutter something about "tomorrow's R.O.'s—delete all reference—should read . . ."

Next on the list for an interview was the Colonel. He was very keen to meet the reporter and promptly set out to describe how pleased the B.M. and the S.C. had been with the gravelling in the vicinity of Battalion H.Q. "Yes, they did say something about our future movements," he said in reply to a question—"but you wait until I get that area over yonder gravelled—I'll send down for the Brigadier to come up."

That was the limit to the reporter's patience and he beat a hasty retreat to the cooks' latrine just in time to hear one of the orderlies confiding to the collection of pig swill. "And the B.M. said we would be fighting the Russians on Stewart Island within a week," he concluded.

JUNIOR LEADERS

If there is one lesson more than any other that this war has taught it is that of the paramount importance of junior leadership. No matter how skilled the high command may be the efficiency of the junior leaders is the factor upon which the ultimate success or failure depends.

The Axis leaders are keen students of and great believers in mob psychology and a book, "The Crowd," written by one, Gustav Le Bon, though almost unknown to English readers, has been referred to as "The Dictators Bible." There is no doubt that they know it thoroughly and act on the principles put forth. Le Bon stresses that a crowd and an army right from a section upwards is a crowd, when under stress and in battle it is under stress is most susceptible to example.

The Axis tactics such as the New Zealanders encountered in Greece and Crete of dive-bombing, and the terrific noise created by the Axis weapons were not so materially effective as they were a strain on nerves. The Axis leaders realise this and hope the result will be to find elements that will give and start a retreat as, as Le Bon states, such an example is extremely likely to be followed by others under the stress so applied.

The Axis forces have achieved success by this method in more than one sphere of the present war. In certain quarters they have employed fifth columnists to start these panics, and in others they have succeeded without that method. When subjected to stress of this type, the men look to their junior leaders, the subalterns and the N.C.O.'s. If these show no signs of any weakening there will be no weakening among the men. In other words, the strength of the resistance of a modern army is the strength of the weakest junior leader.

These leaders must inspire confidence. There is no shrewder judge of their ability than the ranker. If the ranker possess confidence in their leader they will go into battle with confidence, but if they do not possess that confidence their morale is weak and constitutes a definite danger to the whole force when the stress is applied to an army. One weak link can sap the strength of the strongest chain, and it is so with an army.

Junior leaders should realise the tremendous responsibility that rests with them. They should lose no opportunity of making themselves more efficient and gaining the confidence of their men, they should endeavour to visualise the situations with which they may be faced and endeavour to visualise how they would act. They must never forget that the cardinal sin is to do nothing. It has been said, and truly said, that under a weak commander good strategic reasons can always be found for doing nothing. The only leader, if he can be so termed, who has never made a mistake, is the one who has done nothing and never will do anything else.

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Since much of the matter for "The Dragon" was written, a wet canteen has come into being at our camp. Therefore, a different complexion is now thrown on some of the articles published in this issue.

—Editor.

