

"THE GREAT TRANSITION. WESTERN DISTRICT TO WAR. VALIANT SONS OF THE WELL TO DO.

**By R. W. E. WILMOT, 197 Collins Street. from
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Towering over the little village of Derinallum, in the Western district, Mount Elephant rises sheer from the western plain 600ft., and from its summit one looks across a fair expanse of country. This western plain, 100 miles long by 70 miles wide, is bounded by the Pyrenees on the north and the Heytesbury and Otway forests on the south, and stretches from the Barrabool Hills on the east to the Grampians on the west. It is a land of plenty, varying in quality from the rich volcanic soil near the craters, eminently suitable for dairying and cattle fattening, to the lighter country of the open plains, with smiling cornfields and peaceful sheepwalks. It is the region of well-to-do men, who, blessed with the good things of this world, might be expected to take their ease and enjoy the favours of wealth and its attendant comforts. Were the world at peace the many homesteads would be thronged with young men and women; the golf links, the polo grounds, the hundred-and-one attractions which are the charm of country life would be in full swing.

But what do we find? A land with hardly a young man in it; a land in which a golf stick is unknown, a polo pony unobtainable. And why is this so? Because it is hard to find in one of these lovely homes a young man. They are all at the war, and it may be added that many of the women of all ages are away from home, nursing or doing Red Cross work. The social life, usually a feature of the district, has been almost non-existent since August, 1914. I wish it had been possible to have had with me a band of anti-conscription leaders when, some months ago, in company with Mr. Edwin Currie, of Gala, Lismore, I climbed Mount Elephant and viewed the western plain. It has been urged by anti-conscriptionists that the rich man's son has not taken his portion of the burden of maintaining the man-power of the Empire; that he has only subscribed to war loans because the interest is not liable to income tax. This lie may be nailed down by anyone who cares to stand, as I did, on the summit of Mount Elephant and look into the homesteads that adorn this western plain.

At our feet lay the Mount Elephant homestead, the property of Mr. H. Alan Currie, shut up because its owner is at the front, where he has gained the distinction of a Military Cross. He has no son, but his brothers-in-law, Dr. Guy Miller (who, has paid the supreme sacrifice) and Mr. Clive Miller, accompanied him. Just beyond it is Lindwood, whose owners, Messrs. Reginald Hoare and Stanley Wallace, are both at the front, and, to show their devotion to the cause, have offered their property to the Repatriation trustees, at cost price, and are willing to take Victorian stock for purchase money.

Farther away is Bannongill, where Mr. Charles Fairbairn lives, while his son is at the war. Just beyond is Carramballac, the home of Mr. Gordon Chirnside, another man who has gained distinction on active service, and of his brother, Mr. Russell Chirnside. As we follow round to near Skipton, we pick out the home of Mr. E. G. Austin, at Borriyallock, and note that his eldest son, Lieutenant E. W. Austin, is also a Military Cross man. Beyond is Mooramong, the home of Mr. Robert Bell, whose only son is at the war, and we recalled the fact that three sons of the late Mr. D. E. Stodart, the former owner, are also there, and farther away we could look towards Mahwallock. The owner, Mr. Philip Russell, was then in France doing Army Service work, and his son was in the trenches slaving as an infantryman. In the same direction is Trawalla, the home of Admiral Bridges, whose son Jack answered the call very early in the war.

As we swung our field-glasses round to the west we saw Terinallum, where Mr. Stephen Bailey lives. His only son is still at Geelong Grammar School, but as soon as his school breaks up for the holidays he will be found in khaki. Beyond, still farther west, is Berrambool, the home of Mr. William Moffatt, whose son is under canvas. Towards the Grampians, nearing the foothills. Mr. Currie pointed out the direction of Lake Bolac, where, from Eilyer, two sons (the only ones eligible) of Mr. A. S. Austin (who has done so much for the Red Cross Society) have gone to the Sinai Desert, and are now within a few miles of Jerusalem. Along that road you pick up Edgarley, the home of Mr. Thomas Milleear, known so well for his support of the Y.M.C.A. He has but one eligible son, who is now in France.

As the view extends it is broken by the Victoria Range, with that wonderful eminence "The Sleeping Warrior" at its northern end, resembling the face of an aboriginal at rest. The native name for that peak was "The Sleeping Warrior," and no one knows how long he has been there, a sentinel with gaze fixed to the north. His has been a long vigil, but so far it has been one of an era of peace. It will not be the fault of the young squatters of the western plain if that peace is ever disturbed. They have gone abroad to keep the horrors of war from this fair land.

At a slightly different angle we see the Cumming country, where, from Mt. Fyans, the only eligible, Lieut. W. R. Cumming, has changed his polo pony for an artillery horse. Away beyond one runs out to Caramut, where the sons of the late Mr. Roderic Urquhart, Messrs. R. and K. Urquhart, gave themselves to the colours, and one will never return. From that direction Mr. J. A. Affleck, son of Mr. R. A. Affleck, has gone recently to the war, his enlistment dating from the day he left school. Close under Mt. Elephant is Poligolet, the property of the Messrs. Mc-Conachie. There is no son there; but Mr. James McNair, a nephew, and two other nephews, sons of Dr. Gibbs, of Colac, represent the family.

Looking to the south west we saw Woori-Wyrite, the home of Mr. T. Turner Shaw, whose son, Lieut. H. Shaw, has done some military flying, and Eyeuk, whence Dr. Dennis and Mr. Richard Dennis have gone to serve their country. **A little to the right stands Jellalabad, the home of the Dowling family. Mr. George Dowling has no son, but his partners are represented in the firing line by their sons, John and Charles, while Mr. Joseph Dowling's son has given his life to the cause.** From Pircarra, close by, Mr. L. Dennis has enlisted. Still swinging our glasses to the south, we picked up Marida Yallock, whence comes Mr. Donald Mackinnon, Director-General of Recruiting, whose two sons are at the front; and near Terang we sighted Noorat and Glenormiston, the homes of the Black family, which has supplied Messrs. Ian and Donald Black. Farther round is Meningoort, whence went Dr. Douglas McArthur to Salonika for two years and then to France, and Mr. Gordon McArthur, son of Mr. Stewart McArthur, K.C.

From Terang itself, among others went Mr. Mac Montgomery, son of the late Dr. J. P. Montgomery, and from Gnotuk, King Edward's Horse received Mr. Roland Hope, whose younger brother is just leaving Geelong College to enlist. As Mt. Leura came within our horizon, we saw Camperdown, the capital of the Western district, whence three doctors (Gilbert Desailly, Murray Ross, and Geoffrey Owen) each deserted a lucrative practice to tend the sick and wounded, and the old Ballarat collegian, Mr. A. Nevett, walked out of his solicitor's office into camp. Mr. William Bell relinquished accountancy, and Mr. W. Shaw turned his skill as a veterinary surgeon to military account. Camperdown is the centre of the Manifold family homesteads. Mr. W. T. Manifold has had three sons at the war, one, alas! never to return; Mr. J. C. Manifold, M.H.R., has but one son, and he is at the front; and from Wiridgil Mr. Arthur Phillip's son has gone. From near Mt. Myrtoon went

Mr. R. Lush, son of Mr. George Lush. As we looked farther to the east we picked out Gnarpurt, whence Mr. R. A. Thomson, after being rejected half a dozen times, was eventually accepted; and down near the ranges we sighted Mt. Gellibrand where Mr. Robert Ramsay lived at Mooleric, but now is in France; and Mt. Hesse, which has provided Mr. James Kinninmonth (an only son) to the army.

There was then only the eastern view left, and away in the distance the smoke of a fire marked Barunah plains, whence Mr. George Russell went, and died. At Cressy the deserted homestead of Yarima tells that the partners, Messrs. J. Clive Currie and N.G. Dean, have left their prosperous farm to help keep the Germans back. Lieutenant Currie has been wounded and has gained the Military Cross. As we followed the road back from Cressy to Derinallum, winding like a ribbon between the plantations, which skirt the road, we noticed Berry Bank, the home of Mr. Joseph Mack, which has supplied three sons and a grandson to the forces, and across the road is the farm of Hamilton Ferguson, who gave up his work there to play the greater game. Gradually we neared Mount Elephant again, and passed Gala, on the right, where Mr. Edwin Currie lives alone. His son is at the front, and his wife and daughter are away on war work in London; and last we saw Titanga, shut up because its owners, Dr. P. H. Lang and Mr. Stuart Lang, were away fighting.

We had cast our eyes all round, but we just swept the horizon again for fear we had missed a homestead. We could see many where there was no son, but we could not find one which had not supplied its share, and more than its share. The difficulty was to find an eligible in these old homes. These are facts which speak trumpet-tongued of the spirit of sacrifice which pervades the western plain. These men had much to give up; they have given it ungrudgingly, and as each lad comes of military age it is his pride to follow his elders, and to take his place for King and country. He regards it not only as a duty, but a privilege, to be allowed to wear the King's uniform. He could not face his fellows if he were a slacker. Conscription has no terrors for him; he is neither too young nor too old, but always willing."

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