

## Lecture on Gallipoli

At the Temperance Hall, Penrith, on Monday evening last (20th inst.), Mr Henry Hunt (ex-Sergt. of the A.I.F.), who saw considerable active service during the Gallipoli Campaign, from August 28th to the Evacuation (December 19, 1915), delivered an interesting lecture, entitled "Gallipoli and the Evacuation," before a fairly large and enthusiastic audience, though the import of the lecture, and the fact of its expounder having been right in the firing line, should have been sufficient inducement for the assembling of a "crowded house."

Prior to start of lecture the Penrith Orchestra rendered the National Anthem, and also played a sparkling march, which was much enjoyed by the audience.

The lecturer, who is catechist at St. Stephen's Church, was introduced by Rev M G Hinsby, Rector of St. Stephen's, Penrith, who prior to the deliverance of the lecture offered an earnest prayer for the success of the cause of the Empire and our Allies in the great war.

Mr Hunt said he would endeavour to treat the subject in such a colloquial manner as to make plain to the audience the narrative of affairs in reference to the Gallipoli Campaign; and the incidents vividly impressed on his memory during the unforgettable period of his experiences for practically seven months. Incidentally the lecturer remarked that it had been said returned Australian soldiers seemed reticent as to the relation of their experiences, and he had to acknowledge that it was so, in most instances, perhaps, owing to the deep-seated impression which experience of a grave crisis or peril left on the mind, and which, consequently, did not obtain ready expression in the majority of instances. He left Australia on June 16th, 1915, in the 6th Reinforcements, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, A.I.F., and reached Egypt late in July, and had several weeks training there. At the instance of the late Lieut (Rev) La Touche, Mr Hunt and another young soldier were recommended to join the School of Instruction with a view of obtaining Commissions, but before they were fairly launched on their studies to this end their battalions received orders to

launched on their studies to this end their battalions received orders to embark for Gallipoli, and, briefly, they landed (a few days after their units had gone over) on the war-scarred Peninsula on 6th August, the very day the terrific Lone Pine attack had been launched, and in which the Australians so gallantly figured. A great number of comrades, amongst them the friend who had been recommended to study with him (the lecturer) for a lieutenancy, were killed, and more wounded, in the Lone Pine operations. The lecturer pointed out on well lined diagrams on black-board the topography of the Gallipoli field, showing per scale the average distance from one point to another, and the position and contour of the surroundings—the perspective giving a good idea of the position of Lone Pine, Anzac Cove, Gaba Tappe, Brighton Beach, Suvla Bay, North Beach, and other localities, made famous as "hot corners" during the arduous campaign. The lecturer said that the positions won by the Australians at the first landing (25th April, 1915) were practically unaltered during the later occupancy of the Peninsula by our troops; it would be remembered that on that memorable date the attackers gained a line of hills running, roughly, parallel to the beach (as shown on diagram), and dug themselves in there, holding their ground despite the most determined opposition of the enemy. The "farthest out" points of the firing line had been very little altered, at the time the reinforcements in which the lecturer was numbered arrived on the battlefield. The Turks, well supplied with artillery and heavily reinforced, held, practically, impregnable positions, and the Australians not having sufficiently formidable artillery at the outset had a very hard "row to hoe." Mr Hunt referred interestingly to the great enemy attack which Enver Pasha had planned "to drive the Australians into the sea" (towards the end of August), but which proved to be a very expensive and disastrous undertaking for the Turks, who lost about 5000 men in killed, and were obliged to ask for an armistice to bury their dead, which was freely granted, of course. Incidentally, the lecturer spoke of the accompanying discomforts of the battlefield, and the hardships of the soldiers' life in ac-

inconveniences of the campaign, and the hardships of the soldiers' life in action; which, however, were borne with fortitude by the Australians, proving they are of the stuff of which true heroes are made. Mr Hunt graphically detailed the attack of the Australian troops engaged on the Lone Pine (Turkish) positions. The men who took part, amongst others, were the 1st Brigade A.I.F. (N.S.W.), and 2nd Brigade (chiefly Victorians). The first Brigade did heroic work, as did the 2nd, but the splendid achievements of the first were more or less lost sight of in the records—perhaps, owing to the fact that the brigade lost so many officers, and its achievements were thus not related at first-hand. The 2nd Brigade, however, was worthy of all the eulogies bestowed on it; and, as a matter of fact, the Australian attack on Lone Pine was a success; but the Suvla Bay operations (designed to concert with the attack) somehow miscarried, and for lack of support the Australians were obliged to abandon the lines of enemy trenches they had so gallantly won, at the sacrifice of many of their effectives, though parts of the ground were held. During the time he (Mr Hunt) was in the Australian Lone Pine trenches (from August 28th to September 10th) he obtained a very close and intimate acquaintance with the stern requirements of the situation. By the timetable the men at the observation posts in the trenches were allotted 2 hours on and 1 hour off duty (i.e., sleeping time); their bunks were Mother

Earth, cunningly devised shelves in "snug" corners, allegedly (but often "only" allegedly), out of the way of the enemy's fire. On 10th September, with other details, the lecturer's unit was ordered to Lemnos for a brief change, having been relieved by other Australian troops, and on return (we understood) were sent to that appropriately named part of the field—Shrapnel Gully—so called from the havoc caused thereabouts by the constant "shrap" visitations of the enemy gunnery. That Shrapnel Gully was darkly worthy of its title may be gauged from the fact that of the 500 odd men of different units that had held the "gully" for some seven weeks fully half of them were in the casualty

fully half of them were in the casualty list—many killed—at the termination of the period. The losses of the Australian, British and Allies' forces was due in great part to the smallness of the area and the configuration of parts of the battlefield, which permitted concentration of artillery fire by the enemy, who had the advantage of positions. Many tragic incidents were related by the lecturer; "en passant," one of which was the death of four men in the cook's "galley" one morning, *per medium* of a shell which burst right in the middle of the cook's "dugout" and killed the men, who were preparing breakfast for their comrades at the time. The damage wrought by "Beachy Bill" (a Turkish battery so named by the Australians) was referred to feelingly by the lecturer; some 30 men, as he recollected, having been laid "hors-de-combat" by "B.B." on Gallipoli Beach one day. The spiritual ministrations of the devoted chaplains at the front were appreciatively mentioned, and the lecturer recalled the simple devotional manner in which a revered chaplain administered the Sacrament of Holy Communion to a number of men one morning, using a disused biscuit box as the Communion table, while the communicants knelt on the grass to receive the sacrament in the manner of the primitive Christians of old. Later, Mr Hunt (as a non-com. officer) had charge of a party of men in the observation trenches hard by that oft imperilled part of the field known as the "Valley of Despair," remaining on duty there from October 28th until the evacuation. He described, incidentally, several humorous incidents, one of which concerned the alleged desire of a big Turk to surrender himself as a prisoner of war. One or two of the men at this time were—owing to lack of sleep, etc.—somewhat nervous, and about the hour the Turk was supposed to come over to "throw himself on the mercy of the court," one of the men in the observation trench came to him (Sergt. Hunt), and (though even whispering was against the rules) said "I hear something like scratching, and someone is throwing dirt outside; perhaps the John Turk is out there!" Presently some dirt or pebbles were thrown over again, and on investigation he discovered it was the man in the next compartment who

on investigation he discovered it was the man in the next compartment who had been throwing dirt to call attention to the state of his nerves practically. On seeing Mr Hunt he exclaimed peevishly, "How much longer am I to be out in this awful black waste by myself." (Laughter).

At this stage the orchestra diversified the lecture by rendering a very tuneful selection, which was heartily applauded.

The second part of the lecture dealt with the Evacuation—that very notable military achievement which culminated in the withdrawal of the British and Australian and Indian forces on December 19, 1915. Lord Kitchener's visit (prior to the carrying out of the operations) to confer with the military leaders on the spot was dwelt upon, and the enthusiasm of the soldiers on recognising Lord Kitchener, who cordially acknowledged their salutations, was briefly recalled. The clever manoeuvres, "the conspiracy of silence," punctuated by desultory, but seemingly earnest, firing from the British trenches—by which the Turks were hoodwinked to the last moment; the various details of that remarkable scheme of the most successful evacuation, or retreat, on record, were outlined with a clearness which left an unfading impress of the graphic event on the imagery of the audience. Mr Hunt's company was one of the last to leave the Peninsula on that memorable Sunday, and the climax of the great achievement will, no doubt, live amongst his most thrilling personal recollections. "En passant," the lecturer spoke in the kindest terms of General Birdwood, instancing that capable and popular officer's geniality, and his gift of creating an optimistic outlook amid depressing circumstances, and recounted a personal meeting with the General. Mr Hunt also expressed a warm eulogy of the A.M.C., whose valiant, self-sacrificing endeavours, he said, were beyond praise; and he had noted many instances of the stretcher-bearers running into the very vortex of death to rescue wounded men in the depths of battle. Incidentally, he read the historic army orders issued for guidance of officers and men at the Evacuation, and told one or two amusing stories of the last day on Gallipoli; and said in conclusion that the successful carrying out of the

carillon; and said in conclusion that the successful carrying out of the evacuation was an instance of Divine Power and Human Wisdom working harmoniously to achieve the desired result. (Cheers!).

The orchestra, at termination of lecture, rendered another very acceptable selection; after which Rev M G Hinsby moved a cordial vote of thanks to the lecturer, which was carried by acclamation.

The National Anthem was then sung to orchestral accompaniment, and the proceedings terminated at 10.30 p.m.

The proceeds will go towards swelling St. Stephen's Sunday School prize fund.