

DESERT FIGHTING

HOW OUR GALLANT LIGHT HORSE PLAYED THE GAME.

Mr. J. Collett, of Rosewood, has received the following letter from Pte. S. J. Wells, who is at present in Egypt. He writes :—

We were having a lively time a month ago; I suppose you saw all about it in the papers. Our regiment did not have a great number of casualties, but we were lucky. I lost two of my best pals in the first scrap, H. R. Stevens and H. Gibson, two fine young fellows, and great mates. (Stevens is a nephew of Mr. H. M. Stevens, M.L.A.) Gibbon was shot through the head, and Stevens was carrying him back out of the firing line when he fell shot through the head and leg. Neither of them spoke, and are buried in lonely graves on the desert. Stevens was the best fellow I ever met, and a good soldier; no matter what came he never grumbled, and I never saw him in a temper. Those two, Roberts, and myself were in the one section, with Stevens as leader, and we have always been in the same tent ever since we first went into camp. Roberts was knocked out a couple of mornings after; an aeroplane came over our camp while we were watering horses, and drooped couple of eggs. The horses made a bit of a rush, and Roberts got knocked down. He got a cut in the jaw, and had to have it stitched. His horse got away. There were horses going all ways for a while, but they caught them all except mine, which, I suppose, some other unit has. Roberts was out of action for a few days, so our section fared pretty bad.

Our squadron had to retreat one afternoon; we were nearly trapped. We were sent round on the flank to get in touch with the enemy, and try and get their strength if possible. We soon got both, and found out we wanted a lot more than a squadron. They wheeled round on both our flanks and would have cut us off, only our officers happened to get sight of them, and the Turks in our front advanced. When we got mounted they were only about 30 yards away. We had to gallop about a mile or more across the sand and over a sandbank, with the enemy firing at us as fast as they could. If over they saw Australians ride they saw them then. Talk about cowboys in moving pictures- they were not in it! We got out of it very luckily-one killed and a few slightly wounded. It is surprising how lucky men are at times. One man had a bullet put through his cheek, but he was all right in a

week. Another got one through his ear right close to his head. Our colonel got one through his helmet in the morning. Well, we had another "go" next day and gave Jacko a very bad time. We had a good position, and our machine-guns did good work.

We had a good "go" and then retired for water for our horses, but Jacko took advantage of it, and retired also, and is still going. We have not seen him since. It was a rough trip but I might say it was exciting. We all kept well, which was a wonder as the water is not too good. Our doctor is made of good stuff; one night he stayed out all on his own with two wounded. One was about done, and he stayed with him until the end, and then went and stayed with the other, who was badly hit (a Tommy), and brought him in next day on a camel that was sent out. We were out for over a fortnight, and never camped in the same place two nights running, always at a different well. This light horse fighting is much more exciting than trench warfare. Our time in Egypt has not been wasted altogether. We had a good lot of horses, and they stood it well, as they have some big loads to carry. When off in the morning they are loaded up like a Christmas tree. We carry 24 hours' rations for them and ourselves, a blanket, nosebag, 220 rounds of ammunition, beside rifle and gear, so a 14.0 man has a load.