

ARCHIVUM CALLIPOLITANUM

V

CLASSICAL ECHOES



General Sir Ian Hamilton
(1853-1947)

From Sir I. Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary* (London, 1920) 28:

Passing the mouth of the Dardanelles we got a wonderful view of the stage whereon the Great Showman has caused so many of his amusing puppets to strut their tiny hour. For the purpose it stands matchless. No other panorama can touch it. There, Hero trimmed her little lamp; yonder the amorous breath of Leander changed to soft sea form. Far away to the Eastwards, painted in dim and lovely hues, lies Mount Ida. Just so, on the far horizon line she lay fair and still, when Hector fell and smoke from burning Troy blackened the midday sun. Against this enchanted background to deeds done by immortals and mortals as they struggled for ten long years five thousand years ago, – stands forth formidably the Peninsula. Glowing with bright, springtime colours it sweeps upwards from the sea like the glacis of a giant's fortress.

From Tribute to the ANZACs cited in in G. Odgers, *Diggers, The Australian Army, Navy and Air Force in Eleven Wars 1860-1994* (Sydney, 1994) 83:

You will hardly fade away until the sun fades out of the sky and the earth sinks into the universal darkness. For already you form part of that great tradition of the Dardanelles which began with Hector and Achilles ...

From I. Hamilton, 'Anzac and the *Iliad*' as excerpted in *Reveille* 8, no. 11 (1 July 1935) 2:

We who fought at the Dardanelles are never likely to forget. Wrapped up as we may seem to be in the rush of the struggle for life, still there comes, at quiet moments, a sigh from the tideless shores of the Aegean Sea and the swift-running stream of the Hellespont—a sigh from the ghosts of those comrades whose bodies we left there long ago, fainter now or less frequent with the years. Ah, no!

Beyond inexhaustible crop of heroisms and tragedies which still serve to fill month by month a magazine like the Australian 'Reveille', there is another special cause lying at the root of the Dardanelles legend and ensuring it immortality.

It is to be found in a book called the *Iliad* containing what we would nowadays call 'Despatches' from the Siege of Troy; a campaign almost the duplicate of ours, although it took place 3000 years ago. Instead of a wooden horse, we made use of a steel ship, that's about the extent of the difference.

Anyone who fought at the Dardanelles in 1915 and reads the *Iliad* will at once see history repeating itself, and recognize the felicity of the descriptions. Here we have our blizzard: 'As when winter torrents flow down the mountains to a waters-meet and join their raging torrents through the deep ravine.' [*Il.* IV.452-454] Here is our shelling from Asia—'and the iron roaring went up to the vault of heaven through the unharvested sky.' [*Il.* II.457-458]. Take our ordinary existence: Day in and night out the clatter of weapon 'resounds like an armourer's forge.' Then May 1: 'The sound of the two hosts went up to the firmament and the splendour of God.' Indeed it did.

Will anyone who was on shipboard off Helles on that dreadful night deny it? Lastly, the sudden and mysterious veil of mist which was drawn over the Turkish trenches at Suvla on August 21, blinding out gunners while the weather remained bright and sunny elsewhere. The very identical same phenomenon which prevented Ajax from hurling his thirty-foot pike and made him pray. 'Our Father, save us from darkness, give sight to our eyes.' [*Il.* XVII.645-647]

In another thousand years the two legends will have blended and passages from the historians will be expounded in the schools as beautiful images of wicked happenings long ago; yet all the same, wicked or not, if that bald and toothless professor is able to trace his descent to a man who fell at the Dardanelles he will not fail to let his students know it. For those who die there will never be forgotten.



Major General Hans Kannengiesser (Pasha)
(1880-1958?)

From *The Campaign in Gallipoli*, trans, Maj. C.J.P. Ball (London, 1928):

Shortly before this we pass, on the Asiatic side, a broad, flat plain lying along the shores of the Dardanelles, which awakens memories of our school days. It is the delta of the Menderes, the "Skamander" of the Ancients, with the grave cairns of Achilles and Patroclus. Here the Achaeans drew their beautiful broad-built ships to land and erected shelters for themselves. From this place one looks far into the Trojan Plain, recognizing on the right, in front of the village of Hissarlik, the high-lying, ruin-covered hill of Troy, and behind this again the heights of Mount Ida. The Dardanelles, known to the Ancients as the Hellespont, hide many ancient memories which I will endeavour to shortly cover in this story.

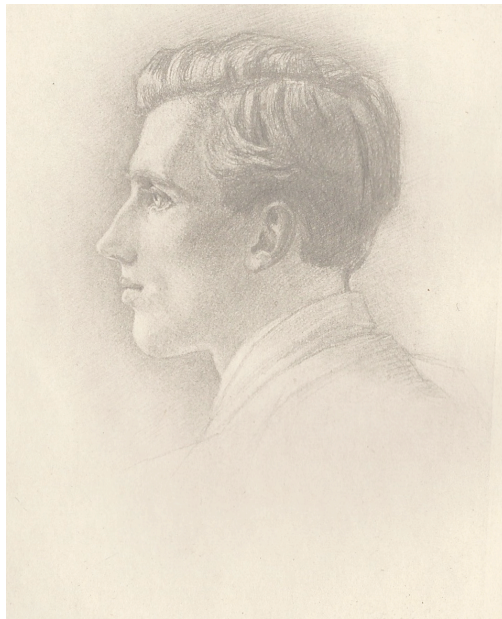
The Gallipoli Peninsula is the Thracian Chersonese of the Ancients which Miltiades, five and a half centuries before the birth of Christ, defended against the plundering forays of the Thracians by a wall built across the narrow strip at Bulair.

The high hill south of akbash was the site of the old Sestos to which Leander is supposed to have swum to Hero from Abydos (Nagara):

“Seht ihr dort die altersgrauen
Schlösser sich entgegenschauen
Leuchtend in der Sonne Gold,
Wo der Hellespont die Wellen
Brausend durch der Dardanellen
Hohe Felsenpforte rollt?”

It was in this spot, by Nagara, that Lord Byron later swam the Hellespont. It is not the narrowest part. This lies, as we already know, by Tchanak Kale, but because of the narrowness the current is too strong. For this reason this portion by Nagara has been used by every army commander who has tried to lead his army or his people from one continent to another during the course of the centuries – Xerxes 480 years B.C.; Alexander the Great 334 years B.C.; Kaiser Friedrich Barbarosse A.D. 1190, who led his army of Crusaders, and A.D. 1354, Sultan Orchan, who led his Osman horde. At this spot in 1915 was put down the net which should close the Dardanelles against the British submarines.

Truly an historical spot.



Patrick Shaw-Stewart
(1888-1917)

From the letter of 29 April 1915 to Ronald Knox (1888-1957), in R.A. Knox (ed.) *Life of Patrick Shaw-Stewart* (London, 1920) 127:

(We are approaching the) *notissima fama insula*, in sight of Samothrace, in imaginary sight of windy Ilios itself and not so very far from Aegospotami; and on this association-saturated spot they propose, I believe, to shove us ashore almost immediately to chase the Turk. The stiffest

work has already been done already; the landing must have been an amazing performance by Australians and the 29th; but no doubt there's still some walking (shall we say?) for us to do.

From the letter of 1 July, 1915 to Edward Horner in Knox (ed.), *Shaw-Stewart*, 142:

That flower of sentimentality which buds rather unreadily in me expands childishly on classical soil. It is really delightful to me (I expect it would be to you), to bathe every day in the Hellespont, looking straight over to Troy, to see the sun set over Samothrace, to be fighting for the command of Aegospotami, and to restate Miltiades' problem of the lines of Bulair. Though that damned Achi-baba (or "Archibald as we waggishly call it") still frowns at us with an impregnable frown ...

From letter of 19 June, 1915 to Ronald Knox in *ibid.* 139-40:

You never enclosed that copy of verses after all. Do so now, and further, please do something for me which will keep you usefully employed for no mean time. Trace me a good-sized map of this part of the world (including Chersonese up to Kardia-Bulair, the Troad, Tenedos, Lemnos, Imbros), and fill all the classical topography you can muster, particularly on the Chersonese itself, where at least the following should be marked:—Elaeus, Madytus (? Maidos), Sestos, Pactya, Kardia, Aegospotami – these mostly from Herodotus, whom I have with me; but besides that I want the topography from the *Hellenica* and other relevant works, and a historical monograph to elucidate it, as I know nothing outside the Herodotean facts. The monograph should include Alexandrian and Roman times – I am sure either Sulla or Lucullus or Pompey must have been here – and should have an appendix on Byzantine and Venetian periods – in fact, it might be brought up to date. Do this abundantly, it would be enormous fun for me. (The historical sketch need only be minute on the Chersonese – just a note or two on the Troad and the three islands.) At present I feel a hideous uncertainty about even simple things like Aegospotami – should it or should it not be identified with Morto Bay?

To-night I am not sorry to be ordered to go for a brief rest to the island whither Miltiades escaped the Phenicians (but he lost his son) (i.e. the island of Lemnos).

Undated poem written on the flyleaf of his copy of A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, cited in *ibid.* 160 (cf. E. Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles – Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War*, Oxford, 2010, 270-71):

I saw a man this morning
Who did not wish to die:
I ask, and cannot answer,
If otherwise wish I.

Fair broke the day this morning
Against the Dardanelles;
The breeze blew soft, the morn's cheeks
Were cold as cold sea-shells.

But other shells are waiting
Across the Aegean Sea,
Shrapnel and high explosive,
Shells and hells for me.

O hell of ships and cities,
Hell of men like me,
Fatal second Helen,
Why must I follow thee?

Achilles came to Troyland
And I to Chersonese
He turned from wrath to battle,
And I from three days' peace.

Was it so hard Achilles,
So very hard to die?
Thou knewest and I know not –
So much the happier I.

I will go back this morning
... From Imbros over the sea;
Stand in the trench, Achilles,
Flame-capped, and shout for me.



Thomas 'Rusty' James Richards

(1882-1935, Lance Corporal (later 1st Lt. and MC) 1st Field Ambulance AIF)

From his 'War Diary' entry for 24th April 1915 (AWM 2DRL/0786, i 226) cited also in J. King (ed.) *Gallipoli Diaries, The Anzac's own story Day by Day* (Sydney, 2003) 17 and in G. Growden, *Wallaby Warrior* (Sydney, 2013) 40:

Gallipoli has mythology interests as the great warrior of the Siege of Troy – Achilles – is buried here, or at any rate there is a place described as the 'Tomb of Achilles'. Lemnos Island is known also to mythology as it was here that Vulcan landed when he was thrown out of Mount Olympus by Juno.

Ibid. Entry for 11th May, 1915 (AWM 2DRL/0786, ii 31), partially cited in Growden, op. cit. 52: From an Egyptian Mail (May 1st) I learn that many thousands of Turks have been captured on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This is the first time I have heard of it.

It says that the plains of Troy on which there were once 200 prosperous cities close to the entrance to the Straits on the Asiatic Coast and can be reached by one day's journey from the Dardanelles. The site of the city is rather inaccessible through lack of good roads and direct communication. This information is very interesting to me applying as strongly as it does to mythology and the old world.



Lt.-Gen. Sir Leonard Thornton
(1916-1999, Chief of the NZ Defense Staff, 1966-1974)

L. Thornton, 'Echoes of Gallipoli', in *The Straits of War*, edited with an introduction by M. Gilbert (London, 1992) 117:

New Zealanders at home were I think influenced by strong reactions across the Tasman. Robert Hughes, in an exceptional book, about the Australian colonization (*The Fatal Shore*, 1987) offers the suggestion that: 'one of the reasons why Australians after 1918 embraced with such deep emotion the mythic event of Gallipoli, our Thermopylae, was that there seemed to be so little in our early history to which we could point with pride. "History" meant great men, stirring deeds, and worthy sacrifices; our history was short of these.'



Archbishop Lord Robert Runcie MC
(1921-2000)

R.A.K. Runcie, 'The God of Battles and the Fight for Faith', in *The Straits of War*, edited with an introduction by M. Gilbert (London, 1992) 37:

The Aegean and the Black Seas are fairly well known to me as a classical scholar and Hellenic traveller. Many times I have sailed past Gallipoli and through the Dardanelles. I have experienced the chatter of a cruise ship conjuring up the ghosts of history and the drama of those waters – the stories and myths of Leander and Xerxes, in sight of the mound of Troy where Hector and Achilles fought and died. Then I have experienced the tribute of silence that descends as we have passed the memorial-marked peninsula of Gallipoli pointing almost accusingly like a finger into the tranquil Aegean, hummocked with the isles of Greece – a silence prompted not least by the presence on board of veterans of the campaign itself.



Next up-date April, 2015.