



Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

The Sailing Of The Troopship

3239A Private Walter Stanley Simpson, 59th Battalion, AIF wrote the following poem in December 1915 before being killed in action at Fleurbaix. Simpson, who enlisted for service abroad on 30-JUL-15, lost a cousin at Lone Pine, Gallipoli and another on the same day during the battle in which he took part. He was taken on strength 58th Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir on the 23rd February 1916, transferred to the 59th Battalion on 15-MAR-16 and embarked to join the B.E.F on "Kinfauns Castle" in Alexandria on the 18th of June, 1916. Private Simpson disembarked Marseilles on 29-JUN-16 and was listed as missing on July 28.

The poem was attached to the Roll of Honour circular by his father when returning the document to the Historian of the AIF. For the First World War circulars were sent to the next of kin seeking biographical details of the deceased, and it was attached to the document by Robert Simpson wanting to ensure his son was commemorated.

Roll of Honour circulars are held by the Australian War Memorial which has digitized the originals. In reproducing the poem Fromelles Discussion Group acknowledges that organization and the work it has undertaken to make such resources available online.



THE SAILING OF THE TROOPSHIP.

By Private W. S. Simpson. No 3239^A

They strain, they slack, she gently heaves and sways;
She hoots, and creaks, the sailors chant their lays;
Slow from the wharf she swings with circling gait,
Her bulwarks line on line of human freight.
True are the hearts that beat 'neath khaki cloth,
Loud are the cheers that ring from men not sloth
To answer with their lives their country's call,
Her honor to uphold in spite of all.

"Safe home! Farewell! the voices fainter grow,
As outward bound the vessel points her prow,
Slow down the stream she drops, then gathering way
Swiftly she bears her freight towards the fray,
Ne'er were there men so brave and true as these,
Leaving behind their loved ones, home, and ease,
Knowing the fate of those who went before,
Whose blood was spilt to 'pease the God of War.

Now up, now down, she swings her onward course,
Now to, now fro, her engine throbbing hoarse;
Proudly she mounts the hills, then sinks the vales,
As mile on mile of azure main she sails.
And sweet the thoughts which dare link mind and mind
Of those out here, and loved ones left behind;
Whilst from the heart there speeds an earnest prayer
"Of those we love, O God, wilt Thou take care?"

Still on, and on, across the trackless deep,
By day, by night, unerring doth she keep,
Her only will to do the will of man,
Her best to give, and thus fulfil his plan.
Within her bowels unconsciously she holds
God's greatest creatures - many precious souls,
And He it is Who never tires nor sleeps
Spreads o'er His own a shield, and safely keeps.

Then on, press on, ye warriors brave and true.
Be strong, be firm, the victory is to you!
Fight for your God, your Country, and your King,
And all the world forthwith your praise shall sing.
Ne'er was a battle lost when fought for right,
For right were never worsted in fair fight.
Reward shall come, and strife will have to cease,
And Earth shall have a universal Peace.