

INTERESTING LETTER

Mrs. M. J. Condon is in receipt of the following letter from Private A. J. Anderson, who was reporter on the "Lachlander" at time of enlistment:

NX57833,

Pte. A. J. ANDERSON,

5 Reinfts., 16 Inf., Bde. H.Q.

A.I.F. Abroad.

3rd May, 1941.

Our trip over was delightful and was without incident. Everyone treated it as a pleasure cruise as indeed it was—the farthest thought from anyone's mind was that we were leaving home to go and fight a war. Hearts were naturally very heavy as we watched Sydney Heads receding on our stern and I do not think anyone watched Australia disappearing below the horizon without a thought of the ones at home. Our one consoling thought was of the great day when we would be sailing not away from it, but towards it—with the war won and peace once more restored throughout the world. Even though things might not look so bright at the moment, everyone is facing it cheerfully and not one man but knows that the tide will assuredly turn and bring victory to us. All the members of the fighting forces I have talked to are buoyantly cheerful and have no qualms as to the inevitable result of this conflict.

Life in the desert is naturally not like sitting by a cheery fireside at home, but it has its consolations and everyone is full of optimism and a real desire to come to grips with the enemy.

Even as I write—one of the pleasures of the desert is making its pre-

sures of the desert is making its presence felt. It is a duststorm, the likes of which are only possible in the desert. Although I am rather ignorant of western weather conditions, I thought that I had witnessed some pretty decent duststorms at Condobolin, but I am not exaggerating even a little when I say they are mere gusts of fine earth compared to the blows I have seen since arriving in Egypt. They last for many many hours and even days—and one lives in a perpetual state of coughing and choking. One rather tall tale has it that you can always tell it is a good sort of a storm when you see a jackal a few hundred feet in the air trying to dig a burrow. The easiest and cheapest way to see Egypt is to stand at your tent door and watch it blow past.

Most of the lads (yours truly most certainly included) had a little difficulty at first in getting the hang of the Egyptian currency—especially the rate of exchange. We lose quite an appreciable amount on our money over here, it taking £1/5/8 Australian to purchase an Egyptian pound. The Egyptian pound is divided into Piastres and millemes, there being 100 piastres to the pound and 10 millemes to the piastre.

Washing facilities are naturally curbed a little owing to the shortage of water—but we are still alive and kicking. One of our chaps broke a record of long standing by having four washes in 25 days, but then he must have been one of those clean chaps we read about.

So far I have managed to procure two day's leave and this was spent in Alexandria. "Alex." as it popularly known is a fairly large city—and differs not very much from most Middle East cities except that its na-

Middle East cities except that its native quarters are slightly more evil smelling than the others (if possible). No words can describe the awful stench which pervades these quarters and it really must be experienced that is to say smelt, before it can be believed. The shopping centres and better class residential quarters of the city are quite modern and pleasing. Alex. has an excellent tram and bus service and taxis and kharries (horse drawn buggies) are in abundance. Most of the inhabitants of the Middle East are out to amass huge fortunes and exceedingly high prices are asked for anything to be sold. The best method is to at least quarter the price asked for the article and use this as a basis for bargaining—even then you can bet your last piastre you are being robbed. The Blackout at night takes a little getting used to, but after falling down a dozen or so flights of stairs, bumping some hundreds of people, posts and buildings and losing lumps of skin off every part of the body, one becomes more or less used to it.

Well Mrs. Condon I am afraid I will have to close now as I am only allowed 3 sheets of this paper per air mail letter.