

Boere, maar poog hy tog om na beide kante kritiek uit te deel en die gebeure in perspektief te plaas. Watter gebreke die werk ookal mag hê, behoort dit elkeen wat in die geskiedenis van die Anglo-Boere-oorlog belangstel, te interesseer en is dit 'n moet vir die boekrak van elke ernstige student van dié konflik. Dit bly 'n groot jammerte dat hy nie die geleentheid gehad het om die stryd tot aan die einde van die guerrillafase deur te trek nie.

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PEACE, WAR AND AFTERWARDS 1914 TO 1919

Brian Wade

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Brian Wade left South Africa in February 1915 to join the British Army so as to serve the Empire during the First World War. After enlisting in King Edward's Horse as a private, he trained at Bishops Stortford and the Curragh in Ireland. He was later commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 7th London Regiment, served mainly in the transport section and saw action in the Somme and Ypres. Due to illness he was medically discharged in February 1918 and returned to South Africa. He subsequently performed colonial service in the former German territory, Tanganyika (present day Tanzania). During his military service and the first seven months he spent in Tanganyika, he kept up a regular correspondence with his mother - he regarded his weekly letter to her "as a sacred duty" - and these letters eventually resulted in *Peace, War and Afterwards*. As there are only a few personal accounts by South Africans of their experiences as soldiers during the First World War (and even fewer have been published) *Peace, War and Afterwards* is a most welcome publication.

Through Wade's letters to his mother the reader gets to know him as a young man who initially takes a rather light-hearted view of travelling to England to join the British army. His decision to enlist was motivated by a "...spirit of adventure..." rather than ".....the lure of patriotism", and he anticipated "...a nice sea voyage.....lasting about a fortnight, then once in London we will go about a bit and see things. Then when our funds begin to run too low we will enlist in Kitchener's Army." However, Wade soon experiences the harsh reality of military life: rising at "...5 a.m. on a horribly cold morning in a biting wind...."; the drudgery of the daily military routine; the extreme discomfort of life in the muddy trenches on the Western Front. This made him long for the war to end and for

him it was indeed over in September 1917 when he fell ill and was hospitalized.

His letters chronicle his daily life, first as a private and later as an officer. He describes those aspects of war which are mostly neglected in the official documents: the soldiers' diet and their living conditions; the excitement of receiving mail and parcels with treats from home; the way they spent their leisure time; their frustrations and longings; the fact that the ordinary soldier often had very little information on the progress of the war ("You've no idea how difficult it is to get news here where history is in the making."); the fellowship among the men and the sadness when losing a comrade in battle.

Wade wrote about the happenings of the war in a rather matter of fact way. Obviously, being exposed to the horrors of war and the ever present possibility of death, blunted his sensitivity. To what extent is evident from his description of how, during the Battle of the Somme, he and a number of his fellow men collected souvenirs from the bodies of dead German soldiers - adding that the "dried out corpses.....are too old and weathered to be offensive". Apparently he did not consider this action as out of the ordinary; this is underscored by the fact that directly following his description of this macabre outing, he tells of the parcel containing cakes, cheese and sweets he received.

The military section of the material forms the main part of the publication and therefore, although the part on the first few months of his stay in Tanganyika as a mining engineer in government service makes interesting reading, it does not fit in with the rest of the book. These entries could well have been left out.

Because *Peace, War and Afterwards* consists of letters, the editor added a number of notes to the text to clarify certain facts. However, these notes are often not enough to put the reader in the picture properly or to provide the necessary background. For example, a few biographical details on Wade (age, occupation, place of residence before leaving South Africa) should have been given at the beginning of the book; also lacking is an annotation filling in the time and events between Wade's arrival back in South Africa and his departure for East Africa. It should also be noted that the reader who is not knowledgeable about the First World War will experience difficulty following the progress of the conflict. Nonetheless, *Peace, War and Afterwards* is a worthy publication which provides insight into the lesser known facets of the war.

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