

"VALE IVAN CLARKE"

They brought us down from Dubbo to a far and distant camp,  
Where the A.I.F. were strangers and our reception rather damp;  
Where we all felt out of place like in a foreign land  
And we looked in vain for a friendly look and that welcome  
outstretched hand.

But there was one there who cheered us when we came to stay.  
He was an A.I.F. Lieutenant who hailed from Mudgee way.  
He wasn't a big bronze Anzac or a lairing City toff  
But a smallish chap from way out back with a little nervous cough.

This officer's name was Ivan Clarke, it's a name we will never  
forget

For he proved to be a gentleman and one of the finest soldiers we  
met.

When we went to Sananda he was with us all the way  
And he still could joke or tell a yarn after the most tiring day.

And one day we found ourselves as though forgotten by God and man,  
Stuck way out in the trenches on the edge of "No Man's Land".  
We spoke of other places, especially of our home,  
And cursed these sons of Nippon who brought us o'er the foam.

As the shells and bullets came whizzing past that morning in December,  
He called to mind other Christmas days, ones we wished to remember.  
He said "I'll write a book one day, or, maybe even a poem,  
And will call it, for want of a better name, "Christmases I have  
known."

Little he knew when he spoke those words that this Christmas would be  
his last

And that he would never be writing about those happy days in the past.  
For shortly after he spoke them we moved into an attack  
And when we had finished, they stationed us on the Sananda Track.

We were out on the road in trenches unsheltered from rain or heat,  
Where the sun beat down like a furnace and we measured the rain in  
feet.

And one evening just as dusk was falling and the shells had stopped  
their wail,

Ivan thought he'd buck us up so he came forward with our mail.

We watched him as he hurried back his job once more well done,  
But there were other eyes from a tree top tall that watched through  
the sights of a gun.

The rifle cracked but it passed unnoticed as we bowed to a mortar  
blast

Little we knew in those few seconds Ivan had breathed his last.

In the dark of night they brought the news how Ivan had met his end,  
And the boys were dumb as they heard the news for no message could  
they send

Of sympathy to some loving Mother to help when the sad news came,  
And tell her how the boys would honour and always remember his name.

But deep in our hearts we breathed a prayer that we hoped would lessen  
her loss,  
And we thought of the place where they buried him under the soft green  
moss.  
Though we never may see his headstone or the place where his body  
would lie,  
We could see the inscription of silver marked in the sky.

"Vale, Vale, Ivan Clarke" in our memory you'll always remain,  
Though we may forget Soputa's mud and Sananda's rain.  
And though we may forget ought else as along life's path we wind,  
We'll never forget you Ivan Clarke the friend we left behind.

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John. Butler.  
Lieut  
Sig. Office.

E. A. Woodson  
Pte. W. W. Powell

Cpl. Thompson  
Pte H. J. Lawrence  
Pte B. Christopher  
J. Napier Lieut

C. J. Woodbridge Lieut.  
Pte Allen R. L.

W. A. Masler. Lieut.  
Pte. Burgess G. K.

Charles Mayhew  
C. A. Morris CPL

J. J. Ryan Pte.  
L/Cpl E. K. Howarth

Pte F. W. Malone

Pte. H. Knick.  
Pte. S. M. Branch.  
Pte. Miller R. A. S.

J. Byrne. PTE  
W. E. Lincoln.

J. Demmad. PTE  
H. Williams Pte

H. J. Murphy. Pte.  
C. Kerr. Pte.