

# My Day

by Eleanor Roosevelt

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## SEPTEMBER 13, 1943

[(Note to Readers: The following exclusive report has been received by wireless from Australia. Mrs. Roosevelt is on this trip travelling as a representative of the American Red Cross. All of her receipts from her column will be divided between the American Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee.)]

BRISBANE, Australia, Sept. 11th—Mountains, woodland, valleys and streams all passed below us as we flew north today. I looked down with interest at the homesteads that reminded me of some of our western ranches. Much of the land is unoccupied here, because as the Governor for New South Wales told me last night, in some places it takes forty acres to support one sheep, since the land is poor and the rainfall is not very heavy.

We landed at about 11:00 to visit some of our armed forces who went through the early fighting in New Guinea. They were not trained then for jungle warfare. Though they fought with magnificent courage and won, the price they paid was heavy. General Eichelberger's Chief of Staff, General Byers, commanded them in that first fighting until he was wounded, and I think he must have been proud to see them today.

I lunched in one of the messes with the men and talked with some sergeants who had been through the hardest fighting. They were men from Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois. Then we saw a group in their jungle outfits with full packs. Forty-five pounds is what a man ordinarily carries, but some carry up to 70 pounds and told me they did not find it impossible. They looked fit and when I asked one man if he felt the Japs were better fighters than he had at first supposed, or whether he now had less respect for them, he answered: "They are not good fighters, but are wily and tricky and never to be trusted."

No one out here has any pity for the Japanese. They have seen them do too many things which we consider beyond the pale of civilized practice. Human life to a Japanese seems to have no value.

By 5:00 we reached our destination, where there is a city of some 30,000 inhabitants. My first impression was one of the most beautiful and elaborate gardens I ever saw. There were flowers everywhere, and opposite the General's home, a gorgeous hedge in full bloom.

First we saw the headquarters company. Photography must be a great source of relaxation here, for a battery of amateurs faced us instead of the usual press, who seemed to disappear completely from view. These troops, after seeing hard fighting, have had a retraining period with replacements and, therefore, they have had time to make their camp look very nice.

Flowering shrubs were planted along the road and some of the tents have flowers around them. There was a little vegetable garden. The medical first aid tent had the stones carefully whitewashed to mark the walk and a red cross in bits of stone which were painted red. The chapel in another tent, did duty for all denominations. Flowers stood on the altar and a crude altar rail had been made out of fencing.

All these camps have dogs and cats and, sometimes, I imagine, other pets. This company had a little black pup who was almost ready to go home with me. Some dogs are born diplomats and the little thing knew it was ingratiating itself, but would have been most unhappy I am sure, if its advances had been taken seriously.

I have finished Mr. Willkie's book, "One World," while I have been here. It is an interesting account of his trip and I enjoyed it and was glad to find that in many things I agreed so heartily with him and he agreed with the Administration. Two books by Australian writers were given me today. One is an animal story of a cow on the range, who loved liberty and fought for it. It is called "Man-Shy" and is delightful. Another is a book of verse by a poet who recites his own poems for agricultural groups, and is called "Nine Miles From Gundagai," by Jack Moses. They seem part of the country and I can well understand their popularity.

E.R.

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