



PRESENTED

TO

THE CORPS OF ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS

by

D. PARKE

Out

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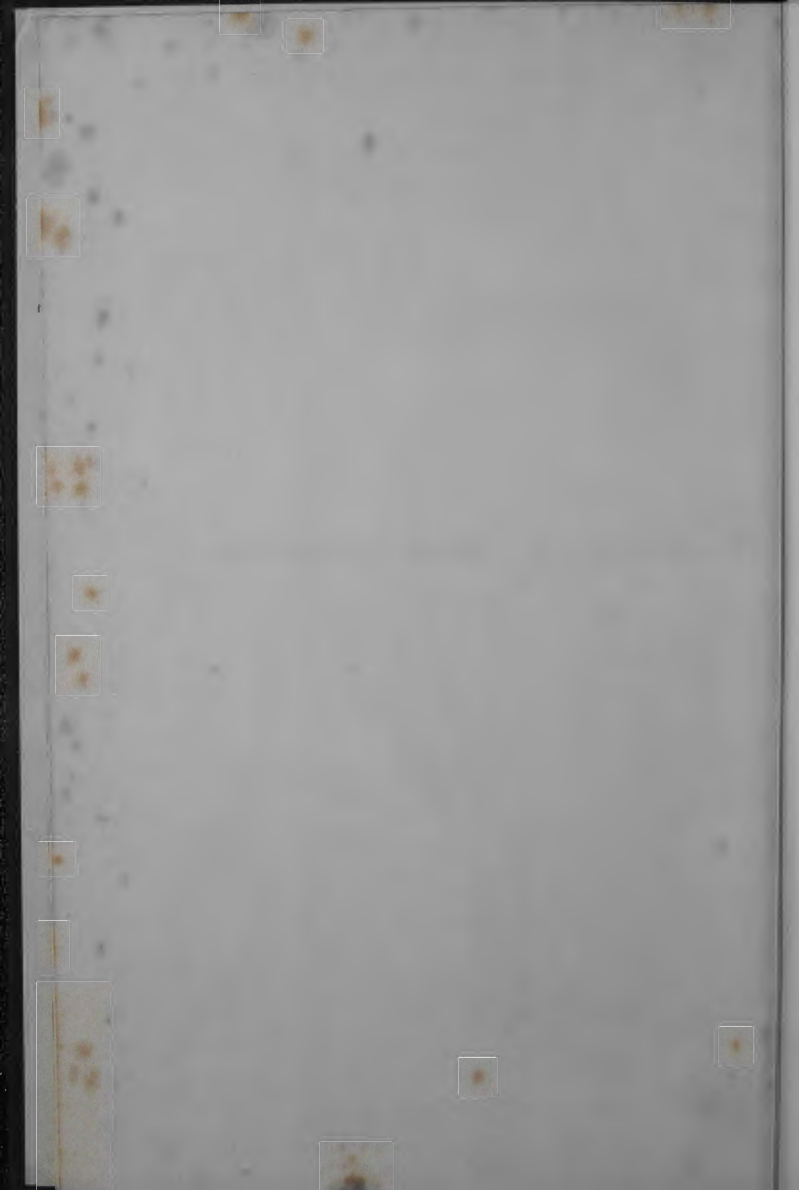
To / Charlie

with love from

Rose



TALES OF THREE CAMPAIGNS



O. Campbell

Main Rd

Laboratory

July 27



BATTLE OF THE SUEZ CANAL
(as seen from our firing line)

TALES OF THREE CAMPAIGNS

MAJOR C. B. BRERETON

12th (Nelson) Company
N.Z.E.F.

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TO
THE NON-
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS
AND MEN OF THE 12TH (NELSON)
COMPANY, WHOSE LOYAL SERVICE MADE THEM TYPICAL
OF THAT GREAT COMPANY OF SOLDIERS, THE INFANTRY RANK AND
FILE, WHO FOUGHT AND SUFFERED WITHOUT HOPE OF
FAME OR REWARD UNTIL THE END CAME,
AND THE WAR WAS
WON — BY
THEM

P R E F A C E

MUCH of this book simply relates the part taken by the 12th (Nelson) Company, which I had the honour and pleasure of commanding. I regret I cannot give an adequate idea of my comrades' splendid service and devotion, or an impression of the hardship and suffering they cheerfully endured. Infantry N.C.O.s and privates bore the brunt of the war—physically and mentally—living in an extreme of discomfort, often facing the enemy at a few yards' distance, expecting no recognition of their services and satisfied to fight and often die in obscurity. Among the millions of allied soldiers similarly placed the 12th (Nelson) men played their part, cheerful, steady in action, and gallant to recklessness when necessity arose ; the admiration and pride of their officers.

Brave men and brave acts were too numerous to mention, but one man may be taken as typical of the rest. He was no braver than others, where so many were perfectly fearless, but his long service, serene temper, and unselfish good nature gave him a host of friends.

He always seemed curiously unaware of danger and I never saw him duck for a shell. If one arrived when he was in the middle of a sentence, it made no difference, he just continued as if unconscious of it. Sergt.-Major Guy preferred it "when things were moving,"

and "we mustn't make a hard war of it" was a very frequent remark of his; to the last he was smiling and serene as he climbed into that fatal trench, swinging his tin hat in his hand. He met an old friend a few minutes earlier and told him, "When you hear of me next, I will be pushing up the daisies," so he had received his warning. His remark had reference to the soldier's common expression when a man made a trivial complaint—"You will want flowers on your grave next."

He was wounded at Quinns and killed at Passchendaele. His great friend, Captain Jim Barton, found him still standing, gazing steadily over at the Huns, unconquered in death. His full water-bottle was taken to quench his friend's thirst, which would have given 'Old Hec' great pleasure had he known.

Little mention is made of casualties, but it may be understood that they occurred constantly. In my regiment, which did not average two battalions throughout the war, very nearly 10,000 men were killed or wounded.

No attempt is made to point a moral, so I venture to stress one point.

Some day the Empire will again be at war, and the Dominions will send their men to fight. The crisis may come earlier than it did in the Great War, leaving little time for training after it begins.

New Zealand men require one condition to become first-class fighting troops. This condition is training—a reasonable training in peace time. No one can count on there being sufficient time after war begins.

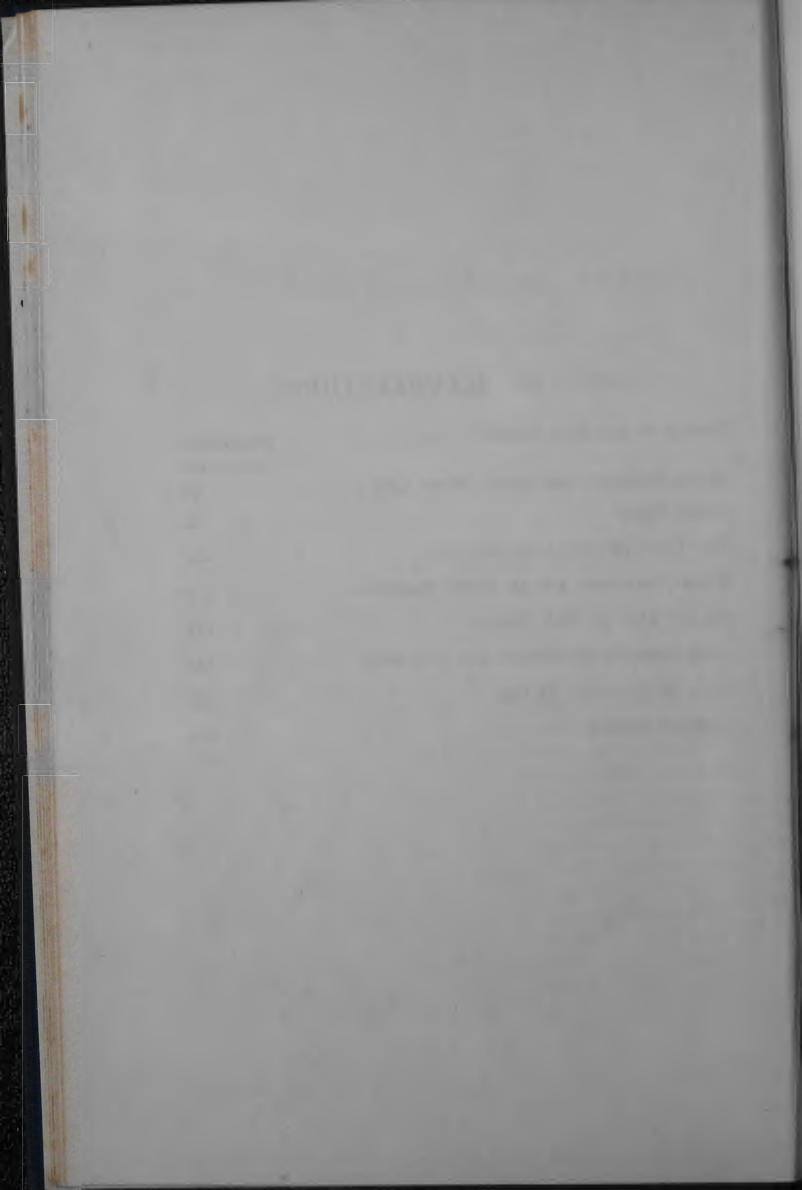
Great wars have been lost and won in two months. In modern war a man must have a stout heart, a strong body, and sufficient training. With training, the New Zealander may cheerfully face any enemy, confident that with his brave heart and strength he will bear himself manfully and effectively. Without it he would not flinch, but it would be a useless sacrifice.

Our men play football and they know that to play it effectively requires training and discipline. Just the same is required in an army, but to a greater extent, because the numbers are many thousand times greater, the risks are greater, the goal is greater, and the game infinitely more intricate.

C. B. B.

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TALES OF THREE CAMPAIGNS

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE

"Yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call and came."
The Coming of Arthur.

TEN transports carrying the N.Z. Expeditionary Force moved out of Wellington Harbour at 6 o'clock on the morning of the 16th of October, 1914, closely following the naval escort. It was a dull, cloudy morning, and the impressive silence was only broken by the bluejackets of the Japanese *Ibuki* giving each transport a "Banzai" as the warship slipped quietly past to her station in front.

With a deep feeling of relief we got clear of land, leaving behind the memory of harassing days in training, marching in rain and mud, endless outfitting and organizing while nearly everyone was suffering from a severe cold. To many this two and a half months in New Zealand proved the most trying and least interesting period of the war. Fitting out such an expedition had hardly been foreseen, and experience had to be gained as we went along, so there were many unnecessary hardships. We met a heavy sea off Cape Farewell, and those on duty, trying for the first time to make a ship dark, had a wearisome time and only

partial success. All the ships were crowded to the limit, and ours, the *Athenic*, in addition to more than a reasonable complement of men, carried several hundred horses, besides a quantity of stores.

On the 21st October we anchored in Hobart, and next morning enjoyed a march ashore, getting a very kind and enthusiastic reception from the people of the town, who loaded us with fruit and flowers.

Two days later we continued the voyage.

A man died on Transport No. 5 on the 28th before we reached Albany, and was buried at sunset; the sudden stillness of the ships, with their stopped engines, as the body slipped into the water and the sun sank into the sea, was suggestive and impressive. H.M.A.S. *Melbourne* and twenty-eight Australian troopships were waiting for us at Albany.

On the morning of the 1st November the fleet commenced to leave the harbour, and by midday the last N.Z. ship was clear. It was a long line, the advanced warships being nearly out of sight. The fleet was at once arranged in its permanent sailing order, the Australians leading in three lines, followed without interval by the New Zealanders in two.

We had no idea where we were going, whether by the Cape, by Suez, or to India. Someone ventured to ask our captain, but he only said, "We may be going to hell for a load of cinders for all I know."

We had no anxiety about possible enemy attack, perhaps because we had no information except the common knowledge that there were heavy enemy warships in the Pacific. We had not been informed that our departure from New Zealand was postponed through the movement of enemy ships, and had no idea that the naval authorities and the N.Z. Government were greatly worried as to our safety. Very luckily, the German squadron did not guess our

route correctly, but hoped to intercept us in the neighbourhood of Cape Horn.

Early on the 5th November the *Minotaur* ordered the convoy to increase speed, and at 10 o'clock a distant smoke was visible aft. The *Melbourne* was detached to pursue the newcomer, who changed her course and tried to escape, but was quickly headed off. She proved to be the mail steamer *Osterley* on her way to Colombo. In the evening she passed us, almost within speaking distance, her decks crowded with passengers, who waved and cheered heartily, evidently very relieved after an interesting and alarming day, and glad to see friendly faces instead of enemy ones, which might easily have been her fate.

In case of attack our orders were for ships to close up and reduce speed to six knots, troops to assemble barefooted on deck, and all timber and fittings to be cast loose. Crowded as the ships were, there was no chance in case of accident of getting into boats, even if they had been sufficient to carry us.

All the ships were fitted with wireless for receiving, and news gathered was generally made known to the troops. On the 8th November the *Minotaur* left the convoy, possibly to search the Cocos Islands, which we were to pass next day. By this time we were getting more interested in the movements of enemy ships, as we caught a good many messages in their code. On the 9th November things moved early. We were passing the Cocos on the western side at a distance of about thirty miles, when at 7.30 the *Sydney* suddenly turned away and in a few minutes disappeared in the direction of the island, and, judging by her speed, on most urgent business. We knew that an S.O.S. message had just been heard until covered and confused by another wireless, and this had caused the dispatch of the *Sydney*. The distress call suddenly

stopped. The news that we rather expected arrived at 9 o'clock from the *Sydney* saying that she had sighted the enemy, the German Town class cruiser, *Emden*, and was about to engage her. At the time, the *Ibuki* was stationed on the starboard side of the convoy, desperately anxious to get a blow at the enemy. Her wireless betrayed her. She first asked if she might assist, and on being forbidden, a few minutes later pleaded, "I am very anxious to assist," but even this did not soften the heart of the commander of the convoy, so in desperation she broke the bonds of discipline and sent "I am going." She increased her speed at once, tearing round the head of the column at a great pace, with a big bow wave as high as her deck and immense volumes of black smoke pouring from her funnels, the very picture of martial eagerness. But after all it was to end in disappointment, for when she had gone a few miles in a perfectly straight line she began to waver about on her course, as if the helmsman had lost interest in her, and she slowed down and returned with a very dejected air. A message had come from the *Sydney* to say that the enemy was "Beached and done for." The good news went through the fleet in an instant, and, as if by magic, bands were playing "Sons of the Sea," and crowds of men were singing and dancing.

It was evident that those in charge had been worried by thoughts of the *Emden* getting among the convoy on a dark night, when she could have done enormous damage. We were greatly relieved and particularly pleased that the Australian Navy had struck its first blow so well, and got off lightly with only two killed and thirteen wounded. We did not see the *Sydney* again before reaching Colombo, as she had to chase a collier, and clean up the mess on the *Emden*.

The news of the Coronel battle reached us the same

day, and though it was a naval tragedy, it relieved us of further anxiety from enemy ships. Next day we heard wireless messages from the *Königsberg*, which then, or soon after, was bottled up on the African coast by the *Suffolk*, and so out of harm's way too.

The *Melbourne* then left us, and the N.Z. ships with three Australians went ahead of the other transports, escorted by the *Hampshire*. She was fated to be lost two years later, carrying down with her the most notable military figure of the age, with his great life work, fortunately for England, almost complete.

On reaching the Equator Father Neptune, with his wife and court, arrived on board and demanded of our captain all those who had not previously crossed the line. The captain was of a very fiery temperament and not at all used to being shouted at, but he agreed amiably and a very busy time began. The band most inappropriately played "Sons of the Sea." Everyone, from the Colonel down, was doctored, inoculated, teeth drawn, shaved and tipped backwards into a sail full of water. In the end Neptune and his lady were seized and put through the processes, in spite of Her Majesty's fierce struggles.

We anchored in Colombo on the 14th November, and found the harbour filled with ships sheltering from the *Emden*. The *Sydney* rejoined us, and, contrary to our desires, we were ordered not to cheer her or make any demonstration out of consideration for the feelings of the German prisoners and wounded, so she took her place in dead silence. People were very chivalrous in those days.

Parties of men were allowed ashore under the control of officers, and all were highly delighted at the strangeness of an Eastern city. In the crowded native quarter it was impossible for them to keep

together, and possibly they did not try very hard, but the men turned up loyally at the jetty. As we passed the barracks of an Indian regiment we stopped to listen to a band practising. Strangely enough the tune was "Home, Sweet Home," the only time I heard it during the war years.

The *Anglo-Egyptian*, while steaming past us between the moles, struck the wall just in front of the *Athenic* with a crash like thunder. She was towed off by a tug and taken to dock leaking badly, and down by the head.

An unfortunate accident occurred on the *Arawa* during the crossing-of-the-line celebrations. The medical officer dived into the bath and struck the deck, breaking his neck, and died at Colombo. An Australian troopship collided with her next ahead at night, causing considerable damage without danger to the ships.

So far the voyage had gone very pleasantly, and the best of feeling appeared to exist in all ships. Training was attempted, but little practical work could be done in such a confined space. The daily routine went very smoothly, and there were no complaints from the men. The only one I remember was a request that tinned meat might be thawed before coming to the table. Apparently it was carried in the freezer, and when opened contained pieces of ice, which the men found rather hard on their teeth.

They were a wonderful lot of men, taken altogether ; many rich, and used to every luxury, others quite the reverse, but all happy and agreeable and willing to put up with anything. Most were young, and the bulk of them would be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, all splendid specimens of physical perfection.

In my company, and possibly most others, all the

officers and N.C.O.s had held equal or higher rank before joining the Expeditionary Force, and had some years of experience, so it was not surprising that they knew their work. Of the privates, a large proportion were from the Territorial Force, so that we all knew each other quite well. We did not by any means take the war lightly, fully realizing what it meant to come early into a very long war, which we expected would be particularly severe against opponents so well prepared as the Germans. The officers, in particular, were very gloomy in their ideas, though they kept these to themselves as a rule, but they did not expect to see the war through. As things turned out, this was far too pessimistic a forecast, and many of them are still alive and well.

On the 17th November we left for Aden, our destination being England, to the best of our knowledge. We knew that a camp was being prepared for us at Sling, Salisbury Plain. Sports were popular, especially boxing, but we decided to discontinue events while in the Red Sea, leaving the championships to be decided later. As it happened, these finals were never fought.

On the 23rd we passed Socotra, and two days later reached Aden. As we entered, a shot from one of the forts crossed the bows of the *Ibuki*, the passage of the shell being very audible—our first shot of the war. Almost at the same instant a launch appeared with an apology to the Japanese, who had good reason to be offended at their reception. We began to feel sorry for the Japanese, when next day a careless soldier, not looking what he was doing, emptied a basket of potato peelings and cabbage stalks over our ship's side into their boat, in which one of their officers was making an official call. Although it was due merely to sheer stupidity, it must have appeared an insult to

the Japanese. At Aden there were many signs that we were getting nearer to the war. Fighting was actually going on ashore, and Aden was more or less besieged for years.

A fleet of ships was in harbour with English troops for India, and we visited them and soon made friends. Our transports were dry ships, but these were well supplied with liquors which we appreciated after the long course of aerated waters. We sampled a number of new drinks, but the "John Collins" proved the most effective mixture, chiefly on account of its length.

Next day we continued our journey and passed through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb.

One of my sergeants had fought in the Somali War, and he pointed out the coast on the Arabian side, where he thought the campaign had been fought, and refused to be convinced that he was wrong. He was a cold-blooded soldier, and campaigning against natives had not made him more humane. The only pistol he had been able to secure was a .22 calibre, and when told that it was of no use either to kill or stop a man, he said with a grin, "It would tickle him though," and that seemed to satisfy him. He was to prove himself a faithful and gallant soldier, wounded in 1915 and killed in 1918, but he was never to be trusted with prisoners.

It was stifling with a following wind in the Red Sea, and we thought the horses in the holds would die, but they thrived on it. Experience in this war seems to show that horses can stand any amount of heat, possibly because their original home is sub-tropical.

News came that Turkey had declared against us, and we were able to pick up three of her ships to take along as prizes. After a few days in the Red Sea, we

luckily got a head wind and were cooler than we had been for a month.

We began the passage of the Suez Canal at midday. It was possible that the enemy might attack ships from the eastern bank, so the bridge was sandbagged, and an armed party kept on duty; but we were not fired at, and passed the time exchanging salutations with British troops, mostly Indians, on the western side.

Port Said, where we coaled in the morning, was also full of shipping, with British and French warships. We played the "Marseillaise" whenever we passed the latter, and the sailors embraced each other enthusiastically, and tried to cheer, with little success. Cheering was common at this time, in marked contrast to later in the war.

At 5 a.m. on the 3rd December we reached Alexandria, which had become our destination owing to the fact of Turkey entering the war, and the resulting unsettled state of Egypt. My company and the 13th disembarked and entrained at 8 o'clock in the morning, expecting to leave at once for Cairo. We were immensely interested to find ourselves landed in Egypt, when we thought we were going to England.

We were surrounded by dirty natives trying to sell us fruit, cigarettes, whisky and other delights, mostly verboten by orders. We enjoyed all this and broke the whisky bottles in hundreds, and waited and waited for the train to start. At first it was quite amusing enough trying to outwit the sellers of whisky (?) and crack their bottles on the steel rails, but when there seemed to be no end to the supply, and we realized that it was only methylated spirits and water, even that palled. Towards noon we naturally began to get hungry, and there was no food on the train and no leave to quit it, but a number of officers and men

found some good excuse to go back to the ships, and there begged a meal.

Still we waited, and at last the time came, as it will even in the army, if you wait long enough, and at 8.30 in the evening we pulled gently out of the station.

Only one or two men had sampled the whisky, and fortunately it did not kill them, but they remained unconscious for a long time. Once we were started, most of us were pleased to settle down to the enjoyment of the journey, with an added feeling of importance in being the first trainload of New Zealanders to venture into this unknown country.

CHAPTER II

TRAINING IN EGYPT

The first qualification of a soldier is fortitude under fatigue and privation. Courage is only the second ; hardship, poverty and want are the best schools for a soldier.—*Napoleon's Maxims*, LVIII.

TRAVELLING to Cairo was like a night journey through fairyland. The bright, full moon lit up the palm trees, the flat-roofed houses, and the crowds of natives in the villages. We watched the changing scenes with delight, hardly able to believe that it was reality and not a wonderful dream.

It seemed a short distance to Qubba station, which we reached at 4 o'clock in the morning, and we marched out towards the desert, halting once just long enough for each to receive a mug of hot cocoa and a bun in the first light of dawn, before going another mile to the place that was to be our home for a few months. Rather tired, we stumbled along over the sand and loose ground, thinking in our innocence it had been cultivated for a crop. This was our introduction to the desert, which was later to become so familiar.

No camp had been pitched, and the place where we halted was not home-like ; but tents were provided, and it fell to Major Grant and myself to lay out the lines for our companies, the small beginning which was soon to grow into a considerable town. We were careful to pitch our camp true and square with the line across the desert which was to be the main

street, and become in a short time a busy thoroughfare.

While we were at this job, an unassuming officer appeared, very plainly dressed, asking a great many questions about the quality of our troops, particularly if they could shoot well. We hastened to assure him that they could be relied on for their shooting, and this was quite true; the Main Body men were largely experienced shots, who had stalked deer, pigs, and goats with the rifle and could be described as competent shots, and in a class better than those made merely by the military machine. We did not claim any other military virtue, as even in our own minds we were an unknown quantity.

This officer impressed us greatly with his common-sense and practical ideas, and turned out to be General Maxwell, the able and effective military commander of Egypt. We were fortunate enough to be able to retain throughout the war this good impression of the high command in the British Army.

The Egyptians at the time were restive and would readily have thrown off the British rule had they been able, so the troops at Alexandria were rushed up as quickly as the trains could bring them. Unfortunately, food did not keep pace with the men, and each consignment had to starve for about three days after its arrival.

We soon became very hungry, but there was no food, or permission to leave camp, and but for the kindness of the East Lancs (territorials) camped near by, we should have fared badly. They did not give us ceremonious invitations but simply shared what they had. Our officers were guests of their messes, and the men shared with theirs, and so we got our first meal in thirty-six hours. We were deeply grateful at the time, but the friendship was not a really lasting one.

For the first few weeks large parties had to be detailed from companies to accelerate transport of food from the railway station to camp. This was a great joy to the parties employed on account of the fun they got out of the natives hired, with their horses and vehicles, to load the stuff and dump it on the sand in camp. The officer in charge had to see the carts loaded and dispatched, with a soldier mounted beside the driver to ensure a speedy return. Neither knew a word of the other's language, and the result was a never-ending source of amusement.

As the troops were kept on duty in relays throughout the twenty-four hours the natives got little chance of food or rest, but what chances there were they made the best of, as they were experienced thieves and full of cunning. Boxes of biscuit and bags of sugar were constantly being broken and they always profited by the accident. When an Egyptian was allowed to rest he liked to pillow his head on a bag of sugar and appeared to be sleeping, but investigation generally showed that he had his tongue working in a rent in the bag and was taking rest and nourishment at the same time.

Each day our working party returned with a new joke and a new word to add to our Arabic vocabulary, and the officer had generally broken his stick. "Imshi" was the first word we learned, and then "eggery," "yalla," "telahena," and "zaieda."

"Imshi, you ——" was the routine instruction given the driver when he set off with his load.

However, good nature prevailed, and light-hearted good humour prevented much hardship to anyone. There was no brutality, but certainly there was a famine in walking-sticks in the brigade. The fact was that we were starving and had to be fed, and, the transport being inadequate, people had to be driven a bit.

In a few days our camp was complete with 8000 or 9000 New Zealand troops of all arms, well equipped with guns, horses, waggons, etc. Drill and platoon training commenced immediately, and continued all the time we were in Egypt.

The first thing we noticed when we began training was that the desert was strewn with what we took to be the bones of animals, but we soon found plenty of skulls and other human remains—a regular boneyard.

Though digging out tombs for the sake of curios was forbidden by orders, it soon became the rage and everyone was at it in his spare time. It is one of the oldest trades in Egypt, and the natives are equipped with a pointed iron rod similar to the spear used to locate kauri gum in N.Z. swamps. Two newly-arrived officers, talking it over at afternoon tea, expressed disbelief in this tomb-robbing, so we immediately took them out to prove it. Within a few hundred yards we found a crowd at work, and calling to a native offered him five piastres—a shilling—to dig up someone. He had lent his spear to a friend, but the chance of such a fortune made him chase this friend, crying and screaming until he caught him. After a little probing, he began to dig, and when he reached the bones he knelt down and peered closely at the neck. After an intent look, he jumped out of the hole, exclaiming in tones of disgust and contempt, "It's a bloody Roman." So it was, a fine skeleton of a Roman soldier, big-boned and solid, disturbed after a sleep of 2000 years. This greatly impressed the newly-arrived officers, who quickly disinterred the soldier, though the native would not touch him. Within a few feet he dug up the bones of an Egyptian child, with beads at the neck, which proved its nationality, and earned him his five piastres.

During the first few weeks wild-looking scavenger

hawks flew about the camp in hundreds, swooping down to seize pieces of meat on the ground or thrown in the air ; but afterwards they disappeared, and we did not see another sign of them.

Work for the day ended at 5 o'clock, and nearly everyone went to Cairo for the evenings. It was four or five miles away with a good tram and train service, and there we found amusements to suit all tastes, from the lowest upwards. For decent people there was pleasure, that never seemed to become stale, in the crowded streets with endless variety of nationalities, mosques, tombs, and, best of all, the Mousky—the native shopping quarter. One evening's glance at the degrading scenes of vice and wickedness was enough to satisfy most of us. Extraordinary orgies went on, and passing along the streets glimpses could be seen through the open doors of crowded rooms filled with soldiers and others, all smoking and drinking, talking and singing, and making a good representation of the infernal regions. But this was the exception, and the streets generally were filled with 20,000 or 30,000 soldiers, enjoying themselves sensibly and soberly.

Officers went to the famous hotels, Shepheard's and the Continental, but they were too expensive to frequent, and we made the Turf Club our headquarters in town and enjoyed many jolly dinners there. They served "shandy" in large clear-glass jugs, with a big lump of ice, to each diner, which was most delightful after a day's hard marching in the sun and sand. We were very grateful to the committee of this club for their hospitality, and showed our appreciation by keeping the place very crowded during our stay in Egypt.

We had our first inspection by General Godley on the 12th December. He neither sought popularity

nor became popular with the colonial soldier ; possibly the restrictions on the voyage had something to do with it. A rumour went round that he was going to put all sorts of restrictions on us in Egypt, but General Birdwood asked him whether he had brought men or boys from N.Z., and he replied, " Men," so Birdwood retorted, " Then we will treat them as men," which undoubtedly gave the best results. This was the popular idea, which may easily have had no fact for its foundation, and it cannot be denied that New Zealand owed much of its military efficiency to General Godley.

We trained very hard all the time we were at Zeitun, working every weekday, and on Sunday attending church service, which was more unpopular than training, if the truth be told.

Newspaper boys caused a good deal of amusement in camp with their cries. They did not understand English, so the sentries prompted them to call out the most scandalous descriptions of their papers and the news contained in them, often publishing very scurrilous things about senior officers. The *Egyptian Times* boy used to call " Timus to-morrow, very good news," etc., and one day he told us, " Very good news, Lord Roberts dead," which was unfortunately true and far from being a joke.

On our desert marches we were followed by native hawkers of oranges, cakes, lemonade, cigarettes and hard-boiled eggs, constantly crying out, " Oringus," " lemonaht," " Flag cigaret," and " Eggs a cook—big one," although all Egyptian eggs are small, about the size of bantams', but strangely enough they were fresh always.

Most of these goods were carried inside their shirts, and the men discovered that they could crack lemonade bottles by throwing small pebbles at the pedlar, who

gave a most lamentable howl when he felt the fizzy stuff running down him.

Most of our spare time was spent in Cairo, where there was always fun to be found, and there we filled the place of ordinary tourists, who had ceased coming during the war, and the town got most of our money.

The Citadel is built heavily of stone, and bears many marks of Napoleon's cannon-balls and bullets from the time he captured it, though they did not make much impression on the hard stone. The balls, of a diameter of from three to six inches, nearly all rebounded after making a dent of about half a calibre, but a few remain still embedded. Firing at these walls must have been more dangerous and exciting for the gunners than for the garrison, as the balls must have bounded back great distances, probably beyond the guns, and it is hard to see how they helped the capture of the place.

Less than a century ago the Citadel was the scene of the murder of the Mamelukes, who were getting too powerful for the nominal rulers of Egypt. They were invited to a feast, to which at the appointed time they were admitted, and entered the banqueting room, having been first thoughtfully divested of their weapons, which were left in the anteroom. They were then shot at leisure from above. Tradition says that one, Hassan Bey, escaped by leaping his horse over the parapet to the rocks some hundred feet below. His horse was killed, and no wonder, but he survived. The hoofprints, nearly an inch deep, are still to be seen on the stone parapet, but it is more likely that Hassan escaped by declining the invitation. To prove their respect and goodwill the people who had dispatched the Mamelukes provided splendid tombs, which remain an attraction for tourists.

A few weeks before our arrival a plot was hatched

to seize the Citadel with its arms and equipment, the plan being for the revolutionaries to enter with concealed arms in such numbers as to enable them to overcome and murder the garrison and thus gain control of the city. General Maxwell prosaically upset this plan by limiting the number of daily visitors.

The alabaster mosque in the Citadel was built of alabaster stripped off two of the Great Pyramids, and is very beautiful and worthy of a visit. The Sultan Hassan Mosque is just below the main gate. Napoleon's soldiers were quartered in it and the guides say they pillaged it, stripping the precious metals and stones off the magnificent doors, so that only one remains complete, and it is said to be worth £14,000.

Egypt is a land of tombs, and large areas are, or have been, burying places. There is a great city of the dead just outside the city, with deserted streets, the houses being tombs, which natives occupy for a few days in order to pay their annual respects to their departed relatives. In ordinary graves the headstone represents a fez or tarbush, and until this can be supplied in wood or stone, the actual hat of the deceased is placed at the head of the grave. Near this dead city are the tombs of the Caliphs, imposing structures, and beautiful from without but ruinous inside.

The reigning Khedive of Egypt decamped when Turkey declared war, so his uncle was enthroned King in his stead on the 19th December. Colonial troops took part in the ceremony, but there was only room for a small proportion of the number available. The rest had to remain in camp after ball ammunition was served out to them in case of an outbreak, which did not occur.

For a week or so after our arrival, the Egyptians had been impudent, and as we walked along the streets we could hear a subdued hissing everywhere, and it

was wise not to go about alone, and to keep to the middle of the road. As a fighter or rebel, the Gippy cuts a poor figure, and the height of his disloyalty was proudly shown during the first few days in refusing to change our sovereigns, much as they itched to do business and take the money.

The gharri drivers of Cairo have a number of curious habits. Their horses were invariably in wretched condition, but wherever the fare happened to enter the carriage, and in spite of the fact that he might want to go in the opposite direction, the driver always whipped his steed into a gallop, at the same time exhorting him with loud shouts, and set off towards the Esbekiah Gardens in the centre of the city. He remained deaf to shouts and threats from his fare until he had completed the circuit of the gardens still at a gallop, doing about six miles an hour, and not until then would he take any notice of his fare's desire to get to his destination. Even in narrow streets crowded with people they always drove as hard as they could, shouting loudly, "Oah! Oah! Rigla! Oah! Yaminak!"—"Look out for your toe! Look out to the right!" The driver became most indignant if he ran a man down, cursing him and slashing him with the whip, assisted by a policeman if one was handy, who also thrashed the obstructor of traffic with his cane. Paying these drivers required a little experience, because if paid what they asked they broke into a storm of weeping at not having asked more; so, as we wished to treat them fairly, we always calculated what was a reasonable amount, and gave it without waiting for arguments, although there were always complaints as long as we remained within hearing.

While out in the desert training, mirages were very common, and on some days they were everywhere. They took the appearance of clear water lying in

depressions on the sand at distances of from fifty yards to half a mile away. At first we had bets on it, the water looked so real, glittering and glistening in the sun, and sometimes the surface was rippled by the wind. It appeared just as real through field-glasses, and horses or men passing through it had all the appearance of wading, with the parts below the surface quite invisible. We saw no mirages presenting cities or palm trees in the sky, but probably no one else ever did, although we have all read of them in travellers' tales.

On Christmas Day a number of us went to the Pyramids of Ghizeh and the Sphinx. Although it was winter it was too warm for climbing; and, remembering Mark Twain, we paid a man five piastres to get to the top of the biggest and back under ten minutes. He returned in eight and a half, looking for more piastres, but we were satisfied. The bulk of the Australian Imperial Force was camped at the foot of the Pyramids.

On the 29th December the N.Z.E.F. paraded for a march past before General Birdwood. The desert rose in clouds of dust and the going was heavy, so the poor infantry had a bad time, going by companies in line over a hundred paces long. A good line was kept until quite close to the saluting point, then a small wave usually formed on the right flank which travelled along, increasing as it went, and ended in the left whipping badly, to the great annoyance of everyone.

Next day the N.Z. force and some Australian units were marched through Cairo to impress the natives and keep them from becoming uppish, but they only looked sulky and unfriendly. With heavy kit, the fourteen miles through stuffy streets was far enough for us, and the hard roads produced many blistered feet.

A few days later a party of officers arranged to visit

the ruins of Memphis and the Tombs of Sakara. No one got much leave in those days, and it was a great treat to be away from military work for a day. We went ten miles by train to Bedrasheen, where our donkeys met us, and we soon reached Memphis, an old-time capital of Egypt and a great city, but there were no ruins to be seen except two huge figures of Rameses II lying in the sand, one of Assuan granite, the other, a finer one, of limestone, and near by a recently discovered sphinx. We visited the Step Pyramid, said by guides to be the oldest structure in the world and dating 6000 B.C. Not far away are the Tombs of Sakara including those of Ti, Meres, the Persians and the sacred bulls. The pictures and colourings in many of these appear as fresh as if done a week or so ago, instead of thousands of years B.C.

In one interesting room were depicted the games of the period, very like those of the present day. There were ball games, ring games where the players stood in a circle, teasel, tug-of-war, dancing, girls' games, farming scenes, and one representing two Nile boats, Dahabiahs, each trying to land at the same place and the boatmen threatening each other with their oars.

A large inclined entrance leading down into the sand, reaching a level passage, brought us into the Tomb of the Bulls, which consisted of twenty-four recesses placed alternately on either side of the passage. Each recess was as large as a room, and, with one exception, contained a huge granite sarcophagus big enough to hold a bull standing upright. The sarcophagus which should have occupied the vacant place was still in the main passage nearly blocking it. While this was being put in its place some great event must have occurred to prevent the interment. Probably the country was conquered, as has happened so many times. The Romans and other robbers split and

damaged the massive stone lids in their efforts to remove them.

The Persian tombs are unlike any others, and were designed to baffle tomb-despoilers, who must have been always plentiful in Egypt. A huge hole 150 feet deep was dug in the sand and an enormous sarcophagus placed in the bottom, with the stone lid propped up so that the body might be placed inside later. The hole was then filled with loose sand and, a little distance away, a narrow well was dug to the same depth and connected with the coffin by a tunnel. When the person was buried the props under the lid were removed and it fitted closely down loaded with fifty yards of sand. The plan was ingenious and must have baffled many a robber. We descended one of these narrow pits by a spiral stair of iron, and looked into a stone coffin ready prepared, that had not received its occupant.

After seeing as much as our minds could comfortably take in we crossed the Nile to Helwan. Another boat reached the landing-place at the same time as ours, and both crews wanted to be first. They lifted their oars and threatened to strike, with fierce looks and loud language, and in doing so, exactly acted the picture of so many thousand years ago that we had been looking at. The boats, sails, the boatmen and their dress and gestures were identical with the picture in the tomb.

We dined well in Helwan in an hotel which had been the palace of Tufik, the great-grandfather of the present Sultan, and when we arrived back at camp we felt we had had a full and enjoyable day.

All this time we trained and were getting hardened after the voyage. Incidentally we tramped the land of Goshen in all directions within a distance of twelve miles, and dug innumerable trenches which will be

our memorial until the sand drifts level them again. We became very familiar with the desert ; many of us liked it, and there must be plenty who remember with a certain pleasure the lonely Beit-El-Shahat, our night and day fight at Gebel Urfa, and our marches through Mataria and along the old Suez Road past No. 2 and No. 3 tower. None of us cared for the night marching, which generally included digging trenches with a protective screen thrown out in front, and a hot and hungry march home again to a late breakfast. Many men became ill, and some contracted pneumonia, through getting chilled in the cold air after profuse perspiration marching and digging. Often our brigade marched three or four miles on a compass bearing until we reached a point generally marked by a small stone, not at all easy to find in the dark ; and then we went on a new bearing for about the same distance, timing the march to attack a selected position marked by flags in the morning twilight. Afterwards we tramped home, having completed a triangle of twelve or fourteen miles.

Headquarters carried a light visible only from the rear, which we followed much as years earlier the Israelites followed their great leader and the pillar of fire. Night operations were not popular with any ranks, and company commanders failed to appreciate the volume of advice and criticism they received, taking up much time that might have been given to instructing the company. Actual war has the advantage over training that no staff person comes along to trouble you, and if you get into a tight corner you remain there untroubled until you get out or not, as the case may be.

One night we practised an attack on another company—an operation of some anxiety. We had visitors all night, first the Colonel, genuinely worried lest an

error should be made, followed by the second in command, and nearly all the time the Brigade Major, besides lesser lights. The Brigade Major quite approved my plan to attack at the first blush of dawn, though it is the worst time possible, because ever since we fought in blue paint the British have always attacked at that time, and we also have the habit of "Standing to" for an hour morning and evening, during twilight. Germans or others aspiring to make war with us may be assured that it is a waste of time to attack us at these times, and any other of the twenty-four hours is preferable. As a matter of fact, the Germans became jocular about our "Standing to," and they are not humorous easily, and when we got to know them better in France, they often called out to remind us that it was time to "Stand to" or "Stand down," fearing that we might omit our usual precautions. My only point of difference with the Brigade Major was the actual time of dawn and sunrise, which he insisted was an hour earlier than I had observed the previous morning. For several hours we continued this argument, which I found as restful as trying to sleep with the sand going down the back of my neck.

A hot three days' Khamsin wind was beginning and sand was drifting everywhere. I could not very well tell the Major that earlier in the evening I had visited my enemy Company Commander, and compared watches and tactics, so that we knew exactly what we were going to do. He would never have approved, although it simplified matters.

When the time came we charged forth in four lines to be met in the teeth by "Five rounds rapid" and "Prepare to charge" by the opposing Company Commander. Then we each blew our whistles as loud as we could, and the lines of bayonets stopped in time

to prevent bloodshed, and the battle was over in two minutes, everything perfect, almost broad daylight and the sun preparing to rise, according to schedule.

The Brigade Major was perfectly dumbfounded ; in fact in very much the same condition, allowing of course for the difference in sex, as the Queen of Sheba after her visit to King Solomon. The thing was too pat to be right, and he knew it ; but possibly blaming the sun for having played a trick on him, he returned to camp without comment. Unknown to him, I had wondered during the night if my opponent had moved from his position so as to take us in the flank when we attacked. That would have been too much like war, and it was satisfactory to find he was too honourable to play the trick even if he thought of it. The Brigade Major caught one of my subalterns out during the night, however, by inquiring of him the direction of one of his sentry groups. He said it was in the direction of a certain star, a fatal error, as he was asked with apparent politeness, " Do you not know that stars move ? " It would have led to an interesting argument if the young fellow had asserted that his mark was the pole star.

According to the book the young fellow should have given the directions of the post by compass bearing ; but if he had done so the major would have tangled him at once over the variation of the compass, a thing no soldier is ever sure of. If he had said the variation was east, the major would certainly have made it west. He had no scruple in putting the sun back an hour, a thing that has not been done in the army since Joshua's time, and would have thought nothing of turning the variation of the compass about.

We were nearly blind with dust when we arrived in camp about noon next day and were glad to shut ourselves up in the tents to drink tea and recover.

About this time General Birdwood saw our battalion practise an attack, and afterwards gave a characteristic criticism. "Gentlemen," he said, "there may be a hundred ways of doing this attack, of which perhaps three are essentially wrong. I am glad to say that you have done one of the right ways." It was cheery and tolerant, and showed that he did not need to impress us with his superior knowledge. So many critics think there is only one way to do a tactical operation, and that their own way.

On the 18th January we route-marched with waggons through old Heliopolis, the site of the Bible city of On, where Joseph found a wife in the priest's daughter, and passed the standing obelisk, whose companion, Cleopatra's Needle, stands rotting and desolate on the Thames Embankment.

In our spare time most of us visited the Cairo Museum, with its thousands of scarabs and mummies in all shapes and sizes, from mummy shellfish up to full-grown bulls. Cats and dogs of strange breeds were plentiful. We gazed at the fine collection of Pharaohs, with their patrician faces and similarity of feature. There was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, of the Exodus, and the one who "knew not Joseph," and many others. There was one poor Pharaoh who had been killed in battle, with his face broken in as though with the blow of an axe. It is strange enough that a blow probably struck by an ordinary soldier so many thousand years ago, should show its murderous result so long, and still be able to cause that uncomfortable feeling we experience at seeing a brutal injury on a human face.

By the middle of January we had reached the stage of hard physical condition, and the men were becoming impatient, fearing that they were never to see any fighting. This feeling, then often expressed, is

common to soldiers who have not been in action ; but once having been in a battle, it is very easy to realize that it may happen again. Training and marching were becoming irksome, but we were on the eve of a change, although we did not in the least expect it. During the afternoon of the 25th January, officers were secretly warned that the enemy had appeared in the neighbourhood of the Suez Canal, and we were to go there next day. No one knew how the news got out, but it spread like wild-fire, and in a few minutes there was a wonderful outburst of rejoicing. It seemed as if everyone had gone raving mad, all cheering and singing, with bands playing everywhere. When this had subsided we settled down to twelve hours' hard work to fix up the thousand and one things needed to complete a battalion to take the field. We had to serve out ammunition, field dressings and food, and most of us blackened our buttons. A Company Commander is very busy at such a time with a family of 250 people, who are not able to get the smallest thing except through him and by his signature. We had a good many sick, but these recovered during the night, and all returned to duty except one in hospital, and he threatened to follow the fashion. The evildoers demanded to be brought to me from the clink, and they begged hard not to be left behind ; but they needn't have worried—bad men are at a premium when fighting is about.

We left for Ismailia next afternoon, and as we drew out of the station we had a curious feeling of going into something eerie and unknown. The only person to see us was an English nursemaid who was all smiles and waved us off cheerily. We arrived in the small hours of the next morning and were taken to our place near the station, when we went off comfortably to sleep on the sand. Snakes and scorpions were

plentiful, and the scorpions gave the men many frights and a few bites at times.

After breakfast we recommenced training as if we were back in Zeitun, and this was almost more than the men could bear. After our wild enthusiasm at the chance of a fight it was beyond endurance, and they were desperately annoyed, saying we had only been brought to Ismailia for brigade training, especially as only the four battalions of the infantry brigade had been moved.

However, we went out wearily on the desert in long lines and practised rapid loading, lying in the sun on our stomachs. It was very uninteresting, with only the aeroplanes passing over our heads on their way to look for the enemy to distract our thoughts from the monotony. They were new and cheered us a little, but everyone seemed dispirited and it was tiring work continually walking along the line exhorting them to put some life into it. Presently we became aware of distant dull thuds far away towards the north. I stopped the drill and asked the men to listen, and then told them that these were the enemy guns. It was good to see their pleased faces, and after that it was no trouble to get them to work.

The aeroplanes reported the enemy daily in strength from 12,000 to 14,000 a few miles east of El Kantara (the bridge), and a few shells were occasionally fired at our posts. Everyone, including the high command, had the fixed idea that this force was merely the advance guard of an army of 100,000 or more, although there was nothing to support the belief except the fact that it was ridiculous to attack the Canal with such a small army as that reported, when it was defended by about 120,000 men supported by the Navy and big reserves at Cairo.

This mistake had far-reaching effects on our tactics

when the attack took place, because had we known the facts we could have taken their whole army, bag and baggage, but we did not care to risk a counter-attack before the enemy had disclosed his full strength. This very mistake has been made scores of times by the greatest masters of war, and it is not so easy to avoid as it may seem. The limit of aeroplane patrols in those days was sixty miles. Another theory was rumoured that Lord Kitchener and the high command in England had forbidden offensive operations against the Turks.

We enjoyed life in Ismailia, although we lived primitively on the sand without tents. We bathed in Lake Timsah, explored the town, and made friends with the Europeans. My company officers became fast friends with some French official families, having afternoon tea with them, alternately as guests and hosts, and entertaining them at our open-air concerts. We became quite used to having the enemy close by, and the thought of fighting him never entered our heads.

The men were more contented than in Cairo, and the simpler life was less strenuous. There were no serious military offences. However, one day a soldier of seventeen years of age was brought up, charged with having laughed at his platoon sergeant. The sergeant was a cockney, and his expressions were more humorous at times than he intended, and quite likely when the offence occurred he was suffering a recovery from the night before with the usual loss of temper. The accused looked a particularly innocent youth and I was about to pass over the breach of discipline with a word of warning when his accuser remarked in a tone of great seriousness, "This man is a very bad character, sir." I nearly upset everyone's dignity by laughing, but controlled myself sufficiently to say, "Four days C.B."

Ismailia is a pleasant town with good public gardens, and contains the headquarters of the Suez Canal Company with many English and French officials and pilots. The natives dislike it, calling it the "Whited Sepulchre," possibly because it is fairly clean, a condition abhorrent to the average Gippy.

Our officers were again guests of the Civilian Club and we appreciated the privilege. The only flies in the ointment were the number of English generals who clustered there. They were old gentlemen of an old school, and they always looked fiercely at us colonial officers, as if the sight were very offensive. They did not in the least understand the new armies just springing up, and probably had no wish to try. Our acquaintance never got beyond this stage of mutual admiration.

Frequently small parties of our infantry, a company or platoon at a time, were sent into one or other of the defensive posts on the canal on turns of duty of twenty-four hours, and although nothing exciting happened, this was considered more interesting than training.

Mahomet's birthday was due in a few days, and the Kaiser graciously moved his to make a double event of it. It was rumoured that the Turks would attack on that day, as they were supposed to enjoy keeping anniversaries like that, but nothing of the sort happened.

On Sunday, 31st January, a few of us rode past Ferry Post and Battery Post to El Kantara, seeing the neat and well-made trenches with the Gurkha garrisons. We exchanged news and salutations with several passing transports, and returned in time for a regimental bathe in the lake, finishing up with a picture show in the evening.

On Monday it was evident that the enemy was working nearer. Stray men were seen nightly by the

outposts, probably trying to get through to gain information, and on Tuesday things began to liven up. During the morning considerable gun and rifle fire commenced opposite the town, and continued for several hours, and occasionally we thought we heard the whistle of bullets. This was too much for the natives working about the railway station and stores, and they fled in crowds towards the desert, weeping and lamenting. A staff officer galloped into our camp for a party to drive them back again. Armed with pick handles, under a hefty sergeant, the men went off gaily at a run, and soon they drove a yelling and screaming crowd of Gippies back towards the station.

After that they were kept at work by grinning Gurkhas with knives in their hands. The poor natives, naturally cowardly, had a bad time. One of them was shot dead by a Gurkha sentry, not five hundred yards away, because he was "monkeying round the post." "Accidents" of this kind are apt to occur in war, where men are on duty with loaded rifles, and orders to fire under certain conditions which must be left to a great extent to the judgment of the soldier. It was dangerous to go near a sentry or other duty man, unless you were acquainted with his methods. The risk was increased with the different language, and even officers had to be careful approaching men of the Indian army among the trees at night. The challenge was so many audible slaps on the rifle butt with the hand, and the reply, given with care, as may be imagined, was the same number of slaps on the leg.

It turned out that the firing during the morning was caused by the enemy moving south past the canal posts, with his flank brushing against our advanced troops. There was little or no damage done, and in the afternoon all was quiet again.

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF THE SUEZ CANAL

“ ‘How sweet is mortal Sovranty!’—think some :
Others—‘How blest the Paradise to come!’
Ah, take the cash in hand and waive the Rest ;
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant* Drum.”

Rubaiyat.

A MAN's first battle is an important event, and people situated as we were might be expected to spend some of their time wondering how they would feel and behave when face to face with death ; but, as a matter of fact, we were so busy day and night working, sleeping, and amusing ourselves, that we thought little of it. In spite of the fact that it was so evident, we did not realize that we were on the eve of a first engagement, or we might have suffered the ordeal of waiting for it, which is thought to be the worst part.

As we gained experience of war, we found that soldiers seldom know when they are on the eve of a battle, and that expected events rarely come to pass. So we thought little of it when, on the morning of the 2nd February, my company was told off for duty, one platoon to Battery Post, another to Ismailia on police duty, and two platoons to proceed by rail to Ein Ghusein, to march from there to the Canal. These were the ordinary duties of the Brigade at the time.

A hot dust-laden khamsin had been blowing for three days, preventing our airmen seeing the movements of the enemy, and we believed he would be

unlikely to shift, and we had no fresh information of any sort. When the two platoons entrained a very youthful Englishman was doing Railway Transport Officer at Ismailia, always a worrying job, and just then even more so than usual. Apart from such trifles as the heat and flies, and the dust and smells common to Egypt, his particular worry was about gun ammunition belonging to an Egyptian Battery of ten-pounders in position near Tussoum. He explained: "They have not a round of ammunition at the guns and they *must* have this. Will you give me your word that you will take it to the Canal, and I will warn them to meet you and take it from you?"

He was a pleasant young fellow and I readily promised, and certainly it seemed reasonable that the guns should have some ammunition with a threatening enemy so close in front; in fact, how they came to be there at all without it was a riddle. The R.T.O. was much relieved, and we took the stuff along.

We soon reached Ein Ghusein, a few miles south, and crossing the Sweetwater Canal, marched two miles against a hot gale of wind that we could almost lean against. It was hard pushing for heavily loaded men, and we were glad enough to see our destination. A belt of firs a chain or two wide is nearly continuous along this part of the Canal, but with gaps of a few hundred yards in some places.

We reported to Headquarters 103rd Indian Brigade, and were allotted 800 yards of front along the Canal. The Brigade Major gave careful and sensible instructions, and sentries were placed at the water's edge every 150 yards, with two pickets in rear. Our information was, "The enemy may be expected to patrol the opposite bank in ones or twos, or even to try to swim across to gain information, and this latter must be prevented. His patrols are to be closely

watched, and only fired at when departing. No attack is likely."

It would have been much more exciting for us if we had known that 12,000 Turks were even then marching towards the Canal in three columns of a Brigade each, one of which was to strike the point we were on—Turkish regular troops at that, and described in their orders as "The champions of Islam." But we were in perfect ignorance. We were in a comfortable spot; the high bank of sand thrown up to form the Canal gave us shelter from the wind, and we were accustomed to living on the desert without tents. The firs gave us firewood, and there was plenty of food and water. It was very cheery during the evening with bright fires burning, and we were a happy little party of just a hundred men and officers. The men were pleased to be away from ordinary camp restrictions and "on their own," and it reminded them of "camping out" in New Zealand; they were as happy as kings.

The officers and sergeants had plenty to do, taking the numerous precautions adopted for night outposts. The ground on either flank was continuously held by Indian troops, Punjabis and Gurkhas, with a territorial battery of fifteen-pounders a short distance on our right; and just beyond, among the fir trees, was Brigade Headquarters. For some strange reason no trenches had been made anywhere; not a shovelful of sand had been moved and there were no tools or material on the ground. It was a little after one in the morning before we were satisfied that everything had been done, and Sergt.-Major Glanville and I had a cup of tea and turned in, simply lying down on the sand in our overcoats when we finished our supper.

We had hardly seemed to have closed our eyes when we were awakened by the popping of machine-guns,

and to our surprise a few hundred yards on our left we plainly saw the constant flashes of two guns, the alarm clock that had so suddenly aroused us. We went quickly to the left picket which was nearest to the firing, but though everyone was on the alert, nothing could be seen in the darkness in front, and the guns were still a couple of hundred yards away. The night was cloudy with a moon.

As I was speaking to Mr. Forsyth, in charge of No. 10, a staff officer rode up and inquired in a sarcastic tone, "What are you firing at? Nothing, I suppose." I replied, "We are not firing, but someone else seems to be. What do you think of that?" pointing to the gun-flashes which made a continuous blaze a little way to our left front. This seemed to arouse our mounted friend, and he remarked with great emphasis, "By God! They are enemy! We haven't a machine-gun within ten miles." With this cheerful remark he galloped off down the Canal, only to return again even more quickly in a few minutes, decidedly perturbed, exclaiming, "By God! I was nearly shot a hundred times!" And no wonder, if he had ridden twice through the stream of bullets there must have been down there among the trees. What he had hoped to find was a puzzle, but perhaps he had a legal turn of mind and wished to have material proof that our friends, whom we could see spitting fire so industriously, were also spitting bullets.

This firing began at 3.20 a.m., and there were still about two hours of darkness. For a few minutes I was busy giving instructions for the men to dig for their lives, and for the withdrawal of sentries before dawn to prevent their being caught down at the water's edge when daylight came. We also had to arrange the distribution of ten cases of reserve rifle ammunition, and while seeing to this we came on an amusing

scene. The Egyptian gunners had at last arrived for their ammunition, and were trying to load it on mules which were kicking and biting. One had his load on the saddle, certainly, but it was under his girths, and he was bucking about and kicking strenuously. The Gippy is a notorious coward and would not go near, and our men looked on, laughing loudly.

Returning to No. 10 platoon, to my great amazement I found the place vacant, only the overcoats lying where the men had been. In a few moments a man came and said that Mr. Forsyth had taken half his platoon farther along the canal, thinking something unusual was happening there. This ground had been occupied earlier in the night by Indian troops. We followed our guide as hard as we could run, and as we did so we realized for the first time that we were under fire; bullets were passing and others fluttering down at our feet, evidently spent after a long journey; but, perhaps because we were very interested in following Mr. Forsyth's party, the fact seemed commonplace and natural. We found the party about 300 yards away, extended behind a number of tree stumps conveniently embedded in the sand at the water's edge; and in front of us was the dark mass of the enemy in boats crossing towards us, and only about fifty yards away. It was hardly necessary to order fire to commence, and in a moment we were shooting into the dark objects in front. The people in the boats did not fire, and though suffering cruelly, made no sound. It was apparent that they were trying to get back to the bank they had just left, and that there was confusion in the boats.

Very soon the boats that were not sunk had struggled back and the men who were able escaped up the bank. Then we saw what struck us as a very strange sight. A line of figures suddenly appeared right across our

front, every man fully exposed on our skyline and digging frantically. The shovel blades seemed to be in the air all the time, every action being visible against the sky. It was very odd to think that these men, so busily engaged in the homely task of digging, were THE ENEMY we had come so far to meet. We certainly had never expected to get such a fine view of them. They were exactly 120 yards away, working very close together, and appearing an easy target. For about twenty minutes we did our very best to stop their digging, but perhaps we accelerated it. Anyhow, try as patiently as possible, I could not bring a man down; and others did not seem to have better luck. Some must have been hit, but the work continued furiously, until in a short time they were out of sight, and we had comparative quiet until daylight, with plenty of time to look round. There was no high bank at this place and no cover for a long distance back; but it seemed a mistake to remain at the water's edge where the tree stumps indicated our position, but would hardly keep out bullets, so we moved the little party back about twenty yards up a slight bank, and there scratched a sheltering groove a foot deep in the level desert.

There was time to think out a plan and I told the men to keep perfectly still when it came dawn, and not to fire until the word was given, which would be at least a quarter of an hour after we could see the enemy. Then everyone was to kill a man if possible.

When dawn came, and before it was light enough to shoot with any accuracy, we saw a long line of enemy rifles very close together, held upright above the bank of sand that concealed them, looking like the teeth of a ragged comb. They began to shoot at once, but we lay still with our rifles aimed, and our eyes fixed on

the enemy until it was clear day, and I gave the word to fire. By this time, many Turk heads were showing, and many must have been killed ; anyhow, we fairly dusted their parapets with bullets.

The fight for fire superiority was very short, although the Turk is a brave man, and many persisted, bringing their rifles slowly down to the horizontal, while at the same time raising their heads until their eyes were nearly visible, when five or six of our bullets would strike the sand in front of each man's face, causing them to disappear. We soon had the situation well in hand, and then we continued to fire at the smallest target to prevent the enemy's getting the upper hand again. This would have been fatal to all of us, as we had no cover and were greatly outnumbered.

On the bank just opposite there were four boats aground and scattered above them a great number of prostrate figures, some in heaps of four or five. Behind their front trench were a number of small sandhills fringed with scrubby bushes which concealed their supports, who were able to fire at us through a gap in their front line, but they were 300 yards away and we did not waste many bullets on them. We did not dare to raise our heads or move for fear of disclosing our position, except to work the bolts of our rifles, and this became more and more difficult on account of the sand getting into the mechanism, until at last the bolt had to be hammered forward slowly and painfully with the fist. My watch stopped and none of us knew the time, and the sun poured down on our backs, which began to ache steadily in the bowed position. Bullets were passing thickly, but the most noticeable sound was the continual sharp cracking near our ears which, though we did not know, is caused by passing bullets at short range. We could hear the English Territorial battery firing on our right,

but nothing of our Egyptian gunners, with their precious ammunition.

At the most exciting time in the fight, a soldier close by became very uneasy and restless. He had discovered that he was sharing his narrow shelter with a particularly hairy and repulsive scorpion. When his comrades realized what was the matter they gave him plenty of advice. One called out, "Shoot the —," which would have been perfectly simple if the insect had crawled out in front, but that was what he just would not do, preferring to snuggle up close to the soldier. The poor man was unable to move much for fear the enemy across the Canal would spot him, and he was too much upset to deal with the enemy at home. At last a friendly voice said, "Cut him in two with your bayonet," and he drew his weapon and got rid of his tormentor with his first blow.

The volume of rifle fire became intense an hour or so after sunrise, indicating that a considerable battle was in progress. Before daybreak we heard sounds of serious fighting about half a mile on our left, where the Gurkhas were, and we guessed that the Turks were getting a severe handling, judging by the blood-curdling and unearthly screeches that reached us.

The Gurkha is a smiling, happy little fellow, but fierce and bloodthirsty. His favourite weapon being his kukri, he has to get to close quarters. His method is to grasp his opponent's beard, and shear him through the left shoulder to his vitals. Should he not be bearded, the nose is used as a handle instead. Apparently some of the Turks had managed to cross, and the Gurkha was using his knife and causing the awful yells which sounded like a soul in torment escaping from the body. We saw one of these knife wounds next day, the flesh of the poor Turk being

stripped to the bone from the shoulder to the wrist by a badly aimed blow.

By this time the Turks in the nearest trench were reduced to firing their rifles without aiming or showing their heads, with the effect generally of blowing up a little cloud of dust near the muzzle. For some time we wondered what caused these sudden puffs of dust just below their parapet.

Just as we were congratulating ourselves that the enemy had no guns, we heard a shell whine over and burst a long way in the rear, and we knew he was ranging on us. I must confess that my heart sank, and I put my hat on. There were no steel hats then, but one could not go bareheaded with shrapnel about. The third or fourth shell burst on the trees in the rear, and for a few hours the shooting continued with great regularity and perfect timing, traversing backwards and forwards practically harmlessly, its extraordinary accuracy being our salvation, as there were no shorts. The Egyptian battery did not fire a shot during the battle, and possibly the ammunition had not reached it, but at about 2 o'clock in the stillness of the following night, when everyone else was making up for lost sleep, they fired it off very rapidly and effectively so far as noise went.

We found four Turks were sheltering in holes at the water's edge just opposite, under the bows of a boat, and they fired at us from time to time, until at last they lost their nerve, and three of them tried to escape singly up the steep twenty-foot bank. As each scrambled up on hands and feet he was riddled with bullets and rolled back again. The fourth man remained concealed until next morning.

During the hottest of the fight a tiny torpedo-boat came down from the north with several of her people on deck. We were astonished to see this vessel

steaming into such a severe rifle fight, although she was so low as to be out of sight of most of the firers. She certainly was a gallant little ship, firing a gun with a big bang as she passed. Just then the voice of one of my sergeants was heard. "Get under cover, you — fools, or you'll get shot." They must have thought it was a general at least, for the deck was bare in a moment.

During the day there was time to notice the faces of the men in our neighbourhood. All eyes were fixed on the enemy and never taken off for a moment, but the expression was one of keen enjoyment, as would be seen at a theatre when the play was of an extraordinary and interesting nature. Two or three Gurkhas were among us constantly grinning. Away on our left I could see the faces of the Indian soldiers, and their gleaming teeth were most noticeable. In this fight we were having a good time and the enemy was under the harrow. For some hours he tried to strengthen his front line, but the supports were shot as they came up in dribblets. At times we had little to fire at, and sometimes men fired at a Turk rifle and struck it out of its owner's hands, which was not likely to make him less nervous. For a short time men ran along their trench, giving us a target so like our "Running man" used in training, that at first we thought it was a ruse, and they were carrying dummies to draw fire. They were real men, however, and very hard to hit, although only 130 yards away. Our easiest shooting was during the last three or four hours of the fight, when they tried to escape one or two at a time from a particular point in their trench. It was becoming intolerable to them on account of the fire from some of the rest of my company, who were shooting down the length of their trench at long range. Most likely their officers were dead. The only German

officer left on the field was found shot through the head in this trench. Major von Hagen must have been a brave man, but it was of him that the *Illustrated London News* said, "He was prepared for any eventuality except the one that befel him," referring to the contents of his pockets, where, among other things useful in Egypt, was a white flag carefully folded in a khaki case. Some movement generally warned us when a man was about to try a run for his life, and as they foolishly went from the same spot, several rifles were waiting, and the man seldom got ten yards. Only one actually escaped by crawling a couple of hundred yards, and then flying for his life. He bounded along, arms and legs in the air together, and no wonder, with most of us firing and swearing at him. Another tried the same trick, but Forsyth brought him down with his first shot at 250 yards. The men laughed and clapped their hands at this. The effect was comical, because his hat spun six feet straight up into the air as he fell with a bullet through the top of his head. Several good shots were applauded during the day.

My bugler went away two or three times on messages, and I asked him later what it was like, and he replied, "Verra warm, verra warm, sir," which we were soon to learn was no exaggeration.

About midday two companies of Punjabis crossed the Canal at Brigade Headquarters and moved down towards the enemy under cover of the steep bank, but the enemy shrapnel followed every move and we could see them ducking their heads at the bursts. This fire must have been cleverly controlled by someone on a telephone, as the Punjabis appeared to be perfectly concealed from the view of the enemy.

Nothing could have been finer than this attack by native troops ; not the least hurry or any confusion, but

looking exactly like a drill movement, with the long firing line, supports and reserve. The only differences were the spurts of sand about the poor fellows' faces as they lined the ridges, and the wounded and dead jerked back by their ankles down the sloping sandhills to have their wounds examined. This attack ran into something much too heavy, and it was necessary to retire with the enemy pressing pretty hard, but not hard enough to disturb the retirement in the slightest. It might have been taken as a model of a company in action, attack and retirement. We did our best to help them by rifle fire, and when the retirement began we were able to shout a warning to a small party which was in danger of being cut off.

Curiously enough a hundred or two of the enemy who had succeeded in crossing the Canal about half a mile to the left were firing into the Punjabis diagonally across our front at the same time. Most likely they were the people operating the telephone to their guns, as they would be able to see every movement as well as we did.

Native troops in action appear to like to have white men and officers near them. I was the senior officer for some distance, and at short intervals during the day voices could be heard calling, "Majure, Majure!" followed by a question in their language. Not understanding, we shouted some sort of reply, which seemed to satisfy the questioner for a time.

The two enemy machine guns which had fired before daylight were not seen or heard again. What became of them is a mystery, as they were not captured. Dead Turks with Turkish bayonets in their bodies were found where they had been firing. These may have been the gunners who made the fatal mistake and gave the alarm, or possibly they were guides who were thought to have failed in their duty.

Before midday we realized that the enemy was beaten, and most of the fire was coming from the sand-hills 200 or 300 yards away, not many being left alive in their front-line trench. Our backs ached abominably, and we were so sleepy under the hot sun that most of us had a short nap.

About 2.30 p.m. an order came to close on Brigade Headquarters. We were loath to obey it, because the ground was perfectly exposed, and we saw that other troops moving behind us as a result of the order were losing a good many men. There was no choice in the matter, so I got our little party of twenty-eight men back a short distance, and then we lay flat for a few minutes to get our breath again. So far we had not drawn fire. Some 150 to 200 yards away the high Canal bank would give us safety; but there was not the slightest cover between, and we were bound to come under the fire of 200 or 300 rifles on the way.

There are several ways of making this sort of crossing, but we had been watching the effect of doing it in driblets or singly, and it was not encouraging. Each man or little party had been fired at and many hit; so it seemed advisable for us to take a gamble all together in one rush. By doing this the other people are taken by surprise, and you get a good distance before being fired at, and then, on account of the large target, the firing is hurried and inaccurate. I had the place of honour when we started, and did my best to keep it, but a few passed me. None of us is likely to forget that run, with the bullets cutting the sand and whispering in our ears, so that it was difficult to avoid wondering where one would get it. I was running neck and neck with a soldier, when he suddenly took his hat in his two hands and held it before me to show the groove of a bullet that had just scorched his forehead, exclaiming, apparently pleased,

"By Christ, that was close!" It was cruel hard work, and we realized as we ran that we had had nothing to eat that day, and were stiff with lying in one position for nearly twelve hours; but it was soon over, and we reached the bank crowded with Indian wounded. There we learned that Ham was hit. Forsyth was behind him, and when he fell on his face had turned him over so that he could breathe. Forsyth and another were anxious to bring him in, but I forbade it, thinking we had been lucky enough in losing only one man. The Indian officers could not understand having to move in and being shot at, and a captain offered to ride to Headquarters to have the order confirmed or cancelled. He had no spurs, and his attitude when he came under the bullets caused some laughter, and someone called him "Tod Sloan." His head and body were hardly visible, but his heels were in great evidence, although he was unable to get his mount beyond a lazy canter with all his efforts.

As we had passed the worst place we went on and gathered up the rest of the two platoons. Brigade Headquarters told us we could rest awhile, and that apparently was the object of our being called in.

On the invitation of the Brigade Major I sat on a box beside him behind a sandbagged shelter to hear the news while he attended at the same time to the telephone and the Acting Brigadier. Being of a bright and cheery nature, he was quite equal to the task. Although Egypt was full of generals, and there were supposed to be thirteen on the Canal, it was left for the fight to be run by a Lieutenant-Colonel, just then very irritable in the top of a tall pine tree. It looked undignified and uncomfortable, and the sniping had annoyed him, so that it would have been unsafe to have asked if he were bird-nesting.

This was the sort of conversation that went on. The Brigadier, staring across the Canal, says : " Who the hell is that moving over there ? " The Brigade Major to me under his breath, " How the devil should I know ? " To the Brigadier in a loud voice, " Don't know, sir." The Brigadier, very snappy, " Go and find out." Rather crestfallen the Major replies, " Yes, sir," and goes to the Canal bank grumbling, and returns to call out with apparent conviction, " A few of our men bringing in a wounded man, sir." A growling sound, but unintelligible, comes from the tree, and we light our pipes and prepare for a talk ; but just then a stray bullet strikes about six inches from our feet, throwing the sand painfully in our faces.

In spite of this the Major told the news that the enemy had made three attacks, and that they had completely failed and the battle was over. There were still a large number of bullets flying about, which we could hear striking some timber and iron lying near. The enemy was shelling the hospital, our only building, about half a mile away, very accurately and leisurely, plastering it with shrapnel, and the thin wooden walls gave no protection to the wounded. In desperation the poor fellows crawled out at the back, and were found fainting on the desert in all directions. This went on for hours, and curiously enough one shell lifted a small pine, and for a moment it could be seen suspended horizontally in the air.

We were glad to have a meal and compare notes with the remainder of No. 10 platoon under Sergeant Guy, and No. 9 under Mr. Saunders. From their higher position they had fired along the enemy front trench, and could also see large parties sheltering behind the ridges and sandhills farther back. These men were enjoying themselves, smoking and kicking up their heels, but the controlled fire soon disturbed them.



MAJOR BRERETON (*Standing*).
SERGT.-MAJOR GUY (*Sitting*).



The strike of bullets could be observed a mile away. The enemy staff had approached the Canal mounted to within 1000 yards, until their gold braid was clearly visible, but they stampeded at the first round from our guns and were seen no more.

At one time a warning was given that the enemy were massing for a new attack, and Private Pike caused a laugh by saying, "The saucy bastards! They don't know I'm here." Our veteran Sergeant Williams was wounded by a time fuse embedded in his back, and was the first N.Z. casualty in the war. He was so impressive in his language that the trembling stretcher-bearer could hardly bandage him for sheer awe.

When we examined the belt of pines we found how lucky we had been in our position a few yards in front of them. Nearly 30 per cent of the trees were cut down by shells, but fortunately they had failed to locate Brigade Headquarters or the Lancs battery.

At 4 p.m. we again took over the ground we had first held the evening before, and it was quite enough for our numbers. We were now ninety-eight all ranks on 800 yards, and one man to eight yards does not give much fire power. During the fight we had held 1300 yards. A hundred Indian sappers under a boyish English officer took over the gap on our left. I noticed one of my N.C.O.s posting a sentry to relieve a Punjabi, and just as it was being done the native was hit by a bullet and carried away; but the corporal and his relief took over as casually as if it had been 100 miles from danger.

About 9 o'clock in the evening a general appeared at Headquarters and to my great amazement made minute dispositions for the fight which had just occurred. This was on a par with the mistake of having our hundreds of machine guns in camp instead

of where they would have been useful. There was very little firing during the night, except that the Egyptian gunners burnt their powder and broke the silence.

Soon after daylight next morning the *Swiftsure* appeared, coming slowly down from the direction of Lake Timsah, and a mounted officer galloped to warn her that the enemy was still about the banks. She immediately opened fire with her heavy guns and twelve-pounders. It was curious and impressive to see this big battleship moving slowly along plugging the bank at fifty yards with her shells. She had a look-out hoisted high on her mast in a basket, and, as she passed the pontoons, the Turk, who was still concealed there, shot him dead. But he was quickly avenged by a twelve-pounder shell fired at the same instant. A few days later we asked a bluejacket on the *Swiftsure* what they did about the man who had killed their look-out, and he said, "We hit him in the teeth with a twelve-pounder." I was curious enough to examine the spot afterwards, and all that remained was a blue enamel mug and a piece of leather equipment. When the ship was passing us we forgot all about the enemy, and everyone stood up on the banks, looking at the extraordinary sight and calling out greetings and chaff to the sailors. The ship's staff, beautifully dressed in blue, were walking up and down on the bridge with their telescopes under their arms as usual, as composed as if they were at a review. Only the dead sailor, with his head and arms hanging limp out of the basket, and the banging of her guns reminded us that the ship was in action. I informed her Commander that he had passed the most dangerous place, and he instantly gave the order, "Cease fire."

Later in the morning we returned to Ismailia with an officer and soldier as prisoners. One had been

shot through the body, the other through the leg, but for all that they would have outwalked us only that a man driving them with a string on each arm, like children playing at horses, restrained them when they went too fast. The main body of the enemy retired some miles, leaving their dead and wounded behind.

Unfortunately our friend, the young sapper officer, was killed in a white flag incident while clearing up the battlefield.

During the next few days we learned a good deal more about the battle. Their orders had been carefully written in great detail, evidently by a German, and if they had been obeyed, the attack must have succeeded to a limited extent. The boats, steel pontoons, with the name *Constantinople* printed on them, were to be carried by men the last mile or so without a halt; and when the water was reached the crossing was to begin at once in perfect silence, and no shot was to be fired before they were across. On reaching the British side they were to attack right and left, and so sweep a gap in the defence. However, the orders were inaccurate in stating that the defence consisted only of a line of sentries.

Crossings were to be made at three points about half a mile apart with a brigade to each point, so that the attack covered about a mile of front between Serapeum and Tusum. In the light of these orders the foolish firing of the two machine-guns before the crossing had commenced is altogether unexplainable. Turkish papers stated that the attack failed on account of the "fierce fire of the enemy."

Private Ham died in Ismailia Hospital on the evening of the 5th February. The bullet that killed him first struck the wood of his rifle, and glancing off entered his neck, breaking the spinal column. He

was buried next day in the civil cemetery at Ismailia, and our French friends promised to tend his grave. A great yawning hole of a hundred yards long, eight feet deep and eight feet wide had been foolishly dug there to receive our dead after the battle, but we did not bury him in it, and it was filled up again unused. It must have been designed by a pessimist, and was anything but reassuring for troops to see, weeks before the battle. The men disliked the look of it intensely, and fairly shied whenever they passed.

A few evenings later the Bishop of Jerusalem confirmed a number of soldiers in the little hall of the "Culte Evangelique" in Ismailia. By contrast with the current events the ceremony was very impressive. It was my pleasure to act as guide to his lordship over the battlefield. The place had become rather shocking to ordinary standards, and I was curious to see whether a highly civilized man would be upset at the sights, if brought suddenly on some particularly gruesome spots without warning. However, his lordship never blinked an eye, but remarked casually, "Poor fellows." He was more interested in souvenirs, and soon had a load of them. There was enough gear about to load a train, and among them hundreds of boots discarded to facilitate escape. They were wretched worn-out things ranging from heelless slippers to lace-up boots without a decent bootlace in the lot. The equipment was mostly home-made and poor in quality, and had been cut off in their haste to discard it. Several hundred dead were lying around, some with Turkish bayonets still in their bodies. It all pointed to a panic on a large scale, during the hours of darkness, probably when they were first fired at. Nothing else could explain the quantity of cut equipment and the weakness of their firing line, compared with their available troops.

They would have scored a considerable success if they had lined the bank of the Canal when they came up at 3.20 a.m. and had been satisfied to improve their cover until it was fully daylight, and then opened fire on us. They had sufficient men to cover all their three points of crossing with two men per yard in the firing line, and the same in reserve and support. This would give them a mile and a half of front with a great superiority of fire, especially with the assistance of their machine-guns.

Our little party of 100 rifles would have been opposed by 5000, including supports and reserves, and we should have been overwhelmed at once, and the crossing made in safety. Once over, the enemy might easily have swept up several miles of our position, but their success would have ended at that.

We fired 8000 rounds of ammunition from the reserve of ten cases, eighty rounds per man, and still had the regulation amount in our pouches. We scored a very good effect, judging by the number of dead in front, and the only criticism our shooting received was from Major Wallingford, who said jokingly that we wasted our fire, because many of the dead had ten bullets through them when one would have been sufficient.

For about four days the enemy remained in the hills twelve miles away, and a small effort on our part would have destroyed or captured the lot. It was talked of, and a demonstration was made, but it was rather farcical. A regiment of cavalry, a battery of artillery, and two companies of infantry from my regiment marched out into the desert until they came suddenly into full view of the whole Turkish army peacefully preparing their evening meal, and, according to the infantry officers, only 1000 yards away. There must have been considerable consternation on

both sides, and our party naturally retired, followed by a few shells. On his return, the rear company commander reported that he had no stragglers, which was not to be wondered at.

Eventually the enemy faded away into the Sinai hills, taking with him all his heavy material, including his six-inch guns. Apart from the smallness of their army, such an attack was doomed to failure, on account of insufficient transport, especially of water. Not a drop of water remained in their water-bottles on the day they attacked, although they had plenty of bread. Possibly it was expected that even a partial success would give them a political rather than a military advantage. It certainly was a unique operation, and probably it will be a long time before the Canal traffic is held up again, even for twenty-four hours, while a battle is being fought across it.

Except for losing a couple of days attending to the Turks, our old task of training went on, the critics resuming their occupation, and the sun gained strength. A staff officer visited us one day when we were dug in, and supposed to be resisting an attack, and propounded the following conundrum: "How are you going to get up your ammunition?" The desert in rear was level and as bare as a table, but men might have been found to attempt to cross it under fire, although to have succeeded would have been miraculous. There was no other method.

On the 21st February we returned to our old camp at Zeitun. The Egyptians were very pleased to see us back again, believing that we had been defeated and were retiring.

CHAPTER IV

ASSEMBLING AT LEMNOS

"A good general, a well-organized system, good instruction, and severe discipline, aided by effective establishments, will always make good troops, independently of the cause for which they fight. At the same time, a love of country, a spirit of enthusiasm, and a sense of national honour will operate upon young soldiers with advantage."—*Napoleon's Maxims* LVI.

IN March we were still training on the old familiar ground, but farther afield in comparatively large formations of troops, up to the strength of a division; while we were getting very fit, there were signs that the men were feeling restless, and beginning to say and think that they would never get into the big fighting.

We had several considerable battles on the desert, with about 20,000 troops engaged on both sides, and to get room for deploying this number required heavy marching. The fighting was keen, especially against the Australians, whom at first we did not like, being very parochial.

When opponents got close enough there was a tendency to stone-throwing, which had to be repressed. One night the N.Z. Brigade dug in, covered by a protective screen of one company. It was moonlight, and the company composing the screen was very jumpy, so much so that once, when they thought they were being attacked, about a hundred of them broke and ran, and it was difficult to rally them. Although

we never saw them, there was an enemy about somewhere and the men had an idea that they might be surprised and captured, which caused the panic. It was a very curious thing and hard to explain, because New Zealand troops have been proved to suffer very little from nervousness when in action against a real enemy.

Sometimes the mirage played tricks on us, and once two opposing companies marched into each other, both completely enveloped in the mirage. In a remarkably short space of time both companies had developed a firing line, supports and reserve, and were engaged in a hot battle.

Locusts were plentiful during the spring, flying in clouds which looked at a distance like ordinary rain clouds, and it was not uncommon to meet a flight of these insects all going past in one direction and frequently butting against the troops and falling to the ground.

Physically we were as hard as it is possible for men to be, and we could march twenty miles on the desert with full pack up, and come in in better condition than we went out. Everyone was full of life. For some time we practised going five hours between breakfast and lunch fully loaded, with water-bottles filled. Bottles were examined on return, and any not full to the cork brought punishment on its owner. On waterless Gallipoli we reaped the value of this training. Looking back when we knew what was expected of troops, it was hard to see how our training in Egypt could have been improved, and it was evident that wise heads had planned it.

We continued to take our recreation in Cairo, and, for some unknown reason, on Good Friday, the 2nd of April, colonial troops partly wrecked a street in the city, burning furniture and some houses, without

attacking the people. It went on for several hours, but ceased at midnight. Mounted military police made matters worse by riding at the unarmed crowd firing revolvers blindly in all directions, and so inflaming the mob that they would have torn them from their horses if they had not discreetly disappeared. There were a dozen colonials in hospital about Zeitun with bullet wounds next day, and there must have been many other casualties. This affair, discreditable to all concerned, was called the "First Battle of the Wazir."

We began to hear strange rumours of doings on Gallipoli, and there were many surmises as to what was really happening. We were convinced that the Naval bombardments must be accompanied by a military landing, but we could hear nothing of the land force. The 3rd Australian Brigade had simply vanished, and we were sure it must be in it, part of a force which we reckoned could not be less than 150,000 men.

Though efforts were made to keep it secret, we knew that on the 4th April Australian troops were marching through Cairo by night, and entraining, so we were not surprised when we paraded next day by shiploads so as to come under command for embarkation. The 12th and 13th Companies of my regiment, with two companies and headquarters Wellington Regiment, paraded for one ship under the command of Colonel Malone. It was a wretched day; khamsin and dust so thick that it was impossible to see a hundred yards, and we could hardly find our place. We stood by with everything packed, ready to move at any moment, until the 9th, enduring considerable domestic inconvenience. The mounted rifles, who were not coming, did what they could to help us, and did not let us starve.

We left Palais de Kubbah station at 11.20 p.m. and arrived at Alexandria at 5 next morning, embarking at once on the *Itonus*, a B.I. ship. At midday we went into the stream, picked up two big lighters and a steam-launch, and, taking them in tow, left the harbour. None of us knew our destination, but there were a thousand guesses on the ship, and all correct. We were fortunate in being under Colonel Malone, commanding the Wellingtons, conspicuous as a gentleman and a soldier, and one who left an indelible impression of his character on his regiment, so that it remained throughout the war a very perfect fighting machine and a pattern of efficiency.

We received maps of Gallipoli the second day out, so our destination was no longer in doubt. At first the sea was smooth, but at Rhodes Island we ran into a gale with heavy rain and sea, and at dusk on the evening of the 12th April the lighters and launch broke loose. We stood by during the night and found them at dawn, but the sea was too heavy to launch a boat, so the captain had to drop an officer and some lascars on the tow after some careful manœuvring of the ship. The sea became worse, and it was soon evident that we would be lucky if we recovered the men and lost the boats. Once we had a line on for a few minutes, but it snapped like a piece of cotton. Then, as the ship's counter rose, the steam-launch came under it, and falling, drove the funnel through her bottom, and she sank like a stone. Luckily, none of the men were in her, and they were dragged back to the ship on the end of a rope, and so we left the lighters and steamed on. The scene was wonderfully beautiful, and would have made a striking picture, if anyone could have painted the ship wallowing among the great purplish-blue waves, and the boats dancing about fantastically, with the figures of the

officer and the lascars in their picturesque coloured uniforms.

The *Itonus* once rolled to an angle of 45 degrees, and the men fell in heaps across her decks shouting and delighted. They took most things as a joke, but how hardly they were to be tried, and how impossible it was to lower their spirit, we did not know then.

Early next morning we anchored outside the boom at Lemnos. The hills were green with the first pale growth of spring and looked pleasant after the brown Egyptian desert. As one man remarked, "It is not a bad place to be buried in." We could see that the harbour was crowded with ships, and recognized the *Queen Elizabeth* with pleasure. Destroyers were moving about in a businesslike way, keeping station with such precision that in the distance they looked like children's toys towed on a string. In the afternoon we passed through the narrow gateway in the boom and anchored beside the cruiser *Askold*, the veteran of the Russo-Japanese war.

Luckily, we were unable to continue training at Lemnos, but we practised disembarking and embarking in boats daily, and often we had a short and pleasant march ashore. Disembarking into ships' boats by means of ropes and rope ladders is very difficult for heavily-equipped men, each carrying a rifle and a load of about seventy pounds.

The island was quite treeless, the land poor and rocky, and the people lived primitively with their flocks and a little cultivation, making their wool into cloth by hand. The villages were mostly on high ground, where a rocky stream supplied water and washtubs as well, the clothes being washed on the rocks. The islanders were quaint in their clothing, the men's pants being very baggy, and one old

gentleman's brushed the stones as he walked. From the hills we could see Tenedos at the mouth of the Dardanelles, and the warships on guard.

One of our transports on the voyage to Lemnos had been attacked by a Turkish submarine, which fired three torpedoes at a few hundred yards without effect, and was then pursued and driven ashore by our destroyers. Unfortunately, there was considerable loss of life in the hurried launching of the boats, but the remainder of our troops re-embarked and reached Lemnos.

A very varied collection of people had assembled on the island and they were greatly interested in each other. French troops, white, brown, and black, soldiers from Australia and New Zealand, men of the 29th Division, Russian, French, British and Greek sailors all made the most friendly advances to each other and the islanders. In one street representatives of all these nationalities were dancing to music, each one performing in his own particular manner. Greek sailors were particularly popular, perhaps because we thought at the time that Greece was coming in on our side. The air was full of rumours about Greece. It was persistently affirmed that King Constantine's wife had stabbed him because he wished to join the Allies. His health bulletins supported this theory as he was suffering from an unnamed disease, and was bleeding from the lungs; and for all the good we knew of his wife's people, she was just as likely as not to have done it.

The men of the 29th Division were of great interest to the colonials, knowing that they represented the best of British regulars. We were rather disappointed in their appearance, their clothes being anything but smart, and their caps in particular sloppy. They were very workmanlike and quiet, and they looked as

if they would be solid fighters, as they proved. These battalions had been on foreign service when the war broke out, and were recalled to England to refit, so that they had not yet come in contact with the enemy. One of them voiced the grievance, "We have been all round the bloody world, looking for the bloody war, and haven't found it yet." In a few days his battalion was to find it—on V. Beach—a bloody place indeed.

Whenever we met French soldiers we halted for a long conversation and mutual admiration. Each delighted to show every detail of his equipment. The Frenchman's special pride is his long, slender four-cornered bayonet, affectionately called "Rosalie," and he presses the information that a prod with "Rosalie" is always fatal. It is certainly a sinister weapon.

The Lemnos ladies were much occupied in making woollen yarn and spinning, and were very shy of the camera; and partly because we could make no headway in conversation, they refused to show their faces at all, and we could only get a photograph by turning away as if we had given up trying, and suddenly wheeling round and shooting before they could get their heads down. By this trick we secured pictures of smiling faces.

The harbour was very crowded, and for several days we were tied bow and stern to an Australian trooper, which proved good company, and we had entertainments every evening. One of the Australian N.C.O.s was an efficient mesmerist or hypnotist, and the antics of his soldier victims caused great amusement. Altogether we had a most enjoyable stay in Lemnos.

The entertainments were more amusing than elevating. The hypnotist got several soldiers under the

influence and then drew their attention to an imaginary cloud in the distance. He then continued: "You see that small black cloud: it is getting bigger and coming nearer. It is now overhead, and it is beginning to rain. Look at the big drops. Why, they are gold! Golden sovereigns! falling down everywhere about you! Pick them up, you can have all you gather." Of course the men made frantic efforts to stuff their pockets, and some, more patient, stood with hands open to catch the shower. Another hypnotized party had their attention drawn to the ground they were standing on, and their tormentor exclaimed: "Why, the ground is alive! It is jumping with fleas, now they are getting into your putties and clothes. You will be eaten!" The poor fellows were tearing their clothes off in a few seconds.

Private séances for officers were more dignified. It was very odd to see one of the ship's officers hoisting an imaginary boat from the water, and giving all the necessary orders until it was securely lashed in its place on deck. It was evident from his attitude and expression that there was as much mental reality about the job as if he were actually doing it.

Ever since we left Egypt, the unfortunate men were living on a diet of bully beef and biscuit alone—a terrible crime, considering that there would be little else to eat on Gallipoli.

In our ship all the decks were of iron, on which the men slept without mattresses, but there was no complaining. It seemed impossible to make those men complain. It only gave rise to the joke which became well known. "We live in an iron ship, we eat iron rations, and now 'Iron Hamilton' is to command us." Bully beef and biscuit comprise an "iron ration."

On Wednesday, 21st April, our orders for the attack

on Gallipoli were issued, and we heard that the following Sunday was to be the day. Sunday seems a popular day in British history for battles. We were very busy the last few days attending to the finishing touches. Everyone was blacking his buttons by burning on sulphur, and officers were tailoring, removing rank badges from their sleeves and replacing them in worsted on their shoulder-straps, while the N.C.O.s usually substituted indelible pencil markings on their caps for their chevrons. Maps were constantly studied and the slopes worked out, and a great number of wills were made. We did not know how useless the maps were and that they would cause the death of thousands before we captured accurate enemy maps, made in Germany.

We had plenty of information about the habits and manners of the Turks. Popular literature describes him as "unspeakable," as if he had habits of committing atrocities not to be mentioned in detail. We received official reminders of the Turks' beastly habits in war, and we expected no mercy if taken prisoner. Naturally we felt a deep hatred, and this embittered the fighting. Numbers of English people who had lived in Turkey declared that the Turk was a kindly man, but we forgot this and their splendid military record, and that for long they had been allies of the British. We knew we would not get a kindly welcome when we invaded his country, and we fully realized that it would be a kill-or-be-killed business, but otherwise there were so many uncertainties that we gave up thinking about it. We were rather keen to have another go, as his poor showing at the Canal gave us a contempt for the Turk's fighting.

Before we left, I wished to secure some Lemnos flowers, so I contrived a last trip ashore with our chief engineer. As we walked up the steep bank above the

landing jetty, a little girl came with outstretched hands and gave me a large bouquet. It was an odd incident, especially as no one else had thought of collecting flowers, and she did not seem to expect anything in return for them. We walked towards the town, and entered a beautiful Greek church, where we saw the ceremony of christening a young infant. The church was nearly filled with officers and soldiers. The young priest who assisted might have sat as a model for a picture of Christ. His classical features, long hair and fair beard made him a pleasant figure in his flowing robes.

We were interested in the preparations to use the *River Clyde* to put troops ashore, but we had no wish to form part of her crew. She was being painted on her starboard side to resemble the rocky coast where she was to be beached, armed with machine-guns, sandbagged, and large sally-ports cut in her sides. Camouflage was not in general use, but fine curling bow waves were often painted on warships to give the appearance of speed.

On Friday the ships that had crowded the harbour began to move singly through the gate and take up positions outside the boom. We had often tried to count them, but when we reached 150 our reckoning failed, and we were never sure of the number. The silent procession impressed us as nothing else could, the stillness only broken when a ship passed close to another, and then a sudden burst of cheering broke out and immediately died away. Noiselessly the warships approached, and passing we could hear their bands softly playing our old national airs, giving us their last message, "The Girl I left behind Me" and "The British Grenadiers." The *Askold* went out playing "The Lads in Navy Blue."

On Saturday they still went by. Three French

warships passed looking like ladies in deshabille, with their week's wash hanging everywhere. The scene became more lively, destroyers moving in clusters, some crowded with soldiers, and ships of all types and all nationalities took their places in the march. Least in size were the mine-sweepers, North Sea trawlers, flying the White Ensign. Although humbly employed in peace time, they had an important part to play, and carried themselves proudly.

We completed our landing kit, each man taking 200 rounds of ammunition, full water-bottle, firewood, two emergency rations, one twenty-four hours' ration, an overcoat and oilsheet, but no blankets.

The 3rd Australian Brigade were to land first, and would form the covering party. They were given this honour at their own request. They were to take advantage of the last quarter of an hour before dawn to get ashore, and then to use the daylight to drive the enemy off and leave the beaches clear. The hopes of the whole landing depended on these first few minutes, because if the brigade were able to get fighting room, the troops following could land comparatively safely.

Our ship, the *Itonus*, was moving towards the scene in the darkness of early morning, and the last quarter of an hour before dawn we almost held our breath though we were miles away from the landings. We could only wait and listen, and as soon as it was broad daylight we heard the sound of the guns supporting the attack. The battle had begun, and we breathed easily again now the tension was broken.

We towed two lighters which kept yawing first one way and then another, and sometimes nearly dragged under, and the ship seemed to be steaming slowly. Great resentment was felt as the idea took possession that the captain was holding back. He was a queer

fellow on the worst of terms with his officers. Once on the ship's bridge the captain and two of his officers took off their coats and threatened each other with their fists, while hundreds of soldiers looked on in amazement. The military officers discussed locking him up and letting the chief officer take the ship. He was a fiery little Welshman who certainly would make the pace.

As we sat at breakfast, Colonel Malone expressed his wish that all denominations should have their particular form of Divine service. Himself a religious man and a Roman Catholic, he took the Roman Catholics. He asked me to arrange for the Church of England men. We lost no time, Major Jordan helping to choose the hymns and prayers, and to my surprise, as I thought they might well pray for themselves, he wished to include the prayer for our enemies.

By this time the scene was a splendid one. A few miles away the allied fleet was moving about in a cluster off the southern end of the peninsula, showing vivid light-coloured flashes from the guns, and rolling clouds of smoke and dust on the ridges accompanied by the heavy sound of the bombardment. As a soldier put it: "A millionaire would give a thousand pounds for a front seat at this show."

In spite of these distractions the men enjoyed the service, singing the hymns heartily, but as soon as it was over, all eyes were turned again to the peninsula. Details were quickly becoming visible, and we could distinguish the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Swiftsure*, and *Askold*. The day was perfect, with not a cloud in the sky or a ripple on the water, but the heavy ships were rolling with the discharge of their guns as they circled round recoiling from their fierce fire.

The *Askold* was particularly active, and often there were exclamations that she was sinking. She was very

noticeable from having five long funnels which gave her the name we knew her by—"The Packet of Woodbines." The scene ashore gave us even greater pleasure than the ships. For several miles the ridges and hills seemed to be going off in clouds of smoke and dust, driven along by the constant impact of the bursting shells, and through this we could see the Turkish troops struggling southward to repel the terrible invasion. It seemed as if very few of them would get through the storm which was on their road. We watched for an hour or so, and then came abreast of Gabe Tepe and were able to see our own landing. It was not nearly so spectacular and there were only a few warships. When we reached a mile or so north of Cape Gabe Tepe we learned that the navy had discontinued landing troops, because the situation was so critical that the question of giving up the undertaking was being considered, and we continued to be spectators for a few hours.

It was impossible to see what was happening in the broken shrub-covered country, and we only got a confused impression of bursting shells and the fierce crackle of rifle fire, with no definite lines to be seen and nothing to show which was friend and which enemy. We could see several parties road-making on the steep cliffs, and wherever the ridges were visible they were lined with men lying down, apparently firing.

The ship's officers were naturally very interested in the undertaking, and found the thought of remaining behind when we went to face the music almost unbearable. They had to be content with showing us every possible kindness, and anything and everything in the ship was placed at our disposal. When the ship's officers discovered that military officers expected to have to steer the boats in, they swore solemnly that

they would leave the ship and pilot us safely ashore. However, they reckoned without the captain.

Just before we left, the hardy little chief officer came with tears of rage to say that the captain forbade his leaving. It was a sad disappointment for them, after their promises, and high hopes that they might have been able to come a little farther, the strongest possible instinct to brave men.

During disembarkation we should come under the direct command of the navy, and we wondered how they would treat us, hoping they would not bully or swear at us if we were slow and awkward at the unusual job. As there was no sign of our being called on to go ashore, we spent a few hours in waiting, all preparations being complete ; but we took the precaution of filling ourselves as full of water as we could hold, in view of the dry times to follow.

Suddenly and unexpectedly a destroyer placed herself alongside and asked for two companies of infantry. The 12th and 13th Companies were detailed to go in that order, so, after being idle all day, I became all at once very busy, first in devising the quickest means of getting the men through the sally ports to the destroyers' decks ten feet below. We were prepared for going down ropes into ship's boats, but what we wanted here were gangways. The fourteen-foot mess tables were just the thing, and in a few minutes they were in place, but of course they had no side-rails and were steep and slippery. However, this fault rather expedited movement than otherwise, and heavily-equipped men in hobnails were soon slipping and running down the steep incline, to slip nearly as badly again on the iron deck of the *Bulldog*. Luckily, helpers were willing and plentiful.

No one ever saw a jollier scene. As the men streamed down each one was received in the powerful

embrace of a bluejacket, and swung aside on the deck with as much fun and cheerfulness as if they had been ladies at a picnic. There was no shouting of orders—in fact none seemed to be given—but people were guided to their places as if by magic. The only remarks were from the sailors, "Come on, deary," "Here you are, my darling," "Come on, Susanna," and a big, awkward infantryman would half run and half fall with his big boots on the bluejackets' bare feet; but nothing worried them that day, and with a "There you are, Mary Ann," they would prepare to receive the next armful. In a few minutes 500 soldiers were on board the little ship and we moved off.

We lost no time questioning the sailors as to the happenings ashore. There was never such an optimistic crew. "The Australians made a great landing, and are driving the enemy everywhere," and "Everything is going splendidly." The holiday spirit was in charge of the ship, though they had a good deal to say of a big shell that had just before nearly blown the *Bulldog's* stern off, and seemed to have made a great impression. Years after I learnt from his brother that the commander of the ship had been killed as well as members of the crew, but from their manner we had no suspicion that any such accident had happened.

As we slowly steamed in, the landing of troops and the embarking of wounded was in full swing again, a beautiful and interesting sight. It looked like a huge boating picnic in ideal picnic weather, ships' boats and all sorts of vessels going to and fro full of men; those going towards shore perfectly quiet, those coming out waving hats and cheering each passing boat and ship. These last were the wounded, mostly Australians, returning to the transports. The otherwise cloudless sky was flecked and ringed with white

where shrapnel was bursting. The enemy fire was rapid but wild, and no doubt they were finding the number of targets very confusing, as very few shells burst effectively, most so high as to be practically harmless, while some plunged into the water. A good burst, with its large circle of water cut up white with bullets, certainly looked unpleasant, but such were the exception. There were numbers of upturned abandoned boats suggestive of earlier tragedies. Our decks were so crowded that there was just standing room, and those who happened to be sheltered by the smoke stacks appeared to be lucky. Just as the thought went through my mind, a piece of iron as big as a fist passed through one of the funnels, proving that the shelter was more apparent than real. About the same time an officer beside me was hit in the neck with a slug. This made him very quiet, though usually rather a breezy, warlike character.

When the *Bulldog* had taken us as far as she could, we got into boats and rowed to the beach. We could see people firing in all directions, and bullets splashed about in a disturbing way. A gun on the beach a little distance away looked as if she were firing at us, and there seemed no reason why she should miss. It turned out to be one of our guns, however, firing up Shrapnel Gully. As we landed we had to avoid stepping on a dead bluejacket, who lay with his feet in the water—a reminder of the navy which had come thus far to help us.

Several of us got ashore without wetting our socks, quite a consideration in the circumstances.

CHAPTER V

ANZAC

"At once from either side, with trumpet blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses run."

The Coming of Arthur.

It was a great relief to stand on firm ground again. A watery grave does not appeal to a soldier, who knows he must take the risk of enemy fire, but a wet death is an abomination.

The staff were delighted to see us, and several of them shook hands warmly and said, "We are very glad to see you, Brereton." This was so unusual that it was almost sufficient to cause, in the language of the Army Act, "Alarm and despondency in His Majesty's forces," and we realized at once that the situation must indeed be grave. However, a few minutes later one of them commenced swearing at us, so we cheered up, feeling that all was not yet lost. We heard news of the rest of the battalion already landed. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Stewart, was dead, and Major Loach was in command; Major Grant was mortally wounded or dead, and in one company all the officers were either wounded or dead.

We moved off inland up a steep hill towards Plugge's Plateau, and passed General Birdwood's Headquarters in a little hollow marked by a piece of board stuck in the ground, which bore the roughly printed initials of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps,

A.N.Z.A.C. Crowds of men with picks and shovels were working hard on the cliff face above us forming a road.

Before we reached them we were halted, and after a considerable time orders came to move the company to the extreme left, where the line was weak. We returned to the beach and followed it towards the north past Ari Burnu (Cape). Dusk was coming on, and to avoid the enemy fire on the beach we struck inland, and found the travelling very bad and the ground broken and scrub-covered. Just as I began to wish for a guide, we met Major Wallingford, the world-famous musketry exponent, with a formidable revolver in his hand, and he good-naturedly offered to show us the way, leading us along a narrow gut or gully in single file. This soon became impassable and we had to retrace our steps. It was extraordinarily difficult country to get about in, but eventually we found the flank, resting on a narrow beach with a ridge rising steeply on the right.

By this time it was quite dark, but there were a few men on the position mostly asleep, and looking round I saw an officer lying either dead or asleep. A slight kick proved he was not dead, but only exhausted, having fought his way well up the Sari Bair ridge with his platoon, and being afterwards forced back over the cliffs to the sea.

The ground we had just moved across was littered with the results of the first few minutes' fight after the landing. Rifles, packs, overcoats, bodies, equipment, and letters scattered open in great quantities gave the impression of an army that had been thrown ashore shipwrecked. The great bulk of the dead were the splendid Australians of the 3rd Brigade; and we remembered as we passed them lying there that they had given their lives for our safety. It was disappoint-

No. 2 Post.

No. 1 Post.

Tur
Gall



ANZAC

Looking in behind Turkish

Sherman's
Redoubt.
Two Enemy M.Gs. Firing
at Walker's Ridge.



EA
st
Camp No. 2 Post.





ing to see so few Turkish dead, but it was evident that not many had been killed on the beach.

After clearing away the bodies of some Australians we began digging, and continued until daylight without losing a moment. Intense rifle fire continued all night, and it was impossible to tell whose it was or where it came from. In the morning we had fair cover except from fire coming from the hills at our back, which was just as likely to happen as not. We faced north, and for about half a mile the ground was comparatively flat, and some of it had been under the plough at one time. The beach curved towards the left, and beyond the low ground the spurs again approached the shore about 1000 yards away. On our right front the water-worn cliffs were continuous.

Eight hundred yards away three ships' boats were aground, and a curious pile in front of the bows of one of them attracted our attention. Through glasses this appeared to be a heap of dead bodies at least forty in number, and as we watched we could see an arm feebly raised at intervals, and dropped again. There was life in one at least. This appeal could hardly be resisted, so a small party was sent out to see what could be done, but they were promptly driven back, lucky to have escaped a casualty. The unfortunate man still kept moving as if appealing for help, so I sent out a larger party in the hope that they might control the enemy fire, but with no better result. While we were doing this, two Australians, unarmed and unnoticed by us, went along the open beach with a stretcher in full view of hundreds of Turks on the high ground. Not a shot was fired at them, and without the least haste they went to the wounded man, placed him on the stretcher, and carried him in. As they passed I saw the wounded man, his unconscious face was black with blood, and looked like death, and

I spoke to his bearers, dirty and tired-looking, telling them they both deserved the V.C. They smiled wisely without replying, and went on with their heavy load.

This was one of the first acts of self-sacrificing courage that we saw, and for a short time surprised us. Similar acts in untold numbers followed, so that we soon ceased to be surprised, and at last the high command found it necessary to discountenance them in orders, stating that no honour would be granted in connection with them, possibly not to discourage men from helping comrades, but to make it understood that it would have to be done gratuitously. Apparently men will do for the sake of humanity, in the form of an unknown man, what they would not do for all the honours at the King's disposal; at any rate they continued risking their lives for their mates.

We were fighting on historical ground where heroes of old had fought and died, leaving behind dim tales that had lasted through the centuries; and possibly thousands of years before history was recorded, the neighbourhood of Gallipoli was the battling ground of peoples of Asia and Europe. It was soon to be seen if twentieth-century men might rival their deeds, and give the world something more to remember. Whatever it was, there was a flavour about the Gallipoli fighting that made it fiercer and more romantic than other campaigns.

Just inland from the unlucky boat was a small roughly-built room, known as Fisherman's Hut, and rising from it a little knoll fifty feet high. About the middle of the morning we were warned that our howitzers were going to destroy the hut, as it was thought to shelter snipers, and we were asked to give it a good rain of bullets at the same time so as to kill any Turks who bolted. As the shell passed us on its

way, to burst near the target, we commenced firing, pleased to assist, when, to our surprise, a six-inch from a ship also landed near the hut, and it became a keen race between the gunners of the navy and the army. They had each got in three rounds when the army won with a fair hit, and the roof went up in a cloud of dust. There were no Turks in it, and, as it turned out, the building would have been useful if it had been left standing.

All this time the musketry was intense around us, but fiercest up the hill on our right. We could hear our own machine-guns firing fast, and the enemy's were making a very peculiar sound like a huge scythe cutting with a harsh rasp, very unpleasantly suggestive of the grim reaper. It may have been due to the guns having a particularly high rate of fire, or because the stream of bullets were cutting through dense scrub, probably the latter. The navy was firing steadily, but our useless maps made them over-cautious, and only too often they stopped. We did not mind a shell or two, so long as the enemy got the lion's share. During the morning a ship firing six-inch over us burst a premature 200 yards behind, in just the right spot to be effective. There was no time to run for cover, and we held our breath while the shower fell. Our only casualty was the heel of a man's boot torn off, but to our annoyance the ship stopped firing.

At midday, April 26th, we were ordered up the ridge to assist the Australians, and I reported to an Australian Colonel, apparently acting Brigadier, and found him very anxious. He gave me the verbal order, "Connect up between the 13th Australians and the 13th New Zealanders, and, when you get there, hold on." I assured him on the latter point, but begged him to give me an idea where the troops were, but this he was unable to do. It was no wonder,

with useless maps and thirty-six hours' constant fighting on unnamed hills without rest or food. He was completely worn out between worry and fatigue, and was killed within a few days.

The company struggled on up the narrow track until we passed the 13th Company, which I knew to be the only 13th New Zealanders. Beyond them we passed a little bullet-swept knob, and again entered a goat track through the dense scrub. The firing just above was tremendous, and the track became almost blocked with Australians coming back wounded in every shocking way conceivable. Two men walked past shot almost exactly between the eyes, and one of them remarked casually that it was a fine day. Possibly both were unconscious, but were automatically walking back to safety.

Soon we came to a party of over a hundred men of the Australian 13th Battalion, apparently without officers or N.C.O.s. They said that all their officers had been shot and that everyone was getting killed, and they were all that was left of the 13th Regiment. We halted to allow Sergt.-Major Glanville time to take forward a small advanced guard, in case we ran into the enemy, or they attacked, and in this way went a few hundred yards farther. As long as we held this ground the ridge behind us was safe, and it was no use looking for the 13th Australians if it were true that we had the survivors with us, so we began to dig in where we were. The ground was very hard, but our lives depended on it, and although we had only the entrenching tool we got down slowly. We realized that picks and shovels are very important weapons to carry into action, almost as valuable as rifles.

The Australians became quite happy again and remained attached to my company. It was unlikely that they were the only survivors of their regiment,

but they had evidently suffered terribly and become detached. Although we could not see five yards in any direction we knew the enemy were very close, and we could hear their voices practically on three sides. They contented themselves with heavy firing, apparently not caring to try and push us out, which would have proved a stiff task.

In order to test the feeling of the men I called out, "No New Zealanders will leave this place," and after a short pause an Australian voice replied, "And no Australian will either."

The 13th Company, a few hundred yards below, was able to pour a good volume of fire into the scrub on either side of us whenever we thought the enemy was making a move to attack. We were great friends with them, and had only to shout when we wanted Captain Cribb to fire, and then there was no delay. If the enemy should succeed in creeping up to jump in on us, we could only give them a few rounds and then depend on the bayonet. The men were quite satisfied with this, and were in fact far too happy and contented, and were sleeping everywhere. Mostly quite young, the loss of one night's sleep with the hard work and excitement made them deadly tired, and the officers had to move about continually insisting that at least half of them remained awake and ready to fire.

We got two Turk prisoners somewhere, and in passing I said to the man in charge of them, "If they make the slightest move, stick your bayonet into them at once." The look in the prisoners' eyes showed that they understood quite well what was said, and thought it was a bit hard, but it would never have done for them to get away and tell their friends exactly where we were, and all about us. We could easily have sent them back to headquarters, but there was a greater risk of their escaping on the way. All

night the navy was thumping its heavy shells above us, and our position seemed reasonably secure.

Soon after dark I received an order to send out a patrol, and report in writing what it learnt. We knew that the enemy was within fifty yards, and it seemed like certain death to leave our cover, but I sent out a sergeant and four men. If they escaped the enemy bullets they were likely to be shot by their friends on returning, as we could not allow unseen men to enter the trench, and the firing would make a password useless. The patrol went, thinking very hard, and in a few seconds the wildest fire broke out from both sides. The enemy knew we were moving, but in spite of all the chances the patrol returned safely, with their clothes and equipment well punctured with bullets. They saw nothing, and the experience must have been very like groping about a dark room full of exploding crackers. I spent most of the night listening to the yarn of an Australian private who related his life-story, and explained very shrewdly why they had lost so many men that day, putting it down to not digging enough cover and drawing fire by moving and talking too much.

Before morning my company was relieved and we went about half-way down the hill and began digging again. An attempt was being made to separate the New Zealanders from the Australians and allot a part of the defence to each. Soon after we moved I found to my horror that a precious twelve-power Goertz glass was missing, and I returned quickly and quietly in the dark to where I had been talking to the Aussie, and found them still hanging in the scrub. They had been lent by a friend, who had taken them from an officer of De Wet, who in his turn had taken them from a British gunner officer during the South African War; so they had an interesting war history, apart

from their actual value. I was very lucky to recover them.

My company was now in a good position with very broken ground in front, and the enemy on higher ground 250 yards away.

During the next day, Tuesday, April 27th, the enemy made numerous desperate attempts to force us back, and the top of our spur again became a wild scene of fighting. The sound of it was remarkable. General Walker, who was temporarily in command of our brigade, decided to clear the top of the hill, and the Wellington Regiment was given the job, with me acting as guide, as far as I knew the ground.

Going warily over the dangerous little knoll, I found a man of my company working single-handed getting a lot of helpless wounded across it. He was soaked in sweat and pale with exhaustion, but he worked with tremendous energy, hauling, heaving and rolling them over with a buzz of bullets about him. He smiled when I told him he had chosen a nice place to work in, and I left him to his dangerous job.

The Wellingtons tackled their job gallantly, and as they reached the crest a perfect pandemonium of fire burst out. It was a sad waste of life to send so many men into such a small space without a chance of first examining the ground, and they caught it very severely, eight of their officers being carried back within twenty minutes.

On our narrow ridge there was always a stream of wounded, and they were the wonder and admiration of everyone. When a man was hit, his mates always put a cigarette in his mouth and lit it, gave him a drink of water and started him off if he could walk. They passed continually in twos and threes all laughing, talking and swearing at the enemy. Vivid pictures remain of men with arms round their comrades' necks,

with shattered limbs swinging where they caught the ground, and the badly hit man in the middle, bright, cheerful and swearing. It gave new ideas of human powers of endurance. This was one of our bad days, and a tense, uneasy feeling existed from top to bottom of the ridge. There was always the possibility that a few thousand Turks might get a rush on and sweep it to the sea.

The 12th Company was called up to support the Wellingtons if necessary, and we had nothing to do but sit about talking during that long afternoon, momentarily expecting to be wanted. Every half-hour or so word came to be ready, and the order, "Stand up, men," went round, only to find that we were not needed just then.

Out of the din of the fight above three orders were incessantly passed by word of mouth away down to the sea below. These were, "More reinforcements," "More ammunition," "More stretchers." In peace training this passing of orders is often practised, and they generally go slowly and badly, but at critical times in action, they fly like lightning and are nearly as hard to control, beginning and ending—no one knows where. The officers on the ridge tried hard to stop these flying messages, which were only likely to cause confusion. Colonel Malone did not require more men—as there were already too many—or more ammunition, and our stretcher-bearers were making the greatest efforts to get the wounded down, until some of them fell unconscious as they worked. It can be imagined what it was to carry men long distances in that terribly difficult country. When they got one man down they had to hurry back, always to find more wounded than they could cope with, while the wish to save their comrades' lives drove them to make the greatest possible effort. Though the stretcher-bearers

had no sleep, little food and very little water, it is certain they did not spare themselves.

In spite of all this turmoil, our hardy old general—Walker—was moving his headquarters to a place just below the fight, practically on the dangerous knoll, under cover of which the 12th Company was sheltering. Men were sandbagging walls, digging shelters and putting in telephones. It showed that we had a general worth having, and though not much to look at, quite ready to put his life into the gamble. Towards evening the ridge quietened down to normal with the usual heavy rifle fire.

For some reason the enemy was expected to attack from the north that night, and the navy kept watch for us. Their searchlights made it as bright as day, and knowing that keen eyes were alert for any movement, we did not worry. Occasionally a ship pelted a few rounds into the gullies. The night was chilly with a little rain, and the Turks were shelling the ridge behind us rather heavily.

One little thing caused more commotion than the enemy had yet done. Late in the evening I was wakened by a heavy thud close to my ear, and at first thought we were being bombed from the air. Men were calling excitedly to "Stand to." They said that the Turks had got in behind us and were firing from about fifty yards away, and pointed out where the flashes had been seen. Just for the moment the thought went through my mind that the enemy had occupied the narrow ridge ending in Sniper's Cleft about 400 yards away. It had always seemed a very unpleasant possibility, but no flashes could be seen in that direction. We waited for a few minutes, and nothing happened, and the only unusual sound was a man groaning behind the trench. It was one of our own men with a bullet through his foot. I took

his rifle and found the shell of a discharged cartridge in the chamber, but the poor chap was dazed and had no idea what had happened. He was a sentry over stores and had been sitting with his rifle between his feet, and in his sleep had fired it, and the thud we heard was the bullet striking the ground. He received no sympathy and was left to take himself down to the beach where he could get assistance.

During the first few days a great deal of uneasiness was caused by the suspicion that Turks were moving freely about among us at night in search of information. Whether correctly or not, we were convinced that this was happening, and, as some of them must have been familiar with the ground, it was just possible. There was no way to prevent it, as the nights were very dark, and it was impossible to examine all the people that were continually moving about, so we had to put up with it, but it was surprising what a sense of discomfort it caused.

On Wednesday things were steady down to a routine, but the gun-fire went on as usual, and the musketry was heavy and persistent. It had never stopped for as much as a second since the landing, and whenever it seemed on the point of slackening it immediately burst out fiercely again. The Turks were responsible for most of the fire and appeared to be very jumpy. There were cliff faces all round which echoed and magnified the sounds, until the beating on the ear became almost painful.

Men and officers were gradually getting back to their units, but there were still many away. On such very rough country an attack like ours must result in a wonderful mixing of troops in the front line; in fact samples from all units engaged might be expected to be found in a very short space of front.

It should happen, in fact, and men and officers

should be trained to get to some place where they can be of use, when they get beyond the possibility of normal control. Troops had landed by boatloads in small parties, from platoons to a company at a time, and they were sent at once wherever they seemed to be most needed. A company was the largest body of men that could be handled on the first day; and when it is remembered that we had to move in single file, and a company stretched out to about 250 yards, it can be understood that it was very cumbersome. All along the Anzac position Australians and New Zealanders were fighting together under whatever senior officer was present, and he naturally kept the men with him until the sector was safe. This made the question of casualties very uncertain, and many that were given up for dead turned up again within the first week. We had a particularly popular machine-gun officer—Captain Conway. He had been seen to be thrown over a cliff by a bursting shell, and everyone regretted his death, which was thought certain. However, he returned smiling as usual, and explained that he had flung himself over to avoid an explosion and had escaped unhurt. He must have been pleased with the reception he received when he came along grinning after we had thought for days that he was a corpse.

When troops landed they were very heavily loaded, and as soon as it was realized that no man can fight his way up steep hills and cliffs carrying 70 lb., and deal effectively with an enemy only carrying rifle and ammunition, they were ordered to dump their packs. In very many cases these were rifled by other troops, so that a vast amount of clothing and kit was scattered about the low ground.

It was commonly believed that a party of blue-jackets escaped from the beach on the first day and

attached themselves to the Australians for about a week, when they were returned to their ship with letters carefully written to prevent their being punished for desertion.

In a few days our clothes were in an extraordinary state of rips and tears. The seats of our pants looked as if we had spent the time sliding down-hill in a sitting position. Everyone was in the same state, and senior officers went about with shirt tails showing. Mine were so bad that I had to go to the beach to tailor them, finding there a profuse assortment of needles and cotton, and an Australian tunic provided cloth for the patch. The beach was littered with thousands of letters lying open, exposing a great number of photographs. It was rather a puzzle how so many letters came to be scattered about. It seemed rather indecent to have these intimate letters and girls' photographs blown about by the wind, so I gathered little heaps and burned them.

The story of the first few days' fighting became known gradually, and we learnt that the Australians had penetrated nearly to Maidos in the first rush; but the heavy enemy counter-attack had driven back or destroyed the small advanced parties. Fighting had been particularly severe on the high ridges of Hill 971, and here our colonel—McBean Stewart—was killed. He was a brave, impulsive man and reached a critical place with a few men, only to be told by those on the spot that it was impossible to hold the enemy. The Colonel replied, "By God's help, we will hold them here," and almost as he spoke an enfilading bullet killed him. The tunic of my informant was cut from shoulder to shoulder by the bullet that killed the Colonel.

The enemy stopped when our full attack was reached, and on the evening of the landing we adopted

a line from which all their efforts could not drive us back a foot. There were many weak spots in our line; one of them had been the top of our ridge, where the Wellington Regiment was now firmly established.

I took the first chance one evening of visiting Colonel Malone's "home" there, and found his little dug-out complete, and a pattern of neatness and order. All his personal belongings—revolver, field-glasses, equipment, and other little things—had their own particular niche, and everything was in its place. The good old colonel himself was as cool and collected as his surroundings, and I could not help remarking, "By Jove, you look very snug here, Colonel." He replied smilingly, "The art of war consists in the practice of domestic virtues—neatness and cleanliness." He was very sore about the number of casualties he had suffered the previous day.

The want of water on Gallipoli was a hardship. There was none to be found on our first position, and we had landed with only a full water-bottle which a thirsty man could empty in one draught. This had to last through three days of the most strenuous exertion: and we made it last. The navy then kept up the supply, but we were always thirsty and there was no fresh water for washing. It required a great effort to prevent men giving water to the wounded, who were going where water at least was plentiful. The days remained cloudless and calm.

On Wednesday morning I went out in front of our ridge with a battery commander to select a new gun position, but we were severely sniped from the hills, and came back much quicker than we went out. It was a foolish thing to do in the daytime, as it was an open ploughed paddock, and we knew that everyone who went there was sniped, and bodies lay about in

the sun as a warning. The gunner major said it was all right, but he had not been watching it for days as we had. When the first bullets came I ran for it, and possibly the other major wasn't far behind.

Just afterwards Captain Cribb was on the beach making preparations to cover a burying party for the dead near Fisherman's Hut. He was worried how he could best carry out his orders with the least loss, but neither of us could evolve anything useful, so Cribb started. For hours I watched the men lying on the flats, with bullets spurting sand about them as they lay behind such scanty cover as they could find, quite unable to see the enemy who were in thousands above them, luckily 800 yards away. At last the useless thing was given up and the company came in, luckily with only two killed and three wounded. The dead were left to add to the others, still unburied. No one seemed to know who was responsible for this ridiculous effort to bury a few men.

Passing our dressing station near the beach, some men of the medical corps told me that a sniper had just shot one of them through the face, and begged me to try and deal with him, as they had no rifles. They pointed exactly where the shot came from, a gutter in a cliff face, about 150 yards above us, and about thirty yards below and behind my company. With glasses the muzzle and foresight of his rifle were plainly visible, also a thin trickle of earth falling away, which proved he was within trying vainly to scratch a little deeper. Just then a man with a rifle came along, and he put half a dozen bullets into the hole, while I spotted for him, and the sniper was effectively settled.

The same afternoon the supposed sniper in the cleft of Sniper's Peak was shot by Australians, who took their time and fired hundreds of bullets at him. He had not fired at anyone, but it was thought he had

been there long enough. Pigeons often circled away from the cleft, and returned, and many thought it was a pigeon post. The birds on Gallipoli appeared to have no fear of the people or the noise, and often sang cheerfully beside machine-guns in action, especially during the first few days.

During Thursday evening there was heavy artillery firing on our eastern side, and afterwards the enemy shelled the landing-place severely.

Friday again was a perfect day, with a beautiful sunset away to the west where the sea stretched in a plain of perfect blue, past the warships and supply ships and the island of Imbros to the historical land of Macedonia in the distance. Like the Macedonians of old, we were beginning to feel vaguely the need of help, and we found ourselves gazing over the sea hoping and expecting to see the wisps of smoke from transports that would bring reinforcements.

Strings of barges were constantly coming ashore from the supply ships, in the charge of a child officer of the navy leading the tow in a launch. They loaded under shelter of the supply ships, but as soon as they came in sight heading for the shore the enemy artillery opened on them with shrapnel, the circle of bullets plainly seen whipping the water. It might be expected that the boy would zig-zag to dodge the worst of it, but no line could have been drawn straighter than the course to the jetty, and it possibly was as safe as another.

The navy was our admiration, and we did our best to earn their approval and esteem by trying to follow their spirit of service and discipline. Whenever we called on them for artillery support the vicious drive of their shells and the speed of their fire made us feel the vigour and goodwill of the men behind the guns. They watched over us at night with unsleeping patience, their lights searching for any enemy who might creep

up to attack us, and the sudden crash of their shells must have checked many an attempt. As long as the spirit of the "Great War" navy exists, we shall have a weapon that we may depend on to do its duty, and the Nelson touch will still be there.

Supplies landed at Anzac Cove were carried to us by men, mules, and donkeys along the narrow beach past Ari Burnu, a stony point always under shell-fire. It was fascinating to watch the constant stream of men and animals running the gauntlet of this place. They tried to hurry past before a shell scattered them, but at short intervals they were caught by a burst which caused momentary confusion, and then the steady stream of loaded men and animals continued as before, only to be interrupted again and again with monotonous repetition. We were better off in the trenches in this restricted position. We only held a triangle on the coast, amounting to about 600 acres of very broken ground—so small that a man could have walked round it in an hour and a half if it had been level. Our farthest point from the sea was two-thirds of a mile, about 1100 yards, and the distance along the coast perhaps a mile and two-thirds. In addition we were on the lower third of a huge scrub-covered hill where the Turks moved freely around us unseen. It must have astonished them to look down on the beaches and valleys crowded with troops and animals, and the paraphernalia of an army, and for weeks they greatly enjoyed firing at this great crowd almost in safety, and found it better sport than attacking our trenches.

To make matters still more unpleasant, the enemy had guns on the coast both north and south for the purpose of raking our beaches. Lord Kitchener's remark, "Good God Almighty," as he stepped ashore and glanced up at the position fairly summed it up. All the same, the Turkish Army, which was not

amateur in war, were never able to drive it in, in spite of efforts which, if successful at any point, would have left little room for recovery. Everyone knew this, so in some cases men held on grimly to trenches which were merely shelves in the tops of cliffs, determined not to be thrown headlong backward.

Gabe Tepe formed a small hill peninsula to the south, and on it was a useful enemy battery that fired into the crowded men and baggage at Anzac Cove until work there seemed impossible, but still it continued. Gabe Tepe was so nearly surrounded by water that the navy took it as a personal insult when it opened fire, and many were the efforts made to quench it.

One day a big cruiser made up her mind to cure the evil, once and for all, and she came in very close in a very determined manner as if to say, "I'll finish you this time, you ——." Circling backwards and forwards for an hour or so, she poured in shells until the little place fairly boiled, and then departed with an air of satisfaction which said, "I've killed you this time, anyhow, you brute!" A couple of hours later Gabe Tepe began popping off her shells as usual, and we all laughed.

A few days later the sailors scored a hit. The Turks were dragging a heavy gun towards Suvla Bay with a team of horses, when they were seen by a patrolling cruiser, and the third or fourth shell burst well amongst the team, which broke loose and galloped in all directions. We were in a good place to see the sights, and enjoyed them impartially.

The *Goeben* became a regular performer, coming on early at about six every morning, and her shells were called "Christians, awake." Firing over the peninsula from the north-east, her ambition was to land a shell on one of the warships. The first was always very

wide of the mark, sometimes striking the land with an explosion like a bursting mine, but the second was closer, and the third usually fell near the target, still lying motionless, apparently unaware of the Islam attempt to wake the infidel. This was the interesting stage, as the next round threw up a great burst of water so close that some of it appeared to fall on board, and the would-be victim moved gently forward, much as a fish propels itself out of the way when you throw a pebble too close to it. We always thought that the ships cut it rather fine, and we expected to see one of them get a nasty smack, but they apparently knew what they were about and evidently they were by no means gun-shy. After a pause of a few minutes a heavy burst of firing from our ships gave the cue for the *Goeben's* exit. She never waited to return it, but contented herself with repeating the performance next morning.

In the distance we could see the fleet off Cape Helles, supporting the French and the 29th Division. We studied them closely, knowing that as the shore attack progressed they would follow and thus indicate progress; but day after day they remained in the same place in spite of the daily official bulletin which recorded the southern successes. This was meant to buck us up, but they did not make sufficient allowance for our intelligence. One of these official statements explained that the enemy was being driven north so hard and so fast that he was being violently pushed against us. He certainly was pushing us rather hard, but we had a shrewd idea he was doing it on purpose, rather than merely inadvertently through bad manners, as headquarters suggested. Another brilliant message informed us that the shells bursting above and about us were from the guns of the 29th Division, an obvious libel. We tried hard to believe these good tidings,

but were obliged to content ourselves by hoping that some progress was being made. We knew the truth soon enough, to our bitter disappointment.

Among the ships at Cape Helles we had one unfailing friend, and early each day we watched for her until some keen-eyed soldier saw her and called out, "Here comes the *Lizzie*," and all eyes turned to see that squat black dot bustling along on her way towards us, and the good news went the round of the Anzac trenches. Almost as soon as she could be seen coming, two vivid violet flashes darted from her side and voices exclaimed, "Now the *Lizzie's* talking." She was the bravest sight in the world to us, as solid as a half-tide rock, pushing hard through the calm sea to see how the rest of her family was, and to put in a smack for them.

She did not spare her guns or her gunners either, but kept her four pairs of fifteen-inches going in succession, knocking lumps off the old peninsula with her ton shells, or plastering the Turkish positions with iron shrapnel bullets the size of billiard balls. Sometimes she shelled Maidos, and the smoke of the burning town soon rose up over the hill before us. Like the Virgin Queen, her namesake, she was not a bit particular in her attentions. Many kinds of tradition are very useless in war, but it was good to be reminded by this powerful fighter, battling for us, of our greatest fighting Queen, who, with her share of faults, was brave, with visions of Empire, of which at the moment we were a precarious outpost.

Although we had no misgivings, we realized that we were in a bad position, only to be held with difficulty after the losses of the landing and later; and an advance to gain our objective could not be thought of without reinforcement.

Loss of sleep was the worst trouble and shortness

of water came next, more easily endured on account of the good sea-bathing. There was an enormous amount of urgent work to be done: food, water and ammunition had to be carried mostly by men, trenches dug and completed, roads made for guns, and wounded carried to the jetty. There was no labour available for the first week or two to bury the dead or attend to the decencies of life. The men worked right through the twenty-four hours, until they dropped for an unofficial sleep, and were not able to do all that was necessary. Perhaps they thought their officers had the idea of the German general who said, "The day consists of twenty-four hours of duty."

Our food was thirst-producing, very dry tinned meat and biscuit, so hard as to defy any but the strongest teeth. The usual way was to soak the biscuit overnight in a little water, and then eat it as quickly as possible to get the disagreeable job over. Food was plentiful, as is always the way when there are many casualties; but want of sleep became more and more a hardship to the younger soldiers. They lay like logs in the narrow trenches with the sun pouring down on them, and walking on them did not disturb them so long as their faces and hands were not trodden on. Many must have slept on duty with their chins resting on the parapets at night, to wake up when spoken to by the officer on duty.

Our sea-bathing was limited to a few hundred yards by shrapnel bursting very constantly about Ari Burnu on one side, and rifle bullets which cut up the water at the foot of our ridge; while the constant shower of spent bullets falling a little way out to sea was our limit in that direction. All ranks, from generals down, bathed together, and in the water all were equal, so a good many jokes were passed. An Australian is said to have remarked to a fat senior

officer floating high in the water, "Say, mate, you must live near the biscuit barrel." The Aussie apologized when the general was regaining his clothes by saying, "I did not know who you were, sir; but you do yourself pretty well, don't you?"

Some boats had been upset a little distance from the shore, and their contents were clearly visible on the bottom. This was a great attraction, and all sorts of things were retrieved; but rifles gave the greatest delight, and men were everywhere on the beach seen cleaning up this treasure, although rifles were nearly the cheapest things on Gallipoli, and were lying about in hundreds. We had long before replaced our long L.E. Mark 1* rifle with the shorter and more modern one carried by the Australians by the simple method of picking them up. As we stepped out of our boat one lay on the beach, which I secured and carried. Officers are not supposed to use rifles, but a little shooting does not interfere with command very much, and many officers carried one, as with only a pistol one feels feebly armed. The men were not satisfied until they had secured the most modern weapon, although one rifle is as good as another.

With so many bullets flying about odd kinds of wounds and narrow escapes were common. Some had holes drilled neatly through their ears, and others had their faces grooved by bullets and were still on duty. In a great number of cases clothes were perforated, and bullets often lodged in bandolier ammunition without exploding the cartridges. The thick web equipment and double layer of cartridges cushioned on the yielding surface of a man's body require a lot of punching through, and saved many lives. Very narrow escapes often put fear of death into people, and men could be noticed going about their work as usual, but for a time pale as death.

When a man was wounded severely enough to incapacitate him he naturally suffered a reaction from the tension necessary to keep him on duty, and he was generally deeply thankful to get to some place of peace and safety. In one case an officer was punctured through the neck and desperately anxious to get away from an exposed place, but was kept there by the main strength of a burly private, who held him prisoner by means of a puttee until he had completed winding it round the officer's neck. Another officer, in one of our night attacks, thought he felt warm blood running down his side, and was afterwards relieved to find that it was only water from his bottle.

In fiction the hero hardly knows he is wounded, but the reverse is true in real life, and one of the greatest surprises a man gets is the tremendous blow of the bullet. Through the shoulder it spins him round, as men often expressed it, "Like a smack with the back of an axe." It is very unusual for wounded men to complain of pain, and there does not seem to be much felt on a battlefield, which is a merciful circumstance. When a man receives an injury which kills him nearly instantly, he very usually says, "I'm hit," in a dazed way, as if that were all he realized.

CHAPTER VI

AN OUTPOST JOB

"And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung
Of torneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear."

Il Penseroso.

At midday on Friday, 30th April, General Walker gave me verbal instructions to occupy some hills north of our ridge, the most distant being about 1200 yards away. The ground was occupied by enemy snipers, and the General thought we should get a good deal of shelling when we were found in possession of the hills. Among other things, we were to protect two guns which were about to take up a new position on the low ground in front of the ridge.

Major Loach gave me written orders, and these required places to be mentioned which up to that time had no names. Our ridge came first, and I suggested "Walker's Ridge" after General Walker, and Loach agreed, saying, "And God knows we have walked up and down it often enough." I pointed out the three hills I intended to occupy, calling them No. 1 and No. 2 outposts, and the little hill over the hut, Fisherman's Hut Redoubt. The first three names became official. My company then went to the foot of Walker's Ridge and rested where we had dug our first trench on the night of the 25th.

Secrecy appeared to be the factor vital to success, as, if the enemy got an inkling of what was coming, the hills would be occupied and an ambush laid for us. The ground was scouted during the afternoon, but no one was told what was to be done, until in the failing light I pointed out to each officer the hills to be occupied, and his particular task. In the circumstances it was most likely that the Turks in the area would be asleep soon after dark, as they were active right through the hours of daylight.

My transport was weak. It consisted of twenty or thirty donkeys and as many Russian Zionist mule-drivers, who understood no language so far as we could make out, except bad language and the boot, and in addition were suspected of treachery. The loads were rifle ammunition and barbed wire, four tins of reserve water, one to each platoon, and a few picks and shovels.

We set off as soon as it was dark, in order to have as many hours as possible for digging.

It was an anxious hour or more, as we strung out in single file through the scrub with the constant smack of bullets around us, and we moved as quietly as we could. There was a small moon and it seemed as if we must be discovered, and we expected at any moment to be fired on at short range. An attack would have been difficult to deal with without holding up our programme, and this we could not do.

One platoon left us and struck inland up a dry dere to occupy No. 1 Outpost, and the rest of the company reached the ruined hut, where No. 11 climbed the little hill above it, leaving 10 and 12 to go a few hundred yards farther across the little valley and the dry bed of Sazli Beit Dere to No. 2 Outpost. When we reached the hut, word was passed up from the rear that the Russians with the donkeys and the

barbed wire were missing. It was no surprise, as we expected they would try some trick or other. They were no great loss, but a sergeant was with them; so I sent another N.C.O. to find them, and in an hour or so they all arrived.

Our scouts had really done the job for the company that night, for not only had they scouted the ground, but had sent back a guide to each position, and a man had remained in possession on each post to receive the garrison. We had only one casualty: a pair of scouts unfortunately mistook each other for Turks, and both snapped at the same instant; one luckily missed, but was shot through the body by his mate. The wounded man was the happier of the two, though he was bleeding terribly from the mouth and his wounds, and was apparently dying. However, he lived, though he was unable to pass the doctors again in New Zealand, and had to go to Australia to re-enlist; and years after I saw him again, a sergeant with the Aussies. A still more remarkable case happened a few days earlier on Walker's Ridge. A very fine sergeant was carried down to the beach dead or unconscious, with a considerable amount of brain substance escaping from the wound and lying on the stretcher. It was reported he was dead, but he lived to re-enlist in New Zealand and enter Cologne after the Armistice.

I made my home with No. 11 platoon, and we lost no time in getting to work on a trench round the hill-top, hoping to get down at least a few inches before being fired at. Our luck held, and though the enemy were close around, we were not discovered. We were short of picks and shovels, but we found some in the abandoned Australian boat.

Everything was peaceful at daylight, and I crossed the valley to No. 2 Outpost and breakfasted there.

This hill had been entrenched by the Turks, and from it they had fired two machine-guns during the landing, judging by the heaps of empty cartridges. The trenches on No. 2 gave plenty of room for the two platoons, but a small post was established a hundred yards or so north of the main position. This overlooked the low ground towards Suvla Bay. Some weeks later it was known as No. 3 Post after "old" No. 3 had been evacuated. I was not fired at crossing the open ground to No. 2 post, or while returning to Fisherman's Hut Redoubt, so evidently the enemy had not discovered our invasion, and took me for one of their officers. A few minutes later they discovered us and the fun commenced.

We saw some tents and living-places of snipers close by, and very astonished they must have been to wake up and find us securely entrenched among them. In one tent we discovered about twelve dozen eggs and some sauerkraut, from which our Sherlock Holmes deduced a German officer's living-place. He must have been greatly alarmed to leave so much good food behind.

Turks are not easily flustered, and they blazed at us from all directions, but we could see nothing—not even a rifle flash. One fellow was particularly annoying, firing from the scrub somewhere on the slope of No. 1 post, about 200 yards away. He was shooting well when he settled down to it, and would have hit a finger if we had held one up. He got only one really good chance, which he missed by a good foot, however, with his first shot. We had not expected anyone to fire from the spot he had chosen on a ridge running down from No. 1, which enabled him to look into a part of our trench where an officer's head happened to be when he commenced shooting. He got no more easy targets. However, he was a nuisance

as our trench was none too deep, and whenever he thought he saw a movement he fired.

We were arranging measures to restrain him, while Starnes was taking a little refreshment, remarking pessimistically as he ate his beef and biscuit, "I will have a feed, if it's my last." Our only reserve of water was a four-gallon benzine tin in my headquarters, and the wretched sniper sent a bullet low down through it, which travelled on through Starnes' well-filled pocket, breaking his razor, and landed on the skin of his leg. Feeling something hot, he did as a schoolboy does when he sits on a pin, only he jumped higher, exclaiming in an injured tone, "Hell! the bastard's shot me!" There was a good deal of laughing, but we made ourselves as small as possible, watching our precious water run out, and listening to the fizz of the bullets going along our trench. After a time we slipped away to a safer place, and there concocted a scheme to settle this marksman. The plan was to put on two small parties, at some distance apart, to watch quietly for his flash. It was a work of patience, but after several hours we were rewarded, and someone had the pleasure of wounding him. A little later he was seen holding on to a shrub and trying to draw himself to his feet, and he was riddled with bullets. He was the only man we were able to locate, although they fired at us with rifles all day, giving an occasional burst with a machine-gun. Nearly all our circular trench was overlooked and could be enfiladed from some part of the high ground, and this made us careful: but luckily the enemy was not occupying all the points of vantage. No. 1 post flag-signalled that they were being sniped badly. Very little signalling between the posts could be attempted during the first two days on account of the accuracy and volume of the enemy fire. We had a peaceful night,

and on Sunday morning we began to understand our position better. Evidently the Turks had no trench line from the cliffs to the sea, and we enjoyed a rear view of their right flank and could plainly see the notch in the cliff top where their trench ended, about 950 yards away.

Two machine-guns began firing from this point towards the top of Walker's Ridge at about 200 yards, and our first job was to get the distance and keep them quiet. This was soon done, and afterwards, by using about fifty rifles, we were able to drive them away in ten seconds. It was a pleasure to see how quickly the two stopped spitting, and disappeared, and then we had to get under cover quickly, because the guns were spitefully turned on us, and a harmless stream of bullets sailed by overhead, while we sat safely in the bottom of the trench. This game continued throughout our stay on the post, and their persistence showed that the extreme end of their trench was the only place where the guns could be used effectively. We had a most interesting view "behind the scenes" in the Turkish army. Hundreds of Turks were visible in the gullies above the cliffs, moving backwards and forwards carrying boxes and other things, all as busy as ants. It was too far to get effect with rifles, and we longed for a machine-gun; we did not disturb them, hoping to get the ships' guns to work on them later.

One object in occupying these hills was to protect two eighteen-pounder guns which moved out fully horsed on Saturday to take up their position between us and Walker's Ridge. It was a beautiful afternoon of bright sunshine as the guns passed the bathing place and emerged from the shelter of the ridge to astonish the eyes of these thousands of Turkish soldiers. Luckily for our eighteen-pounders the enemy

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OUR GUNS MOVING INTO POSITION.

machine-guns were not handy, but there was a wild fusilade of rifles, and the gunners promptly unhooked their guns and galloped back, with very little damage. It was evidently too much even for Turkish *sang froid* suddenly to see the target of their dreams in the shape of two guns, twelve horses and a lot of men, and they lost the power of shooting straight. For some strange reason the gunners lost time in unhooking their guns, and left them to be fired at until dark, the Turks hoping thereby to damage the sights or some other delicate part.

That evening I was asked to be present when they were manhandled into position. It was very uncanny crossing the silent flats to Walker's Ridge, escorted by two scouts: the moon was very bright and we were likely to be fired at, but by moonlight it is easier to miss than hit. On the way we passed a grave about two feet deep with two men lying on their backs in it, their calm faces lit up by the moon, and looking like children asleep in their cot. By some curious association of ideas it brought to mind the lost babes in the wood, as we hurried by to escape the penetrating smell. A big team of perhaps fifty or a hundred gunners hauled each gun to its place. An idea was about that a couple of Turks were on the rope assisting in the good work. Anyhow the gunners got a couple of suspects which they held for a time, but eventually they escaped.

Next morning one of the gunners exposed himself and was shot through the heart. Major Loach was also wounded, eventually losing his leg, and Major Jordan took command. While we were on the outpost we were looked after by the battleship *London*. She kept the ground around our posts well lit up at night, carefully lifting the searchlight beam so as not to show our trenches to the enemy. In the daytime

she was trying to map the country by fixing points which we indicated by means of flags, a very unusual way of making a military survey.

One day I received a secret order to dig more trenches in preparation for a big attack from our flank, which was under consideration. With the same object in view, orders were issued to scout towards the cliffs of 971 and report on ways of approach. I got the scouts out, and the tired men resumed work with picks and shovels, making new trenches and enlarging others. The men must have wondered why the extra work was being done, and they did not go about it with any great enthusiasm or make much show.

Almost as soon as we began, a line of Turks half a mile or more long began digging frantically above the cliffs towards 971. They were in shirt-sleeves and we could see them shovelling as no soldier works unless he is convinced of urgent necessity. The trench they were making would fairly meet any attack from the direction of our posts. It looked as if they must have received some warning of our plans, although it might easily have only been a coincidence. If they were working as a result of some warning, it must have been received several hours before they commenced, to enable them to organize a working party of perhaps 1000 men.

We drew the attention of the navy to the enemy trench-digging, but their fire went a long way too high, so evidently they could not see them. Our second Sunday was not to pass without severe fighting, particulars of which were sent during the afternoon to my company, and possibly also to the Turks. Australians and two N.Z. regiments were to attack in the neighbourhood of Pope's Hill. Naval guns bombarded the high ground behind the main position all day, assisted by land guns. The advance was to take

place at 9 o'clock, and before that time there was a lively fire of all guns and machine-guns. It was about 1200 yards away from us and the evening was dark and still. The sound of that attack was a most dreadful thing. The attackers had been told to cheer, and suddenly we heard an awful burst of machine-gun fire, and the cheers and yells of our men as they faced it. This went on for half an hour without a pause, and then the voices gradually died away, and left only the terrible musketry, which lasted until morning. It was hard for us to go to sleep with this going on, but we could not help, and their turn now might be ours next ; so those who were not on duty rested.

A good deal of the enemy fire must have been in our direction, as all night a storm of bullets passed over us, with a solid rushing sound. Spent bullets were always dropping in great numbers on Gallipoli, and could be seen everywhere cutting up the dust, and especially about Fisherman's Hut. We took little notice of these so far as the thought of danger went, and very few men were wounded by them.

The boat on the beach below us was a perfect "Treasure Island" for the men. They could not go near it in daylight without drawing fire, but at night I was besieged by men who wanted to explore. We could not all go at once, or we might have found the Turks in possession when we returned, but eventually we all had our turn. The treasure consisted of picks and shovels, bully beef, biscuits, cigarettes, tobacco, cameras, and the like, and the men did not object to smoking cigarettes out of the dead men's pockets. We did not trouble to take some cases of ammunition, as we had so much that I was able to build a barricade of boxes in my shelter to prevent a repetition of the unlucky event which cost us our water. The shelter had been made originally by the Turks with timbered

head cover, and a six-inch shell from the navy still stuck in it, while a large quantity of empty cartridge cases showed that one of their machine-guns had fired from it.

The tragedy of this Australian boat was plainly written. It must have been in daylight, and the boat had been allowed to touch the shore before three machine-guns had opened fire, one from our post and two from No. 2. As fast as the men jumped out they were shot in a heap in front of her bows. Only two men had a run for safety, and they lay about a hundred yards away with legs and arms outstretched still in the attitude of running. To give an idea of the fire they came under, I counted forty bullet holes in a slouch hat near the boat.

Towards daylight on Monday I went across again to Walker's Ridge. Men who had survived the attack of the evening before were resting on the beach. They were deadly tired, with eyes bloodshot and staring from the horror of the night, as well might be after such a bloody business, where no amount of bravery or sacrifice gave any hope of success. Again our maps were to blame, as on them the plans were made; but the ground proved entirely different. I also met an officer of another regiment in great distress, who had become panic-stricken and fled from his party to the beach, leaving his movable belongings—hat, haversack (filled with official information), field-glasses, and equipment, either to be picked up by his men or by the enemy who afterwards occupied the ground. He was certainly sadly in need of consolation, but later he lost our sympathy, for to everyone's amazement he received the D.S.O. for this very performance. Truth is stranger than fiction.

Nothing appeared to be known as to the result of our attack, or the number of casualties, and I could

learn nothing about three companies of my battalion who were to have taken part. Things were rather gloomy, and I was glad to go back to our good home in the outposts.

During the day we had to deal with a lot of rifle and machine-gun fire, both on behalf of ourselves and the guns we were protecting, and we were able to control it to a certain extent, as we knew it came from the enemy flank on the hills. We had made the low ground too hot for their snipers, and they had departed.

We were connected with the guns and the main position by telephone. At four o'clock in the afternoon some snipers were located concealed in a cliff overlooking No. 1 post. They had tormented the post for days and caused a good many casualties, but at last their hiding-place was found and pointed out to the guns, to which it offered a point-blank shot. When everyone was ready the gunners commenced, and the third round brought the Turks out with a rush, but they had no chance on the bare cliff, and the platoon brought them down with an angry rattle of rifle fire.

Tuesday was our last day on these hills, and we were relieved at eight in the evening by the 13th, and that night we enjoyed a good sleep on the beach after nine days and nights in trenches. We had nothing to do the following morning but gather news, of which there seemed to be very little; but we picked up a few yarns, true or otherwise. One was told of General Walker going down Shrapnel Gully, and his adventures there. This gully must have been a bad place, since the head of it concealed a number of enemy who sniped at pedestrians using this thoroughfare, causing them to sprint from shelter to shelter. The General was proceeding in this way, and no doubt his temper

and temperature rose each time he had to leg it to the next haven of refuge. As he came round a corner into the protection of some rocks, with his temper naturally at boiling-point or near it, he found there an Australian soldier leaning indolently against the hillside, smoking a draggled cigarette. The General, who was red-haired, and used to a certain amount of deference, looked at the soldier, and the soldier returned it in a perfectly friendly way. Walker then asked him, "Do you not salute officers when you see them?" and receiving no answer proceeded to ask, in reference to his rank, "Don't you know what I am?" and the soldier replied, "No." "Well," said the General, thinking he was bringing the thing to a climax, "have a good look at me and see. What now?" After a leisurely look which covered him from head to foot, the Aussie deliberately gave his opinion. "Well," he said, "I am not sure, but judging by your crossed swords and battle-axes, you are either a butcher or a pioneer." The General then departed to the next resting-place. In one place an Australian officer was having trouble with his men, who were exposing themselves unnecessarily, one man standing in full view of the enemy. He reproved him wrathfully but classically. "Get down, you fool! Don't stand there like Ajax defying the Income Tax." A working party of Australians on the beach were in charge of an unknown officer who wore an eyeglass. To take a rise out of him, next morning when they paraded each had his identity disc screwed into one eye. As it happened, the officer turned up without his monocle, but when he saw his parade ready for him, he tossed his glass into the air and caught it neatly in its proper place, saying, "Can you do that, my men?" They couldn't, and the work went on smoothly afterwards.

Monocles were not usual in colonial armies, but

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ENEMY SEARCHING FOR AN ANZAC BATTERY (X).

they were not unknown. A senior N.Z. gunner officer was never without his glass, apparently a fixture, and when years later his guns were being badly smacked about in the Somme, he was to be seen pottering about wherever things were hottest. Apparently quiet unaware that anything unusual was occurring, the Colonel, with monocle firmly screwed in as usual, made a wonderful impression on the gunners, who talked proudly of him and his eyeglass for months after.

During the day Major C. H. J. Brown took over command of the battalion, and introduced himself to us in that capacity. He was in rags, and very worn-looking and dirty. We laughed heartily at his and our own appearance, but we were greatly pleased to have him.

Almost immediately secret instructions were issued for the embarkation of the New Zealand infantry brigade to Cape Helles for a great battle there. We were greatly pleased with the idea and pictured ourselves in an open warfare fight, assisting the 29th Division to drive the enemy northward across undulating country. Very truly hope springs eternal in the human breast.

Our place at Anzac was taken by the Naval Brigade, which we imagined to be composed of the Royal Marine Light Infantry of the old navy, the finest and steadiest infantry in the world. During the afternoon they began to take their places on the hill and we had a sharp disappointment. The poor little fellows, in great helmets, pale, and sweating profusely, could hardly climb the steep hill, worn out by hard fighting and heavy losses. They were newly-raised troops, untrained physically or otherwise, and should never have been on Gallipoli. We looked at each other at the thought of leaving the front to their care. As soon as they reached the trenches they opened a wild rifle

fire, which naturally brought a tremendous return, and by evening it sounded as if a great battle was raging.

As soon as it was dark the brigade assembled on the beach in fours facing south. Below the Anzac jetty an Australian brigade was in the same formation facing north, so that a great part of the beach was packed with men. General Birdwood must have had a few anxious hours that evening. The enemy had shelled the beach every night, and if the conditions were known to him, he could have swept the place with shrapnel and got most of us. Providence or chance favoured us, and not a shot was fired. Very slowly, a few steps at a time, then a long halt, then a few more steps, we moved in perfect silence towards Anzac Cove, with our ears cocked for the harsh sneezing sound of shrapnel, while above us continued the fierce fusillade of musketry. The danger from the enemy artillery was bad enough, but what we expected was a break-away somewhere up Walker's Ridge, and the garrison coming back in a panic. If that happened we should have to think and act quickly.

Near the jetty I met an old friend on Headquarters Staff who anxiously inquired, "Is it all right above? Can they hold on?" explaining, "There are a lot of old ladies here" (meaning other officers on Headquarters) "who are very worried about it." It was not necessary in the darkness to conceal a smile as I replied, "They are as right as a bank and can hang on till doomsday." He shook hands and departed, saying, "I am very pleased to hear it," leaving me feeling as big a liar as George Washington, though in a better cause. After the anxiety of thinking out plans of handling the company should the worst of calamities occur, it was a relief to find ourselves in the bottom of a big Thames lighter being towed out into the darkness, leaving Anzac and its worries behind.

CHAPTER VII

HELLES—BATTLE OF KRITHIA

" . . . Reach'd a field of battle bright.
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe—the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill."
The Coming of Arthur.

ABOUT two miles from shore we climbed on board the *Mosquito*, and with two companies of infantry crowding the decks, we just sat down where we were, very glad to be on the water again, able to throw off care and indulge in quiet thinking. For over a week there had been little time for anything, and deliberate thought was impossible. We had been obsessed with the idea that we must make good almost to the exclusion of other thoughts; and for days the most common remark had been, "What will they think about this at home?" Our strongest impression now was admiration for the Australians, wonderful fellows and great fighters, and their kindness was remarkable. They could never do enough, and even forced on us their precious water they so badly needed themselves.

We had done enough fighting to be callous to the sights and smells of death, although dead bodies lying in fields of poppies seemed out of place. We had been content and happy ashore, but were quite satisfied to be at sea again. An old German general hits off the feelings of those engaged in a battle as nearly as it can be done, by this illustration. He says it is like a

party who reach a cold stream on a hot day and eagerly undress and plunge in. At first all enjoy the exhilaration of the cold water, but after a time the weaker spirits begin to wish for the shore again, and soon none but the hardiest are really comfortable, and the party is happiest when all are on the bank in the warm sunshine again.

We had found Gallipoli a strenuous place, but not nearly so sanguinary as we had expected, bad as it certainly was. Before the landing it had been considered impregnable, and we had been warned that we would find the water and the shore barb-wired, but it was not so bad as that. We knew quite well now that its impregnability was a bogey.

We were very pleased with our prospects in a new field, especially as we had just received the official news that Krithia and Achi Baba had fallen and there was nothing to stop our going to Constantinople ; and, strangely enough, we believed it.

The night was very calm and dark, and we could see the profile of 971 against the sky. The Anzac position looked for all the world like a great foundry at night, working strenuous overtime, sparks flying everywhere, and where shells were bursting great fiery showers flew in all directions like a heavy blow on red-hot metal. This was accompanied by a clanging and cracking that made the likeness complete. The rifle flashes clearly marked the position of the trenches. Around our ship was dead silence, only broken by the plop, plop of spent bullets and occasionally the metallic ring of one striking the deck.

After a time a kindly soldier led me down into the sleeping-place of four burly warrant officers, who received us with hot coffee and delicious bread and butter. We were tired, but still more hungry and thirsty, and we ate and drank all night while we

listened to our hosts' tales of the sea. A warrant officer related how he was below when a big explosion occurred, and the next moment he found himself on deck, having been blown clean through a half-inch steel plate! The crack, which must have been fairly wide, as he was big and fat, closed immediately, and he was unhurt. No one attempted to improve on this experience, and we continued to eat and drink in comparative silence. There were many good stories told, but this one was never beaten. The sailors particularly disliked the duty of mine-sweeping, with its possibility of being blown up any minute. Before we left the ship we finished their two days' ration, and left them to go hungry on the *Mosquito*; but they did not mind, and we did not worry, thinking a little starvation could not hurt people who were so fat.

While we were still off Anzac one of my sergeants came down to get his arm dressed. It had just been punctured by a bullet and showed a little round hole in the upper arm, with no exit wound and no blood. We could not locate the bullet, so I padded the hole and told him to report to a doctor ashore, but by this time he was busy with the coffee and bread and butter and took no further interest in the wound, remarking with a smile that he would wait until he got another and then would have both out together. Unfortunately the next one, on the 8th of May, killed him. He was a fine-looking fellow, educated at one of the English universities.

Before daylight we reached W. Beach with its harbour breakwater formed of sunken ships. The men were very loath to leave, and we had almost to drive them off the ship, but at last we reached the sandy beach, where we were told to remain until daylight. We lay down and in a moment were all asleep.

In the dawn I became conscious that men were going past us, and I recognized a man who usually marched in rear of our battalion, so I made frantic efforts to rouse the company, but it took too long and we lost sight of them. The place was crowded with troops, but there was no information to be gained from them. It seemed as if we could not go wrong in starting off north in the direction of the enemy, the only way we could go, as we were on the southern tip of the peninsula. We climbed a sandy bank and a comparatively large plain stretched before us, and off we set. As we knew that Krithia and Achi Baba were in our hands, we reckoned we would have a considerable march before the enemy could interfere. However, we had only gone a few hundred yards before we noticed something queer. On both sides of us troops were advancing in small parties in artillery formation, evidently under shell-fire. We still believed Krithia and Achi Baba were ours, but we could see that the enemy must have some infernally long-range guns, and that it was no place for a self-respecting company in good strength. Besides, we might easily get in someone's way. We halted just as long as it took to walk the length of the company, and we went back to the beach. This time we asked for the main north road, and were told, "Beyond V. Beach." We did not know where V. Beach was, and whenever we inquired the officer just laughed heartily and did not even trouble to answer. Evidently V. Beach was the best local joke; but we were strangers, and did not see the point just then, so we went along towards the east and soon reached V. Beach with its grave of 800 dead, and the *River Clyde* sitting empty on the rocks.

We climbed the bank again among the ruined stones and guns of Seddel Bahr. I had read of the stone cannon-balls used in the old days on Gallipoli, but

was very surprised all the same when we stumbled across numbers of these ancient missiles in all sizes from three-foot monsters downwards.

In a hedge at right angles to the road a line of French 75's were steadily firing, and we took the liberty of asking them if troops had passed along the road, but they said "No." It was a puzzle where the battalion had got to, and we sat down to try to solve it. Rather heavy thudding was going on around, which we discovered was caused by "Asiatic Annie" firing from Asia Minor. If she was shooting at the *River Clyde*, as was likely, she was doing very badly, as she was getting closer to us, and quite likely to hit us; so we went up the road, passing through the line of French guns, and a mile or two beyond found the battalion in a field getting ready for breakfast.

We had quite overlooked this meal, which was not surprising considering how we had been employed during the night, but we joined them and disposed of another ration. The four battalions of the N.Z. Brigade were present, packed into rather a small space.

We liked the look of the place, nearly flat, with undulations towards the north, and very civilized after Anzac. There were none of the precipices and narrow gorges that echoed and re-echoed every shot. Great quantities of transport, stores, and animals had been landed, which gave the appearance that this was the main effort. The firing-line was not much more than half a mile away, but in spite of this, the comparative quiet gave a feeling of relief. A couple of hundred yards away on the right was the main road, with the towers on an ancient aqueduct standing parallel to it, and the Straits lay just beyond. Across the narrow strip of water we could see the plains of Troy and the distant mountains of Asia Minor. The field we were placed in was in full view of the enemy, and we scraped

little pits until it was completely honeycombed, to give us protection if we were shelled, which seemed likely.

We studied the firing-line, and found that the French were immediately in front, the naval division in the centre, and the 29th on the left, making a line right across the peninsula. The Battle of Krithia, or the Battle of the 8th of May, as we called it, commenced that morning, the 6th of May, with great punctuality at 10.30; in fact you might have set your watch by the first gun. It began by a general bombardment and a fire of musketry, and in a few minutes we could see movement among the attacking troops.

By this time we began to suspect that we had not yet deprived the enemy of Krithia or Achi Baba, which latter in particular was squatting solidly in front of us, and still had a foreign look. We had nothing to do but watch the progress of events, which were sufficiently interesting. In most places we could see something of the firing-line and supports, but we found that the white bursts of enemy shrapnel were the best indication of the position of our front line.

The French soldiers completely puzzled us. They seemed to be running all ways like a disturbed ants' nest, and their supports lay behind little mounds and scrub, kicking up their heels and smoking cigarettes luxuriously. Every ten minutes someone exclaimed, "By Jove! the French are running!" "No, they are advancing!" This went on until we realized that their methods were beyond our comprehension, and we watched them with little idea of what they were doing. They fought in a curious collection of gay uniforms, some with wide scarlet trousers, others in blue coats with gold facings and white trousers. In spite of, or perhaps because of, their strange tactics, they made steady advance throughout the battle, splendidly

supported by their famous 75's, which seemed to have plenty of ammunition.

The centre gave us a good deal of concern during the afternoon. We could see no movement, but the enemy shell-bursts crept closer and closer, showing that we were losing ground pretty fast.

We slept in our shelter pits, but were kept awake for an hour or so about two in the morning by a rapid burst of fire from the French guns repulsing a Turkish attack. Their gun was, and still is, the most effective shrapnel gun, and is absolute destruction to troops in the open. Its shell velocity is very high, and its recoil system so perfect that the gun can be fired a considerable number of times without needing to check the aim; and it has a mechanical fuse-setter which does away with the human error so fatal in a time-fuse.

Next morning we continued to watch the battle, which recommenced at the same time, to the exact second, and found it a pleasant occupation, but rather monotonous. At a mile or so's distance, a battle takes a very different aspect from what it does when one is fighting in the line. You hear a light crackling of musketry in the distance and you cannot help regarding it as a mild performance. There are no horrors or physical or mental strain, and, even for people that have been through it, it is impossible to realize in a small degree that men are facing death and being killed at such a short distance. Even the wounded on the roads did not help much to visualize the reality. Certainly the roads on both sides of us had a great many casual pedestrians, all more or less tied up with white calico, and at intervals there were parties of four soldiers carrying stretchers, but they looked as if they were just sauntering along in the warm dusty sunshine, and there was no sense of tragedy about; certainly

there was nothing in their manner to suggest that a few minutes before they had faced battle, murder, and sudden death with its accompanying emotions.

A number of us strolled about to see the neighbouring sights, first visiting a number of British eighteen-pounder batteries that had greatly aroused our curiosity by the fact that the gunners picnicked all day about the guns and never fired a shot. It seemed an extraordinary thing for men who should have played a very important part in this great battle to be idling about, leading a peaceful domestic life. The gunners explained that they had only two shots per gun per day to fire, and were most unhappy and discontented. They complained that they could fire all they had in a minute or so, and would have been better pleased if they had been able to save up ammunition for a week or so, and then they could have enjoyed a little shoot, but they were compelled to fire these two miserable squibs a day to no purpose. No wonder we had not captured Krithia or Achi Baba, and our poor territorials in the centre were falling back.

A hare caused a diversion during the day by galloping back out of the fight straight into the New Zealand Brigade, which stood up to catch it. It was quite panic-stricken and jumped into the arms of Private Pike of my company, who soon had it boiling for his tea.

It was very interesting to stand on the main road on the right, and watch the French as their troops moved up into the battle. There was a great variety of colour in the men as well as in the uniforms. There were black Senegalese and fair-skinned and fair-bearded Frenchmen as well as dark-complexioned, and also the medley of faces in their Foreign Legion. Many officers had full beards, and with their staffs cantering gaily about, made a picturesque and inspiring scene.

There was no shadow of anxiety, much less fear, to be seen on any of the French faces.

At midday I stood on a hillock in rear, and the whole line from sea to sea was plainly visible, with warships firing from the Straits, and beyond it the plains and ruins of Troy. On a slight rise on the left front stood Krithia, with its church and several windmills, and this side of the village was a small coppice of firs. On our side of the fir coppice was an open space, looking a pleasant, harmless place enough in the clear sunshine; but it soon earned an evil reputation and became well known as the famous "Daisy Patch," where thousands of men of various nations fell in the struggle for Krithia.

It had been the scene of earlier fighting, though this had left no noticeable mark, and in a short time I watched another drama enacted. Suddenly a rush of men swept forward across the space, much like the loose rush on a football field when the ball changes ends, but for the bright flashes of the bayonets in the hot sun. It was the 5th Battalion of the Royal Scots charging the coppice. Losing only a few men, they went across the open without a pause, and dived into the wood, where the glitter of bayonets showed the wave of their advance as it went to the far edge. There was comparative quiet for about half an hour, until the Turks turned such a concentration of fire on them that they had to retire, this time losing heavily.

During the afternoon the N.Z. Brigade was ordered to cross the peninsula to the western side to bring it behind the 29th Division, and shortly after one o'clock we began the march across the heather-covered plateau, in full view of the enemy. We made a huge target, moving in artillery formation—a chessboard of sixty-four platoons, with an interval of about 150 yards between each. The enemy shelled us, but with

little effect, and we continued until we reached the cliffs overlooking the sea, where some of us sat for a while with our feet over the edge, enjoying the view. While we halted the fire slightly increased, and after a time we set off again, changing direction right and moving towards Krithia, until we reached an old Turkish trench which became our home for the night.

The fire on this trench became moderately severe, but the men took it cheerfully, calling out as each shell was heard coming, "Bob down, you're spotted," a quotation from a popular comic song. Its last occupants had left the trench a land of plenty, with a quantity of unopened meat tins about; so everyone had as much food as he could manage. This trench was a long one, extending to the right beyond the Krithia road, and appeared to have been dug about two months, as were most of the enemy trenches on Gallipoli. It was not the least damaged by artillery fire. We made beds of heather in the bottom of the trench, although gathering it was very chancy work, and we were very satisfied and comfortable that night, enjoying a most luxurious sleep. Certainly no one gave it a thought that we should be attacking next morning.

The 8th of May came in bright and clear, and we had enough extra meat for a big breakfast. Both armies cooked this meal at the same time, each with its three distinct lines of smoke where the front, support and reserve troops were, making a curiously homely and peaceful scene. After breakfast the men resumed the game of the previous evening with the shells.

About 9 o'clock Colonel Brown called up his company commanders and gave a short verbal order, "The battalion will attack from the front-line trenches at 10.30 a.m. precisely; 12th Company will lead."

Then he smiled and added, "And I am sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot give you any further information." It was indeed a meagre order. Usually they give the sector from which to attack, the point to attack, amount of artillery support to be expected, and the co-operation of other troops. We knew nothing, not even how far it was to the front line.

As my company had to lead, we lost no time, and in a few minutes the first platoon left the trench, and the enemy fire quickened at once. After we had gone a considerable distance in artillery formation, the Colonel accompanying us, we were ordered to halt, and we lay down. The Colonel called out to me, drawing my attention to a platoon that had halted dangerously near a tree. As we were very old and close friends, I took the liberty of shouting back to him, "It's all right, Charlie. If they don't know, it's no good trying to teach them in the middle of a battle," and he seemed quite satisfied, so I did not shift the platoon. My second-in-command also found fault with the place where I happened to be lying, but, in a case like this, one place is as good as another. Bullets were beginning to whistle past, and that usually makes people irritable. After a short time we advanced again until we reached a bullet-swept ridge where we changed formation, and moved in file up a small valley slightly to the right, where there was some cover. I left my faithful bugler, Hoy, to warn the rest of the company to follow us. We found the British trenches were in three lines, with about 100 yards between, the "Worcesters" holding the supports and the "Dubsters" the front. These last were a composite battalion formed by combining the survivors of the Dublin Fusiliers and the Munsters, and the name was an apt compound of the names of the two famous Irish regiments. They had lost half their number on V. Beach, and many more since.

We reached the front trench a few minutes after ten, and I had time to see the officers and gain a little information. They were fine, cool fellows. At one place enemy bullets were coming in fast with an angry buzz, and when I alluded to it an officer remarked casually and disparagingly, "Oh, yes, they keep popping off at us here." They pointed out the locality of the enemy, but not a sign of him could be seen. The main position was supposed to be about 1100 yards away. I made up my mind we would attack straight for Krithia, which was in full view, in lines of platoons extending up to ten yards, with 150 yards between platoons. This would give us a chance against the storm of machine-gun bullets we were likely to meet when we started.

For about 200 yards the ground sloped down to a slight hollow. The surface was smooth and bare of cover, having little grass on it. It looked as if there might be some shelter in the hollow, and the only thing to do was to cover the intervening space as quickly as possible in one rush, and then try to make a line.

Our scouts had reached the place and were making signs as if it were found a suitable halting-place. They were not able to signal a message, and it was not to be expected that they would send back a runner. Nothing more could be done to help our attack, as the officers of the 88th Brigade, through which we were passing, had promised to give us all the support they could with their machine-guns. No doubt they did so, but the firing was so intense when the advance began that it was not possible to distinguish any particular sound. Artillery support was what we needed, and it would have saved most of the loss; but no guns were firing at the enemy position, nor was a single shot fired to help us during the attack of my company.

The "Dubsters" showed plainly the effect of the terrible mauling they had received during the previous fourteen days by repeating without ceasing, "It's no good advancing, sir, you'll all be killed. It's no good, sir." We knew they were not far out, and it was not at all encouraging to hear them, but the poor fellows who were not going to advance just then could hardly bear to see us go into it. However, we had no choice, or we certainly would not have gone.

The order for the company to attack was then given: "The 12th (Nelson) Company will attack Krithia in lines of platoons, extended as far as possible, platoons at 150 yards' distance; objective—prominent brown house in front." An officer asked how far the attack was to go, and I told him, "As far as you can get." He did his best to carry out the order, but was killed about 200 yards ahead.

When 10.30 came I called to Colonel Brown, telling him we were ready, but he replied to wait a few minutes, as the battalion on our left was not yet up. So we waited, not a pleasant time for us, as most of us fully realized that we were about to take part in a mad business that was hardly in the "ordinary way" of war. About 10.35 I again asked the Colonel if we should go, and he replied, "All right," and I passed the word to No. 12 Platoon to prepare to advance, and a moment later, "Advance," and the men jumped at it with their heads down. The poor fellows knew that their only chance lay in speed, and even that is not much use against skilfully laid machine-gun fire.

There was never any doubt that they would face it well, but one felt a sort of pride at seeing those lines of young soldiers rushing at what was a fair chance of death. It was a terrible sight in that clear bright sunshine, men going down like ninepins everywhere, falling with a crash with the speed they were going.

Men of supporting companies coming up were being knocked over behind our trench too, and an officer friend fell very heavily just behind me, and rolled over convulsively. I moved about assisting to get the company away, and I have a vivid picture of the up-turned Irish faces of the men kneeling in the trenches, the men of the Dubsters. Their short-cropped hair gave them the look of gaolbirds with their round heads and hard, dirty faces. Almost all had their hats off, and it was easy to see from their wondering faces and remarks that they did not like the business. It was the first time they had seen colonial troops in action. Possibly they would have preferred to go themselves.

I was starting with the last platoon, but I had not gone ten yards before I felt the terrible pain of a bullet through the top of my head, and as I fell I could see in imagination, but very vividly, great flames rushing out of my head. It crossed my mind instantly, "Serve you damned well right for ordering men into such a fire"; and then I realized that my responsibilities were over, and all I could do was to keep cool and pull through if possible. At the same time I heard friendly Irish voices exclaiming, "Begorra, the Major's down," and "Bedad, we must save him," and though I could not see, I felt them rolling me over. I asked them to take care of my glasses, and a voice replied, "They're all right, sir. The sergeant-major has them." He kept them, too, and it is hoped he is alive to use them. Then I faded into unconsciousness.

Long afterwards I pieced together something of the day's fighting and my movements. The losses were heavy, but we secured a few hundred yards of ground, and a general advance on the rest of the front at 5.30 in the evening continued the line on either flank.

We had two officers killed. Mr. Forsyth was a

It is a common mistake to think that the only way to avoid the problems of the first two cases is to make the contract conditional on the occurrence of the event. But this is not always possible. For example, in the case of a contract to sell a house, the seller cannot make the contract conditional on the house being in good condition at the time of the sale, because the house is already in the seller's possession at the time of the sale.



NELSON MEN AT CAPE HELLES.



12th COMPANY OCCUPYING No. 1 OUTPOST.

fearless and efficient soldier, and strangely enough had that morning told of a strong presentiment that he would be killed during the day. He was quite cheerful about it, but could not be argued out of the idea. Premonitions were common during the war, and in all cases that I know of, those who received warnings were killed.

A very curious case was that of a young officer in the battalion who was told by a fortune-teller in Egypt that he would be killed on his next birthday, which happened to be the 25th of April. On the eve of the landing he said good-bye to each man of his platoon, telling them he would be killed next day, and sure enough the prophecy was fulfilled. Of course this was a pure chance, so far as the fortune-teller was concerned, and this was quite a different thing from the usual warnings.

The other young officer who was killed had just been appointed, and had only reported for duty that morning. His appointment from another company had caused heartburnings, because we had a senior sergeant who was greatly respected and deserved the position, and I promised to speak to the Colonel about it when things became quieter. However, there was no need ; both the sergeant and the officer were killed.

Our brigade and the Australian 2nd Brigade received generous praise from the officers of the 29th Division for the work of the 8th May. An officer of the 29th Division informed me that the Brigadier of the 88th Brigade covered his eyes when we attacked, saying he could not bear to see it. It would have helped us more had he been able to arrange artillery assistance, but with no ammunition that was not possible. The fault lay thousands of miles away, with people who do not put in an appearance on battlefields.

The Australian attack was beautifully executed, but

their losses were heavier than ours. When the 13th Company attacked, friend Captain Cribb caused considerable amusement by trotting forward in his characteristically steady fashion, blowing clouds of smoke from his pipe and carrying a long-handled shovel in his hand as his only weapon. He had the gift of leading and the benefit of previous war experience.

During the afternoon four company stretcher-bearers made up their minds to carry me out, to give me a chance. They placed the stretcher on the ground behind the trench and at a signal threw it on their shoulders, and bolted back as hard as they could run, laughing as they went. They were pelted with bullets for 800 yards before they could slacken down into a walk.

CHAPTER VIII

HOSPITAL AND ENGLAND

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on;
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

I HAVE no recollection of the following week or two, except of once being violently sick, and at another time feeling someone scraping my head. When I groaned to let him know it was unpleasant, a voice said, "You don't want to take all this Gallipoli mud with you, do you?" I was about four days on the beach at Cape Helles before being put on board a mine-sweeper, and it was again about four days before space could be found on a hospital ship to take us to Alexandria, calling at Lemnos on the way.

The day before we reached port I began to wake up, and found in the next bed an Australian colonel, with his batman lying on the floor between us. This faithful fellow had attended us for days, never leaving his master's side. With the silent devotion of a faithful dog he lay uncomfortably on the bare deck beside his officer's bed, waiting until he could be of some use.

The first thing I noticed was my watch, which had stopped, and the strap was nearly out of sight, embedded in the swollen wrist. I remembered that it had stopped during the Canal fight, and concluded

We were honoured by visits from General Maxwell, the Sultan of Egypt, the Marquis of Anglesey, Prince Frederick of Battenberg, Lady Rochdale, and the Bishop of Jerusalem. Lady Rochdale came regularly, sometimes reading aloud, but generally sitting by the bed sewing. She was so simple in her manner and dress that my batman, groom, and other soldier visitors had to be requested to brush up their manners in her presence, as they thought that she was of the same social standing as ourselves. Her husband was at Gallipoli in command of a territorial division.

The Bishop was the right sort of visitor, laughing cheerfully throughout his short stay. The opposite was a parson of the silly kind, who prayed at length of home and dear ones, but luckily only appeared once.

A sergeant came in one day with a pair of field-glasses of a peculiar pattern, which had belonged to the officer who had bolted in panic to the beach. He explained that — did not seem to want them any more, so he took them.

When we were able to move about life in the hospital became more interesting. It was quite an event to look out of the window for a few minutes, although the view was only over the desert. There were two features of interest. Every morning a French mounted bugle band played wild and inspiring music on the way to its headquarters, and in the evening a little Egyptian boy in charge of a few goats settled down on the desert for their night's rest. For a few minutes they stood about in the twilight, and then lay down together, and at dawn they could be seen getting to their feet again. The animals and boy alike yawned and stretched themselves and then moved off, presumably to look for breakfast.

On the 18th of June a number of us left for England by the hospital ship *Nevasa*. We were very weak,

and blinked like owls when we got into the strong sunlight, but our kind friend, Lady Rochdale, was on the wharf to see us off. Nothing could have been better than our treatment in No. 17 General, or kinder than the doctors and sisters ; but the excessive heat, and fighting flies from dawn until dark, had made it a struggle for existence, and England seemed to promise a new lease of life.

The conditions under which the seriously wounded were evacuated from Gallipoli must have been a severe test of vitality, and those who survived were generally in a very low state. My nurse said that I looked exactly like an Egyptian mummy, and about the same age when I first arrived. Although we were feeling very pleased, we were a feeble and sorry crowd as some crawled up the gangway to the deck of the *Nevasa*, while others were carried.

She proved a second heaven, and the big officers' ward was soon a happy and sociable place. It was the first time we had a chance to exchange Gallipoli stories, and nearly everyone had strange or gruesome experiences of his escape after being wounded.

A Royal Scots officer was hit in the head in the charge through the fir coppice, and was left behind when his battalion retired. For days he lay semi-conscious, and in a lucid interval he remembered and drank the last of his whisky. Later he discovered that a Turk had taken his empty flask, and the fact that there was no whisky in it amused the Scot, even in his perilous plight. In the same way he lost at intervals his tunic, boots and breeches. Luckily the next to arrive on the scene was not Mrs. Grundy, but people of his own regiment, who had retaken the ground. They thought he was dead, and were about to bury him when a brother officer begged the men to carry him back to be examined.

Another Scot was about to have some porridge when the attack prevented him, and he was also wounded in the head. When he woke up in hospital in Alexandria he did not realize the interval that had elapsed, and called loudly for his porridge, greatly to the amusement of the nurses.

Head cases are curious in several little ways. Many could not smoke cigarettes without reversing them and burning their lips with the lighted ends whenever they took them out of their mouths. They had also to stop every few words, quite unable to remember some simple expression, which someone would supply to enable them to go on. A captain with fractured thigh and head wound had very defective speech and no memory. He did not know his own or his father's names, or if he had a wife; he rather thought he had, but had no idea of her name, or where his home was. Of course paralysis was usual, although strangely enough bullets that passed through the forehead from side to side produced no effect except prostration from shock, unless the optic nerve were destroyed.

Among other stories one was told of a Royal Scots bugler who carried a message to Sir Ian Hamilton. The boy was trembling when he reached him, and Sir Ian spoke gently, thinking he was suffering from shyness, but the young Scot suddenly broke out, "They dommed snipers got me," and so they had—through the leg. The General then inquired if he was hungry, and he replied, "By God, I'm starving," so he got Sir Ian's lunch.

We called at Malta and took on more wounded.

A good-natured N.Z. major, with a bullet through his body and lungs, and looking very ill, took me under his special care during the voyage.

We were very excited when we sighted the Isle of Wight. As we travelled up to London in a well-

appointed hospital train the country looked extraordinarily beautiful. After Egypt and the conditions under which we had been living the scene of peace and quiet gave an impression of dream-like beauty.

A dense crowd met us at Waterloo station, and their kindness and sympathy took us by surprise. We colonials thought we were coming to a city of strangers, 10,000 miles from our homes, but the welcome showed that it was the great home of our race, and we were received with warm affection. Everywhere flowers were pressed upon us, and hundreds of kindly hands stretched out as we were hurried to the cars. Throughout the war London never failed in her reception of wounded, and her welcome remained unique in its warmth and friendly homeliness.

My destination proved to be the "Royal Free" Hospital in Gray's Inn Road. It still had its civilian staff, accustomed to the lowest class in London, so they had little idea of handling a mixed crowd of soldiers. Their former patients had disliked water, and the staff could not believe that we would take a bath without compulsion and a nurse to see us do it.

Most of the officer patients were regulars, but there were several colonials, and the hospital staff feared the Australians greatly. The prim and precise rules soon put bad ideas in our heads. Officers were allowed out for a few hours on a leave pass signed by a nurse, and it was amusing to see a general sallying forth with one of these, to drop it politely in the gutter as soon as he was out of sight.

An order was issued that officers were not to bring liquor in, and the gates were locked at 8 o'clock at night. After that one or other of the young officers climbed out every night, between 9 and 10, and returned with a bottle of whisky to be shared round for supper. There was never any friendliness between

the patients and the nursing staff or doctors. An Australian officer, with his back broken by falling over a cliff, was paralysed in both legs, but on crutches and with the help of one of the waitresses he was able to enjoy short excursions in the streets. One day she asked us if it would be considered "proper" for her to do this, seeing that he was a married man.

Many people lent their cars for the use of the hospital, and these were quickly filled. A lady of the new rich made a serious *faux pas* one day. She was taking for a drive a party of colonials and a modest cavalry captain, a regular. Our hostess thought we were all colonials, and extolled us wonderfully, saying we were as good as anyone, or better, and such gentlemen! We blushed a little but took it all in, but in a few minutes some remark betrayed the Englishman and he had his turn to blush, for the poor lady apologized abjectly to him, saying that anyone could see at once that he was a regular soldier, "they are so different, you know," and all the rest. This was quite true, and no one knew it better than we did; but she had been slow to notice it. She was so greatly put about that we were sorry for her, but everyone except herself laughed heartily over the joke.

In a week or so my commanding officer, Colonel Charlie Brown, arrived badly wounded in the hip. He was our fourth commanding officer in a fortnight. By this time hospital discipline had gone from bad to worse, and officers were absent without leave for days at a time. Possibly the generals did not set a good example. General Sir Edward Chaytor, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., C.B., etc., used to slip out very frequently, having only a wounded arm, and we wondered if he had one of the nurses' passes concealed about him, or if he were simply absenting himself without leave. If he had one each time he must have had a large

collection before he left the Royal Free. Probably not, because long afterwards he admitted that he was ejected from the institution after a few weeks for being refractory. Later they threatened to expel me, but I persuaded them to keep me, as I had arranged to be married from the hospital on my last day.

It was a quaint affair. My particular friends, the Australian with the broken back and Colonel Brown, were both unable to attend, and the only people from the hospital were the two waitresses. As the Colonel said, he was not much use at a wedding as he could neither stand up nor sit down, so he begged to be excused. The gentleman who gave the bride away had never seen her before, and he had to introduce himself at the door of the church.

A few months later I was passed fit for service by a medical board, and reported for duty to the Australian and New Zealand camp at Monte Video, near Weymouth, where convalescents were kept until fit to return to their units. It would have been severe conditions even for sound men, as the huts leaked like sieves, covering the floors with water, and often completely soaking the mattresses. This was reported to the War Office, with a view to having repairs made, but the reply stated that the huts were only so many years old, and therefore were not yet in need of repairs.

In our mess there were many Australian officers who had local fame in Gallipoli, and one was a medical officer who had been doing duty at No. 17 Alexandria. While he was there he wore a shade over one eye, so I asked him if he had hurt it. It had been knocked out only a week before by a shrapnel bullet, and he did not allow it to interfere with his duty. This kind of fortitude was very common among Australians, and I came across another even more surprising case. A

hard-faced young private was struck on the shoulder by a shell which exploded on impact, tattooing the side of his face with powder, and taking his arm off. Afterwards he told me proudly that he had not laid up at all, but had helped to nurse the rest of the sick and wounded on the ship.

After a time I was again medically boarded and given six months' sick leave, being still weak and very lame. This meant a voyage to New Zealand in the *Rotorua*, with 120 other wounded men.

We were very displeased with our reception in Auckland, possibly contrasting it with our welcome in London. A stout sergeant-major began by bullying the unfortunate men on the wharf, repeating as fast as he could shout, "Shun," "Stand at ease," not understanding that a man with only one leg can do neither, and all of them were more or less crippled. Immediately afterwards a rascally expressman took me down for 7s. 6d. We began to wonder if we were in an enemy country.

Two months later I was away with the 11th Reinforcement. It was a pleasant voyage, and in the Indian Ocean we celebrated the first anniversary of Anzac Day by a dinner attended by forty-two people, including two nurses.

We reached Suez on the 3rd of May, and next day entrained for Tel-el-Kebir, where there was a large camp of Australian and New Zealand details on the site of the old battlefield. The two lines of trenches with redoubts in front and on the left flank stood almost as perfect as on the morning of the battle over thirty years before, when the Egyptian army was defeated in a twenty-minutes' fight.

The British dead were buried near by in a small cemetery on the bank of the Sweetwater Canal. Although there were not many graves very few of the

dead had been identified, and most of the graves bore the inscription, "Here lies a British soldier," which seemed an indication of the indifference of a great nation towards those who had won her battles. This cemetery was much frequented by the troops because in it were the only shade trees for miles around.

When I landed in Gallipoli I possessed a very complete outfit of all the things one might need on a campaign, and I came off bareheaded and barefooted ; so I went to Cairo, to inquire if anything had been recovered, but all I retrieved was my sword and a worn-out sleeping bag.

While in Cairo I met an officer, an English baronet, who had actually landed at V. Beach from the *River Clyde* on the morning of the 25th April. He was the only survivor I had met out of 1500 men who had tried to get ashore that morning, and he told an interesting tale. Most of them were caught in the cross-fire of machine-guns, many while still in the water struggling with submerged barbed wire, and nearly all who reached the beach were slaughtered there, helpless. A tiny ridge of sand saved the lives of a few survivors.

A staff officer of the 88th Brigade told how his whole brigade staff attempted to land by that fatal bridge of barges, which it was hoped would reach the shore, but failed. The party was sheltering for a moment on a barge waiting for the General to move, when it was found he was dead, and all the rest were hit but two, who returned to the ship to report to enable a new staff to be formed. On board, the General in command was dead on the bridge, where his body lay for days. The order to disembark was then cancelled, and the troops remained in shelter, listening to the bullets splattering harmlessly against the hull. At nightfall they landed without a casualty.

This attempt from the *River Clyde* may have been a mistake, but it resulted in a wonderfully gallant effort to carry out orders under most appalling conditions, and the Dublins and Munsters probably lost more than half their numbers.

While we were at Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt was indulging in a heat-wave, with a shade temperature reaching 120° daily, so we had some sunstrokes. It was a struggle for existence, and inoculations did not make things pleasanter.

However, we embarked again on the 20th May on the *Ivernia* bound for Marseilles. The draft consisted of 1825 officers and men—part of the 11th Reinforcement, with the sweepings of the troops that had been so long in Egypt, the Australian Imperial Force, the N.Z. Expeditionary Force, and the 29th Division. This uninviting mixture fell to my command.

Submarines had become a serious danger in the Mediterranean, and we followed an unusual course, passing to the east of Crete, then westward along the Grecian coast. The Austrian fleet was in the Adriatic, so crossing the mouth of this sea was particularly dangerous. As far as Malta we had a British escort, and then we came under the care of the French navy, with a remarkable contrast in methods.

British destroyers kept in the closest touch with us all the way, but we never sighted a French warship, and they contented themselves by sending numerous warnings of submarines, which were sometimes lying right in our course. Though they shine on land, the French have not yet caught the knack of naval warfare. It was the ambition of the captain of the *Ivernia* to meet a submarine, as he considered he could make a good fight of it with his six-inch gun and some 200 rifles, but luckily on this voyage his hopes were not

realized. He had his wish a few months later, when he found he had been too optimistic, and was sunk.

The troops behaved fairly well, but had the bad habit of opening water-tight doors and port-holes, and eventually the captain gave a direct order that this must cease, so I stationed a sentry in each hold with loaded rifle and instructions to shoot if anyone attempted to open a port or door. This proved effective, and no one was shot.

After what would have been a delightful voyage but for the submarines, we reached Marseilles at night, and took a pilot. This gentleman had a wholesome fear of torpedoes, and as he came up the gangway and all the way to the bridge, he kept shouting, "Full speed ahead, captain; full speed ahead." He had good reason to be alarmed, knowing there was a submarine watching the port. We steamed round in small circles all night at our fastest pace, so that the enemy must have had a lively time dodging us, and at the first streak of daylight we shot safely into the harbour.

At 2.30 in the afternoon we disembarked, with heavy rain falling, giving the city a dismal appearance, but we had no time to explore, and in three hours' time we were all travelling in one train up the beautiful Rhone valley.

The train was terribly dirty and slow, with no conveniences, so the scene could hardly be imagined, and certainly may not be described. It was not merely a case of bad discipline, although that was not perfect. We could only console ourselves by watching the lovely country on either side. We passed through Orange, Mâcon, Les Laumes, Montereau, Juvisy, and Lyon.

On French trains New Zealanders develop the bad habit of riding on the tops of carriages, a thing they

never do at home, but abroad it becomes a mania. Certainly they were crowded, for though the trucks were marked to hold "40 *hommes* or 8 *chevaux*," we were never able to get more than thirty-six of our *hommes* into them with a tight squeeze. Every Railway Transport Officer complained of this habit, generally putting it politely that the local general had a prejudice against it.

We passed under many low bridges with electric wires of high voltage, and expected that the men would be swept off or electrocuted; but no, it made no difference. One man certainly fell off, and to our disappointment did not break his neck, but caught up the train later with a sprained ankle. It will be understood that ours was a troop train, not a "Rapide." The injured man resumed his place on top of his carriage.

The French people were friendly; gentlemen took off their hats as we passed, and ladies smiled at us, while the children begged for bully beef and biscuit.

We passed through Versailles, and saw the barbed wire and trenches of the Paris defences, which fortunately were never tested, and reached Etaples on Sunday evening, May 28th, after a journey of fifty-seven hours. Colonel Saunders met us and took my report, which showed five men missing, at which the Colonel laughed, saying that it gave us the record for the most complete draft he had received; so the others must have done pretty badly. It was easy to lose men, as the train stopped without rhyme or reason, no one knew whether for a minute or for hours, and went on again without giving any warning, and as we started men kept catching up and climbing on board for the first half mile or so. The five men who stayed behind must have been very poor runners.

CHAPTER IX

ETAPLES

"We are the Anzac Army,—
The A. N. Z. A. C.
We cannot shoot, we don't salute,
What blooming use are we?
And when we get to Berlin,
The Kaiser he will say:
'Hoch! Hoch! Mein Gott, what a
b—— rotten lot
Are the A. N. Z. A. C.'"
Soldiers' song to Tune 214 A. & M.

THE British base in France was on the outskirts of the village of Etaples, well known to artists in search of fishing scenes. In the neighbourhood Napoleon's great army assembled for the invasion of England, and in the village stands the house which had been Ney's Headquarters. It is still called Napoleon's house, and bears the names of several famous French marshals engraved on plaques on the front. It would have astonished them had they returned a century later and found a great British army encamped.

All troops in the base passed through a strenuous course of training before going to their units. There were several sets of instructions and separate training grounds, which went by the name of "Bull-rings," where the morale or fighting spirit of the men was well catered for, as being even more important than training their bodies.

The Germans have always realized this, and their

system makes the military idea predominant from childhood up. The British were carrying the idea a step farther, and trained to produce bloodthirstiness. To kill, and not merely wound, Germans would bring the end of the war nearer. Bayonet fighting was taught artistically, and the classes were worked in such a furious and realistic manner as to make an onlooker's blood run cold. There was plenty of material to which this kind of teaching appealed. When it can be instilled into an army, hatred is an extra weapon. Their methods, and responsibility for the war, produced this feeling for the Germans to an extraordinary extent, without much of it being wasted in verbal expression.

The weather in France was cold and sleety, and the change from the extreme heat of Egypt was very severe on men not equipped with warm clothing.

Very few officers or men in camp had been at the French front, and our ideas of what it was like were of the vaguest, and the information we could pick up was the reverse of reassuring. For the first time we heard the front spoken of as "Up the line," as if a railway was referred to.

Ghostly and ghostly stories floated round, of men found stabbed in No Man's Land, or shot dead in their trenches by prowling Germans, which made us think of it as an uncanny place where bad things happened. By all accounts, whenever anyone put his head up to look over the parapet at night, he was sure to have his brains blown out by a German lying concealed in the grass. We knew enough to reduce the stories by a liberal discount, as travellers' tales, and divide what was left by two, but even then it sounded unpleasant.

An officer went up the line to see what it was like, and returned a week later shaking like a leaf from top to toe, and declaring, "It's hell! Hell!" adding

something about canvas screens waving backwards and forwards with concussion, as if he'd been visiting a "House of Terror" or "Katzenjammer Castle" in Wonderland. Nerves were his trouble, his having been shattered on Gallipoli, and he was not required to face it again.

The camp was severely disciplined and dull, and the pleasures of Etaples were soon exhausted, so our only resort was Paris Plage, a little watering-place four miles away, another unexciting place.

One peaceful Sunday afternoon a military police corporal, well primed with Dutch courage, broke the monotony of camp by charging through a crowd of soldiers at a gallop, sweeping wildly round with his sword. Not content with doing this once, he turned and repeated the performance, but this time they were better prepared and clouds of missiles were flying, including the useful entrenching tool, and the warlike corporal was speedily unhorsed and disarmed and placed in durance in our clink, to be tried later by court-martial.

Military police in general were bad, but the Etaples staff in particular held the record. Later in the war one of them caused a riot by stupidly killing a N.C.O. with a revolver. Practically the whole camp went out of hand for six days. The valiant police were chased through the houses like rats by the infuriated men before they could be sent out of harm's way by motors; and their captain was dragged face downwards over the cobbles until discovered and rescued by a New Zealand officer with misapplied notions of humanity. It was just in time, as they were commencing to kick him to death. Sadly enough, a number of the rioters were shot.

On the 27th of June I visited Armentières in charge of a draft. Steenwerck station was as near the enemy

as the train went out, and we walked the remaining four miles into the town, passing old trench systems at Nieppe and Port Nieppe that had been used early in the war.

A good many balloons were in the air, both ours and theirs, and in the town windows were broken, but the French remained in their houses.

The battalion was relieved that night, and was expected back in town about midnight, so everyone at headquarters sat up to wait their arrival. About 12 o'clock they began to come in, and in a couple of hours we had a party of twenty or so, mostly young officers, all as gay and jolly as if they had arrived at a party and meant to enjoy it. They looked remarkably clean and fresh and fit, and seemed to have no idea of going to bed, but gradually the room emptied and presumably they returned to their companies and billets. The part of the town nearest the enemy was badly battered, and the suburb of Hooplins was in ruins.

Considering that the town was closely built and only about three miles from the trenches, it had not suffered as badly as might be expected ; but it had been a quiet sector, although this was now changed; and destruction was on a larger scale, to end two years later in the town being destroyed and taken. Nearly all the churches were in ruins, but fine mansions were available for officers' quarters, although nearly all damaged by shells. Plaster ceilings and the great mirrors that the French seem to delight in were starred with cracks.

The Colonel's headquarters had just received a direct hit, the shell bursting in the kitchen where the cook, a Frenchwoman, and a parrot were. The cook was unhurt, but the parrot was killed.

I returned to Steenwerck late on the 29th and was made very comfortable for the night by Madame

Magnier. On her mantelpiece was a highly-prized souvenir of the war of '70, a German shell fitted with copper studs, which had been fired from their new rifled field-gun. It is to be hoped that she saved it when the German invasion of 1918 again overran her home.

A few days after I returned to Etaples orders came to report to my battalion for duty on the following Saturday.

At this time it was common knowledge that the British were preparing their great offensive in the Somme Valley. On account of the immense amount of work necessary and the thousands of tons of material to be accumulated, it is impossible to prevent the enemy knowing that an offensive is in preparation, but the day and hour of the attack can be kept secret. Apparently the value of secrecy was not understood at that time by those in high positions, and for weeks the 1st of July was spoken of as the day.

About ten days before the event an officer on General Haig's staff informed me that there was to be a five days' bombardment, and that at 6 a.m. on the 1st of July our front-line men were to climb out of their trenches and advance to the attack. This officer met me casually in a train and knew neither my name nor anything about me, and as I was just as ignorant of his identity, and he was possibly a German spy feeling for information, I said nothing and broke off the conversation. It turned out to be true in every detail, however, and this appalling fellow had been broadcasting it round the world. In the circumstances the only wonder is that the attack succeeded.

The opening bombardment was heard plainly at Etaples, and on the 30th June it became intense, and we could distinguish the rapid throbbing vibrations

of the lighter guns, punctuated by the thuds of the heavies, with the flickering lights of the barrage guns, but the beams flashing up constantly into the sky were unmistakably from the muzzles of heavy guns. Officers and men, especially those who had been in action before, stood late into the night watching and listening.

There were a few of the original 12th Company in Etaples—Pike, and my old friend Ashworth, whom I had last seen in a hospital bed in London with a large wound in his back, received when he returned to Gallipoli. I had searched many hospitals to find him. In one an officer lay very ill, and as the sister opened the door and announced me, a bored voice said reprovingly, "Major Brereton, he is dead," and even when he found he was mistaken he displayed little interest.

Ashworth was due up the line too, so we joined forces and went shopping to replace my lost kit. Revolvers were very scarce, and an American Colt was all I could get. Sometimes it would fire, but nearly as often it would not, and was like a lot more stuff the Americans put off on us. Their small ammunition jammed the machine-guns, and their shells burst anywhere, sometimes in the gun-barrel, or anywhere on the journey towards the target. This American stuff had one advantage—whenever anything went wrong, it was safe to put it down to "American ammunition."

CHAPTER X

ARMENTIERES

"Far other is this battle in the west
Where to we move, than when we strove in youth
And fought——"

The Passing of Arthur.

ON the 1st of July we arose at 2.15 and groped about the dark station, until we found the train that was to take our party of Australians and New Zealanders to Steenwerck.

At Hazebrouck the officer in charge of the Australians went to the R.T.O. for information and received a rude rebuff, being ordered out of the presence at once. He appealed to me, my rank being sufficient to warrant bearding this lion in his den. When I entered the office the major was sitting writing with a very warlike expression of face. Without looking up, thinking no doubt the Australian had returned, he shouted, "Clear out!" As this order was not obeyed, he looked up and said angrily, "Why don't you clear out?" When he understood that I intended to stay till I had got the information required, but had not yet asked for it, he inquired a little more mildly what I wanted, and in a moment the question was asked and answered. The Australian only wanted to know if we stayed long enough to enable him to feed his men, and this unfortunate major wasted the valuable quarter of an hour that would have done it. The major had not shaved for days, and was obviously badly rattled and incapable.

Discourtesy between officers was most unusual in France; in fact, unknown but for this instance. Extraordinary patience and civility were the rule with officers on lines of communication. That they "suffered fools gladly" would be a slight exaggeration, but they put up with them cheerfully on occasion.

In a very short time Hazebrouck had a new R.T.O., and a young Scottie captain reigned in the stead of the major. We saw him one busy day when the young man was in his glory, issuing written orders, giving numerous verbal instructions, using his telephone, and carrying on a casual conversation with a roomful of officers, all at the same time. Everything moved as if it were oiled and everyone was in a good humour.

Our draft marched to Armentières from the station in small parties with a few hundred yards between, so as not to attract enemy shells.

I took over my old company and went to its headquarters, a comfortable mansion belonging to a French professional gentleman, situated near the main railway station facing Lille. The owner was absent, and an old caretaker and his wife lived in the cellar. The house was still comfortable, but the windows and mirrors were broken. At the back was a beautifully-laid-out garden, where we could gather a bucket of strawberries daily.

We had our full complement of six officers, all new to me, but among the men were several of the original members. The officers had to get down to business at once, to solve the new and difficult problems likely to occur in this new front. The division had been in the line about a month, a short enough time to get acquainted with the new surroundings without going very much into tactical problems.

Two countries could not have differed more in physical features than Gallipoli and Flanders, and the

contrast in weapons was nearly as complete. In fact, the only similarity was that it was as easy to be killed in one place as the other. Trench warfare in France was a greater departure from pre-war military methods than in Gallipoli, and knotty problems had to be solved by company officers by the light of actual experience on the spot ; it was a month or two later before we were satisfied we had fairly solved most of them.

The German minenwerfer held pride of place as a topic of popular conversation. It seemed to figure in every sentence, and evidently the huge bombs from this mine-thrower had made a deep impression on the company. Judging from the talk, people spent long hours in the trenches looking up into the sky and dodging these shells of nearly 200 pounds, packed with high explosive, easily seen and heard as they soared high in the air and dropped vertically. At the top of their flight they were popularly supposed to pause in order to select someone's living-place to drop upon, and the wobbling sound as they fell was said to be, "Where's your bivvie? Where's your bivvie? Where's your bivvie? Thud!" The men of the Maori Pioneer Battalion varied it to "Where te Pioneer? Where te Pioneer? Where te Pioneer?"

The company sector was noted for the number of these undesirable visitors, and rejoiced in the name of "Graham's Post," or "Minenwerfer Alley." The officers harped on the subject in a way to put the wind up any newcomer, and there was nothing for it but to listen politely and appear impressed.

Next day, a Sunday, I visited Graham's Post and found it had an uncomfortable appearance, much ploughed up with craters of all sizes—for the biggest of which our new friend the minenwerfer was responsible. However, none arrived while I was there, so it was not necessary to practise the dodging method. On

our way back to town a shell fell near us, as we were passing a tall factory chimney close to the sap. After my long absence the old familiar sound seemed more unpleasant than ever. The chimney contained an artillery observing station, which the enemy were trying unsuccessfully to bring down. These chimneys are very hard to hit, and it is said that after our guns had shot in vain at one for several days, the gunners were astonished to find it had disappeared overnight. The enemy had felled it, because everything in its neighbourhood was being damaged.

We were due back in the trenches on Monday evening, so we had our last comfortable bed for a long time, as it turned out.

Reliefs were carried out after nightfall, and the enemy was generally considerate enough not to shell the roads leading to the trenches. There was every prospect of a quiet evening's work, and Sergeant Guy assured me that the company was in good shape and would carry out any job in style.

Just as it became dark we marched out of town, but we had hardly got under way when gun-fire became active and we saw that something unusual was happening in front. In the distant darkness a fine display of rockets and lights shot up suddenly with a sparkling of explosives. Not knowing the locality, I remarked it was lucky we were not going to that spot, but my second-in-command thought it was our exact destination.

The road we were travelling by was very congested by other troops moving with us, so that we were eight abreast. At first we did not know who they were, but we soon found out. Mounted officers shouted at us from the pitch darkness, "Who are you? What the devil are you doing here?" and we found that they were the 3rd (N.Z. Rifle) Brigade also carrying out a relief by the same road as the 1st Brigade. We

plodded along side by side, and exchanged comments, but no compliments, the situation being far too crowded for pleasure or safety.

Motor-cyclists, transport waggons, and guns began to stream past us from the front, all going for their lives, and we had to leave them room or get run over in the darkness, as vehicles do not carry lights in war. In answer to our shouts they all replied, "They are shelling the road in front." This was unpleasant news, as the road was straight and led direct towards the enemy, so if he chose to fire down it we should be in a nice mess.

By this time it was impossible to tell where other companies were, or what anyone else was doing, so my company was halted while the second-in-command and myself went forward to discover what was happening. The inky darkness was punctuated in all directions with gun-flashes, with a specially fine display in front. Behind us, Armentières was well illuminated, blazing in five places.

We were caught rather at a disadvantage that evening as all our divisional guns were being moved to new positions and were on the roads when the trouble began. They were galloping past us in haste on the look out for some place on the roadside where they could come into action independently, and give the enemy something to quieten him down a little.

We did not know this at the time, and the situation was a complete puzzle, so we marched on until we reached the reserve line, which gave us shelter from the bullets which were becoming numerous, and we followed this in file for about half a mile until we reached Port Egal sap, our road to the trenches. A panic-stricken rat bounded past the company, getting many kicks and causing some laughter.

We arrived in our sector, No. 3 (Graham's Post, or

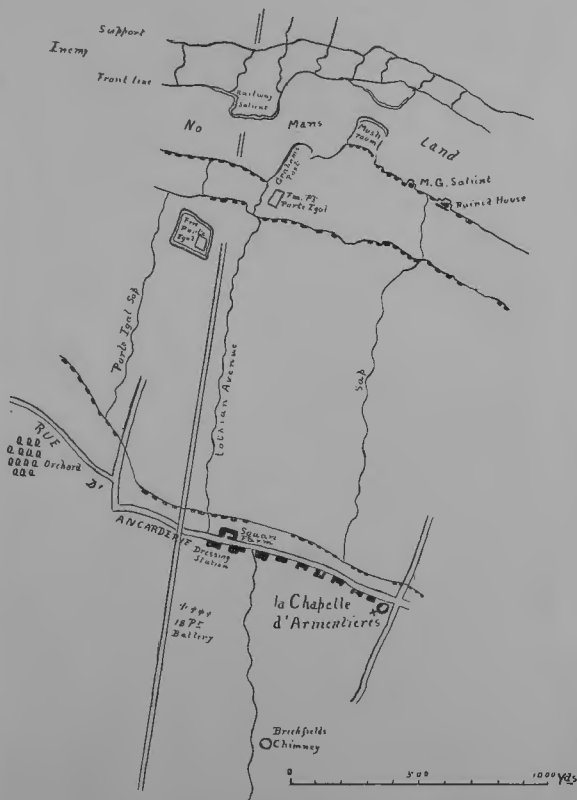
Minenwerfer Alley), about midnight, to the surprise and pleasure of the garrison, who thought that the bombardment would have prevented the relief. Our only casualty had been one man hit by a bullet.

The commotion in the line had been caused by an unsuccessful enemy raid, and everything was quiet when we arrived. We were glad to settle down, but possibly not half so well pleased as the other company was to get out. Next day we came in for a considerable amount of artillery fire. The left of the company frontage was marked by the Lille-Armentières railway, the steel rails still crossing the trenches, and it extended a few hundred yards to the right and ended where the front trench bent forward to form the "Mushroom."

Our shelters were very wretched and quite useless as regards protection from the lightest shell; against the 5'9 a tent would have been safer. The roofs were heavy enough to bury and crush men, so we learned to leave them during strafes, and took our chance in the open trench with the sky above us, which was much safer and pleasanter.

Two hundred yards of the right of the front line was the particular playground of the minenwerfer, and they made it a desolate, forbidding place. We patrolled it at night, but no one could live in it as it constantly changed its shape, and even the dead were not allowed to rest there. In particular, the long-dead body of a Sherwood Forester was continually thrown to the surface, and had to be re-buried.

My headquarters was an iron hut, sandbagged and fairly strong, standing about twenty yards in rear of the support line. It would have been a more desirable residence if the door had not faced the enemy obliquely towards the left, which enabled him to practise on it nightly, firing from a tree with a machine-gun. Visitors



PLAN OF COMPANY SECTORS.



constantly arrive at company headquarters, and whenever the door was opened at night a stream of bullets came as well, fired at the light. Two officers had been shot inside the hut, one while having a nap on his bed; then a sandbag wall was built in front of the door, which was a great improvement and received the bullets, but the light shone over it and still attracted fire.

For the first few days on the Western Front the duty of holding a quarter of a mile of front against the redoubtable Hun seemed a considerable responsibility, but it soon passed off in the many minor worries of a company commander. Besides reporting what the enemy might be doing to you, or you to him, from a dozen to twenty reports had to be sent in every twenty-four hours, all requiring his signature. Most of them were trivial, but they took up about 90 per cent of his time, and the balance could be devoted to sleep and the enemy.

On the theory that like cures like, "retaliation" was the order of the day. If the Hun put twenty high-explosive shells from his 77-mm. gun into your front line, you ordered thirty ditto from the 18-pounders into his front, being careful to give him a similar dose in slightly larger quantity.

Our 18-pounders and 4.5 howitzers were on the telephone and were very prompt in the delivery of orders. In fact, it resembled the attention of a good tradesman, say the butcher, and the likeness became perfect by artillery officers visiting us daily to inquire if we were well catered for and satisfied. The weak point was that Division had no control over heavies and we were outclassed when the enemy turned on his 5.9's.

In twelve seconds from sending the telephone message our light guns would be bursting shells on

the enemy as required, a good performance considering that it took the shell about eight seconds to come up. Of course there was not always this commendable promptitude, and sometimes we had to wait—occasionally in vain. Promptness was essential, because, if our fire were delayed, the enemy did not know what the dose was for and then was apt to become irritable and give us some of our own medicine, as they practised retaliation too.

In popular literature trench warfare is generally described as monotonous, but we never found it so, not the front-line infantry; but it depends entirely on the habits of the troops on either side of the line. If neither wished to fight it would be as quiet as staying at home; if both were for fighting it would be extremely lively. When one side wanted to fight and the other wanted to be left alone, you got the condition that usually prevailed.

The Armentières sector had been a very quiet one for a long time, and no doubt the Hun desired it to remain so. "Live and let live" had been his motto, but we were a new division, and a new broom, and what we lacked in gun power was made up in impudence. Our programme commenced with patrolling No Man's Land as far as the enemy wire every night, constant raids and smoke and gas attacks, and any other annoyance we could devise. A month of this sort of thing made the enemy seriously angry, and he took up the new and fashionable idea of raiding with characteristic solidity, using a tremendous amount of artillery preparation.

They also followed our system of retaliation, and on the morning of the 7th July they gave us a severe example of what could be done in that way. It lasted an hour and a quarter, beginning at 1.30 in the morning, and was a reply to a bombardment on our immediate

left. We had only six men hit, but that was because we had learnt to dig a funk-hole under the fire-step. A layer of sandbags on the top of the step to keep out splinters made this a very safe place, unless the parapet was blown in, which happened often enough, and then the shelterer was buried.

It is most undignified to sit crouched up under a fire-step, and it particularly hurt the pride of Gallipoli men. Whenever a man found a mate in this position he affected surprise and asked, "Hullo, who are you?" which invariably drew the reply from below in a tone of disgusted contempt, "I'm a ——— Anzac under a ——— fire-step."

All the world had heard of the severity of artillery fire on the Western Front, and I thought I had a good notion of what could be done; but this first experience of a bombardment far exceeded my calculations of what it was likely or possible to expend on a single company. Once it started it was difficult to think connectedly, and the buffeting was like being on the losing side in a glove-fight, with most of the blows below the belt. The only satisfaction to be got out of it was the idea that the enemy was doing his utmost, and that it could not be made heavier. Our division was holding a wide salient, with the result that the enemy was able to rake our trenches from either side at short range, and this caused most of our casualties.

At the end of each bombardment the Germans waited about ten minutes and then suddenly put in a blast of shrapnel in the hope of catching people walking about, as they naturally would when the tension relaxed; so we made a practice of sitting tight until this extra arrived. Being of settled habits, they never omitted it nor did it more than once.

We had another very disturbed night on the 6th-7th July and were trying to get a little rest after day-

light when he began again at 7 o'clock in the morning, this time slowly and deliberately. It was most annoying to have to get out of a warm bed to apply a dose of retaliation. It produced not the slightest effect, and the shells continued to arrive in the same thoughtful way, with a good pause between each burst.

The ruined farmhouse of Port-Egal stood between our support and front line, and each gun was fired to hit this; when the red cloud of brick-dust was observed they knew just where they were, and the gun was switched on to the support and front line, hitting them at about 100-yard intervals.

The enemy was scientifically checking his guns for some scheme he had in view, taking about a quarter of an hour with each before changing to another calibre. They also tested their other weapons, from rifle grenades and grenadinwerfers, or pineapples, to the monster minenwerfer. This was the preliminary for the Mushroom raid of the night 9th-10th July.

The ranging took three days of about nine hours each, and must have tried the patience of the German gunners. It was even worse for us who had dirt thrown over us continually, and several casualties. On the evening of the 7th a heavy British bombardment occurred about two miles south, punctuated exactly every ten seconds by the discharge of very heavy guns. The third day of the enemy ranging ceased as usual at 5 o'clock, and for a few hours there was a calm.

It was a perfect midsummer Sunday evening, and many of us wrote letters home. These letters were put in the mail-bag and left in the dug-out ready for the mail-man; but an enemy shell found the bag and perforated it with splinters: the bombardment was very searching. We were using summer time and darkness came on about 10 p.m. At 9 o'clock we stood to in perfect quiet, but at 9.15 the storm broke on us with

the suddenness of a single explosion, all the shells seeming to arrive at the same second. I scrambled into the telephone bivvy, found it already packed with men, and took the receiver. I was able to ask the artillery for all the assistance they could give, and also to warn the Colonel that something serious was likely to happen. The telephone was connected with the front, and the companies on our right and left, as well as the guns and battalion headquarters; but in a short time all these were cut by concussion or splinters.

Within a few minutes of the commencement of the bombardment we were in comparative darkness, although there was still an hour of twilight. Owing to the dust and smoke, we could only see about ten or twenty yards. A line of roadside trees stood ten yards away, but we could get a glimpse of them only now and then when a swirl of air swept the fumes away. The bombardment continued with extreme intensity for several hours, and from the beginning we fired Véry lights from the front in a vain effort to light up the scene.

We knew quite well that the enemy would either attack in force or raid, so we kept a sharp look-out for any lift in their shells. Before they could get in among us they would have to increase the range 100 yards, and we had to be very alert to watch the percentage of shells that were going behind us. We also had to keep our ears cocked for signs that the enemy had entered our front line. If this happened we should hear bursts of fire from our Lewis guns, and the hollow explosions of our Mills bombs as long as the garrison there could fight.

A sap sentry stood at the junction of Lothian Avenue with the trench, a few yards from the telephone bivvy. Through the long hours he stood at his post, and we could see him constantly lit up by the blinding flashes.

He kept a sharp look-out up the sap for an enemy rush, which he would have to check, while shouting for help. The sap was blown to pieces, but the sentry remained unhurt and was quite unconcerned at the end of the strafe.

We were not having a very pleasant time in our shelter, a concrete one a foot or two higher than the parapet, with a bare face of cement towards the enemy. A shell on this would have finished the lot of us. The place had two stories, the basement only eighteen inches off the ground, but both were packed with humanity. We faced the rear, and a weird effect was produced by the constant flare-lights, as they rose and fell, causing the shadow of the parapet to move up and down on the parados. It was like watching the horizon through a port-hole when a ship rolls heavily. The feeling was increased by the rocking of the ground from the big shell explosions and minenwerfers.

Our faces were pale green and anxious-looking when lit up by the explosions. A big shell burst on the parados eight feet away and knocked the breath clean out of us, but the only damage done was to the telephone wire, which was cut by a splinter within a foot of the hand-piece. Soon after 11 o'clock we noticed a slight change in the bombardment, and thought we could hear more shrapnel than before. Possibly the raid took place then. At midnight the Colonel informed me by runner that the Mushroom had been raided, and ordered me to send out an officer with a Lewis gun to try to cut the enemy off as he returned through No Man's Land. By this time we could hear our shells bursting in the Mushroom, giving us cold shivers thinking of our poor wounded lying there helpless under it. Usually it is pleasant to hear friendly shells rushing close overhead. They sound very venomous and

destructive, hissing along like angry snakes to burst a few seconds later on the enemy.

At 12.30 a.m. all fire ceased and a few minutes later Major Allen, calm and smiling as ever, arrived with a couple of hundred Aucklanders to repair the breaches in our parapet. Their arrival relieved us of responsibility and gave us a chance to rest. A short time before one of my officers explored the front line for about 500 yards towards the Mushroom without discovering anyone, and hearing nothing but the groans of some wounded who were buried.

The greatest concentration of fire had been on the next company sector behind the Mushroom, and the trench there was blown flat. We had been more fortunate, having only about thirty killed and wounded, two of the latter being officers. The front line had received more fire, but the bulk of the casualties were in the supports, which were more thickly manned.

A few bays away from the telephone an officer and four men sheltered, and one of them, my batman, was a great performer on the mouth-organ. The officer had a good voice, so they had a singsong until an enfilade shell burst among them, killing or wounding all but the musician.

The explosive in the shells used in this bombardment contained a large amount of phosphorus, which made us violently sick, and it was a week or two before we recovered.

The enemy entered the Mushroom from both sides, and after a severe bomb-fight took away two or three wounded prisoners. One object of the raid had been the destruction of our mine-shaft, but the raiders were too rattled to find it, and in their hurry they left the gun-cotton for its demolition behind.

This raid made two lines in Haig's report, almost the only mention the New Zealanders got while in the

Armentières salient. With the usual official brevity and lack of veracity it stated : " The enemy attempted to raid us, but were repulsed with loss."

When dawn comes after a night like this the best of soldiers have a feeling of disgust and fed-up-ness. Everyone is dead tired, possibly without feeling sleepy ; the trenches are down everywhere ; clods and earth thrown about promiscuously, with shells and shell fragments enough to stock a small war museum. The wounded are away, but the dead still remain where they were killed. The body of one poor fellow lay on a fire-step near the cook-house, and I sent to our stretcher-bearers to get him away as soon as possible. Passing the place a little later, the body was apparently still there, and as I went to make sure, a leg moved. It was another man resting in the place where the body had been.

Our New Zealand mail arrived in the trenches at daylight that morning, very welcome and showing that it takes a lot to upset army routine. All this time we had a great quantity of gas in our trenches, and we only waited for a favourable wind to give Fritz a treat. Unfortunately a man deserted to the enemy and probably told about the gas and other details, to our disadvantage. We blamed him for the severe time we were having, and it was as well for him he did not fall into our hands, as we hoped he might. This gas was a curse to us, and our only consolation was the hope that the enemy was even more worried by the threat of getting it. The prevailing wind was favourable, and night after night for weeks we made preparation for firing it off. This meant withdrawing our front-line garrison, patrols, and wiring parties, and finding cover for them elsewhere, which left us open to attack.

A fire programme always accompanied the gas

attack, consisting of machine-gun fire commencing a few minutes before, to cover the sound of the gas hissing from the cylinders, followed by shells to confuse the enemy and prevent the proper use of their respirators as well as to catch any who might be rushing about. The time fixed for liberating gas was always 10 o'clock at night, but two minutes before time, when we were all standing ready, word came countermanding its use, and we never fired ours. We knew that when we used the gas the enemy would give us a good bombardment, partly for revenge, and also to drive the gas back, so we were to a certain extent relieved.

Our first attempt at gas was laughable. At the critical moment gas alarms sounded on all sides, and we put on our gas masks, thinking bitterly that the enemy had somehow forestalled us. The fact was that the alarm had spread from the enemy to us. All messages were in some sort of code, and when a previously arranged operation was countermanded, any negative message gave the information; sometimes these had a humorous turn, as, "Hot suppers are off to-night," or, "Iron rations will not be delivered," both applicable to a bombardment.

Opposite our left the enemy had a small salient on the Lille-Armentières railway line, which formed a constant target for our guns and raiding parties. Sometimes it was blown almost to pieces three times in the twenty-four hours, but the Germans persisted in holding it. We got heartily tired of the everlasting message, "Our guns will bombard the enemy railway salient for thirty-five minutes at such a time," and it would take a book to describe the strafes that we gave it. We were interested in it only because retaliation always fell on our company, we being a convenient distance from the enemy trench, so they could shell us without danger of hitting their own.

On the 10th July, the day after we were raided, we bombarded the enemy salient with guns and trench mortars at 5 o'clock in the evening, and the retaliation lasted an hour ; at 11.30 the same evening the dose was repeated, for which we were punished for an hour and a quarter. On the morning of the 12th we bombarded the place for twenty minutes, which brought the shells on us for forty minutes ; and at 3.30 the same morning we had a two minutes' rapid fire with trench mortars, machine-guns and rifles. Our telephone always got cut off sooner or later when the strafe was severe, but one or other of the lines generally remained working for some time. The wire to the front line was particularly useful, and as long as it held we could be sure that the enemy was not in it. The company commander usually kept up a conversation with the front-line officer, and learned what was happening, who was wounded, or killed, or buried. If the latter happened a party always went to work to get them out at once, and it was good news to hear that the men were out again, not much hurt. One officer complained that he was buried three times one night, but that sounded like an exaggeration.

Our casualties mounted up steadily. One night a sentry was decapitated by a direct hit with a shell as he looked over the parapet at the end of the firing, almost, if not quite, the last shot. As the men used to say, it must have had his name on it.

At the end of our bombardment, within a few seconds of the last burst, and sometimes before the last shots were fired, all the enemy machine-guns opened fire to check a possible infantry attack. It was not easy to catch Germans neglecting or shirking their duty.

All day on the 13th July our guns cut wire in front of the enemy salient to prepare a track for a raid by

the Otago Regiment. This annoyed them, and they gave vent to their wrath at intervals; but still the tiresome thump, thump, of our shells went on with the greatest regularity, one a minute. It certainly did get on our nerves.

At 10.15 that evening we opened a very heavy fire on the salient, and my company suffered a severe retaliation for an hour. The enemy had got wonderfully quick at this business, and within a minute of our shells bursting on them, we got their return thick and fast. Evidently their telephones were in good order, as well as the men who operated them.

The Otago raid was timed for midnight precisely, and at that hour our barrage was sent up. As the men issued from the sally port they were met by a deadly hail of shrapnel, and the raid became simple tragedy. The enemy shells fell on them like a clap—at midnight to the tick, and as we crouched under our parapet, 100 yards away, someone exclaimed, "They have got them," and truly they had. In a few minutes the raiding party of 160 was reduced to seven or less. Someone may have talked too freely in Armentières, but at any rate the enemy had exact particulars as to time and place.

After midnight we received a hot return lasting an hour and fifty minutes; but we thought of our poor friends lying out in front, helpless, and for once we were not sorry for ourselves. The enemy must have known they had stopped the raid, but they kept their machine-guns going on the place for forty-eight hours, making it difficult to recover the wounded and dead. A number of us tried to go across to their sector to render assistance, but we found the way barred by a belt of shrapnel which no one could pass. Germans are artists in the use of guns, and even at the time we could not help admiring their methods. As soon as

possible our stretcher-bearers went over, and in a short time one of them returned to report that he was exhausted. He was pale as death and vomited violently.

An Otago soldier saved a good many lives that night. He carried in fourteen wounded men on his back. One of the blackest of sheep, he had been sentenced to death, but had got off with imprisonment. He received a free pardon for his gallantry and his record was wiped clean. Soon after he got another sentence of two years. Long afterwards I met him in London, incapacitated for further service on account of wounds and fresh from an encounter with military police. The police corporal's face was bleeding as he came to ring up for reinforcements and handcuffs, while the culprit lounged unharmed in the outer office, smoking a draggled cigarette. The corporal was instructed not to put in a charge against the man, but to give him a good thrashing, which he claimed later to have done, without mentioning if he had achieved the feat single-handed. There were plenty of instances of men being heroes in the line who might be called blackguards according to some standards.

The next night was the 14th, and we had two raids and one bombardment, so when things became quiet at 2 p.m. we were worn out completely. During this spell we were glad as a rule when daylight came, although the scene sometimes appeared desolate enough. Between 4 and 8 o'clock in the morning was the quietest time in the twenty-four hours, when both sides seemingly were exhausted and took some rest.

The company sergeant-major, Thompson, and Sergeant Cannington, were killed in their shelter by the same shell during the Mushroom Raid. They were Gallipoli men, and a great loss to the company. They had shared a very weak but luxurious bivvy,

furnished with a double feather mattress from Port-Egal farmhouse. The bed had been a standing joke, and was considered to belong to the sergeant-major of the company for the time occupying the sector. After the raid a hole about ten feet deep occupied the site of the shelter, and in it were the bodies of the two sergeants and the twisted ironwork of the bed. The piano from Port-Egal was built into our front-line parapet close by.

This was a severe time and we lost a lot of men. Much is said of the bloodshed of war, but there is usually very little actual blood to be seen, even in the confined space of trenches. After a hard night a few drops of blood and a splash or two in a few places would be all that could be seen. In many cases men seemed to be killed by the explosion, their bodies being completely crushed without an external wound.

Our relief came at 11 o'clock in the evening of the 15th, and it would have been hard to find a more thankful or tired lot of men than we were as we stumbled back down Lothian Avenue. As usual, the railway salient was being shelled and a strafe was going on a few hundred yards to the right, but we got away on time in spite of it. We had less than a mile to go to the third line or "Subsidiary," shortened colloquially to Subsid.

The men lived in the trench system, the one we had followed on the night when we went in, but company headquarters were in Square Farm, about fifty yards away.

We had not removed our clothes or equipment for twelve days, and had had very little sleep. Things had happened so quickly that it was not advisable to take off even one boot at a time for a few minutes, and we were infested with lice. We did not notice them when we were moving about, but when we became

warm in bed they began to crawl, and it was this "Toujours promenade" that annoyed us. Our only wish now was for sleep.

During our stay in the trenches we had full employment, apart from routine duties, in repairing the damage done by the enemy, and we needed considerable assistance. The quantity of material required was remarkable; the shells seemed to search out every corner. We generally needed a complete set of sanitary buckets every twenty-four hours, as well as about 1500 sandbags, twenty or thirty sheets of roofing iron, about ten coils of barbed wire, timber, and of course ammunition.

Our nerves were affected by the gun-fire, and nearly everyone had loss of appetite. One bogey was laid, however, and the minenwerfer was little spoken of again, the big bomb being lost in the crowd of shells of all sizes.

"Square Farm" was a large block of buildings with cellars and a fine garden of flowers, strawberries, and red currants. Everything was overgrown, and on the tennis-court stood a notice: "Do not cross here, on account of rifle fire." Lothian Avenue ended at the farm, and some wit had inscribed the name and directions in the languages of all the Allied nations ending with, "Some trench, sure," which was supposed to be Canadian. On the roadway near by was the notice, "Keep close to the wall."

It was a peaceful place enough and we went to bed determined to stay there as long as we could. A wine-cellar is a good place in which to make up arrears of sleep, and some of the officers slept for four days with short intervals for meals. A wireless station in the next cellar supplied us with news of the night's gathering from all sources, which was interesting, although sometimes inaccurate.

The enemy shelled the road occasionally, but only once hit the house, and that did not trouble us in the cellar, which would have become even more secure if the whole structure had tumbled down on top of it.

The men were allowed to rest, except for a small party to push rations up to the front—quite a dangerous duty—and a man was unfortunately killed the first night.

On the 19th July a heavy bombardment took place a few miles south to prepare an attack by Australians and other troops. As usual it was reported to be a great success, but we found out a few months later that it had been a hideous failure. The same evening the 1st Battalion Auckland Regiment raided our old target, the enemy railway salient, using the courtyard of Square Farm as a place of assembly before and after. Raiders' faces were blackened to make them less visible under flare-lights, and also because it is disconcerting to have black men rushing in on you when you naturally expect them to be white. The party was in the highest spirits on their return, having been very successful with only a few casualties. They had not been primed for the raid, but they were to all intents and purposes drunk with excitement and victory. It was amusing to move about among them in the darkness. Their language was monotonously bad, and their wild looks and gleaming eyes and black faces gave the appearance of a scene from the infernal regions. Everywhere men stalked round repeating, "I'm a —— Anzac, and I don't care a —— for you or anyone else." They all said the same thing, and no one listened or appeared amused. If these warriors could only have seen themselves walking round boasting and cursing, no doubt they would have laughed heartily. When raids were over the parties usually received an extra ration of rum; and when this arrived it took effect and men

began to vent their feelings by firing their rifles, which was the signal for spectators to retire. The last we heard was an officer's voice as he took charge, and the party went off like lambs.

On another occasion a Wellington party marched into Armentières after a successful raid. It was the cheeriest sight imaginable, the men laughing and singing and most of them wearing German helmets, overcoats, or other trophies.

Raiding was easily the most exciting form of fighting ; perhaps because it was a great gamble, often successful with no loss of life, and sometimes just the reverse. It might be imagined that they were haphazard or spontaneous affairs, but as a matter of fact they were most deliberate and carefully thought out. Detailed orders would assume the proportions of a book. When it was decided to raid, the party was withdrawn from the line and put into hard training for a fortnight or more, practising on an exact counterpart of the trench they were to attack, reproduced so that the raiders might become familiar with important features. At the same time the party did not know what particular portion of the enemy trench was represented, and were not informed of the day or hour of the raid. During the training period the actual ground of the proposed raid was constantly patrolled to discover enemy precautions and traps.

Raids were covered, as a rule, by a carefully worked out artillery support, which enclosed it on three sides and so protected the raiders from counter-attack. This support went by the name of a " Box barrage." When no artillery was used, the attack was called a " Silent raid," and its counterpart, a " Dummy raid," when the artillery box barrage was fired but no attack followed.

A telephone accompanied the leader of the raid and kept him in touch with headquarters. The great

majority of raids were successful, and about eight minutes in the enemy's trenches generally enabled the raiders to carry out all the objects of the operation. We were seeking for information as a rule, with orders to bring back papers, shoulder-straps, and generally a couple of prisoners. Sometimes the object was to inflict loss and cause uneasiness or to destroy entrances to mines.

One of our eighteen-pounder batteries stood about 300 yards in rear of Square Farm, and on the 21st July the Germans made a deliberate effort to destroy it. A Hun plane circled high in the blue sky above it, and in a few minutes the big shells arrived among the guns. They only cleared our gable by a few feet, and one burst on it, but we were confident that the German gunners would not make many mistakes. When they got the range they went from single shots to salvoes of four until 250 had been fired.

The ground round the guns was well ploughed up and it looked a good job, but, considering that some twelve tons of shell had been fired, there was little damage, only one gun-wheel being broken and some ammunition blown up. As soon as the enemy had finished the battery fired a few rounds to show they were still alive. At that time the infantry had very unfriendly feelings towards the gunners, as we felt that they did not help us enough or share our dangers. We never thought much of the retaliation system, considering it merely eyewash so far as results went. As the target for both artilleries was the infantry, we could hardly be expected to be enthusiastic, especially as the Germans had more guns and much heavier metal at their disposal than ourselves. We would have preferred our guns to engage the enemy's batteries and keep them in check or destroy them, but they seemed to have made a truce, and at any rate the enemy's

artillery observing stations away on the Premesques Ridge stared us in the face, with never a shot fired at them. On the other hand, the infantry on both sides, in trenches visible ten miles off and more and hardly to be missed, were the targets for all artillery, so we were pleased when someone else got a turn. However, our greatest grievance was that the gunners did not stand by their guns when fired at, but sheltered in dug-outs near by until the trouble had passed over, while we had to stand our ground and take whatever came. We certainly had ground for complaint in the want of heavy artillery support, which was in the hands of Tommy gunners who seldom came to light. When we were in the front line one of our "forward guns," which lived in a well-concealed spot just behind the support line, was continually shooting and drawing trouble on us. It seemed absurd for this little wretch to go on firing as it did when all other guns had stopped, and we called it "Barking Billy" with every offensive prefix. Men prayed aloud that an enemy shell might destroy the whole outfit, but this blessing was denied. As a result of this feeling there was much jeering whenever we met the gunners.

After four days the company returned to a sector on the right of our old home, where we found ourselves much better off with less fire and better cover. Unfortunately, men got the idea that they heard the enemy mining underneath them in the support line, and every moment they expected to find themselves travelling skyward on a charge of high explosive. Experienced miners among them declared they recognized the sound of tapping and of "sets" being driven up. The men became worried, although the thing was impossible, and at last it was discovered that there were cavities underground and rats were causing the suspicious noises.

In the daytime the Maoris repaired the support-line parapet, but they always contrived to show themselves and draw fire, which meant sitting down under cover until it was over. They preferred a few shells to hard work, and the progress of repairs was very slow. Whenever the local noises died down we could hear distinctly the distant rumble of the Somme Battle away south. The sounds of fighting heard at night along the line were very curious. At a few miles' distance a strafe resembled the growls of a huge animal tearing at his prey. The fighting at Ypres too was often heard.

The Germans were particularly generous in the use of their brilliant flares, which were brighter than ours. We considered it was the enemy's job to provide lighting, and whenever anything the least unusual happened they turned on the lights. In addition to trench lights, the enemy had a searchlight which made No Man's Land as light as day.

While we were in front of Armentières wiring and patrolling were continuous, and at night No Man's Land was full of our men. As a result, it was almost impossible to get our front line to fire at anyone, and it must have been comparatively safe for the enemy to creep up to our wire. Strangely enough wiring and patrolling were safe jobs, while pushing up supplies in trucks was dangerous and casualties constantly occurred, generally a good distance back. On still nights we could hear distinctly the squeaking of the enemy's supply trucks as well as ours.

On the 27th July my company took over the famous Mushroom, a maze of rotting trenches and weeds, wretchedly cheerless, only sixty yards from the enemy, and for that reason immune from enemy gun-fire. It had a garrison of about ten men, and was a death-trap if raided. Periscopes were in use and sniping was keen; but we held the enemy well in hand. Nearly every

morning the garrison conversed with the Germans, beginning with polite salutations, but soon descending to vulgar abuse. The idea was to inspire confidence and induce the Huns to show their heads, and then sweep their parapet with a machine-gun. This never failed to amuse our men and provoke the enemy to language, although possibly they were more annoyed than hurt.

It was a convenient place to publish news on placards for enemy benefit. The later British account of the Battle of Jutland particularly interested them ; after it was taken down they requested to see it again, and we obliged them. Very likely they suspected it was truer than their own account.

On the 1st August we were officially informed that Lemberg had fallen, with 75,000 prisoners, and Austria practically beaten, while Roumania had joined in the war with the Allies. We were elated, and hastened to impart the good news to our friends across the way by means of a large notice board. We were disappointed to find that the Huns took it calmly and were not the least annoyed, and would not even shoot at it. Their only comment was the remark that it was a "damn lie." This expression was uncalled for, as we were acting in good faith. We discovered to our disgust next day that the news had come from the enemy and that there was no truth in it, so we took the notice down.

We returned to Square Farm on the 3rd August, after an easier bout in the trenches. A new company headquarters was being erected near the tennis court, and we looked forward to the time when it would be finished, so that we could leave the farmhouse and its cellars. We had appreciated them when we were worn out, but for the ordinary times they were too gloomy.

Our messroom on the ground floor was a regular

Bairnsfather place, being pierced on the enemy side by a ragged shell-hole six feet by four, which we used as a doorway. During the evening bullets pattered against the wall and were apt to come in through the hole, so we never cared to prolong our evening meal into the twilight, and whenever we played cards in the evening we chose a corner where the wall was intact. During our absence from the billet a shell had entered the messroom through the ceiling and killed two men who were cooking. Luckily for them the officers were out when the shell came in.

We expected that the enemy would celebrate the 4th August in some unpleasant way, and we were pleased when the day passed quietly, except that we moved into our new two-roomed headquarters built of clean sand-bags and the door away from the enemy—a much better arrangement than in No. 3 sector. We settled down, very thankful to have such a good home, and after dinner I stood in the doorway enjoying a smoke and thinking of nothing in particular, when a shell passed by very close to my nose with a tremendous whoop, to burst about forty yards away. It was so unexpected that I nearly jerked my head off in the effort to avoid it. The enemy fired these solitary enfilade shells at irregular intervals, causing a good many casualties altogether, because it was not serious enough to make people careful. It was only a small shell, the 77-mm., which is the whizz-bang of the front trenches; there it is travelling faster and arrives before the sound of its flight, hence its name. In the subsidiary line it was no longer a whizz-bang.

Our only objection to our headquarters was its visibility, and we hoped that the German intelligence department would inform their artillery that it was only a harmless living-place, and not a gun emplacement.

Armentières was thought to be full of spies, and it

was said that a man could not change his shirt without the enemy knowing.

We returned next day to No. 3 subsector of evil memory, to be pleasantly surprised at its improved appearance. Evidently it had not been so severely battered in the interval, and the parapets and shelters were greatly improved. We had never been able to keep it in repair, although we used from 1000 to 1500 sandbags every twenty-four hours, as well as other material. After forty-eight hours we were relieved by the Wellington Regiment. Nothing alarming occurred during the time, but the enemy used phosphorus shells again, which made everyone sick. It was said that wounds from them caused blood-poisoning and were usually fatal.

On the 8th August we found ourselves back in the subsid., but on the left of our usual place. At first sight we liked its appearance very much; it had a peaceful, countrified look, which unfortunately was not justified, as we got a number of very hot shells over almost immediately, high-explosive shrapnel very well timed too, and one of them burst right on top of our dug-outs. The name 'dug-out' was generally a misnomer in these parts, as it was given to any living-place or shelter, and very few of them were actually below the level of the trench.

During bright weather there were always a considerable number of aeroplanes up belonging to both sides, with almost constant fighting and spent bullets dropping.

We were warned that we were soon to go south to take part in the Somme Battle, now five weeks old, and we were neither pleased nor sorry at the news. We had heard enough of the battle to know what we would get down there, but the Armentières sector had not been a good home for the N.Z. division, or one that

had satisfied us with its usefulness. The infantry felt that their losses and exertions had not had a proportionate effect on the enemy, on account of German superiority in artillery and more efficient shelters. We did not object to the small guns, 77-mm. and 4.2's, and were little disturbed by them, but the 5.9's and heavier guns hurt every time they hit, and the Huns were always hammering us with them. Our little pip-squeaks of divisional guns, the eighteen-pounders and the 4.5 howitzers, had no effect on the enemy, except to aggravate them. We knew, of course, that our efforts had been made to help the Somme Battle, but our losses by enemy fire and exhaustion were not likely to assist. Our casualties were rumoured to run into several thousands; at any rate they were heavy enough to cause a question in the House of Commons.

Our old friends, the Australians, had been some time in the Somme, and they were anxious to have us beside them again. They sent several messages to us to come and fight with them, not politely worded, but the language appealed to us, and we understood. "We want the 'Kiwi Bastards' with us," reminded us of our friendship on old Gallipoli, and we could fill in what was behind the message.

During our first evening in the subsid. we bombarded the enemy heavily, and the rather feeble reply looked as if we were knocking some of the fight out of them at last. In the evening big minenwerfers were bursting about a mile away, and the concussion put my lamp out six times in a few minutes, so I had to let Fritz finish his shooting before I went on reading. These minnies produce moral effect mostly, and do not kill many, but there is a great disturbance of air and earth.

On the 10th August I took a walk to Armentières with the genial and popular R.C. Padre of the Wellingtons. Like others of that good old faith, he took the

war philosophically, if not humorously. On the way to Square Farm we had to dodge a few shells, and arrived rather breathless ; so we stopped in the shelter of a dressing-station to recover and light our pipes. Just then the eighteen-pounder battery behind the farm opened a fast fire over the building, and suddenly with a bang ! bang ! two prematures burst at the muzzles of the guns, splattering our wall with bullets. Both swearing, the Padre and I dived for the door and safety at the first burst, but the second came before we reached it. The battery stopped dead in its shoot, and in the sudden silence the infantry about jeered loudly and counted the gunners out, and for once this childish practice seemed justified. Only one man was wounded, although in a moment a soldier gathered a handful of flattened lead bullets. It was unfair to blame the gunners for the accident, which was most likely due to American ammunition, although the only thing we were sure of was that it was not made in Germany.

The Padre and I first visited the N.Z. Cemetery in Armentières, and I learnt the news by reading the names on the wooden crosses, finding the resting-places of plenty of friends whom we thought still to be in the land of the living. We did not feel much sorrow at the time for those who had crossed the divide and were at rest. The graves of my sergeant-major and his brother-sergeant, killed in the same explosion, were side by side. It must have been a happy thought, and not a mere coincidence, that so many mates were buried together. Near-by were the graves of two very young soldiers, boys well back in their teens, who had been close friends before the war and mates in the army, where people find it best to live in pairs. They were killed by the same shell, and here their crosses stood side by side ; so they were not divided after death.

The Padre finished his work before I had fully

explored the place, and we visited a hospital, where we had a gorgeous afternoon tea with the doctors. The cake was rich and iced, and we hoped the doctors did not notice the way we devoured it. Before we left, the man who had been wounded by the shrapnel was carried in looking pale and pasty.

About this time one of my company cooks had his afternoon off, which he enjoyed in town in his own way. He was a good cook, an ex-man-of-war's-man, but, as cooks sometimes are, was very dirty and given to excessive drinking. Our adjutant was returning the same evening and found a man lying unconscious in the sap and breathing heavily. Thinking naturally it was another poor fellow knocked over by the enemy, Captain Stitt knelt down and gently asked the man where he was wounded. He was rather surprised when a strong voice replied in a tone of angry contempt, "Wounded be damned ; I'm drunk." Like the good-natured fellow he was, the adjutant got the cook on his legs, and picking up his luggage, hunted him along the duckboards towards home. He reached it staggering along with outstretched arms, like a tight-rope walker, with Alan Stitt behind him, calling out, "Don't stop him, boys, he's getting on beautifully," as he shot past me into the cookhouse. I placed his luggage under my bunk for future reference, as it consisted of bottled beer. In the morning it was clean gone, and I never mentioned the matter to the cook, fearing to lose his good opinion of my intelligence. He must have sent a friend for it while I was asleep, or else he sobered up and got it himself.

We had a good deal of gun-fire on the 11th August, and a 77 nearly got one of my officers. It missed his head by a very few inches, and he ran to shelter, very perturbed, claiming that it was a 5'9—a very natural mistake, as most of us knew. Tom Cole was one of the

few men who did not mind a shell passing so close. One day in the front line he had been looking over the parapet, and when he moved down under cover a shell passed where his head had been. A friend remarked, "That was pretty close, Tom," but Tom denied it, saying, "No, it wasn't. It was a foot away."

The enemy had a fixed idea that guns were concealed in an old orchard beyond the Rue d'Ancardérie, about 200 yards behind us, and they gave it a Teutonic shelling nearly every day. There was no gun or anything else there. They first fired a few ranging shots, and to make quite sure they always reduced the range to get a burst between our trench and the road, which was evidently visible to them. This shell had to pass close over our heads, and occasionally it hit our trench; so we had to keep discreetly under cover until it was fired and then we had no further anxiety, as the Germans increased the range and landed all the rest in the orchard.

Preparations were well advanced for the withdrawal of our division, and incoming troops had taken over some localities. During the afternoon of the 11th Armentières was very heavily bombarded, causing several fires and damage to property, as well as loss of life among the French and the incoming division. French civilians stuck pluckily to the town, and many did good business. There was still a fashionable tea-room with smartly dressed waitresses, always crowded with officers enjoying the company and the sticky gâteaux. In the battered town this crowded room filled with officers wearing steel helmets, and the lively French girls enjoying life apparently without a care, made a curious contrast with the scene outside. The building had been hit once or twice, but the waitresses were as gay and jolly as if they had been in Paris.

We were seldom in the town, and were never com.

fortable there. Little children played in the gutters, carrying their gas-masks ready to put them on in a moment, but they did not let the danger prevent their fun. There were little ones from one year old, and many of them had only known life in shelled streets, possibly enjoying it as a part of their game. When shells burst close, they stopped to look and listen, and if one came too near they trotted off to a safer place, and we took the cue and followed their example.

The churches had all been destroyed by this time, not particularly on a system of vandalism, but because all or most of them were used as observing stations, proof of which were the telephone wires still to be seen in their ruined steeples. The church of Notre Dame, standing in a small square, was the last to go, on the 18th July during service. The accuracy of the shooting was miraculous, almost the first of the 5'9's going through the clock face, and nearly every one of the 250 struck the building, though they probably came six or eight miles. Our hospital on the side of the square was evacuated, but no one was hurt. The congregation took refuge in a cellar under the church, and the only casualty reported was a souvenir-hunter who came too early on the scene and was killed.

Armentières was within easy range of the fortress guns of Lille, and when we were in the trenches we enjoyed hearing the big enemy shells away up in the sky sailing along to the town behind us. We called them the Lille Express, and, strangely enough, we could see sparks from them at night as they passed over. It gave us a malicious pleasure to think that the heads were getting shaken up a bit.

When batteries have been in a position for some time they accumulate unauthorized stocks of ammunition, in spite of the fact that reserves are stipulated in orders, and every round is accounted for, at least on paper.

Actually, the careful battery commander adds secretly to his reserve from time to time. However, when a relief occurs, neither more nor less than the official reserve may be handed over, so a prolonged shoot is generally ordered by Division to give everyone an opportunity of squaring the books.

On the 12th August our guns fired heavily, and the enemy returned it next day, which was a Sunday. On Monday I went to Armentières with a friend, and enjoyed a good lunch and a bath in the brewery vats at Pont de Nieppe. These baths formed the subject of Bairnsfather's humorous picture, "Old Bill," wallowing in a tub, being fed, like a walrus, with sardines by his friend Bert.

We returned to our home in the line in good time for a tremendous bombardment, which was our divisional farewell to the enemy. The darkness was well illuminated by the guns and bursting shells and hundreds of flares and rockets from the disturbed enemy. The men stood on the parapet and enjoyed it, as we were getting nothing back our way. The Germans seemed taken aback by this salute, and did not fire a shot until six next morning, when they put in two hours' very rapid fire which caused considerable losses to the Scottish troops, who had not properly settled down. Armentières also received heavy punishment.

My company was relieved in the evening by one of the 4th Gordons, and we returned to our city home after forty-five days in the trenches. When they arrived the Gordons were very irritable, damning everything and everyone. We always liked and understood the Scottie troops; they might have been our blood-brothers, always growling and swearing. This time they were annoyed because they had been promised a week or two's rest behind the line, after

a gruelling time in the Somme, only to be rushed back into the trenches in a place which, as they recognized at once, was no "Home from home." We had not much to show for our casualties, and though we knew we would be well blooded in the Somme, we might not lose many more men there than we had done here, although in a shorter time ; so we were quite pleased to leave it to our Scottish friends, with our best wishes.

I did not go with the company to town, but accepted Sergt.-Major Guy's offer to guide me back by the fields, which he guaranteed was perfectly safe and pleasanter walking. When we had gone some distance a bullet came whistling along and entered the ground by our feet. This annoyed the sergeant-major greatly and he called it some very offensive names. Our N.C.O.s were particularly keen on going "overland," as they called it, instead of travelling by the saps, and they frequently tried to persuade me to follow their ways, but I never favoured them. Once before I had followed the guidance of a sergeant from the front line to the subsid., travelling along the tram-line that carried up supplies. All went well and we were walking along chatting casually, when we walked into a stream of bullets which seemed to be passing about three feet off the ground, some between our legs. Of course we ran as hard as we could and used unparliamentary language until we passed the danger ; then we remembered that this was a spot well known to our pushing parties, where the enemy fired bursts from a machine-gun across the tram-line. We should have waited until the gun fired, and then run a hundred yards before it began again, and we should have been quite safe.

We reached our town house about midnight and found it still there, but a great shell-hole was newly excavated at the front door. Another shell had landed

in our beautiful garden, and nearly all the windows in the house were gone, but some strawberries still remained.

At 10.30 next morning, the 15th August, the N.Z. infantry marched out of Armentières towards the railway station at Steenwerck. When we had gone a mile or so we began to see the extraordinary state the men had been reduced to by their three months in the trenches. It was a glorious morning for walking, but they began to fall out in numbers, and sit down dazed and unconscious of the shouts of officers to get back into the ranks. It was the reaction after being fired over so long and the steady strain of duty, to find themselves marching on a peaceful road where they could straighten their backs and look round with their heads up, and see the old world going on as usual. One soon forgets that there are such pleasant things. To their deafened ears they seemed to be walking in an unreal world of perfect silence. We halted several times in the four or five miles' march, and waited a few hours near the station, so those who had fallen out had time to recover and join up again. We ate our lunch in a cornfield, sitting with our backs against the sheaves in stook, and all of us felt a sense of unreality. Then we entrained, and after going a few miles began a six miles' march to Wardrèques. It was very hard to get the men along. It seemed as if the stiffening had gone out of everything, although if we had turned round and expected to meet the enemy they would have been all right.

Instead of being in fours they were marching six abreast and sometimes more, but we understood what was the matter, and took it less seriously. Other companies were having the same difficulty, and we got some pleasure out of the efforts of the second-in-command of the next company in front, who was exhausting

himself driving the rear of his company along, a little bunch of tired soldiers. The six miles seemed incredibly long, and it was a weary job getting over the last one, but when we were beginning to think we would never get there, we reached our billets in Wardrèques at last.

CHAPTER XI

THE MARCH TO THE SOMME

"And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—'Open then the door:
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more.'"

Rubaiyat.

WE enjoyed being in Wardrèques. The men were in farm buildings among the hay and the cows. They did not offer to help milk, but were content to watch the French girls. The officers were quartered in a convent, where everything was clean and prim, but comfortable. A short march of an hour or two daily was all the work we had to do, and the rest of the time was spent resting and drinking a great deal of light wine and beer, which produced an astonishing effect on the men in their peculiar mental and physical condition, and was possibly good for them. We heard our bands again, which at first sounded strange, as we had nearly forgotten that there were music and pleasure in the world; but we enjoyed it, and it helped to bring us back to normal.

A few miles from Wardrèques was the old town of St-Omer, where Lord Roberts died in harness after a lifetime of service to a country that of late had not realized his value. A huge explosion of shells had occurred at the railway station a few weeks earlier. It continued for several days and some million or more shells were lost, causing a shortage. Buildings near the station were destroyed or damaged, and the sound made people think that a new offensive had broken out.

After five days we marched out of Wardrèques and entrained at Arques. It was Sunday morning and we met the whole French population on its way to Mass. At 10 o'clock that night we reached Abbeville, where we were horrified to hear that we had a march of at least twelve miles to our billets. We were hungry, but there was no food except for some lucky ones who secured a bun and a cup of tea or beer, and even they were badly prepared for a heavy night's work. At 11 o'clock we started off in pitch darkness. At first we sang a little to keep up our spirits, but we soon gave it up and tramped along in silence, becoming more weary and angry every hour. If we had been fit and fed we should have enjoyed the walk, but we were in poor training and very empty.

To make matters worse, we had no idea where we were going or how far, and, although we were marching uphill most of the time, we did not get the usual hourly halts that make long marches possible. As the night wore wearily on the language increased, and men cursed everything and everybody from King and Kaiser to company commander. We approached villages with pleasant prospects of bed and rest, but we went through them and marched on with fallen hopes. The poor men were greatly irritated by some foolish person in the lead who kept constantly passing down the tired line, "Only another kilometre," until the false message was drowned in curses.

It may be thought that this was a great fuss about a night march, but nerves were worn thin and bodies cramped through living in trenches; and, to top all, we knew that the hardship was unnecessary. My horse was ridden in turns by anyone who most needed a rest. Luckily, Sergt.-Major Guy supplied me with some milk lozenges. He was seldom without a reserve of some sort. Daylight came to find us still marching,

except the lucky ones who had fallen out, and were now snoring peacefully on the roadside miles behind. Soon afterwards we reached the village of Merelessart, which was our destination. Our billeting officer, Major Gray, had done his work well, and guides met each company and led them straight to their billets. The men did not trouble to go into the buildings, but sank down on the courtyard pavement and fell asleep, completely exhausted. As the officers went into the house the people were getting up, and inquiring heads appeared at the windows. It was the height of luxury to fall into a deep feather bed with many blankets and the inevitable eiderdown, but it was too luxurious, and there was no sleep there.

The forenoon was taken up attending to the men's feet: blisters that could be measured by the square inch were plentiful, but our regimental chiropodists soon made them more comfortable. In the afternoon the battalion paraded and the Colonel spoke very bitterly of the men who had dropped out during the march. We were greatly disappointed, feeling that we had done our best.

We remained a fortnight in Merelessart, and soon came to know and like the people, who were kindly interested in us, and did their best to make our stay pleasant. Their fit men were all in the trenches, and only boys or very old or crippled men were at home. Most of the villagers lived by weaving scrim on great home-made wooden looms. The material being supplied, four francs were paid for weaving 100 metres six feet wide. Working twelve hours a day a man could make eighty metres and earn about 2s. 6d., but the dust from the jute fibre made the work unhealthy. Better-class weaving and tapestry work was done by some of the villagers.

The infantry of the New Zealand Division was billeted

in neighbouring villages, and we began special training for wood fighting, in anticipation of our task in the Somme. It was a difficult problem, and most company commanders had only vague ideas of tackling it. We had plenty of practice grounds, as the country had many dense woods through which we tried to fight our companies without getting them completely mixed up and out of hand.

After all, we were lucky enough not to encounter woods in the battle, where horrible scenes were so often enacted. In Merelessart our main task was to restore the men's condition, and a few days of steady work and organized games, with regular food and rest, produced a great improvement in their appearance and spirits. With more realism than romance they called this process "fattening up for killing," though they were not the least depressed by the idea.

Plentiful light beer, wine, mead, gin and brandy brought a crop of crime never absent when we were out of the line. Every military misdemeanour is a 'crime', of which simple drunkenness is considered venial; but when one of my men got drunk and broke into a French house and frightened the women, he got a well-deserved six months hard labour. As he went off under escort he chanced to see the Colonel's groom, with whom he had a difference, and he challenged him to settle it while the opportunity offered. The N.C.O. in charge gave him his freedom for the occasion, and the groom administered a remarkably good farewell thrashing. This groom had been in my service earlier in the war and was a remarkable fellow in his way, clever and capable, a non-smoker and non-drinker, but very fond of gambling, at which he appeared to be an expert. As a groom he had a very safe job, but unfortunately he was returned to his platoon for duty some time later, and, as he expressed it, he knew he was "for it," and he was killed almost immediately.

I met his opponent of the fist-fight years after and was surprised by his good behaviour. As he had been a man of very bad military character, I told him I noticed a great improvement. To my surprise he said very seriously that he was a changed man, and he had made up his mind to go straight. This was the only conversion that I came across in the army.

Soon after our arrival a man was shot for desertion. Executions were rare, but in such huge armies as were in France the totals were considerable. Officers as well as other ranks were liable to the extreme penalty for serious offences, practically restricted to desertion or mutiny. It was a sort of tonic to feel that if one ran away when things were bad, shooting would follow. I believe that the greatest care was exercised and that only habitual offenders, who had deserted time and again, ever suffered the death penalty. No soldier was shot for a sudden loss of nerve, and even after a man was condemned to death, if he had ever behaved well in action he was reprieved.

On September 1st the good news arrived that Roumania had joined the Allies, although we would not have been so pleased had we known that Germany would crush her so quickly.

On the morning of September 2nd we parted from our kind friends, and marched out of Merelessart with the usual inebriates supported in the ranks by their mates. That night we stopped at Airaines. Next day we passed through Hengest and reached Piquigny after a pleasant march of eighteen kilometres. The roads were covered with marching troops. An endless stretch of moving battalions crawled along the winding roads like great snakes. Each company marched compactly, with its cooker smoking cheerfully in rear preparing the men's stew and tea for the next halt, and as far as the roads were visible the smoke rose at regular

intervals from the columns, giving the scene a homely and peaceful look. Occasionally the men glanced back, contented to know that when they were ready the food would be cooked and served. A soldier is happy when he knows that a hot meal is handy.

Piquigny is an old-fashioned village on the banks of the Somme. I was comfortably lodged with an old lady and her daughter. Madame and I played cribbage during the evenings, and the only drawback was the new family of lice that I picked up there in my cosy bed. The town had been occupied by enemy cavalry for a few days at the beginning of the war. The story is told that when the Mayor knew that the British were due next day, he disclosed a hidden store of 8000 bottles of champagne to his German guests, and they helped themselves so liberally that the town was comfortably retaken. Certainly there was no evidence of fighting, though we drew a Hun cap out of our well in a bucket of water, and we hoped that its owner was not down there.

We continued training for the attack, but now in open country, and we were becoming fairly proficient. The advanced line kept touch with low-flying planes, which noted the positions gained and reported progress to headquarters. It is the most important and difficult thing in modern war to let the guns and the high command know just where the front line is. From time to time we were given lectures to promote the fighting spirit, the most notable lecturer being a Scottish officer from General Headquarters, who very ably delivered a bloodthirsty address that appealed to every instinct of hate and murder. Delivered to men about to enter a great battle, and well tuned up, it was quite in keeping with the spirit of the time.

The lecturer began by drawing the familiar picture of the obsequious German waiter, making himself as

servile as possible in the hope of a tip. "But now," he continued, "this man is out to kill you, loudly boasting what horrors and atrocities he will commit on you if he can get you at close quarters. Will you let this German waiter carry out his threats and rip you with his bayonet, or will you have something to say in the business? You know what he did in Belgium when he got the upper hand, and what he will do again if he gets you at his mercy. You are not the men to let him do such things to you, but you will do the killing; and when you get to close quarters you will bayonet all you meet, dead or alive, wounded or shamming, and take no prisoners." This Scottie officer had no trouble to carry his audience with him, and at the end the men were ready to bayonet anything in German uniform, and they remembered and acted on it when they got into the battle. At the time this teaching was general in France, as it was fully realized that our only hope of ending the war lay in killing Germans without scruple. The Somme battle was planned to that end, attacking always behind overwhelming artillery barrages, not so much to gain ground as to destroy men and so break down the spirit of their army.

It was apparent that the streets of Piquigny were one of the great highways into the battle, and day and night troops constantly marched through, with miles of transport waggons, all going one way to feed the monster machine. Especially at night the stream could be heard moving, with the rattling of wheels over the stony streets and occasional men's voices. Much more goes into a battle than ever comes out.

Above local sounds we could hear plainly the gunfire at the front. On the 5th September an attack must have taken place. During the morning we noticed a succession of bumps and thuds, far too rapid to count,

which suddenly developed in the afternoon into a tremendous hum like the roar of a giant aeroplane, which was the barrage following on the bombardment. The French knew what this meant only too well, and their faces were very serious that day. We used to try and cheer them up, but it made not the slightest impression. They only shook their heads sadly and repeated, "It will be a long war."

As usual we made good friends with the French, and we regretted having to go when the time came; they seemed just as sorry, giving us good wishes for our safety. We marched out on a lovely morning, the 7th September, and for a few miles our road lay along the marshy banks of the Somme. We had quite a number of drunks reeling along helped by their friends, who carried their rifles and equipment. The French were always astonished to see men in this condition, which must be unusual among their people. As we marched I overheard one of my hard cases, when he noticed a friend staggering along as drunk as a lord, remark rather sadly, "I wish I had half his complaint."

We stopped that night in the village of Cosiers, and for once had miserable quarters. We had no idea what had happened to the place, but it was almost deserted, and had a look of hopeless desolation. The men's quarters were so filthy that they did not go into them.

Our six officers had one room and one bed, of more than doubtful appearance, and no food procurable. The old Frenchman was insane, and went particularly mad whenever we approached the pump for water. His wife was a little more amiable, and we managed to get some tea and a little sleep in spite of the vermin. Happening to go into the backyard during the evening, I discovered one of my men up the Frenchman's apple-tree. Luckily, it was not the old man who found him or probably someone would have died for it, more likely

the old chap. As it was we were both astonished, but the poor soldier looked so terrified, as if he expected at least to be shot for it, that I let him scramble off and kept his crime undisclosed.

At Cosiers the sound of the guns was louder, like the roar of a heavy sea breaking on a beach.

We made a rather long march of fifteen miles to Dernancourt next day, a little village near the River Ancre. The road was so crowded with troops that it was hardly possible to halt for rests or meals. Albert lay towards the north, easily recognizable by its church with the hanging figure of the Madonna and Child, a remarkable landmark visible round the countryside.

The three N.Z. Infantry Brigades, 12,000 men, camped down in the open fields during Saturday and Sunday. All the battalions paraded for divine service, and a good many wondered if they would live to see another. Towards evening battalions marched off in succession towards the battle, and as each moved out of the bivouac the roadsides were crowded with men of other units eager to say good-bye and shake hands with particular friends as the column passed. All troubles were forgotten and everyone was in the highest spirits and keen for the coming fight. We were one of the last battalions to move.

During the march one of my corporals had developed a terribly blistered heel. It was raw, and the skin completely off it, but he begged hard not to be sent to hospital. He was a quiet fellow, but he must have possessed great will-power to march with such a foot, in his determination to see the battle. He had his wish and saw part of it, but he was killed before it was over. It is curious how strong the attraction of a fight is to those who have been in battle before. When our turn came we marched down towards the little River Ancre, passing Dernancourt, under the railway bridge.

A Tommy sentry was posted there to warn troops that the road was not to be used, but stupidly enough he let us pass. General Braithwaite discovered this when his brigade was half-way through, and he told the man what he thought of him. The interview between the peppery general and the well-trained (?) sentry was certainly humorous. Each time old Bill shouted, "You're a bloody fool, aren't you?" the poor man sprang to attention, saluted, and replied, "Yes, sir." This did not leave much room for argument, so the general kept repeating himself, until a hundred yards away when he turned round again in his saddle and yelled, "You're a bloody fool, aren't you?" And the voice came faintly back, "Yes, sir."

In the twilight we could see shells bursting away in front. We passed through Méalte, halted about a mile short of Fricourt, and bivouacked on a wet hillside covered with thistles. As we reached the place a shell burst close by, and we heard again the hateful shrapnel. A curious inarticulate sound between a curse and a snarl came from the crowd of soldiers at this renewal of acquaintance. The countryside for miles around was crowded with men, very little camping room was allotted us, and the ground was damp and muddy.

Next day we viewed the famous battlefield, stretched out before us, and from our bivouac we could see ground still held by the enemy.

The country was hilly with chalk a few feet below the surface, making excavations very noticeable. Just in front of us in the hollow were the ruins of Fricourt, destroyed to its cellars, and on the rising ground beyond were Fricourt Wood and Mametz Wood. On the skyline above Mametz Wood we could see the jagged remains of High Wood, still partly in the hands of the enemy. To the right of Fricourt stood King George's Hill, where a few days earlier the King had watched

the battle. This steep and commanding hill had been an enemy stronghold for nearly two years, and if skill and labour could have done it, it would have been impregnable. It was riddled in all directions with underground works, but in spite of all it had fallen to high explosive and the British attack on the 1st July. We examined it with interest. The enemy front line had been blown into the air by our mines, and its position was marked by a continuous line of craters. The ground was strewn with projectiles of all sizes and kinds, and particularly noticeable was the enormous number of our sixty-pound trench-mortar bombs, known as tadpoles or plum puddings. Their fragments lay about in thousands. Many German corpses were still in the dugouts or on the steps leading out of them, showing that the attack had come on them before they were able to reach their fighting positions. An enormous concentration of men, horses, and guns surrounded our camping place. In every direction the undulating country seemed alive. Although the battle had lasted two and a half months, a portion of the enemy line which had been assaulted on the first day had not yet fallen. The heights of Thiepval in front of Albert still held out, although we had advanced well in behind it, with the Australians in the post of honour, holding Posières and Mouquet Farm in a grip that nothing could shake. We could see their position clearly, and it looked more like a line of small active volcanoes than anything else. Other parts of the battle were active by turn, but in behind Thiepval the ground was always boiling in shoots of black and grey, and at short intervals enemy barrages swept across the position towards us, and we could distinguish the fierce rattle of machine-guns. But carefully as we watched we could see no Australians coming back, not even wounded men; and we realized that they were invincible, as they had ever

been. The enemy were pressing on the Mouquet Farm from three sides in a desperate effort to save Thiepval, but they could not move its little garrison, though the farm was placed in a hollow and not well situated for defence. How these Australians managed to hold their ground was a mystery to us then, and will be until their history is written.

We remained in our bivouac for a few days. At night the whole countryside blazed with cheerful fires, very unusual in this war. An immense quantity of boxes was available for firewood. They had contained ammunition, bombs, fuses, biscuits, meat, jam, etc., that had been served out for the battle, and now fulfilled their destiny by warming the chilly soldiers. One blanket and an oilsheet were all the men had to protect them from the weather, but they were comparatively comfortable for all that. Working in pairs they made a tent of two ground-sheets laced together, supported by a piece of string stretched between two rifles which were stuck, bayonets fixed, in the ground. A few sods to form side walls and block one end completed a small but effective shelter.

When the King visited France it was rumoured that he said that a great surprise awaited the army, and we often wondered what he meant. A few days before our attack parties of officers and men were invited to a place a few miles away, where to their astonishment they saw huge monsters crawling about the fields, crossing ditches and trenches and walking through fences and walls with the greatest ease. There was something comical about their deliberate movements and mechanical power, and most people were amused, especially as they thought that they would have a very different effect on the Hun at first sight. These were the new tanks and they were there in hundreds. Possibly they were the surprise mentioned by the King.

Their secret had been well kept, and the army had no suspicion of their existence. When they were being shipped to France the inquisitive were told that the bulky cases contained tanks, and the name stuck. As was intended, the news soon spread, and everyone was well pleased to think of the joke we were going to spring on the Germans.

During this time it fell to my lot to preside at a court-martial on a case of desertion. We filled in the time while at Fricourt in practising close-order drill, a thing we had not done for some time ; many of our best sergeants had almost lost the trick of it, and were rather amusing than effective at it. However, it was time well spent, for ordinary elementary drill is the groundwork of a soldier's efficiency, and experience of war only proves its necessity.

On the 14th September the battalion was completed in ammunition, bombs and food. The *moral* was of the best. The idea was everywhere that we would go clean through the enemy this time, and everyone wanted to get at them before it was too late. Their captured orders told us that their guns were wearing faster than they could be replaced. A final spur was the message from the French, that they were pausing in their attack to allow the British to draw up level.

In case battalions were wiped out, a nucleus was kept back for a few days consisting of half the officers and a number of N.C.O.s and men. Ordinarily they would replace casualties.

On fine days the battlefield was covered with a haze of dust and smoke, which is the usual accompaniment. Both sides used captive balloons, but the enemy were very shy and kept them low down in fear of our 'planes. Our deadly attack with liquid fire at the end of June had shaken their nerve, although they had learned since to attack ours in the same way.

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

"To-morrow ?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years."
Rubaiyat.

WHEN we arrived the British had gained about three miles of ground on a four and a half miles front. The enemy dug successive lines of trenches as their front lines went. Every hundred yards had been fought for, and the contests in the woods were particularly ghastly.

The German divisions had been through the stubborn Verdun attack and got their fill of fighting there, only to be plunged again into this more deadly battle. Their captured letters showed that enemy officers and men were reduced to a state of hopeless despair. A Blood Bath they called the Somme battle, and they complained bitterly of the way the British were attacking, saying it was not war but murder, and that our aim was not to gain ground or any military advantage, but to kill Germans, which was exactly correct.

As in a glove fight, the time comes when the two scientific opponents must prove which of them can best survive severe punishment ; so in this battle the British were making their maximum effort, and it was intended that the heart of one side or the other should be broken by punishment. Luckily, our aeroplanes had almost complete control ; the few enemy 'planes that came over were very high and going for their lives though at night they bombed our back areas.

The N.Z. attack began on the 15th September when

the Rifle Brigade and the 2nd Brigade took Switch Trench, Flers Trench, Grove Alley and Abbey Road, past the flanks of Flers village.

Flers was practically captured by a tank which passed along the main street of the narrow town, firing in all directions, and then formed a "strong point" beyond. The tanks assisting our attack were not fortunate. One stuck fast in the mud before it reached a place where it could fight, and another was wrecked by shells and burnt out near Flers Trench, but two kept going and tramped down the enemy wire and machine-guns and helped the troops to advance.

A British balloon was attacked by a Taube and the balloonist promptly took to his parachute, and twenty minutes later reached the ground safely, the dead body of his attacker falling past him as he descended. Our airmen very smartly shot him down in flames before he reached the balloon, and he became separated from his machine as it fell.

Our brigade was in support of the first attack, and moved back when it was over to Carleton Trench. On the 17th I visited General Johnson in his headquarters in a German dug-out above Green Dump. The scene in front was terribly ugly—a desert of shell-holes and mud. The mud was slippery and slimy so that it was impossible to walk without falling, and the shell holes were as close as cells in a honeycomb. The enemy kept a permanent barrage of high explosive bursting black and heavy on Switch Trench, and all supplies and troops had to pass through it to get to the front trenches. Our gallant Brigadier passed through it twice daily.

The German dead lay where they had fallen; indeed we had difficulty in getting our wounded out, and keeping up the supply of food and water, so that our own dead received but secondary attention. The casualty clearing station near Fricourt was very busy

during the 19th September. The wounded arrived in a constant stream covered with mud from head to foot, many having been four days exposed to the constant rain; but they were calm and uncomplaining, and there was no groaning except from unconscious men. The great bulk of them were English troops. Only one made a fuss, a young unwounded officer. An Irish doctor noticed he was misbehaving and shouted a few sentences in his ear that effectively kept him quiet. At this station every man got his antitetanus injection, and it was noticeable that each wounded man shrank away from this small addition to his suffering. The patients were only detained for a short time, the living going on in motor ambulances, and the dead put on one side.

On the 21st September the battalion moved back to Green Dump, in reserve. Losses from artillery had been heavy and everyone was tired and worn with the strain and exposure.

For some time we were puzzled by a new sound near Fricourt, and at first we thought it was one of our guns of a new type. First came the sound of a dull explosion and then the noise of a shell in flight. It turned out to be a fast travelling enemy shell, and the report of its burst reached us before we heard the sound of its flight.

Whenever the weather was fine the N.Z. troops in reserve played cricket, and only took a casual interest in the battle. Just below the cricket ground was the depot of the Guards Brigade, well supplied with wooden huts. The Prince of Wales lived with them, and every evening during mess the bands of the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Guards played the best of music, marching and counter-marching in ankle-deep mud with the same precision as if they had been on a London parade-ground.

Great numbers of dogs roamed about the Somme

area without either homes or masters. Some were beautiful animals, and all were fed by the troops ; but they seemed to have adopted a wandering life and disappeared again. Many were evidently old friends and went about in pairs. Dogs have a strong instinct of fear, though they are most courageous animals, and they dread gun-fire. When a sudden burst of heavy firing broke out several miles away one poor dog trembled and staggered from fear, so that he could hardly walk.

Rats always infested the trenches, though they seemed to suffer greatly from fear and often ran away in panic when things were bad, and as a rule were gaunt and mangy, often nearly bald. Cats lived with us quite happily, having settled homes, as a rule in officers' quarters, where they were quite as much a part of the establishment as in civilized houses. They seemed to have no sense of fear and no nerves, and strangely enough they took no interest whatever in the rats, though they often met face to face.

There were numbers of lost men, too, in the Somme, who had become separated from their battalions. They were searching miserably for their units and liable to be charged with desertion. To protect them we usually gave them certificates stating that at a certain time and place they were trying to regain their battalions, which we were not able to help them to find.

Posières was constantly subjected to severe bombardments and attacks, but no impression was made, and the Australians hung grimly on.

The battalion attacked Gird Trench on the 25th September, and I went with Major Jordan to learn the news. We passed through the ruins of Fricourt and found the buildings completely destroyed. The main road past the town carried an enormous traffic, and resembled a busy street in London, but the military

road control was perfect and there was no confusion. Only heavy vehicles with such necessities as ammunition and food, guns and ambulances were allowed to use the road, and they completely filled it in continuous streams inward and outward. Light vehicles, horse-men, infantry, and tanks went across country. An army of men constantly worked at road repair, shovelling metal under the wheels of the vehicles as they passed. Great heaps of metal had been placed at intervals on the roadside for this purpose. Men of the military traffic control were posted with loaded rifles to ensure the proper use of the road, and if necessary to compel obedience of orders.

For miles the country was filled with cavalry of six British divisions, often actually standing by their horses waiting the order "Mount" and "Advance" in anticipation of a break through by the infantry, but the chance for a big cavalry attack did not come. A broad cavalry road was kept clear for them right up to the front line. Shell-holes were roughly filled and obstacles levelled, and the road was well marked with notice boards every few hundred yards, bearing the words, "CAVALRY ROAD." We hoped some day to see this road filled with men and galloping horses; had this happened, it would have been hard to hold the German line, or the British infantry either for that matter.

We went up the valley behind Fricourt, following the wrecked railway line past Fricourt and Mametz Wood. We wished to explore High Wood, which after a frightful struggle was now completely in our hands. The scene was ugly and desolate beyond description. Where a dense wood of about 150 acres had been was now a wilderness of shell-holes and splintered timber mingled with torn earth and human remains. Among the uprooted stumps and shattered branches was a maze of trenches, and everywhere were portions of equipment,

clothing and human bodies. We found no one living there and the place seemed lonely and uncanny, and from the number of bodies about one would hardly have been surprised to find the place inhabited with spirits.

A little shelling decided us to return to Caterpillar Valley, as a more cheerful place, though it had an evil enough reputation. It was inhabited by English gunners who invited us to a cheerful morning tea and local gossip. Strangely enough, as it was a long way from the enemy, we heard bullets passing overhead. For a time our road was blocked by falling shells, so we remained a while with our pleasant friends. One of the shells landed on a gun detachment, and blew the crew into the air. The shelling was not severe, and we passed safely along the Caterpillar to a dressing-station in a quarry near Green Dump, through which the wounded were passing freely. We stopped to gather news, but could learn nothing definite, so we adjourned for lunch to an old trench on the rise towards Longuéval where there was shelter from the occasional shells. In the afternoon we were surprised to discover one of our batteries firing direct to the rear, but it turned out that it was shelling the enemy stronghold of Thiepval.

The casualties on the 25th were considerable, so I took over my company again. The men were in good heart, as attacking is easier to bear than defence, and they were well satisfied with the progress made. There was little shelter in the muddy trenches, but the men were so tired that they took no notice of the mud and the rain. Pigs are often found living under better conditions than we were, for no quarters as luxurious as a pigsty were to be found on the battlefield. The enemy had no time to make deep dug-outs. Luckily food was plentiful and good, as is usual during a battle, so rations are indented for twenty-four hours in advance and the survivors benefit by the number of

men casualtied. In addition, quartermaster-sergeants are very knowing people, and finding that numbers cannot be checked at such a time, habitually draw for more than actual strength. Strawberry jam was regularly on the menu—a very unusual thing.

My sleeping-place was a hollow in the side of a trench a few yards from General Johnson's headquarters, with just room for Lieut. Barton and myself.

On the 30th September, Barton and I went forward to learn the lie of the land, first visiting Switch Trench, which remained exactly as the 2nd and 3rd (Rifle) Brigade had left it in the early morning of the 15th. It made no pretence of proper trench construction, and was a mere ditch dug in sodden ground. In their desperate effort to hold it the enemy had packed too many men in it, and the dead occupied its whole length, about a man to the yard. Our barrage had not damaged it much, although the enemy had no material to strengthen the sides. Very few of the dead had been killed by shells, and none had been killed by bayonets. The bullet had done the work, and a surprising number were shot in the throat. They were still in the same attitude as when death had caught them, but swollen and as black as niggers. These invaders of La Belle France did not present a glorious appearance, and it was hard to imagine that they may have been some of those who so proudly cakewalked through Belgium and Luxemburg when their advance was practically unopposed. A great many were still sitting in little recesses cut in the front bank, where they had been shot by our men after they jumped over the trench. Between the trench and its support the ground was well strewn with men in the attitude of running; our barrage had accounted for these, as the extent of mutilation showed.

We went on a mile or two farther and crossed numerous other trench systems, all similarly filled with

silent occupants. In remarkably few cases were bayonets fixed to the German rifles. With us, the bayonet is always kept fixed in action and in trench warfare, and it was strange that these well-disciplined soldiers had not done the same. Evidently they had no idea of resistance once our men reached them, and possibly they hoped for quarter at the last, but there was little or no mercy shown, and it is believed that none of the Germans survived the attack on the Switch.

Their machine-gunners were picked men who always fought to the last. It was said that one of our tanks passed over a crew with the gun still firing and pressed the lot into the mud, and it is quite likely. The German soldier will never be accused of lack of courage by those who know him best. They fight best in a regular or mechanical manner, and are not good rough-and-tumble or bottle fighters, but for endurance they have hardly an equal in the world and not a superior.

We found Flers much damaged, but not in nearly such a ruinous state as towns a few miles back. The enemy had shelled it continuously since its capture, partly because it contained a good well, and we did not spend much time exploring, but returned down the long main street, where the victorious tank had made its passage, raking the side streets with its guns. It is to be hoped that this tank commander survived the war to tell the tale of his capture of Flers. Our nearest way back was along the main road towards Longuéval, but it was overlooked by a German balloon, which meant that it would not long remain healthy. In a few minutes high explosive began to burst in front of us, so we left the road. There were great numbers of British dead and some New Zealanders lying near the roadside. We found N.Z. riflemen enjoying their tea, surrounded by their own dead, several days old, some even in the trench. When asked why they did

not bury their dead they only laughed, and said they did not mind them.

This part of the battlefield was in full view of the Germans, and there were a great number of men scattered about. So long as we avoided groups or landmarks there was little risk of a shot ; but they were making wonderfully good practice on groups passing along the road, where every little party got its shell, and there must have been many casualties. Two ruined tanks and a wrecked aeroplane were on a rise and we inspected them from a distance, and even kept a little way apart from each other so as not to tempt providence or the Germans too much. We returned home in time for a good tea, feeling satisfied that the division had made the enemy pay dearly for our casualties.

On the 1st October the 2nd Brigade attacked Gird Trench towards Eaucourt l'Abbaye. We were in an excellent position to watch this attack. As it was restricted to a narrow front, a number of guns were borrowed for the job, and about 360 light and heavy were used. After a two days' bombardment the attack was timed for 3.15 p.m., at which instant the air above seemed suddenly to be filled with projectiles rushing forward to form the barrage which was thrown across the landscape a few seconds later, as suddenly as a picture on a screen. It was as high as a tall tree and appeared a wall of smoke lit up by gleams of flame from the bursting shrapnel. At the same time thirty drums of burning oil were fired into the enemy trench to add to its horror. In twenty minutes we knew that the attack had been successful, and a few minutes later a curious thing occurred in front. A few hundred yards away men suddenly appeared running from all directions with the greatest energy to form a quickly growing group, displaying as much haste as if they

were going to a fire or a dog-fight. At first it puzzled us completely, but in a few minutes the group resolved itself into a column of fours marching towards us. As it approached men still kept rushing to it, springing into vacant places and immediately picking up the step. It was evident these were highly-trained men, German prisoners without escort, the lucky ones who had been missed or overrun by our attack, now marching towards us and safety. They were following a well-thought-out plan to save their lives, by organizing into a formed body. Until they did so they were likely to be shot individually. When they passed there were about 200 of them, led by five officers, who even at this trying moment were attempting to swank a little. Covered with mud, they still had their kid gloves hanging half off their hands. They passed us in perfect order, looking as if they fully realized their fortune, and in time, no doubt, someone took them in charge.

On the 3rd October we were ordered up into support near Flers. It had poured all day, and at night was still raining and as dark as possible, so the problem of finding our way and arriving on time at our sector of trench was a difficult one. The distance was only two or three miles, but practically all landmarks were gone. Each company took its own route, and my plan was to go eastward until we reached the steel lines of a tramway which crossed Turk Lane, leading to our destination. We set off in the dark, slipping and falling over the greasy shell-holes, stopping often to inquire our way of any Tommies we met. This did not help much, as the only answer we got was "Ah doan't know." When we reckoned we were near the tramway we asked a sergeant who had been living on the spot for four days, but he didn't know. Within a hundred yards we fell over the steel rails, and we knew where we were. At Turk Lane we caught up to the rear of the

company in front and found the second-in-command with his hands full, trying to get a drunken man along. This warrior was full of good nature and nonsense, as well as rum, and his remarks caused more amusement than would be expected during such a tedious night's work. Turk Lane was a network of loose telephone wires which were maddening to heavily loaded men with rifles. They gripped us by the rifle sights and by the neck and knees, and some we broke and some we escaped from, but we struggled on until we came to the Switch. As we got near it the men said, "This is the Switch, I can tell by the smell."

We found our trench all right, a narrow seven-foot ditch with six inches of liquid mud in the bottom, and no dry spots. The shelling was nothing, but having to wander about in this wretched ditch to make sure every man was up and in his right place was very trying to the temper, and as I did not expect to get to sleep for some time it made it worse to hear the tremendous snorts and snores of the men, who seemed positively to be doing it on purpose. I spent the balance of the night sitting on a muddy step, dozing a little, and thinking of the glories of war. A light shelling continued next day, and we were due to be relieved at 8.0 p.m. The relief was a few hours late, and we waited patiently. The bulk of the men still snored while others carried on an impromptu concert, singing among other songs, "Keep the home fires burning" with a good deal of feeling. At about 11.0 o'clock the relieving companies arrived, but owing to bad officers or training, they showed no signs of actually occupying our trench and so relieving us.

After watching them standing in a group for half an hour or so, apparently not knowing what to do next, I went out and tried to lead them in, first placing a lighted candle in the bottom of the trench to show the

way. It was of no use; some of them blundered down, then tried to climb out the other side, and many succeeded while others exclaimed, "Ahm stook, choom. Ah can't get oot." The crowd who had climbed across the trench huddled together and tried for a time to "form fours." It was amusing, and I could not understand what they were doing; so the major commanding the next N.Z. company tried his hand, and also failed to get them anywhere. Sergt.-Major Guy made the final effort, but he could not move them at all. They simply huddled together like unwilling sheep, and he left them with a bitter blessing, "The —— Huns will get the —— lot of you."

My patience was exhausted too, so I passed the order, "Move out in file by the sap on the right," and the company moved off without confusion and in absolute silence. It certainly was a contrast to these unfortunate Tommies (— Bn. K.R.R.) who belonged to the 41st Division of unenviable reputation. Their inefficiency could not be blamed to the rank and file, and must have begun with their officers and not the juniors only. However it happened, there was not a single officer with the company that came to relieve that night, nor did I hear the voice of a non-commissioned officer.

As we went down the sap we found that we had not yet done with these poor fellows, as we met a platoon coming up, still without an officer. There was no room to pass, so we asked them to turn back until they reached a wider place, but they had not enough initiative to do this, so we asked them to climb out and let us get by. A voice answered, "We can't get oop, we have a full pahk oop." This was too much for my Sergeant-Major, who had not recovered his usual good temper, and he pushed them aside into the mud, grinding his rifle butt in their faces as he went by. If we had taken



LOTHIAN AVENUE.

(See page 161.)

time to think we would have been less annoyed than sorry for the unfortunate leaderless men.

When we left the Turk Lane we made as straight as we could for Green Dump across a maze of shell-holes. They were bad enough, but in addition we kept getting into the blast of our own guns, a most unpleasant experience, as they were heavy ones, possibly 9.2 howitzers by the volume of the blast. It was impossible to see anything for several seconds after these explosions, and the pace became very slow. Every 200 yards the front had to halt to let the rear of the company close up. Just before reaching Green Dump a corporal boasted that he had not yet fallen down, but almost immediately he provided a laugh by slipping into a hole.

At the Dump a guide met us and we got rid of our Mills bombs, which we had carried out for some unknown reason. I went to my old sleeping-place to collect some clothes that I had left in the care of a boy of the Artists' Rifles. The last night I had slept there I had a vivid impression that the trench was about to collapse, and it was only by a great effort that I was able to remain in bed. It fell next night, luckily unoccupied, and several tons of earth came down on my spare clothes.

By this time the men were nearly exhausted, and it was only by telling them that the enemy had taken to shelling Green Dump at night that we got them moving. Luckily a few shells did arrive to help us on, and we reached a road with some surface left.

Supply carts and horsemen appeared to want all this road to themselves, and we only kept our share with a good deal of language and many hard blows with our tin hats, very handy weapons on occasion. The men were anxious to seize the horses and ride themselves, but that would not have done. We heard a

transport driver ask his mate who we were, and a reply in a stage whisper, "New Zealanders," conveyed a world of meaning. At 3.30 a.m. we reached Pomier Redoubt, where the mud was a good ankle deep and the only shelter some old trenches ; but our good old cookers were there with a splendid hot stew and tea, so any ill-temper vanished. A pint mug of each was as good a supper as any man or officer could wish, and the only thing that could be better was two mugs full. At such times we felt gratitude to our cooks, but unfortunately we neglected to tell them.

Next day my company marched some miles to a town for a bath, badly needed after a month without washing. I was lucky enough to put my clothes through a "delouser," which rid me of these beastly pests. When this was done I scoured the town looking for something to drink, assisted by an Aussie quartermaster, and after a couple of hours found some champagne, two bottles of which I carried back to Pomier Redoubt.

The 1st Brigade was remaining in reserve to the 41st Division, and we expected to be suddenly ordered back to help them, but luckily things were not so bad as that. The weather turned finer, and we spent most of our time drying our clothes and beating the mud out of them. When my overcoat was dry it stood right up, but a day's thrashing made it pliable.

After three days at Pomier Redoubt, where the mud was only a degree better than at the front, we were delighted to receive orders at midnight on the 6th October to march out six hours later. This meant little sleep for anyone, and practically none for the cooks ; but we were tired of the Somme with its interminable shell-holes, mud and ruins, to say nothing of dead men and shortage of water, and we were glad to move.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE LINE IN FRONT OF FROMELLES

"I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head."
Rubaiyat.

Two minutes before six the battalion moved off, the Lewis gunners toiling hard to drag their carts through the sticky clay. It was a bright morning, and we had the holiday feeling. A few men missed the warning to move and were left behind, but they soon woke up to find the battalion gone and overtook us.

For the last time we passed the ruins of Fricourt and the clearing-station near by. We reached Albert at 8.30 and found our train, but no prospect of its leaving, so we settled down to enjoy ourselves in the train or about the yard. All day the Germans shelled the town with twelve-inch guns, making doors and windows rattle, and our howitzers shook the place with their firing.

The hanging figure of the Madonna and Child still remained as if appealing to France for revenge on the desecrating German. Possibly it had its effect, for it was seen by every soldier who took part in the great battle.

Few things were obtainable in Albert and the only liquid was champagne, of which there was plenty. The men filled their pint mugs and, blowing the froth off drank it thirstily. France generously supplied this

best of drinks, which they had well earned. As the day wore on, the merriment increased. Everyone had been thirsty for nearly a month.

The officers sang choruses until the quartermaster was falsely accused of neglecting the supply department. At six in the evening our train pulled out and by daylight next morning we found ourselves at Longpré, a peaceful little place with comfortable quarters.

The 12th Company officers were billeted on a very mean French lady, who raised the price of eggs every morning, beginning with the standard of fivepence each. She also hinted at the souvenir usually given on departure if our hostess were kind. A present of ten francs was customary, and the poor woman looked very sad when we explained that we were not giving it on account of her meanness.

After four days we entrained and arrived at 3 o'clock in the morning in the outskirts of Estaires, having come the last twelve miles in motor-lorries. It was the first time we had travelled so luxuriously. The men used to say that lorries were reserved for Chums and German prisoners. We only remained in these billets until the afternoon, which found us marching through the mud-splashed streets of Estaires and Sailly-sur-Lys to our billet at the cross-roads in the house of Monsieur Le Conte. The Australians in Sailly were very concerned because we came along in column of route, saying we were looking for trouble in the shape of enemy shells and that we would soon learn better. However, we were not at all impressed, thinking they were over-anxious. They were men of the 5th Division who had been several months in this sector, and had taken such terrible punishment on the 19th July. In the Somme we had met the 5th Bavarians, who had so badly mauled them, and we avenged the Australians by nearly wiping them out.

After a rest of two hours the infantry of the 1st Brigade marched into the trenches, and by nightfall the relief was complete. I did not like the fact that the day was a Friday and the date the 13th. The relief was very rapid, and there was barely time to see to the safety of the sector before night came on. The outgoing company commander insisted that it was a very quiet place, but while he spoke a pineapple bomb exploded and covered us with mud. He amply apologized for this mishap.

In the morning we viewed our new surroundings. In front was a particularly solid-looking brown earth wall representing our friend the enemy. The little river Laies flowed obliquely from them and passed the front and support line of my company sector. No Man's Land varied in width from 150 to 250 yards, and was the usual flat ground with shattered tree-trunks, but here cut up with numerous trenches and saps made during the tragedy of the attack on Fromelles. Thousands of unburied Australians still littered the place, proof of the deadly machine-gun fire that had enfiladed them.

Except for the Fromelles ridge a mile or so in front, the country was as flat as a pancake and very wet. The enemy proved hard to rouse, and we found that the division in front of us had just come from the Somme, where the heart had been knocked completely out of it, and we believed it was our old friends the 5th Bavarians back again. It had been reported that the King of Bavaria entertained a very poor opinion of the fighting qualities of New Zealanders, and hoped that his soldiers might meet us, presumably to teach us the finer points of war. We hoped he was as well satisfied with the meeting as his troops undoubtedly were.

By this time the army was amply supplied with ammunition and guns. Evidently Lloyd George had

made a success of the Ministry of Munitions. During the Somme Battle batteries became snowed up with empty cartridge cases.

During our stay in front of Fromelles we carried out a punishing programme: guns and trench mortars fired fifty rounds a day, target or no target, so the enemy must have suffered intensely, but the retaliation was comparatively feeble and ineffective. Things were so quiet the first morning that men stood on top of the parapets to repair them; but the enemy would not permit this insult and fired at the parties, so the practice was discontinued.

Our first twelve days were uneventful, and we returned to our billet at the Le Contes' two or three miles back. The men were on straw, and slept better than I did in a feather bed, after being used to a duckboard covered with a few sandbags. To make sleep more difficult the walls of my room were decorated with a fantastic black pattern, that looked like the work of a madman. All night the sound of a child crying and complaining in fragments of French came through the thin partition. It was homely but did not assist sleep. It was the youngest, a girl of five, who had received some painful burns and whom we afterwards knew as "Ginger." Monsieur Le Conte was a fat gentleman, exempted from war service on account of his large family. The wife was a tired slave, and there were four girls and a boy at home. The little girl soon got over her burns and was petted by everyone. Unlike her older sisters, Olga, Jean, and Agnes, she was a great coquette and played her numerous admirers carefully. She had the wickedest and most suggestive wink imaginable. My batman was one of her special admirers, and she avoided as much as possible hurting his feelings. If she were on my knee when he came into the room, she jumped off at once saying, "Frank

très jaloux." The Australians had taught her some Egyptian words and their own slang, which she mixed with French words and English slang to make a quaint vocabulary.

When Monsieur Le Conte rose at five in the morning he could be heard all over the house poking at the fire and shouting, "Olga! Olga!" until he roused the family and that finished his day's work. The family worked until 10 o'clock at night attending to the farm and its root-crops, the estaminet, a little shop and the housework. There is never a bath in a French house, and when Olga appeared in the morning rubbing her eyes, the men used to chaff her saying, "You haven't washed yourself, Olga," which always drew an indignant reply, "I have wash myself." As soon as she got up Jean brought coffee to the officers in bed, but it was generally cold before we were sufficiently awake to drink it.

We often lent a dozen men to help at farm work, which they liked doing, but there were constant complaints that they did not work hard enough. Monsieur was at the bottom of it, but Olga had to make the complaints. Occasionally the men played coarse jokes on the girls, but not ill-naturedly, and they were always on the friendliest terms.

Only once Olga came with genuine rage. She complained that the men lived in their place, but spent their money in an estaminet farther down the road. She ended up by saying in a tone of bitter meaning, "They are bad girls there." It was not at all likely that the statement was true in the way she meant it, but poor Olga was burning with righteous anger and it was not easily appeased.

Estaminets were allowed to open for an hour at midday, and again from seven until eight in the evening. The Le Contes had little reason to complain of want of

customers, as their large room was filled to suffocation every evening from the first stroke of seven until the last one of eight. Then we could hear the harsh voices of the girls ordering the unwilling ones out. If there was the least delay, Olga always rushed to me to have them put out.

The French were in mortal fear of the military laws. As soon as the officers knew the family well enough we spent the evenings with them, sitting in the family circle round the stove. A pot of coffee always simmered on it, and Madame mended and ironed the day's takings and packed them into neat heaps, while the girls washed and packed away hundreds of empty bottles and finished the day's work by washing out the brick floors of the estaminet and kitchen. The work was never finished before ten. Madame's job was very tedious, as most of the money was torn and dirty notes, down to the value of twopence-halfpenny, and she had first to repair the rips and tears with gummed paper before she ironed them. The officers often helped the girls, but no one offered to help Madame.

Monsieur did nothing and said nothing, but he looked as if he made up for it in thought. Neither he nor his wife could speak English. Often old Charley was present. He appeared to be a retainer of the house, though he worked for the military authorities. He was an oldish man, very lean, and drank a lot of beer which he never owned to liking, and much more readily drank wine whenever anyone gave him the chance. It annoyed Charley greatly to say, "Bier est bon, Charley, n'est-ce pas?" Striking the table with his fist he would shout angrily, "Bier non bon, beaucoup bier beaucoup," etc., finishing up with the universal French joke, which to our notions is more true than polite. Charley and I became close friends, worse luck, and

he confided that it was he who had ornamented the wallpaper in my room with the pattern in charcoal. He was very proud of this artistic piece of work.

In the early days of the German invasion the house had been occupied for a few days by the enemy, and Charley graphically described the event. At the enemy approach all fled except the Madame and Charley. For the four whole days poor Madame wept, letting her tears drip on the stove. Charley illustrated how he sat in a chair with folded arms and a proud Napoleonic expression, until a Hun came up quietly behind him and suddenly put the cold muzzle of a revolver to his nose. Charley slipped to his knees with his arms extended above his head in one motion. After that he conducted himself more modestly, but Madame never ceased to weep as long as the Germans were about, which must have annoyed them mightily. They paid for what they used and did no damage, but were abrupt and surly in their manner, which was hardly to be wondered at in that cheerless household. We were generally quartered in houses that had been occupied by the Germans in the early days, and in all cases it was the same; they paid for everything and behaved well enough, but were rude in their manner. Of course the French have a poisonous hatred of Germans, and it was amusing to watch French soldiers when they met German prisoners. We looked at them with curiosity and no goodwill certainly, but the French stood and examined each at a distance of about two feet as if they were inspecting some strange unclean beast, and their faces expressed extreme disgust, as though they refrained from spitting by a great effort. As a rule the German faces were expressionless, though occasionally a man glared fiercely.

My company soon became very friendly with the family, and they always turned out to wish us "bon'

chance " when we went to the trenches, and gave us a warm welcome when we returned. On these occasions there were plenty of embraces, and Charley always did his best to salute me in the French fashion, first ineffectively wiping the beer from his mouth with his hand. Apparently it pleased the majority. He tried it on Barton once, but he rudely pushed him over.

After ten days we returned to the same sector of trench. Reliefs were not dangerous and were carried out in daylight. We went down the road past Brigade Headquarters in Rouge de Bout in sections in file at fifty yards' distance, and then we adopted single file so as to make the least possible mark for enemy observers, who generally had a balloon overlooking the road. Every few hundred yards of the road was screened across with scrim or other light material to obstruct the enemy view, and it was seldom shelled. We entered V.C. Sap at the Rue de Quesne, and that brought us in less than a mile to Rue de Bois where our battalion headquarters were. We followed this road a few hundred yards to the left, concealed from enemy view by canvas screens, and then gained the slight protection of Impertinence Sap, which was only waist-deep and went across exposed paddocks also artificially screened. A few tear shells fell close by, which made our eyes water for a few minutes so that we could not see where we were putting our feet. A crowd of armed men feel very ridiculous with tears streaming from their eyes, but it is not painful and soon passes off. The next road crossing our track was Rue Petillon, where the Y.M.C.A. had a coffee and food stall almost in the support line.

There is little ceremony in a company relief. The outgoing company commander explains to the incoming any important conditions that may have arisen during his relief, and when his company is clear he and

his sergeant-major say farewell, and with the rest of their company headquarters pick up their gear and depart down the sap. The incoming commander deposits his kit on his plank bed and surveys the cold and cheerless place, which in a few hours takes on a snug appearance again, and is 'spoken of as home.

The dug-outs were mostly concrete, and more substantial than we had been used to. Mine was typical of the rest, concrete, about two feet above ground and inside six feet long by six wide and five high, and fitted with two beds. On top of the roof of concrete were several layers of sandbags with air spaces between to absorb shock, and under the top layer a sheet of concrete, technically called a "burster," to ensure the explosion of the shell before it penetrated.

Altogether there were about six feet of protection on top of the dug-outs, which we reckoned would resist a 5'9 shell, unless it made a perfectly square hit. A good many dug-outs leaked, and sometimes we had to bale three times in a night, but later we plugged the leaks with cement. Water for shaving was always available between the duckboards on the floor.

The past fortnight had been fine, but the weather broke badly and it rained in torrents, and for a few days the saps and trenches were waist-deep and full of floating duckboards. It stopped the war in our locality, as the enemy must have been as wet as we were, and in the circumstances it would have been ridiculous to annoy each other. As soon as the weather improved we tried to block the passage of the River Laies through the enemy trench by blowing it in with our sixty-pounder trench mortars, to form a lake behind his parapet. We persisted for a few days, preventing repair at night by turning a machine-gun on the place. but at length we had to give up the idea as being beyond

the power of the plum-pudding or tadpole, as the bomb was called.

There was only a foot or two fall in the land from our trenches to the Lys four miles away, and the waterways had been neglected in the summer, but we hoped our engineers would soon come to our rescue and cure the trouble. The worse the weather the more likely General Russell was to make a visit of the trenches and have things put right. A colonel of engineers promised that all would be well, but next day the General arrived. He went to the Laies at once and asked if the channel below was clear. The engineer colonel said it was, and Russell went off to see for himself, the rest of us following ; and five hundred yards away we found the stream completely blocked by a collapsed bridge. General Russell worked on lines of ordinary common sense besides having a good fund of humour. He asked a man one day why he had not shaved, no doubt expecting the unblushing reply that the man had shaved very early in the morning, which leaves the officer no option but to pretend to believe the tale, and remark as he moves on, "Your beard grows very quickly." This man, however, said that they had no time for shaving, and the General gravely told me not to work them so hard. We got a certain amount of fun from the visits of generals, not of course from the seniors, who knew far too much, but out of young officers of their staffs who were obviously unused to trenches. If such a one appeared, a company officer usually got him into a state of extreme nervousness by warning him when to duck for imaginary snipers and pointing out all the particularly dangerous spots, which would be made very numerous.

The infantry had sometimes to complain that our guns fired into their trenches, but the gunners never pleaded guilty, though undoubtedly it happened.

There is the old joke of the question being asked, "Whose is it? Ours or theirs?" Although it was unusual for our shells to land among us, this question was not by any means a joke, and was in constant use. It was said that a gunner officer testing his battery from the front line was nearly blown over the parapet into No Man's Land by the shell bursting a few yards behind him. We frequently complained that the machine-gunners were firing into us at night, but they stoutly denied it, although the infantry were quite certain the bullets came from behind.

The enemy fired daily, but the minenwerfer did not trouble us. We threw a tremendous lot of stuff at them and raided them frequently. We got a good many little bombs from the Grenadin Werfer, but we rather despised them until one dropped on two men, wounding one and killing the other, a fine young soldier—Frank Strachan. It happened at a very quiet time just when we were being relieved, and we buried him next morning in an old orchard behind the Rue de Bois among hundreds of Australians of the 5th Brigade, killed on the 19th July.

When we were out of the line two of my platoons formed the garrison of Winter's Night and Junction Post in the third line of defence. This, called the Brigade Line, or Subsidiary, was not continuous, but consisted of a chain of posts with good wire in front. In case of heavy attack the troops in billets would man the gaps and complete the line.

With the great amount of available artillery, it was always considered possible to break through the front and support line on a limited front, so both sides adopted a third line about 1000 yards back. Behind this again we had many broad bands of surprisingly dense barbed wire, often twenty yards through and six feet high, and almost solid. Movable gates of

barbed wire were available to block the roads.

On the dark night of the 16th November the Wellington Regiment raided to the accompaniment of a fine bombardment, which showed up well with the flares and coloured rockets. Our house rattled and shook with the firing of our howitzers close by, and the doors were continually blown open by concussion.

We often visited Estaires, as yet undamaged by war. The motor-lorries constantly passing through splashed the houses with mud to a height of six feet, and the patient French never ceased cleaning their windows. They had a novel way of protecting the glass from concussion, by pasting two strips of cloth across each pane in the form of a cross to keep the glass in place when the concussion shattered it.

Estaires saw dreadful fighting when the German attack in 1918 drove the Portuguese Division almost to its gates in the first rush. The bridge over the Lys leading into the town was the scene of particularly bitter fighting, a spot which we all knew well because a Tommy examining post was there, and everyone was put to the annoyance of stating his name and unit as he passed. A man of the 13th Company tried to get by without stopping and got a bullet in his leg. While we were in the line the Germans sent an impudent message to Estaires to say that they meant to eat their next Christmas dinner there, but this did not worry anyone, although the French dreaded the coming of the Portuguese.

Next time we set off to the trenches one of my sergeants had a big shell dressing bound over one of his eyes, and he was very shy about explaining the injury. It seemed that the evening before he had been clearing the estaminet at 8 o'clock and a man of the Wellingtons defied him and jeered, saying that he was hiding behind his stripes. This roused Robertson,

and they went outside and he took off his tunic and set to work. His opponent turned out to be a professional, and Robbie had his work cut out ; but he left the man unconscious behind the estaminet before he finished. Robbie was a notably hard fighter, and had led a platoon in the Somme for some time after his officer was out. He was not too well pleased with the way his men advanced, and he offered to drag them along with the pick he was carrying. As a matter of fact, he was too eager.

The men were always quite pleased to return to the trenches, and Sergt.-Major Guy often remarked as we walked back, " I am always glad to go back into the line ; there is always something doing there."

However, this time we went into the famous dug-out just behind the support line, forty feet deep and big enough to hold 400 men. It had five well-like entrances with spiral iron steps which did not quite reach the bottom, and you generally fell the last six feet. The surface water poured down these entrances and pumps had to be kept going. The dug-out was dark and smelly, but warm and safe. Tactically it seemed a poor idea, as there was little chance of getting out in time to resist an attack and gas would pour down and fill it. The following evening many of us came up for fresh air and to watch a raid. The raiding party only found flooded trenches and no Germans, but twelve of them were wounded by a mysterious explosion that could not be satisfactorily explained. It might have been caused by a trench-mortar bomb falling short, or an unexploded bomb accidentally disturbed.

Luckily I did not stay many days in the depressing deep dug-out, but on the 22nd November was ordered to report to the 1st Battery for seven days' duty. This was to give infantry officers an idea of the duties and difficulties of the artillery and so promote good feeling

between the arms. We had got over our spite against the gunners. The Somme had wiped that out, and we knew they would stand to their guns and take punishment. Most likely the gunners always had kind thoughts for the infantry, "The Poor Bloody Infantry," as we were called. In war infantry are a rough, dirty lot, and hardship produces bitterness and spoils manners.

The 1st Battery, eighteen-pounders, was quartered in Rue Biache, a few hundred yards from Brigade Headquarters in Rouge de Bout. They occupied two cottages and the four guns were across the road in a small field. The gunners lived much more comfortably than infantry, but they were not relieved as we were, and the officers and N.C.O.s were greatly overworked. Each battery had to find a forward observing officer (F.O.O.), a liaison officer with the headquarters of the battalion they were supporting, an officer on duty with the guns, another at the waggon lines some miles in rear, and a battery commander. Often there were not enough to go round, but the duties had to be done.

My first day was spent with the F.O.O. in the observing station in Rue du Bois about 1000 yards from the enemy trenches. The look-out was cunningly chosen in the roof of a shattered house with a slate raised to admit the use of a telescope, well wrapped over the end with rag and never allowed to protrude for fear of being seen. When the sun was on the side of the house the glass was never used on account of the danger of reflection. If the enemy had known what the house was used for, it would not have lasted long.

The view was wonderful to one who had been used to looking only from the ground level, a peep at a time. Just in front of us were our support and front lines, and beyond them the desolate and dreary-looking German trenches, and behind them, but in clear view,

were their communication trenches, dug-outs and screens. About two miles away stood the Aubers ridge with Fromelles village, and the railway station containing a big train which remained in full view. After living the life of a mole, only able to glance over the parapet for a few seconds at a time, it was like coming out into the daylight to see the whole display at once. We watched likely spots all day, but saw no Germans. At that time sniping with guns was practised when any target appeared. Guns were kept trained on roads or places where men were likely to appear, and were warned by telephone when to fire. It was said that at times the gunners bailed up staff cars, firing in front of the car while another gun fired behind it. Control of fire from the forward observing station worked very simply. Particulars were sent by 'phone to the guns, which reported when ready, and when fired, "Gun fired, sir." The observing officer then waited a few seconds until the rush of the shell could be heard overhead and it was time to use the glass to observe the burst. Although we had no live targets we fired occasionally.

The guns went by names ; Anzac and Beachy Bill were two of them, and they were spoken of as individuals and treated with familiarity and affection. Next day I was allowed to shoot at some bivvies behind the Sugar Loaf, a part of the enemy trench. Before commencing I was warned that Beachy Bill was in bad form. The first round went beyond the target, and Bill side-slipped badly while delivering the second, so the shell went 100 yards to the right, but dropped on the German front line and was not wasted. Then the gun settled down and put several high-explosive shells nicely on the bivvies, and we hoped that Fritz was at home to receive them.

The observing station was the most interesting

position about a battery, and the pleasantest. In the confined space of the gunpits the concussion of the eighteen-pounders was very severe. Everyone used cotton-wool to protect the ears, but the shock was still unpleasant, and a long spell of firing must have been very distressing.

The guns were completely covered over with sand-bagged walls and roof, and standing outside, the thick walls could be seen to jump with each discharge. The opening through which the gun fired was concealed except at the instant of discharge, usually by two small curtains run on a wire, drawn back and replaced by pulling a string, almost as quickly as working the shutter of a camera.

A gunner was constantly on duty to give warning of the approach of an enemy 'plane, when firing stopped, unless absolutely necessary. Gun flashes cannot be concealed either by day or night, but the most dangerous time is in twilight, when the flash is readily seen and surrounding country can be recognized. If the enemy located a battery they generally ranged on it and postponed its destruction, sometimes for a long time; but everyone knew he was at the mercy of the enemy, which was the reverse of pleasant.

When I returned to the company billets the French were threshing corn by steam power. The work was done by women, but we helped, and found the girls could pitch sheaves and feed the machine as well as men. The weather was so cold that fork handles were unpleasant to handle without gloves. We wondered if the enemy would try a shell at us, as the whole performance was in full view, but they did not fire.

We next went into trenches on the right of our previous sector, and found them much drier. The enemy was fairly quiet, not attempting any important

raids or bombardments. Since the Somme, we had plenty of work to do as we were very short of officers. The battalion had only lost about fifteen in the battle, but our 2nd Battalion had made up by losing about thirty-five, which is about the full complement, and we lent them more than we could spare. For a time we only had two officers in my company—one beside myself; and as it was necessary to have an officer on duty in the front and supports all the time we were fully employed. Censorship of letters was a big job, often taking several hours a day, and it was work that had to be done, or the letters could not go.

Routine work goes on as usual under fire and practically nothing is allowed to interfere with it. Pay day came fortnightly and we preferred a quiet day, but did not always get it. If there were many shells about, the job took all day, as the men had to come along singly, stopping at times for shelter. There was no set washing day in the trenches, but men erected small clothes lines about the trenches. Once while a strafe was on a man was heard to say to his mate, "I say, lucky we got our washing in before this came on," just as the women do when speaking of a shower of rain at home.

The Somme left work that took months to clear up. Forty-three of my men had been killed, and reliable details of their deaths had to be gathered so that I might write to their people. It had been a severe battle, and even the redoubtable Tom Cole spoke of it in a patronizing way and claimed it had put the wind up him, but no one believed it. A story is told, however, that at one stage Tom's platoon was being terribly shelled with particularly big stuff, and the men were taking cover as best they could. One poor fellow, whose nerves got out of control, called to Tom by name for help, and Tom shouted back, "I can't help you.

It takes me all my bloody time to help myself," which certainly was an unusual admission for Tom.

A number of extra queries and returns had to be furnished and answered as a result of the battle, and the volume of this class of work was increasing. Probably both armies were in the same plight, as human nature does not vary much. Behind the trenches there will always be vast numbers of military minds working at high pressure to make good their job, which sometimes ran to asking curious and unexpected questions. Much of the day was spent in explanations, and if company commanders did not become proficient liars it was not for want of practice.

An ever-recurring return was that demanding the number of men of Semitic Faith. We never had any, so for about four years a nil return was sent in about once a month. Possibly it was in connection with their numerous feasts or fasts. We did not know or care, in fact we had long since reached the pitch of soldierly virtue hinted at by the poet when he said, "Theirs not to reason why." Returns regarding religious sects were always in season. A great many such queries reached company commanders about 2 a.m., when courage is said to be at its lowest, but when tempers are generally high. For instance, this arrived at that time, "Immediate please detail for duty at division one cold shoeing smith"; and another asked, "Urgent, please report if, in your opinion, it is better that men's drawers be fitted with running strings at the bottom, or that the tapes be sewn in loops at the top to suspend the garment?" My brain was not working too freely at that moment, and one of the rules of the game being that every question must have its answer, the best I could manage on the spur of the moment was, "Wanting experience, I have no opinion on the matter."

One day, after we had been well shelled for a quarter of an hour, a runner came warily along, dodging bursts, with the news that a bombardment might be expected. We thanked him, concluding either that he was late or the enemy was over-punctual.

Company commanders answer all the queries that come to an army, because it is a military rule to pass things on, but orders forbade their passing it further, as all messages from companies must bear the company commander's signature. It is a good rule, however, for everyone but the individual concerned, because otherwise he would certainly pass it on, probably to a hotter place than was ever in the Great War.

The losses of gear in the Somme had to be explained, which in my company was a considerable job, as we lost everything, including about 140 men. When so many men are killed or wounded there is always a great loss of goods as well, but in our case our stationery box was lost by the transport officer, who also lost his head; and it so happened that every platoon roll was lost on a casualty. After the battle we had to start right from the beginning and compile rolls. We lost three officers and six batmen, though mine was not killed or wounded, but I sacked him because he lost my overcoat. Twelve men had simply vanished off the face of the earth and no evidence existed as to what happened to them. Some no doubt were blown to pieces and others buried, though of course if a man had his head blown off he could not be identified.

Watches were issued for the battle, and instructions came to return the same or in case of loss to explain the deficiency. I returned one watch and explained the loss of fifteen, the temporary owners being either killed, wounded or missing. This report caused some confusion in rear, because it turned out that I had

only been issued with twelve watches. This gave the authorities a paper credit of four watches.

Our worst trouble, however, was about a Strombus Horn, a thing you blow to let people know you are being gassed and don't like it. On relieving the Australians I had given a receipt for, among a host of other things, a "Horn, Strombus, one, mark so and so." I did not personally see this instrument of music, nor would I have known what it was if I had, though I had heard several. Some days later I received a request to furnish a report of Horns, Strombus, in the sector, and carelessly made a nil return, forgetting that in the dim distance someone sits and checks all these things.

It was a fatal error, and a runner came up with a message, "Please explain for the information of Brigade why you now make a nil report of Strombus Horns when on the 13th October you signed a receipt for one Horn, Strombus." My reply duly explained this conundrum: "Having only two hours of daylight to take over the sector on the 13th I had to choose between securing the safety of the locality and personally checking the trench stores; I chose the former." With ordinary good fortune this should have settled the matter, but a few days later my stalwart front-line officer, who always modestly described himself as "Rough as Guts," was visited by a corporal whose duty it was to inspect and report on horns of all kinds.

R. as G. told him we hadn't one, but unfortunately the inspector fell over the box while going round the trench, and recognized it immediately as containing the horn. He expressed some bitter opinions, among others that we deserved to be gassed, though how the contrivance would prevent it he did not explain. We took it in good part, remembering he was a specialist and thought a lot of his apparatus. I did not mention

it to either, but I was annoyed with both R. as G. and the corporal, as it made the business very complicated, and if the truth leaked out that after all we had the Horn, Strombus, that we had signed for, we would need a short armistice to explain the matter. After this occurred we had to swear in every company commander that relieved us not to report the horn, but to remember each time to make a nil report thereof. It was becoming a complicated business with many reputations involved. At last my sergeant-major, while carrying the concern a little way down the sap, dropped it accidentally into a deep water-hole that silenced it for ever. It had caused a lot of fun in its time and had no reason to be ashamed, but we were tired of it.

Some of our runners were as humorous as their messages. One had a bad impediment in his speech, and at times he arrived breathless and angry because he had nearly been stuck with a bayonet before he could get out his reply to a challenge. The same youth was eagerly pursuing a rat down a sap, and failing to keep a proper look out, collided heavily with a general. For once his impediment was no drawback, as the general's remarks left no gaps to fill.

Another runner was Richardson, who had, at a very critical moment in the Somme, allowed a Lewis gunner to use his shoulder for a gun-rest while he cleared the enemy away. Richardson stood stock still until the gunner behind him was knocked over. When asked how he came to do such a silly thing, he said, "Damned if I know; he nearly blew my ear off." Richardson was blessed with perennial cheerfulness, and when he paid his first daily official call at my headquarters at 3 o'clock during that bitter winter, his cheery smile could be felt in the darkness. It was generally either snowing or raining, but to the question how things were going he had a stereotyped reply, "Splendid,

sir. I've just fired my five rounds rapid," which referred to his regular morning salute to the enemy when he came on duty. Nothing ever came amiss to him, but he was most completely contented when going down for the rum ration, finding probably that the Q.M.S. who issued it remembered the old-standing order not to muzzle the ox, and gave him a taste to go on with.

We had a fine young officer who had been a sergeant in the Samoan expedition, which is incorrectly described as a bloodless campaign. While in charge of an examining post on a road in Samoa he was one morning busy at his toilet, shaving, when he heard his sentry call out "Halt!" several times, but it was evident from the sound of wheels that the order was not obeyed. Naturally the sergeant shouted "Shoot! Shoot!" and the sentry fired, putting a bullet through the head of the man driving the cart, who turned out to be a Chinaman. It was only an accident, a sort of "rub of the green"; but naturally everyone was upset as no one wished to kill the poor man. Instead of reporting what had happened, the tragedy was concealed, the body in one place, the vehicle in another, and the horse was stripped of harness and given a start down the road.

During the cold weather whale oil was issued to be rubbed on feet daily, and dry socks were given out every midday, when it was compulsory for everyone to put them on. Dry socks were useful things to have handy, but when it was found that a habit had grown of men carrying a spare pair on top of their small box respirator, orders were issued strictly condemning the practice. While one of our generals was going round the line he stopped to see if his order was being observed, and soon found a soldier with socks in his gas-bag. The General good-naturedly explained how

wrong this was, and the great danger of impeding the use of the respirator. To illustrate it the General said, "Now, when I give the word you and I will put on our respirators, and you will find that you will be greatly handicapped by the pair of socks on top of yours." When both were ready the General said, "Now, on respirators!" and plunged his hands into his bag. Horrors! What he grabbed and pressed to his face was not the facepiece he expected but a pair of his batman's socks, which he had been carrying round for weeks.

The 5th Australians left behind other troubles beside the Strombus Horn. We signed for a number of gum-boots among the gear and goods, and after they had gone a great quantity of new thigh gum-boots were found behind the line, still packed in boxes. Naturally our Q.M.s kept the find quiet and boots became easy to get, but after a time the Australians missed them and made inquiries, which as usual reached company commanders. There were thousands of boots missing, each worth a pound or more, so we were ordered to report individually in order to be cross-examined by Division. This brought nothing to light, however, as each officer knew that if he owned to anything it would mean loss of boots to his company, so each maintained that his receipt was exactly right, neither more nor less, but not to overdo it he was ready enough to say that there were some worn-out boots in his sector that he had refused to sign for, and was willing to produce in proof of his statements. This boot question was never solved, and it disturbed Division for a couple of months and was then forgotten. These fine thigh boots were a great blessing, but even they were of no use during the wet spell, when the water was waist deep and over.

An Australian tunnelling company was working

under us, and we suspected that they were stealing our boots, or rather their own, if everyone had his rights. Anyhow we seemed to be losing some, so one evening I crept into their workings to investigate. I found their officers' quarters and approached the matter delicately, but fortunately the officer asked point-blank if I thought his men were stealing boots, and I denied any such suspicion. He gave his word that they would never do such a thing, which closed the incident satisfactorily.

The Germans were wonderfully regular in their habits of trench warfare, more so than we, though much we did was according to routine. We had a traditional "stand to" of an hour during twilight, morning and evening, which dates from the time of bows and arrows. This applied to all troops within a mile or so of the front, and just as regularly the enemy turned on the machine-guns and swept our parapet. Sometimes when the time came they called out to remind us to "stand to" or "stand down." Their machine-gun fire lasted forty-five minutes, while we sat on our fire-steps and talked current gossip or read the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* or studied the pictures in *La Vie Parisienne*, as long as the light lasted. No one was ever hit by this fire, which was probably turned on to prevent curious eyes seeing them occupy their listening posts in the evening and return from them at dawn. The only men whose heads were above the parapets at the time were our sentries, who played bo-peep with the bullets in the calmest manner, keeping their heads up except for three or four seconds while the stream was passing the post.

The enemy fired a great number of flares, which were much brighter than ours, so that we came to consider it their duty to light No Man's Land. Our

nightly expenditure of flares averaged only seven for the company, fired at odd times when the enemy failed.

The enemy machine-gunners had an artistic touch, with great control of their weapons, and evidently the teaching in all their schools was exactly alike; they rippled along backwards and forwards with a sound like running a finger over piano keys, slowing down each end and striking a single note before returning. Our guns fired little staccato bursts of about ten rounds, so it was quite easy to distinguish them. We used to call the unseen German gunner "Parapet Joe," and before we realized that they were all equally expert performers, each company thought it had a special champion in front of it. At times the enemy used guns which were completely worn out, and the bullets arrived without a trace of rifling on them. They were rather annoying, as they flopped about and dropped anywhere, turning end over end in flight.

As they made curious sounds, the men called these guns "Sobbing Susan." After a few months we became very expert in distinguishing between the various sounds common to trench warfare. Everyone could recognize the difference between a 77, a 4'2 and 5'9 while they were in flight, and no one could confuse one of our eighteen-pounders rushing over with a cooing howitzer shell. The springy rattle of our Lewis guns was quite different from the jerky popping of our Vickers and the more continuous fire of the enemy machine-guns. These sounds were all so perfectly normal as only to be heard subconsciously. A burst of rifle fire was most unusual, and if it occurred officers came out to see what was the matter. Hand-grenades were not often used in any great number, and the sound of their explosions was a danger signal, being evidence of close fighting.

We had a patrol out every night and sergeants

became expert leaders. These returned any time between midnight and dawn, cheerful but muddy and cold, and glad of the allowance of rum before turning in. Nothing could have been more appreciated, perhaps not only for the comforting stuff in itself, but because it showed that a little humanity and kindly feeling still existed for them. The sergeant remained for half an hour or so to relate all that had happened to the patrol, and the story invariably had a humorous turn. When he had received an extra rum ration he too went off to bed.

In the depth of winter the front-line garrison had a very hard time. Everyone was on the fire-step from 4.30 in the evening until the enemy parapet could be seen clearly in the morning, sometimes at 8.30, but on foggy days an hour or so later. They could not have stood it without hot food during the night and good clothing, and even so when they came off duty they were only fit to crawl into their shelters and sleep until it was time to go on again. We usually expended 1500 rounds of S.A.A. every night, mostly through Lewis guns, and the empties had to be carefully picked up next morning and returned to store.

During the day the front was held by the snipers and observers, who remained on duty during the hours of daylight, watching the enemy minutely through telescopes. These men were keen and efficient and took a remarkable pride in their work. They worked in pairs in holes cut into the parapet through which they observed and fired. The enemy generally fired through holes in steel plates, which our men could hit and ring whenever they wished.

During the war the Press heaped abuse on the Germans until they might be believed lacking in every soldierly virtue; but we knew only too well that the reverse was true, and that they were remarkably brave

and solid fighters with scientific training. They were also capable of humane conduct. On a dark night one of our patrols lost direction and got into the enemy wire, where it was machine-gunned and bombed at once, everyone being either killed or wounded. At daylight the company officers saw some of them hanging in the enemy wire, while one had crawled nearly back to our trench dragging a broken leg. The Germans made friendly signs by waving hands and showing a white cloth ; so two officers went out and brought the wounded man in. As no shots were fired they felt encouraged to go back and get the others, but when they were half-way a German called out in English, " Do not come farther ; we will take care of them." A party came out and gently took our wounded and dead into their trench. This took some time and certainly was a chivalrous act, not without risk, and was greatly appreciated by the N.Z. company commander. Next night a letter of thanks was left near the spot in a cleft stick, but the rain of the succeeding days obliterated it.

While in Sector B we had no alarming adventures. The enemy tried a raid on our left and were unsuccessful, having their party completely wiped out.

Unfortunately the medical people now adopted the habit of asking questions, demanding of companies why wounded men arriving at casualty clearing stations were short of one or more necessities. The queries were unanswerable, and it seemed odd trying to explain why Private Jones, who arrived for treatment minus most of his face, was also minus his tooth-brush. It was a trifling annoyance, and we were deeply grateful to our medical service for its efficiency and the rapidity with which wounded men received attention. They had to be carried some distance, taking perhaps half an hour, and then there was always a waiting

ambulance, so that they were in comparative comfort and safety a few minutes later.

We always had complaints from Division whenever men reported there for duty. They were supposed to carry with them twenty-four hours' rations, which we were unable to give them, as we had no biscuit and tinned meat to issue. We could have given the men their raw ration, 12 oz. of meat, a potato, a piece of cabbage and an onion, but they would not have carried them far. We had constantly to answer such pathetic queries as why Private Brown, ordered to arrive with twenty-four hours' rations, appeared at Division with nothing consumable on his person, but half a packet of cigarettes.

At this time we greatly rejoiced to hear that Mr. Asquith had been turned out of office, thinking it would help as much as beating the enemy in a great battle. We had a theory of the war that seemed sound and comfortable. Our idea was that British statesmen had done everything conceivable to lose the war for the past two or three years, and that if ever they relaxed their efforts we would surely win. The French also had a philosophy which was characteristic and in keeping with the sang-froid with which they served. Their reasoning ran: Either you were called for service or not; if not, there was no need to worry. If called up, you either served in a dangerous or a safe position. If the latter, there was no need to worry. If you were given a dangerous duty, you either escaped or were injured. If you escaped, there was no need to worry. If injured, you were either killed or wounded. If wounded, you got every care and comfort, and there was no need to worry. If you were killed, you couldn't worry.

This sector was a good one for the New Zealand Division, very comfortable, with few casualties, while

the enemy were having a very bad time. The line that had looked so solid when we came in was gradually sinking into mud under our fire until there were only heaps of earth with concrete work showing up in places. Our light trench mortars made their lives unbearable. One day we suddenly opened on a spot where smoke was showing, and the rapid bursting of our bombs drove the poor cook over his parapet into the comparative safety of No Man's Land, where he ran about a hundred yards before returning to his trench. No one fired, but there was a good deal of laughter at this frantic wretch sprinting for his life. Cooks in the line did heroic work in the commonplace duty of preparing meals under all conditions. Their smoke often drew fire, and frequently the cookhouse roof went, but meals never failed.

Severe colds, with loss of voice, and influenza became common in the winter, and I had a bad turn of the latter during our stay in the trenches, and when we were relieved was hardly able to walk back to billets. My foot was giving trouble, too, and was so swollen that it was difficult to get a boot on ; so I was sent to an officer's rest-house at La Motte au Bois in the Nieppe Forest. This was in a large château, which dated from the twelfth century, owned by a French countess. The countess had an idea that the war would soon end—a notion that became common among the French, but only for a short time. The country around La Motte was marshy and eels appeared daily on the menu. The weather was intensely cold and snow fell heavily.

After six days I returned on the 23rd December, and found the company resting in Estaires, where I was billeted on a fat brewer and his buxom daughter. We made preparations for Christmas by buying pigs, and cooking them to go with our plum puddings from

home. We had plenty of vegetables and beer, so we had a first-class dinner, officers and men sitting down together. The men enjoyed it immensely, and our good-natured padre had not the heart to delay them even for a moment by saying grace. Most likely the enemy hoped for a little respite during Christmas, but beginning at 7 o'clock on Christmas Eve we gave him a severe bombardment lasting through Christmas Day.

A sad blow was dealt the N.Z.E.F. at this time. The old 1st Brigade, with its two and a half years' war associations, and the 2nd Brigade were broken up, and two new Brigades formed by transferring two battalions in each, and we were ordered to take our place in the new 2nd Brigade. It was a sad morning when we put the new patch up, indicating the 2nd, and we felt that the sentiment and tradition of the old Brigade was gone for ever. As a result of this change we marched back to Sailly on New Year's Day, 1917, to take our place in the 2nd Brigade. It was sadder than a funeral, and our close friends of the Wellington Regiment, whose companies were billeted along the road, turned out with guards and bands to show their sorrow at our departure.

At midday we were back at Le Conte's, and as it was raining all the men were packed into the building to have their midday meal. As often happened, the officers' mess-cart had gone astray, so we prevailed on Olga to prepare us an omelette, but almost immediately the enemy commenced an unexpected and very heavy fire, and splinters began to hit the house freely. If one big shell landed in the courtyard, with 250 men in it, there would have been a nasty mess; so the platoons were ordered to fall in and move out in succession towards Laventie, where there was plenty of shelter. The company got out of the courtyard in good order, but with remarkable promptitude. The officers

decided to stay and have dinner, and we shouted at Olga to hurry, but she went on calmly frying the omelette, refusing to be bustled by hungry men or the enemy shells, although poor Jean came in trembling, saying, "I very frightened." After a long time Olga brought our dinner, perfectly undisturbed, apparently having no more nerves than a fish.

When dinner was over I saw Monsieur and advised him to get his family out of the house if the bombardment came any nearer, but he only smiled and seemed quite sure his house would not be fired at, and his manner added to our previous suspicions. By this time we could see that the enemy was trying to destroy a howitzer battery a couple of hundred yards away.

A few weeks earlier a large number of dud shells had landed near, which could not possibly have been observed by the enemy, who would have to depend on a local report, and we imagined we knew who the informant was. The howitzer battery was not much damaged, although over 200 shells were fired. The direction was better than the elevation, and most of the shells fell short. The big Y.M.C.A. hut across the road was hit.

This New Year's Day bombardment was general on the front and very severe, being a reply to our Christmas firing. While we watched the battery getting well smacked about a motor dispatch rider came down from the front, but stopped at our warning and joined us. Apparently he had to pass along the battery road, and it looked barely possibly to get through, but after a few minutes he said he must be going on, and jumping on his machine, let her out, and got through safely.

When we went up V.C. Avenue a few days later we found the country had been rooted up in an effort to destroy the sap, but little damage had been done to men or material, although it was reported that Bishop

Clery had a narrow escape with a dent in his tin hat. He had been a frequent visitor to the trenches, smoking and talking with the N.C.O.s and men. He was a frail-looking man, but evidently had no fear in his make-up. This sort of visitor was regarded by company commanders as an unnecessary worry and responsibility. Our regimental padres who visited us on duty were a different matter, and we enjoyed their company.

For some time the enemy had been losing their grip on the front line, as a result of the steady fire, and our patrols began to enter and explore it, and later they patrolled it at night and seldom met any Germans. At last we put day posts in their trenches, which had been practically abandoned. For hundreds of yards behind the German front line was a sea of mud which the patrols could hardly penetrate, and they were covered in mud, with weapons completely clogged, when they tried. A few Germans still came into their front trench at night to fire flares and rifle-shots to keep up appearances. Our guns and trench mortars maintained their programme, and the enemy works sank flatter and flatter, and the concrete dug-outs showed more plainly in the mud. The weather was very cold, and it was said to be the severest winter since 1870.

Fighting patrols of ten men under an officer went out nightly to hunt for Germans, but were rarely successful. One party lay in wait on a track with two Lewis guns two nights in succession, but their expected prey did not appear.

While we were in the trenches there was practically no crime. All the men were too keen on their work to neglect duty, but occasionally men returned from the billet area either later than ordered, or drunk. One man came back at midnight, six hours late and drunk, leading a dog on a string, which he cheerfully presented

to me, remarking that he knew I was fond of dogs!

A serious case of desertion occurred in November, 1916. A man on ten days' leave to Aberdeen did not return until he appeared on New Year's Day in plain clothes under military escort, having been arrested in Scotland on Christmas Day. On the face of it it seemed a bad case, and senior officers thought it would mean a certain death sentence. The man went by the name of Mc—— in the N.Z.E.F., but it was not his real name, and he had been in some trouble in New Zealand before enlisting. Possibly as a result of this he would not say a word in explanation of his conduct, and seemed perfectly callous and indifferent as to the result. He refused to talk it over with me, although he knew he was safe in doing so. He was one of a celebrated trio of rascals, who enjoyed their fun together and were the hardest fighters and drinkers in the company, and none of them men likely to desert. We were puzzled to know what to make of the case, and I twice went to see him in confinement. He refused to explain his absence, but the second time he told me his real name, and the address of his mother and sister, and a friend in Aberdeen. I determined to try and get there and learn the facts, being certain he was innocent of desertion.

Our next relief was in our old Sector C, through which the River Laies passes. The drainage had improved and water never rose above the duckboards, but as usual a stream flowed down Brompton Avenue. Every night our 'planes passed over in squadrons to bomb back areas, showing coloured lights to prevent our shooting at them. One of our 'planes gave a good daylight display, flying up and down along the German trenches on a front of about ten miles, keeping very low all the time. Most likely it was the "Mad Major," a British officer who had been crippled early in the

war, but having the use of his hands he learnt to fly and performed very daring feats. He entertained us for the better part of an afternoon. When he was away in the distance we could hear the rattle of musketry increasing as he approached, and, as he passed, the enemy turned on every machine gun and rifle, while we fired our trench mortars, Lewis and Vickers guns at Fritz in the hope of catching the unwary or disturbing their aim. The aeroplane hummed along unconcerned as if unaware of the commotion below.

Severe colds were very common, accompanied in many cases by loss of voice, a very awkward thing for officers and N.C.O.s. The doctors seemed helpless, having no suitable drugs, so we sent to London for eucalyptus for inhaling, and every morning my billet was full of patients with heads covered with towels, coughing and choking over steaming bowls. It seemed hard that these men should have to continue on duty, exposed to the severe weather; but our brigade evacuations through sickness were kept as low as possible by not allowing a man to go sick until he had to be carried out, or nearly so.

In particular I had a very fine lance-corporal who went by the nickname of "Bowser," a man with a splendid record. His speciality was bombing, but he had led a platoon through most of the Somme Battle, after his officer was out, and he was particularly rough and hardy. He came in great trouble one morning because he had been passed fit for duty, but felt unable to go. He could not speak, and could hardly walk the few yards to my room. I kept him back for the day, but next day he was passed fit again by our medical officer, and started for the trenches. A few hours later he was found unconscious in a sap by Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Brigadier-General) Brown, who sent him to hospital.

Our medical officers were not to blame for this kind of harshness, though there were many such cases. They were driven by those above them, as indeed we all were ; not that the high command was inhuman, but they in their turn were driven by the necessity of winning the war. Wars such as this could never be won by normal humane methods when both sides were making a supreme effort to break each other by going beyond the limit of endurance.

Our doctor, "Très Calme," as he was called, had nothing of the brute about him and constantly risked his life attending wounded under fire. Eventually he gave his life for his patients, for he was killed carrying out his duties in the same uncannily calm manner that was his nature, and which earned him his nickname. Nothing could shake or flurry him, as he had shown when the roof of his R.A.P. was blown down on him and his wounded in the Somme. Sergt.-Major Guy happened to be passing, and helped to get the patients out. A German colonel, with a severe wound, was pinned by a fallen beam, and the poor fellow appealed to Guy for assistance, saying, "Help me out, kamerad, help me out." Guy got him out, but he died in his hands before he laid him down. He then brought out my second-in-command, Captain Dron.

Frequently before dinner a sergeant would come to me displaying the leg of a fine goose or duck, nicely cooked, and ask if I would care for it. I always asked how the poultry was come by and received the same reply, "Don't ask any questions, sir." No doubt they were honestly acquired, although sergeants, like officers, were not always perfect in their behaviour from a strict military point of view.

One night in the middle of that cold winter the sergeants kept up a birthday late into the small hours of the morning. Returning home they noticed the ice on

the frozen ditches, and tested its strength by jumping on it. It was not strong enough for this treatment, and they got wet up to the middle, which only amused them. With spirits undamped they passed the Colonel's headquarters, and one dared another to throw a brick on the roof. This was immediately attempted, but the brick went through the window and hit, or nearly hit, "Tres Calme," who was talking to the Colonel. This was a mistake which led to trouble.

On another occasion two junior officers of irreproachable conduct were returning on horseback to their billets in the early morning, when they were halted by a Tommy examining post. This appeared to annoy them so much that they dismounted and knocked out the whole post of eight men before continuing their journey. Apart from the indiscipline of the thing, it was risky, as the post was armed and likely to use their weapons. They were tried by court-martial and received some small punishment.

Towards the end of the month my turn came to go to England, which gave me the opportunity to see what I could do for Mc——, whose court-martial had been postponed for the purpose.

CHAPTER XIV

SLING

"For in the market-place, one Dusk of Day,
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet clay,
And with its all obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—'Gently, Brother, gently, pray.'"

Rubaiyat.

ARRIVING at headquarters, London, I was ordered to hospital, but in view of the urgency of my visit to Aberdeen the doctors allowed me to make the journey. The cold trip was likely to be unpleasant as I was in severe pain. A curious incident occurred on the way.

A few weeks earlier General Orders had published the finding of a court-martial which had condemned a lieutenant to death for desertion, and the sentence had been carried out at Abbeville. When his platoon had reached the trenches during a relief this unfortunate officer was absent, and was found concealed in his billet. Notices of executions were published as warnings.

In our compartment in the train we had a pleasant and convenient party of four officers of the Navy and Army, enabling us to talk more freely than if we had civilians with us, but before long a smart, fashionably dressed girl came in and took a seat. None of us was pleased, and it prevented me from lying down. She tried almost at once to join in our conversation, but received no encouragement. After a while she addressed me directly, bursting out in exclamations that she was in great trouble, her husband having been killed a short time before in France. She was

very excited, but when she found we listened sympathetically she calmed down and told her story. She had only been a few months married when her young husband was killed, and she was greatly troubled that she could learn no particulars, although she had applied to the War Office and his battalion. Afterwards she became ill and none of her friends or relations had been allowed to see her, in particular a little sister of whom she was very fond, which had been a great trouble to her. When we questioned her she said that her husband had been killed at Abbeville, a place far away from any danger, as we all knew. As she spoke we noticed a broad, newly healed scar across her throat extending almost from ear to ear. She made no effort to conceal it with a fur or wrap, although she was comfortably dressed. It was quite evident that the young officer who had been executed at Abbeville was her husband, and the shock and mystery of his death had upset her reason and she had been placed under restraint after attempting suicide. We did what we could for this poor girl's comfort, and one of the officers was able to see her safely to her home.

After a very painful journey I reached Aberdeen, and was directed to a comfortable boarding-house where I received great kindness and a generous meal, with a great variety of home-made cakes. Though I was a hospital case there was nothing wrong with my appetite.

Next morning I found Mc——'s sister, told her of her brother's danger, and explained the business I was on. She was a young married woman, respectable and intelligent, and she helped me to gather information without causing trouble or making mistakes. Although at the time I knew nothing of the cause of Mc——'s prolonged absence, I was absolutely sure of his innocence of desertion. If he had been guilty my

visit would have made his death unavoidable, and strangely enough the man had never stated or inferred his guilt or innocence, and his sullen silence had been taken as an indication of guilt.

His mother was very old and frail, and almost bed-ridden. Her daughter thought that a sudden shock would very likely kill her, and she had no idea that her son had been arrested. He had stayed with his mother, who was living alone, so that she was the only one who could give evidence to clear him. It was certainly a delicate thing to go to this old lady and pump her unawares on this life or death business, but the daughter came and introduced me as a visitor to Scotland and the friend and company commander of her son. She looked a typical old Highland lady, tall and gaunt and evidently very weak in body, but keen enough mentally.

Naturally enough she told me all her family affairs, without the least suspicion that I was acting as a sort of amateur detective, or that her statement was going to save her son's life or condemn him. She was alone, because all her men were in France. Her husband was a time-expired soldier of twenty-one years' service, now working for the army behind the line, and all her sons were there; one had been killed, another was a gunner, and the third was my man.

Her son had arrived home on ten days' leave in November, and he had told her from time to time that he had obtained extension of leave, which enabled him to remain until Christmas. She particularly wanted him to remain over Christmas and he agreed, intending to go back immediately after, and with this in view he regularly cleaned up his rifle, equipment and uniform.

To avoid notice and possible arrest he wore his brother's clothes when he visited his cronies or the pictures, but he was never long out of the house. This

was all right so far as it went, but I had to get a definite statement that he had never concealed himself. It was looking for trouble to ask the proud old girl such a question, but it could not be avoided. I was quite satisfied with the answer and the dressing down she gave me. With her eyes blazing with wrath she exclaimed, "Conceal himself, the idea! Him conceal himself!" This was all I wanted, so I departed with as much dignity as was left to me and found Mc——'s friend, a crippled young man living in one of the closes. His story was the same as the two women's, but I think the mother was the only one who believed the story of extended leave. Poor Mc—— was arrested on the evening of Christmas Day.

A summary of these statements was sent to France, and Mc—— was found not guilty of desertion, but guilty of absence without leave, for which he got two years' imprisonment.

I went at once to the officers' hospital, Forest Hill, Brockenhurst, satisfied that Mac could not be shot. Among old friends there, Major Jock Rose, the machine-gunner, was father and humorist of the ward. He had been wonderfully torn and broken about by high explosive on the Somme, and was covered in scars, but was slowly recovering, though still undergoing numerous operations.

At last he had a holiday trip to London, and returned just as lights were turned down. His bed had been apple-pied and all sorts of odd articles packed in it. Jock was a deliberate man and took his time in undressing, at the same time relating how he had enjoyed his trip. At last he sat on his pillow and cautiously, being a Scot, pushed his feet down between the sheets. When he found the obstruction a comical wild expression came over his face as he glared round the room to find the culprit. Suddenly he leapt out of bed with

great agility for a cripple, and rushed at the least guilty man in the room, a young English flying officer, and seizing him by his long hair, dragged him bed and all round the room. This amused the other patients and the sisters, who were the real culprits, until Jock found the exercise too strenuous and returned to his bed, which we helped to make comfortable again.

An officer was in hospital on account of an unusual experience. His trench included a part which had no fixed garrison and was held by patrolling. Going round this at night, he saw as he thought his patrol approaching, and began finding fault with the N.C.O. in charge for something amiss. The party continued to approach without speaking and suddenly opened fire on him, putting a bullet through his shoulder. He replied with his revolver and emptied it, and they disappeared. He was quite sure he had hit some of them, but he was full of regrets that he hadn't a Mills bomb to throw among them. Officers going round trenches at night had to be ready for such experiences, but the Germans were not enterprising enough to make them common.

After a few pleasant weeks I left hospital and reported to Sling, a comfortable place, but very unpopular with soldiers on account of its strictness and intense training. Sick and wounded men were retrained there as well as the drafts from New Zealand, who were put through a hard two months' work before going to France to meet the redoubtable Hun. As they had a great deal to learn they had few idle moments, and the finer points of saluting and turn-out were strictly attended to, so it was no wonder that the new men hated the "Sling Front" and the old hands simply loathed and despised it. Training was kept up to date by the exchange of officers and N.C.O.s from France.

Once we had a case of suspected spying. An old

gentleman, about seventy, giving himself out as an ex-army officer living in the south of England, appeared in camp to inquire if a certain man, a relation, had arrived in a recent reinforcement. The man had not come, and the old gentleman was a guest of the officers' mess for a day or two. He turned up whenever a reinforcement arrived and was garrulous and inquisitive. I found him in the camp one night about midnight, apparently just arrived, and he spent the night in my cubicle. He asked all manner of questions about our troops, their *moral*, physique, training, rate of enlistment, and everything else, and it was tiring work inventing untruthful and misleading answers, and a relief when the old man went to sleep. Next morning our assistant provost-marshal marched him out of camp, and we never saw or heard of him again. Possibly he was a spy, although no doubt he was an ex-army officer as he represented.

About this time Brigadier-General Fulton took command at Sling. He had a terrible reputation as a martinet and his arrival was awaited with misgivings. He was a Rifleman, and he immediately gave orders that our daily "Piccadilly" march past had to be done at the rate of 140 paces to the minute. Colonial infantry find 115 as fast as they can go comfortably, so most of them were nearly running to keep up with the music while the Brigadier pointed out mistakes at the saluting base and fairly put the wind up them.

Luckily, the General forgot to keep the pace up, but the next week he revolutionized the whole Sling training, giving battalion commanders just four days to prepare new training grounds and a new syllabus, and commence training. When he gave the order it seemed a sheer impossibility to carry it out, but he was a forceful man and the work was completed in the time. Like the Roman centurion, when Fulton said "Do

this," it was done, however impossible it might seem.

I hoped to make a good impression on the General by inviting him to mess on his first day. He was very pleased and friendly, and up we went, but he caused rather a chill at mess by suddenly drawing my attention to the length of hair of one of my officers, sitting near. I began to wonder if the invitation was wise, and after lunch I asked him to excuse me, as the battalion was about to parade. The General said he would like to see the parade. Immediately it was formed up I tried to send the men away to their training, but a small voice at my ear said, "I would like to look round the battalion." This took two hours, and we found more dirty rifles and other wrong things than I would have thought possible. The situation was relieved by someone ringing the afternoon tea bell, and we persuaded him to have some. He had been most cheerful and gentlemanly throughout, and had pointed out errors with an air of regret; but it was plain that he enjoyed himself.

Later he again visited our mess. In other battalions he had ordered an arrangement of tables that was unpopular, but had then to be adopted. We did not want this to happen, so we arranged our mess-room in his particular manner, and when he arrived he seemed pleased, but said nothing. When we adjourned to the ante-room the General noticed that the ceiling had been newly painted. Its colour was brown, but he abruptly asked why it was painted blue. The mess-president was called up to answer this and a heated argument followed. After our visitor had gone we replaced our mess tables in the way we preferred.

Second-lieutenants were Fulton's pet aversion, and they greatly dreaded him. As he was inspecting the battalion one day a company commander called his company to attention and saluted, only to be asked,

"Why did you not call your company to attention?" The young officer, a lieutenant, replied, "I did, sir." This was quite enough, and I was ordered to send him along after parade for a reprimand. He was a soldier of many battles and very angry as he went to get his tearing, but he returned quite perplexed, having only received a kindly talking to after all.

The General was once inspecting a newly arrived reinforcement draft from New Zealand and the officer in charge was very nervous. He had been warned to answer the General's question promptly, and also told that the first question would be one asking the name of the ship he had come by, the *Tongariro*. Fulton, however, varied his usual custom and abruptly asked if the men had been inoculated. The poor officer blurted out the word, *Tongariro*. Luckily the General hadn't a Mills bomb in his hand or he would have thrown it.

Fulton's only thought was for efficiency and the comfort of the men, but he succeeded so well in concealing his very kindly nature in a brusque, not to say bullying, manner that the men were as afraid of him as the second-lieutenants were. He was in his glory at the saluting point, when the battalions went by, gesticulating and pointing at the faulty ones, and straffing each commanding officer for the faults of his unit as it passed. Dress, especially puggarees, was his strong point. Possibly he was colour-blind, but whether this was so or not, many a red infantry puggaree was declared to be purple, the colour of the Medical Corps, and had to be changed. Right or wrong, changes ordered were carried out, as no one willingly disobeyed the Brigadier.

When he received an officer's first salute in the morning General Fulton never failed to run his eye over such officer's turnout, from cap-badge to bootlaces, whatever

his rank might be. He once suddenly grabbed me by the shoulder-badges, making me wonder what was wrong, to find he was only admiring their polish. Before the war he had been a Gurkha officer. Beside being a splendid soldier in the field he had a wonderful grasp of military detail, which enabled him to inspect a battalion in such a searching way as to find hundreds of faults in what was a nearly perfect turnout, and then go through a kitchen and criticize the manner of cleaning meat tins or the cooking of rice.

However, by this time there were colonial officers with shrewd knowledge, and much as we respected him, our General had a few reverses. He loved to get all the responsible officers together to discuss a subject, say blankets, and see how many of us he could bowl out in a mistake. Once he thought he had caught the Camp Q.M. in a discrepancy of 2000 blankets in the laundry account ; but he realized he had met his match when the Quartermaster dryly replied that he had borrowed 2000 clean blankets from Imperial Stores, and returned them dirty.

A battalion commander also scored neatly over a matter of clothing. An officious ordnance officer from London discovered some hats and boots put aside in the Battalion Q.M.'s store, and was told by the quartermaster-sergeant that they were condemned by the C.O. and were to be destroyed. The ordnance officer thought otherwise and took them to Fulton, who agreed they were serviceable and sent the C.O. an order to pay the new price of the hats. This amount the C.O. promptly paid in the local ordnance store, the officer very unwillingly giving a receipt as he suspected trouble. The C.O. then visited the General, who was sitting in his office in high good humour, and began by saying, " I received your order to pay for those hats, sir, but I suppose you did not

remember that you condemned them on one of your inspections?" This was very unexpected, and the General replied, "But —, you will not really have to pay for them." The C.O. said he had already done so, but in order to relieve the General's feelings he went on, "But that point does not affect the question, sir. Those hats were never condemned by me, but put aside for camp use, being too much worn for issue to men going overseas. The ordnance officer had no authority to enter my store and remove clothing on issue to me. If this is permitted I cannot be held responsible for my equipment." Finding no fault could be laid at his door, the General became cheerful again and sent for the ordnance officer, to whom he gave a terrible tearing, repeatedly telling him that the C.O. had got all over him. The hats were then returned to their rightful store and the Regimental Medical Officer was asked to examine them. He declared them insanitary and unfit for use, so they were immediately burnt. This no doubt was the fate they had first been condemned to. Truth may sometimes be stranger than fiction, but a good mixture of both is more perplexing.

The General was most particular that officers should give him a smart and correct salute, which he returned in a very offhand way, with a gesture combining the penal signs of the first three degrees given in a grand or casual manner. After about two months at Sling General Fulton returned to France, where he was almost immediately killed, and the division lost a very gallant soldier.

As one of our reinforcements was travelling by train to Sling eleven men were killed at a siding. Instructions had been given that men were to go to the rear of the train to draw rations at the first stop, and as they were doing so an express rushed past and cut them to

pieces. Of course it was not intended that men should leave the train at this stop, but at the first station.

With another reinforcement we received eleven conscientious objectors. The Camp Quartermaster met the draft as usual at Bulford, where he was told that eleven men refused to walk. He was very busy with other things, so he briefly ordered that they should be roped to waggons, and the march began. A few were dragged over the gravel for two or three hundred yards and then they got up and walked. Three of these unfortunates were allotted to me, but they would not train, drill, or even do light gardening, so they were put in separate cells furnished with a Bible and one blanket. They were the first of these strange creatures that we had seen, and they were regarded as curiosities. Generally the feeling towards them was that of disgust, as though they were unclean and hardly human. A soldier naturally abhors a conscientious objector. German prisoners were put to work with them in England, and they rightly objected that it was insulting to class them with such people, and their wishes were respected.

Two of these men insisted on stripping off their clothes and sitting in a corner in a state of nature. This could not be allowed in the chilly weather. The instructions were to train the men to fight Huns if possible, but if they refused to send them across untrained. They were forcibly dressed and handcuffed except at meal-times; but one man was not genuine in his wish to go naked, and the provost sergeant found he only wished to impress me with his fortitude, and so, at his request, he was handcuffed for the few minutes of my daily visit and then released. We did not let him know his secret had leaked out.

Eventually two of them hunger-struck and I sent them to France. The third poor wretch refused food

from Monday until Friday and was sent to the train in an ambulance. He ate a hearty meal when he got on board. These three men did not profess to be religious, but socialistic objectors, and two of them were intelligent and willing to argue their views. They had taken a stand of which they had become heartily sick, but were too proud to give up. Nine out of the eleven decided to do their duty and push a bayonet, but they did not give in until they got to France.

I took several reinforcement drafts via Folkestone and Boulogne to Etaples. Folkestone suffered badly in air-raids, and one bomb killed sixty women and children. It fell in a narrow street at five in the evening between a fruiterer's shop on one side and a large draper's on the other. We passed through next morning, and the blood-drenched street, with pieces of red flesh sticking to the walls of the wrecked houses, made a very ugly picture of war. The people naturally were shocked and low-spirited, but it cheered them to see the New Zealand soldiers marching through the town in good spirits with a band playing.

The War Office strictly forbade bands going to France, but we took several across, playing most of the way, generally by special request.

The line of communications was entirely controlled by English officers, and was a model of efficiency and rapid working. Most of the personnel, officers and N.C.O.s, were from the old regular army. One of the R.T.O.s in Folkestone was an English lord, a sallow-complexioned captain with a monocle and an expressionless stare. He scarcely seemed alive, but he once waked sufficiently to give me the salute due to a field officer. It was only done to show it was possible, and we never stirred him to further effort.

During the two hours' journey across to Boulogne we were too well guarded ever to be attacked by

submarines, but the mixed troops on each ship had to be organized so as to admit of control in case of accident. The escort consisted of destroyers, assisted by 'planes and semi-rigid airships or "Blimps"; and, as the speed of the convoy was over twenty knots and a different course was taken each time, it formed a difficult target to attack. The Assistant Military Landing Officer (A.M.L.O.) at Boulogne was a remarkably efficient Englishman who sported a magnificent flowing tie which made him conspicuous, and became famous.

It was always interesting to the new troops to march through the French town past the butchers' shops with horses' heads over the door, and horse-meat displayed inside, and up the steep hill to Ostrohove Camp. They were very taken with the little boys and girls who walked along beside them, generally hand in hand and talking incessantly. It seemed very pretty, but the little rascals were only after the "pennee" which, however, was forthcoming.

At Ostrohove all ranks were served with food and one blanket, summer and winter, so it got the name of "One Blanket Hill" and was most unpopular. The blanket was wonderfully prickly, as if it were woven out of gorse thorns, which could be felt through thick riding-breeches. "One Blanket Hill" was also noted for its amount of theft; troops always left it lighter than they came. We stayed one night in this camp. Next day a march of eighteen miles brought us to Etaples.

In the hot weather of 1917 sunstroke was very prevalent on this march; numbers of suffering men were left on the roadsides, and there were many deaths. Our troops did not suffer from sunstroke, and apparently Canadians and Englishmen were most affected. We often had a party of Maoris in the draft, and when we had no band they almost took the place

of it, being splendid marchers and always in high spirits, singing most of the way.

At the halting-place for dinner they usually gave a *haka* to enliven the crowd, which in the great heat was an important matter. When the weather was cooler and we had a band the march was enjoyable. Sturdy French women carrying baskets of oranges and sweets accompanied us all the way, joining us from the villages as we passed. These women were great dancers, and as long as our band played they waltzed down the road in front of it, their friends carrying their loads for them, making a jolly scene.

When the troops reached Etaples each man was immediately served with rifle, sling, pull-through, oil bottle, bayonet and scabbard. Each article was issued separately, but by a miracle of good management 1000 men could be completed, and the equipment checked and signed for, in eighteen minutes.

I made the return journey to Boulogne by train. The line was greatly overtaxed, and for hours at a time big trains passed through Etaples every three or four minutes, going north packed with troops and war material. As a result ordinary time-table trains were most unpunctual.

The 2.30 train left at 11 p.m. with four English officers who had been without food all day and were fairly starving, but they began the sixteen miles' run to Boulogne expecting to arrive in half an hour. A very fat French officer slept all the way, but the rest of us were too hungry, and the conversation kept drifting round food. Hour after hour we rolled on until we had no idea where we were, but thought we must have over-shot Boulogne, and expected to be brought up in Belgian trenches. We thrashed out what we thought would be a suitable supper, and agreed that a large ham, cold fowl, with plenty of bread and a few bottles of

vin rouge would fill the bill exactly. At 4.30 in the morning we staggered across the cobbles into a rest-house in Boulogne and inquired feebly for food. There was hardly anyone about, but someone said: "Oh, yes, if you care to help yourselves there's plenty of ham, several fowls, bread, and a few bottles of Burgundy; go ahead." We did not speak a word, and when we were satisfied we found beds in the Loos Hotel, with its filthy alleys and clean bedrooms.

French trains got into a bad way in the latter part of the war. They were never cleaned, though we did not mind the filth, but the windows were gone and the doors broken off their hinges and lost, so they were terribly cold. The lighting arrangements were missing and officers used to put candles anywhere, so that the woodwork was very much charred. The beautifully upholstered fawn-coloured first-class carriages fared no better than others. On any journey, short or long, an officer, if wise, took plenty of food, a blanket, candles, and a flask of whisky. The latter was a pass to the best society on the train, and the blanket was handy to block doors or windows. Train wreckage lay in great quantities beside the line, so accidents must have been frequent between Etaples and Boulogne.

At Etaples at this time my friend Pike was a police corporal, a position of importance and responsibility. Illegal two-up schools flourished, however, in spite of police persecution. Soon after daylight one morning there was a brisk burst of rifle-fire, caused by Pike and his party in pursuit of three Australian gamblers. He was using a revolver himself, and two of the men were caught. Later Pike got into trouble. He was caught running a gambling school, with a bottle of whisky in his pocket, and he was sentenced to detention and the loss of his rank. He stoutly maintained his innocence and got a retrial, which proved he was only

acting as a decoy when caught. His previous sentence was quashed, but nothing would give him back his weeks spent in No. 2 punishment except leave in England, which he applied for and obtained. He never regained his position in the police and had to rejoin his company, but luckily escaped the dangers of war.

The Loos Hotel was always crowded to the limit with officers. It had a good table and a remarkably smart girl in the office. Without apparently looking up she would address each applicant for a room by his rank and the name of his regiment, greatly to the surprise of the officer concerned. Considering there were hundreds of regiments represented, with rank badges variously displayed, it was a wonderful performance.

Before embarking for England our passes had to be examined and stamped at the little ticket office of the A.M.L.O., and it was cold work waiting for this in bleak snowy weather. A queue was formed and it sometimes took three hours to get past ; we were often annoyed by certain young officers of the gilded staff who thought nothing of butting in ahead of a hundred of us. Invariably they were lieutenants, and their beautiful uniforms showed that they had never been near a front. Once one of these gentry, gaily calling to another bird of the same feather, squeezed in front of me just before we reached the pigeon-hole. Waiting until he turned to hand in his pass, I stepped forward and trod heavily on his thin boots with my hobnails, and turning round at the same time pushed him past the window with my heavy pack, saying politely, "Excusez moi."

In a similar queue a few weeks later I related this incident to a Brigadier-General patiently waiting turn in the tail of the queue. As I spoke another young staff gentleman did exactly the same thing as before, going straight to the pigeon-hole. The General

revealed himself at once as a man of action, and in a moment he was conducting the young man to the rear, speaking fiercely into his ear as he went. He saw him safely behind the last waiting officer before he returned to his own place. British officers of high rank were invariably courteous, but it seemed remarkable that so many arrant cads had found safe billets on their staffs.

The monotony of life at Sling was broken by a fire which caused a little amusement. As the alarm went a party of Maoris arrived in camp, and they dashed at the hose reel and ran it out, with the end reversed of course, and the nozzle away from the fire. It would have taken time to put it right, and with hundreds of men and buckets it was quicker to use them. It was a wooden building used for musketry, and there was a lively popping of cartridges. The fun began when the men were ordered to go inside. As soon as one put his feet inside the door he gave a yell and sprang out again. Others took his place with the same result, until some officer tried it and found that the water on the floor was charged with electricity from the electric-light wires. When we knew what the matter was the men went in, but as they passed the door lead dripped from the roof and some of it got down their necks, which was worse than the electricity. Altogether we had a good deal of fun with the fire, which was caused by the electric light short-circuiting.

The King reviewed us in the Bulford fields. He cantered on to the parade-ground accompanied by a few officers, and the absence of ceremony impressed us greatly. He was in the best of spirits, laughing heartily and appearing to enjoy everything, and very graciously gave everyone good opportunities of taking photographs. With an enormous Royal Standard waving over the green fields and the King beneath, the Royal review made a very notable sight to us colonials.

CHAPTER XV

TROOPING

"Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest."

Rubaiyat.

THE voyage of the *Remuera*, leaving England in October, 1918, included more incidents and excitements than are usual on troopships, where the discipline and routine generally run an unexciting course. In the first place we were carrying the first large consignment of English brides, numbering about 120, travelling in most cases with their husbands, but in different accommodation: the wives in the third class and the soldiers in the troop-decks. We left Liverpool on a gloomy day with about 1000 soldiers on board, in a convoy of thirteen ships. There was a heavy sea and most of the women were sick before we could get settled down, and were sitting about the decks in dreary misery.

We were seventeen hours out rolling heavily along under a grey sky somewhere off Queenstown. The first ship's inspection was finished, and as we came on deck we heard a heavy thud followed a few seconds later by another, and the first mate exclaimed, "What's that?" Some officer who knew the sound very well said, "High explosive." Almost immediately a naval officer hurried to report that one of our convoy had received

two torpedoes aft. We crossed the deck, and the officer pointed out the ship, the *Missenabic*, a Canadian Pacific trooper of 16,000 tons, our next neighbour on the right.

For half a minute she steamed on apparently unhurt. It was pathetic to see the doomed ship, mortally injured, trying to keep her place in the convoy. I gave the officers orders to get all life-belts on and see people to their stations, and when I looked at the *Missenabic* again the waves were lapping over her decks aft. It was so sudden that it appeared unreal, and we looked on astonished. About two minutes after she had been struck her bows lifted until we could see beneath her keel. Already five of her boats had reached the water. Our people stood quietly at their stations, every minute expecting a crash in our own ship. The old captain was on the bridge and his first thought was for his dog, sending a man down to let him loose and give him a chance to swim for his life. From the first moment of the attack the escort exploded depth charges every few seconds, which shook our ship severely. Suddenly the *Missenabic* reared straight on end and her people were seen falling down the decks. It must have been an experience of extraordinary horror. She remained for a few moments with her fore-part above water as far as the bridge, great volumes of black smoke pouring out. Then she slid slowly down until only her bows remained visible, and then gradually she disappeared. It was all over in about four and a half minutes. Very few of her 500 people had time to get into the boats, and most of them were lost.

The rest of the convoy hurried on with increased speed, crowding round the *Remuera* to protect her, the only full ship. There was perfect silence on board, but some of the women were crying.

This incident, added to sea-sickness, made the war

brides very forlorn, and for a few days no attempt was made to keep them in their proper quarters. They naturally wanted the protection of their husbands. Unfortunately this made them all the more indignant when rules had to be enforced, and they easily prevailed on some of the soldiers to attempt a rebellion against authority. The women did not take kindly to military discipline, to which, of course, they were not subject themselves.

However, a trial of strength occurs on every trooper carrying drafts without organization, but if the O.C. troops is firm it passes off in a few days, generally with more or less humorous incidents. A deputation of seven men waited on me to represent their side ; labour union men, good talkers who could argue their case. We talked it over for a couple of hours or so in a most friendly way, and no threats were made by either side. They spoke in rather high-sounding language, as labour leaders generally do, and talked loftily of messages to the people, but were reasonable from their point of view, and perfectly respectful. Briefly, what they wanted was to run the ship as they liked, without interfering with me, however, as O.C. troops. When I explained that they would have to get rid of me first before trying anything of the sort, they quite agreed on the awkwardness of the position, especially as our escort of American destroyers would take a hand if anything strange occurred on our ship. After a brief interesting talk we went round the decks in a party to see that space had been fairly allotted for everyone's benefit. The members of this deputation afterwards met regularly in my cabin, where we talked over repatriation problems and their solution, and came to know and respect each other.

For the first fortnight we were in constant fear of another attack by submarines, as we supposed there

were more than one and that they would follow us. Soldiers volunteered as extra firemen, and the convoy went at its best speed. One night something went wrong with our engines, and at daylight we were alarmed to find ourselves several miles behind our mates. It was nearly midday before we regained our station. If there had been a following enemy we should surely have been snapped up.

The greatest care was taken to keep the ship dark, and at night no smoking or lights of any kind were allowed on deck. On all troopships a number of men and an officer are constantly on duty to enforce orders, and one night the officer made a curious mistake. At three in the morning he went up to the bridge to make his hourly report, smoking a cigarette. He expected to find only the mate there, an easy-going soul who would not have objected. However, the captain was on the bridge, anxiously watching for a suspicious light that had been reported astern. He met the officer and asked in a tone of icy politeness, "And who are you, sir?" The lieutenant replied, "The military officer of the watch, sir." The captain suddenly shouted, "Get to hell off my bridge, sir!" and the poor fellow nearly fell backwards down the steep ladder. He was immediately reported to me for disciplinary action, but he forestalled my remarks by saying, "You need not say any more, sir; I have had quite enough," and that ended it.

When the convoy was well across the Atlantic the *Remuera* left it and steered for Panama, accompanied for a few days by the British cruiser *Devonshire*. Before she left us the men wished to cheer her and make any other demonstration they could to mark our appreciation of her escort. She was timed to leave at 9 o'clock in the morning, and they mustered on deck and began to cheer. To our surprise she drew close alongside,

with all her crew on deck. The soldiers then struck up songs, as well as they could without music, and almost at the first bar, the *Devonshire's* band picked up the tune and came in with a bang, and we all sang together. Possibly such a thing never occurred before on the old Atlantic; at any rate, we had a unique concert lasting about an hour, until at last the warship slipped away amid general cheering.

Soon afterwards we reached the Caribbean Sea, where we were clear of submarines, but the movements of a vessel, apparently a sailing ship, alarmed us as she gradually closed in towards us, and although there was little wind she seemed to travel faster than we did. All day we edged away from her, but she was obviously getting closer, and when darkness came we turned at right angles and gave her the slip. Captain Sutcliffe was convinced that this mysterious ship was an enemy and that her sails were not her only means of propulsion.

At 7 o'clock one evening we tied up to a wharf on an island at the entrance to the Panama Canal. Everyone was wild to get ashore, and luckily general leave was arranged from 8 p.m. until midnight, so wives, soldiers, perambulators and babies paraded on the wharf. The Colon port authorities very kindly ferried the whole mob free of charge to the mainland. This unrehearsed performance of conveying over 1000 people across a quarter of a mile of water in half an hour was a wonderful example of American efficiency. The night was very dark, but there were no accidents, although the boats moved at twenty miles an hour, and sometimes it looked as if a catastrophe must happen. The launches were handled by negroes, who were certainly masters of their art.

Leave was given only to Colon, not knowing that Christobel and Colon are practically one town, only

divided by a railway line, and all the saloons, shops and fun are in Christobel. I found the American military police holding our men back at the railway with considerable difficulty, and I immediately gave general leave into Christobel, and the happiest crowd in the world streamed across the road.

Christobel is Panamanian and beyond the jurisdiction of America, while Colon is in the American Canal zone where liquor is prohibited. Christobel was a dazzling place to come to after a long dark sea voyage. Everything was new and interesting, with amusements to suit a variety of tastes. Panama hats were for sale everywhere at from 2 to 100 dollars, but the men were more interested in the saloons, which in this pleasant land kept open right through the twenty-four hours. They were bright and cheery and well lighted, with two or three variety artists giving turns in each.

The port people undertook to convey the revellers home, a much longer business. Many returned by midnight, but others were out to make a night of it. Captain Martin, the ship's adjutant, kindly offered to bring in the stragglers, and spent the night going round the bars with the shore-picket. He arrived on board at 6.30 next morning, tired but cheerful, with the last of them. He was a wonderfully good-natured officer and possessed a fine voice, and used strategy instead of force and unpleasantness to gather his flock. He and the picket made a complete round of all the saloons, where of course the late birds were carousing, and as his party entered each place he struck up "God Save the King." At the sound of the well-known air that ends all entertainments, good and bad alike, the festive warriors sprang or climbed to attention, exercised their musical talents and went home quietly. This procedure was successful everywhere. Certainly the fun was temporarily waning, as they had drunk the place

dry as Colon after a persevering effort, and after 2 a.m. they were waiting for a fresh consignment of liquor from cool store.

Next morning we all got ashore for the day, to enjoy the hospitality of the place again. The kindness and generosity of the Americans knew no bounds, and officers at least were not allowed to pay for anything. The ship had moved to a wharf on the mainland and a naval Sousa band played at the ship's side during the afternoon.

Society at Colon was entirely official, consisting of naval and army officers and their families, and officers employed in the administration of the canal. Several ladies came to afternoon tea in the saloon, but while it was being poured out someone mentioned the magic word whisky. One of the lady guests inquired in a faint voice if there was whisky in the ship, and on being told there was plenty, they rose with one accord and adjourned to a cabin. Two rounds of drinks disappeared amid exclamations of pleasure, almost before we had taken our seats. To their credit they remembered with regret their absent husbands. At one time or another nearly every lady exclaimed, "Oh, how I wish Jack (or Bill, or Tom) were here! How he would enjoy it!" We could not help admiring the way these ladies put away whisky in a humid temperature of 90°, when clothes stick all the time, even on temperance drinks.

We passed through the canal next day, with not a man missing or a shilling's worth of damage done in the town. A number of our new American friends accompanied us, and the battalions in garrison along the canal turned out to welcome us and threw handfuls of money on our deck as souvenirs. So we parted regretfully from our friends and steamed out into the Pacific, expecting a long and uneventful voyage, but

within a few days we sighted another suspicious vessel that gave our commander an anxious day.

A large steamer appeared on our starboard quarter, gradually overtaking us and crossing our course about four miles astern. She sent strange messages on her wireless and several times changed her course, which convinced Captain Sutcliffe that she was an enemy. The soldiers were kept out of sight, in hope that we would not be recognized as a trooper, and a good supply of ammunition was placed beside the gun. This was a first-rate weapon, a six-inch Mark VII, so we were not by any means defenceless. For several hours it was kept loaded and trained on the enemy. The riddle of this strange ship was never solved, and towards evening we saw the last of her as she disappeared in the direction of the South American coast.

In the early part of the voyage we had a good crop of offenders, 150 coming in one scoop, so there was always someone doing military penance. The men thought nothing of it as it was not unusual, but it made headquarters very unpopular with the women. The war brides behaved well, but their sympathy was always with the men who were undergoing punishment, and for some weeks I received nothing but black looks as I moved about the ship; one lady, called Romford Kate, never became cordial. Quite often a soldier could be seen doing pack-drill with his infant in his arms, a pathetic instance of paternal martyrdom, while his wife looked on, contentedly convinced that her warrior was a victim of martial oppression. His ideas were possibly quite different, but anyhow they did not matter.

A rumour went round that I threatened to leave behind at Panama any lady who might misbehave. It was an absurd idea, but we left it uncontradicted.

One young lady whose husband was not on board

amused herself and others by a series of adventures that lasted throughout the voyage. She was attractive and had admirers in every class, privates, corporals, sergeants and officers all had their turn, but not for long, as she always contrived to bring her knight of the moment into disfavour with the authorities by some breach of discipline. She had a fair field for her talents as a charmer, and she must have found the voyage enjoyable.

Within the first few days she became prominent by refusing to stay in her cabin, on account of the character of her cabin mate, against whom she made a serious charge. This was disproved and the captain ordered her to return, which she did, but she never left the limelight long. She next requested that a certain crippled private should be allowed on the ladies' deck during the evenings to keep her company. She was lonely, she said, and the soldier had been a close friend of her husband, who had preceded her to New Zealand. We interviewed the lucky soldier and inquired if he were specially qualified as a suitable protector, and his first sentence satisfied us that he would pass the test. He said he had a mother and sisters at home, and further explained that he was naturally chivalrous and a great respecter of women in general. He was evidently very suitable and a pass was hastily made out and handed to him. A day or two later a corporal of military police was charged with assaulting the chivalrous private. The poor man bore marks of a good mauling on his face, but he confessed that he had struck the first blow. They both admired the lady, and that was the natural cause of the trouble ; but they shook hands and made up their quarrel in my cabin, and possibly each decided in his own mind that the fair lady was not worth getting into trouble over. At any rate they were not noticed in her company again.

It was hard luck for the private, whose pass should have secured him the inside running as the lady's official guardian, but his readiness to fight for his privilege put him out of court. However, other protectors were soon forthcoming.

A week later the captain was making his round of the ship and, happening to glance into the cabin of two sergeants, he was horrified to find the place festooned with ladies' garments. Being a stern man of mid-Victorian ideas, his conclusions and remarks may be easily imagined, though they would not look well in print. Spoken by a soldier they would have been classed as bad language, but he, a courtly man of a more courtly century than this, could use phrases and expressions with a dignity and intonation that robbed them of offence. He was still furious when I saw him in his cabin, and it was evident he had no very high opinion of soldiers as cargo. We agreed that the thing was quite wrong, and then the captain sent for the lady, who was under his jurisdiction.

She came in smiling and unruffled, though it seemed at first sight that she had something to explain. The captain received her with the courteous dignity of a polished gentleman, which he never lost, at least for long, and the lady explained that the two sergeants were close friends of her husband, whom she was about to join in New Zealand, and knowing that she was lonely and unhappy in her own cabin, they had given theirs up to her and were sleeping on deck for the rest of the voyage. She made it plain that they were doing this out of chivalry, and because of their respect for her husband. When the lady had quite finished the captain told her she would have to go back to her own cabin or he would lock her in a cell, and she departed smiling as she came.

I interviewed the two sergeants in my cabin and they

fully endorsed the lady's statement. They had willingly given up their comfortable cabin to sleep on the deck, on account of their close friendship with her husband, for whose sake they were trying to make her voyage pleasant. He had been a man with the faculty of making friends. I told them that, though they would not be permitted to give up their cabin for his sake, they still could watch over her comfort, especially as they were travelling in the same class, and on arrival in Wellington could hand her over safely to her husband. I assured them that I would make it my business to tell him how they had stood by his wife during the voyage. They did not care for this at all and, with the modesty common to soldiers, they much preferred that their attentions should remain undisclosed. They wished too that the affair should not be included in the official report on the voyage. They were never noticed in the lady's society afterwards.

Towards the end of the voyage three men were tried by court-martial for absence from a guard. The chief witness was the Maori sergeant in charge of the guard, who gave evidence manfully in the preliminary investigation, fully proving the guilt of the accused. Counsel for the accused discovered that the sergeant had been philandering with the lady while in charge of the guard, whether to the neglect of his duty or simply in his spare moments no evidence was called to prove ; but when the trial came on, the poor fellow lost his memory and became so uncertain and confused that his evidence was worthless and the charges were dismissed. Though he had done nothing wrong his conscience evidently was not quite clear, and it would have been interesting to have known if he too were an old friend of the lady's husband. He was almost sure to have been, but no opportunity arose of officially investigating.

A day or two before the end of the voyage the lady was seen reclining on a deck chair closely engaged in conversation with an officer, although her place was in the 3rd Saloon, where she was seldom to be found. This last affair had not time to develop on board. The popular husband did not meet the ship or present himself on the wharf to meet his bride, and when last seen ashore she was in the safe keeping of the officer.

Besides troops and ladies, our good ship carried only whisky, 35,000 cases and 500 barrels. If we had been torpedoed we should have drowned gloriously in whisky and water. The crew sought the whisky with skill and patience throughout the voyage, and when successful the troops had a share. The soldiers were not well enough acquainted with the structure of the ship to compete in treasure-hunting with the crew, who were literally in the best of spirits throughout the voyage. They were at it every night, generally in a fresh place, as previous openings were blocked when found. One night they removed part of the ship's structure, a half-inch steel plate about four feet square, which took the best part of next day to rivet up again. The crew were never either drunk or sober, and the bos'n was particularly jovial, and remarkably familiar with his superior officers for an ex-man-of-war's-man.

The captain was greatly worried about the whisky. If the troops had got out of control and then got to it, we might easily have a floating bedlam, but there was little danger with fifty good officers on board and a number of reliable N.C.O.s. All the same it was as well to keep everyone in a good humour. The enemy made the first part of the voyage safe, and afterwards we had sports daily. The lady, too, had done her modest bit to relieve the monotony and while away the long hours.

One evening during dinner a heavy thudding was heard just below the saloon, and the captain jumped to his feet, concluding that the crew were getting at the whisky again. He rushed off, followed by the ship's adjutant, to find it was only a steward hammering lead into lumps in preparation for selling it at the end of the voyage. The captain was relieved and pleased, but we never heard what he said to the pantryman.

As usual on return voyages crown and anchor schools flourished and a few of the "kings" were caught. Gambling was not an offence in the field, but transport orders forbade it, so when an officer blundered into a busy school someone had to suffer. The crown and anchor kings were usually old soldiers who prided themselves on some knowledge of military law, and made a show of defence.

One man was caught with his hands full of money, running a board, and the evidence against him was complete, when he called evidence in defence. To everyone's surprise one of his witnesses swore that he, the witness, was running the game in question. This produced a curious legal point, which was easily got over, however. The accused was found guilty, and the witness was charged with running a gambling school, or, alternatively, with making a false statement. This put him in an awkward fix, and early next morning he came and confessed that he had made a false statement. He had received five pounds to do it, but he did not own to that. He received no further punishment than his fright, and presumably he kept his five pounds.

Among the soldiers were two lunatics, one of whom wanted to jump overboard and swim back to Scotland. This man had to be watched night and day, and several men were told off to undertake the charge of him under a Presbyterian corporal who looked the essence

of reliability. However, like Homer, he had his lapses, and at Colon the lunatic was discovered under a motor-car superintending the operation of hoisting it on board. The corporal was on holiday. One night he allowed the madman with the swimming mania to practise walking along the ship's rail, although there was a heavy sea running. When remonstrated with, the corporal remarked, "He is very sure-footed," as if that made the performance quite satisfactory. Another day the corporal spoke to Captain Martin in support of the morality of gambling and running a crown and anchor game; he was warned not to get caught at it, but sure enough a few days later he was. It seemed hard for him to lose his well-earned stripes when he was returning to his people for discharge, so his offence was passed over.

On our military roll a name appeared with "Incorrigible" written opposite it, as if that gave all the information required in returning a man to New Zealand. His behaviour on board was completely out of keeping with the description, and in addition to the fact that he was never known to break any of the numerous rules of life on a transport, he was one of those who voluntarily stoked the ship through the danger zone during the first fortnight. This duty is hard and unpleasant, and requires the highest gallantry in a volunteer, as he knows quite well that if the ship is struck he stands the poorest possible show of ever seeing God's daylight again. Possibly this type of man possesses an over-supply of courage, which makes him difficult to handle at times.

Afterwards he fought a fireman who insulted his wife, and gave him a week in the ship's hospital. His wife looked a fit mate for her good man, an east-end Jewess, hard as nails and ugly. Then he came to me for advice, which began our acquaintance. He had

been challenged by the fireman, when he recovered, to fight again in the firemen's quarters, and he wanted to know if he would be wise in accepting. Of course I strongly urged him not to fight unless on deck, as he would have had a half dozen of them on him at once, and would probably get kicked to death. So he declined the invitation with regret.

However, soon afterwards he fought and beat another man, and a third fight failed to eventuate only because the other man was too nimble. He frequently visited me in my cabin, where he spent a good deal of time relating his life history, which was not uninteresting. After arriving in New Zealand an inquiry came from the secretary of some repatriation society, asking if I thought this man, to whom the tag "incorrigible" was still sticking, was worthy of assistance. I could only state the opinion that any man who had risked his life for his people and his country was worthy of help.

The last ten days of a long voyage are critical ones, and our court-martial tided us over it, causing intense interest for at least a week. Everyone took sides, although all the ladies and most of the men were with the accused. Even one of our parsons was found studying the manual of Military Law, certainly not in the interest of the prosecution. The court-room was crowded, and when the accused were acquitted a general feeling of pleasure and contentment remained.

We had our last fright almost at the end of the voyage. At 3 o'clock in the morning the ship's whistle blew as if it were never going to stop. In a few minutes we were all on deck, in varying stages of undress, standing at boat stations. The adjutant went to the captain's cabin to find out what the trouble was, and the old man remarked, "Why doesn't that damn fool clear the whistle lanyard."

At the end of the long voyage we parted with a

great deal of regret. There were many charming people on board, both men and women, and the dangers we had safely passed and the pleasant days spent on board the *Remuera* had caused many brief friendships that might well have been lasting in other circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAKING OF A SOLDIER

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind),
To scorn delights and live laborious days ;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Jury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life."

Lycidas.

ON a fine day in Trentham a reinforcement draft paraded for embarkation ; the men looked well and steady—the finished article, trained for war. A few days later we were rolling across the Australian Bight.

We hoped for leave ashore at Albany, but this was firmly forbidden by the Australian authorities, and all that they would allow, and this only as a special favour, was a short route march. We accepted the march, which went satisfactorily until we were nearly through the town and the head of the column had just passed an hotel. Happening to look back I saw the fool publican with an armful of beer-bottles, enticing the men to break ranks, which they did with a rush. Before I could reach him the publican fled indoors and we got the men on the move again ; but the incident revealed want of cohesion in our crowd, and some of the officers, being inexperienced, had little or no control.

After a short rest we returned through the scrub-covered hills, avoiding the town. Within a mile of

the jetty about a hundred men suddenly rushed out of the middle of the column away through the scrub, running like so many wild animals. It was an amazing sight, though grotesquely humorous. A faithful young bugler was sent after them to tell the idiots to come back. We halted for a few minutes and the boy returned with most of the runaways, and the march continued. By this time we understood why the Australians were unwilling to let these troops ashore. They knew from experience something of their ways.

The ship lay in the stream and we had to wait an hour or two while the men were lightered out. Another disgraceful break away was quite possible. A picket was kept at the back of them, but it would be powerless to stop a big rush. Major Wain of the mounted remained with me near the picket. Suddenly in the darkness about 400 men came running back with the curious low roar that a mob makes when out for mischief. The Major and I sprinted about 100 yards to meet them, and they stopped at once and began to parley, in spite of two or three would-be leaders who shouted from a safe place somewhere at the back, "Go on, and don't listen to the —s." As soon as they stopped and listened they came into control again. Ninety-nine per cent at least were decent sensible fellows, and after ten minutes' talk they turned and went slowly and unwillingly back to the pier head. During the night our shore picket rounded up twenty or thirty men who had broken away earlier, leaving three missing.

On inquiry these three men were found to have made careful preparation for desertion, and they were never retaken. They had seen a good chance to break away and run for it, and the other men had followed them like sheep, though they had not the least idea of deserting.

About midnight it was reported that a soldier had been killed and was lying dead in an alley-way in the firemen's quarters. It required the captain's permission to explore, as the place was out of bounds ; so we left the matter to resolve itself on the theory that if the man were dead there was no need to worry, and if alive, he would walk out in the morning. As a matter of fact he turned up alive next day.

When the runaway cases were tried each man said he meant no harm and was only after a beer. They may have supposed this was true, not realizing that they ran unthinkingly following three men who had a very definite object—the avoidance of dangerous military service. Most likely the attempted break away from the wharf was engineered by one or two others of similar kidney, who had missed the previous chance and knew it was hopeless to try alone.

A marked improvement in discipline was noticeable before we reached Colombo. The men were beginning to know their officers, some of whom had good war service and force of character to control men ; but it was also evident that the infantry were quite unreliable, although the artillery and mounted rifles were the reverse. The officers gave frequent lectures with the object of teaching the men to realize they were soldiers. When men feel that they are the representatives of their country abroad there is no need to fear a repetition of such performances as we had at Albany.

At Colombo a staff officer came on board and issued an order absolutely forbidding leave. This was another bitter disappointment to the men, so I went to the G.O.C. to try and get some relaxation of the order. At first he would not hear of it, but at last he relented a little, and asked if I would guarantee to control the troops. Remembering Albany this was rather a hurdle, but the promise had to be given without hesitation,

and the G.O.C. very kindly gave three hours' leave ashore in a limited area of the town, which was picketed by our troops before the main party arrived.

The experiment worked splendidly, and the men's behaviour was as near as possible perfect. Little infantrymen were seen lugging great bunches of bananas round nearly as big as themselves, bought for a shilling, and which they were now only too willing to share with their mates, to relieve themselves of the burden. The citizens of Colombo appeared to have no high opinion of colonial troops, and all the big business places and hotels put up their shutters and closed their doors. Whether this was due to their knowing us too well or not well enough we did not know ; but at least we did the town no harm and spent a lot of money, and the men enjoyed themselves to the full and were happy as kings.

We continued the voyage next day, a very contented ship's company with one man missing, who was most likely drunk and asleep when the picket went round for stragglers.

On arrival at Suez we found the draft had to go into camp for a time, as the submarines were too active to allow us to cross the Mediterranean. The camp had been occupied since the outbreak of war by troops—British, foreign, brown, and black—continuously, so that the sand for several feet down was polluted with every kind of filth, while in the villages around within a mile or so were the most virulent diseases—typhoid, typhus, diphtheria, small-pox, dysentery and malaria, besides others equally dangerous which a man might acquire without much effort. It was a sinful place to dump a raw draft at midsummer, especially as there were millions of acres of the purest desert sand unoccupied.

The first meal in camp was a great blow to the poor

men. On board ship and in New Zealand they had been accustomed to a ration of twenty-four ounces of meat and twenty-four ounces of bread with butter, jam, and vegetables in abundance, and now they were brought to twelve ounces of meat and twelve ounces of biscuit and tea and nothing else. When the poor fellows saw the place, without a blade of grass for miles and no trees to shelter them from the sun, and the scanty poor food, they realized they were up against it. Luckily they did not realize at first that these were trifles compared with their real troubles. It was mid-summer and the daily shade temperature varied from 105° to 112° .

None of these things were hardships to seasoned troops, but the beastly diseases were. In a few days men began to go away in hundreds to Suez Hospital. It seemed as if the men's hearts failed them too, and after all they were only boys—country boys, most of them never away from home before, and they had never known hardship, picturing a soldier's life on the lines of their comfortable home in Trentham camp. In any circumstances it was a disgraceful thing to put any troops in such a place. In a few days we had 150 men in hospital, and about that number was constant during our six-weeks' stay.

We tried to cheer them up, but it was hard to raise a smile. It was no use telling them that this was the country where our Palestine troops came for their leave and convalescence and recreation; they would not have believed it, although it was true.

A certain percentage of leave was allowed for officers and men, and I was able to visit Divisional Headquarters in Bethlehem, and from there the mounted rifles front in the Jordan Valley, where the mode of warfare was very different from that in France. The conditions under which the front-line troops lived were

as bad as could be imagined, and explained the meaning of the expression, "Go to Jericho!" Malaria, mosquitoes, venomous snakes, scorpions, and a daily shade temperature of 120° made it a hot place in every sense; but in spite of this, our fine troopers and horses looked hard and fit as fiddles. The men were confident, cheerful and interested.

When we returned to camp in Suez, my batman, who had also made the pilgrimage, was a proud man, with wonderful tales of his travels for his admiring comrades.

A horse show took place at Ismailia, with competitors from France, the French colonies, Italy, England, India, New Zealand and Australia. The Australian horsemanship was in a class above the others, magnificent riding. The Spahis gave a picturesque display of great cleverness. Wrapped in their white flowing clothes, they galloped across the ground, carrying two rifles, first firing one towards the rear, and slinging it again, then they fired the other, finishing by drawing a sword and sweeping off imaginary heads. They rode beautiful Arab horses, well trained and not requiring any guidance, the bridle-reins remaining untouched. It is no wonder if their owners have a great regard for these lovely creatures, which are well worthy of a long journey to see galloping in bright sunshine on their native deserts. The Spahis also picked up handkerchiefs from the ground while travelling *ventre-à-terre*.

In Suez dysentery attacked nearly everyone of the draft, and most of our hospital cases were down with it. Luckily there were very few deaths, but we left about 150 behind when we sailed.

We were thankful to embark at Alexandria on a P. & O. liner bound for Otranto. The weather was delightful, and the journey would have been an unmixed pleasure but for the fear of submarines. As we passed

through the danger zone the movements of our convoy were suggestive of a party of drunken men reeling home after a festive evening. At irregular intervals of from two to twenty minutes the ships simultaneously changed their course, making it impossible for a submarine to place herself in a suitable ambush.

We entered the inner harbour of Otranto and anchored in the stream, and lighters came alongside. They looked familiar and someone said, "This reminds me of the landing." When we looked round the lighter we saw that it had been at Gallipoli, and the old veteran was well scarred with bullets and shells. A few hours later we commenced our long journey through Italy and France. The men were in trucks with little room to move. All ranks had to sleep on the floors as best they could.

We went through Brindisi and then followed closely along the shore of the Adriatic, praying that an Austrian submarine would not pop out of the water and shell us. The scenery was pretty and improved as we went on, and chianti in wicker-covered flasks was plentiful and cheap and the omelettes good. For the greater part of the way the hills rose steeply from the narrow beach. We passed Monopoli, Bari, Barletta, Termoli, Castlemara, Ancona, and Rimini, crossed the famous Rubicon, and then struck inland across the rich plains of the River Po through Faenza, Bologna and Modena, until we reached Voghera and the beautiful plains of Lombardy. On all sides stretched endless plantations of plane trees each with its grape-vine trained out on the branches, and connected tree to tree, the whole country being a vineyard, with lucerne growing luxuriantly under the vines and the richest soil in the world below. The Huns would have delighted in defacing this lovely garden of Europe.

We listened intently, but we could not hear the guns

on the Italian front. Like Belgium, these beautiful plains have often been battlefields, and we passed near the bridge of Lodi, where Napoleon first made himself famous, and the battlefield of Marengo, where by his brilliant genius he turned a defeat into a great victory.

At Voghera our road turned south through Novi and Aquata to the Gulf of Genoa, and passing through Monaco with its beautiful little harbour, we entered France near Ventimiglia.

We had not been able to make ourselves understood by the Italians, and they persisted in taking us for United States troops, on account of our hats. When we entered a town we were greeted with smiles, "Americana?" which disgusted us, and when we said, "Non, Nouvelle Zélande," it was clear that they were puzzled. We then tried "Australie," but apparently no one in Italy had ever heard of Australia, much less New Zealand. As a last effort to introduce ourselves an officer asked them if they knew who it was that was winning the war, but they shook their heads vaguely and smiled. Evidently they were uneducated, and we fell back on the only words that were really necessary—omelette and chianti. The rate of exchange was very satisfactory. You tendered an English sixpence for a penny cup of coffee and received elevenpence change—apparently an easy way of making money.

Throughout the journey the behaviour of the train was first-rate. Usually we halted once in every twelve hours, to allow a meal and a wash and give the men a chance to stretch their legs. At each "halte" sufficient hot tea was ready, prepared by English line of communication troops.

Influenza broke out fiercely before we reached France, and at every stop the bugle went for sick parade. Our last transport must have been infected.

High temperatures were the special feature, and when $104\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ was reached the patient was evacuated to the nearest hospital, often insensible.

The men began to think that fate was against them ; every phase of the journey seemed to be worse than the last. Many stops were at night, and the rows of unconscious men, laid out side by side on the ground for examination by the doctors in the dim lantern light, were too suggestive of death for young soldiers in a strange land. Luckily it was not nearly so bad as it looked, for although over eighty were evacuated, none were reported to have died.

Our route led up the Rhone valley, which can never be anything but beautiful, although the hedges and fields had not their former neatness and showed the result of years of war and wasted manhood.

In spite of their cramped quarters and the epidemic the men enjoyed the changing scenes of our journey, and once, when we halted in a wood, they decorated the whole train with greenery. It would not have been amiss in New Zealand, but here in France a holiday train looked sadly out of place, and in a few minutes the decorations were stripped off. The men were sorry to have to do it, but were very anxious to please and obey. It was explained that the French would object to their woods being robbed of branches ; and besides, a holiday train would grate on their nerves while their thoughts were focused on the grim struggle still in progress.

We had a good band with us which played the Marseillaise as we passed through the towns, never failing to draw smiles and salutes from the Frenchmen.

English R.T.O.s were on all stations, as well as the Italian or French station-masters, and in one case only did we find two officials at loggerheads. When we were at lunch the Frenchman started the train

while most of the officers were at some distance. The band saved the situation by jumping out and playing the Marseillaise as loud and as well as it could, and the Frenchman immediately was all smiles and the train stopped. He was evidently either a musician or a humorist.

After eight days we reached Cherbourg, where we went into camp for a few days. The men were worn out, looking thinner and years older than when they left New Zealand. Thousands of American gunners were with us, all eager to make friends. They were splendid men, much the type of ours in figure, size, and manner, and slightly more talkative, with no fear or shyness towards officers. They had not yet been in action, and were keen to relate their experiences. Their training in America had been in some desert place where there were only scattered shrubs, and they were full of its terrors. The Egyptian desert had also made a very deep impression on the New Zealanders, who were quite convinced that a place where nothing at all grew must be much worse than the American desert, and they longed to tell their new friends about it and gain their sympathy, but they never got the chance. The American gunners forced them to listen to the oft-repeated tale of their desert and their hardships. Knowing it was only a tame affair compared with Egypt, our men time and again opened their mouths to commence their tale, only to be talked down again. After four days we had to leave them without once telling them we had a desert too.

These Americans were wonderfully eager to get first-hand stories of the war from officers who had seen fighting, and hundreds of them soon gathered round any officers who happened to talk about the front, ready to ply him with questions. They were well-educated men, keen and self-reliant, and only once

did any boastfulness appear, when a gunner said, "Well, I guess we have about the best gun pointers in America here." The officer took it up and at once retorted, "Yes, and I guess you will want them too. When you first run up against the Hun he will frighten hell out of you." The soldier was squashed for a moment, and then continued manfully, "You would not have us come with our tails down, would you, sir?" which completely turned the tables. "No, we like to see you with your tails up, the higher the better. You're all right," the officer replied. These Americans were just the boys to our eyes; full of vigour and fight and confidence as all troops should be, and especially valuable when European soldiers were becoming to some extent war-weary. Among the guns they had brought were monster fifteen-inch, mounted on railway trucks, the very thing for an argument with the Huns.

On a dark night we slipped across the Channel to Southampton in the steamer *Duchess of Argyle*, and on arrival the draft was split into its detachments and sent for training to the depots of the various arms. Before they left I talked to some of the men and shook hands with them, as I was leaving for London. They spoke of the different incidents of the long journey; it was three months since we left New Zealand, but they all ended by saying, "But you were very hard on us, sir." This certainly came as a surprise and a slight shock, as I thought I had been lenient, and at least there was no wish to be hard. Our point of view was different, however.

Six weeks' strenuous work at Sling under severe discipline did much for the infantry. When they marched in they were rough, but a uniform military hair-cut, thin boots replaced by serviceable ones, equipment properly fitted, and all details of clothing

made correct, produced in four days a 100 per cent improvement. Every man threw Mills bombs, fired rifle grenades, fired a musketry course, learned barbed-wiring, trench construction, the Lewis gun, a smattering of enemy weapons and methods, and many other things essential to a soldier. There was not time for frills, where there was not sufficient time to learn things on which their lives might depend. Besides these duties they were bullied about by all ranks and sorts of N.C.O.s, and punished for trivial errors in saluting, dress, or demeanour. All they could look forward to was leave in London for three days before going across to France and the unknown beyond.

Food was not plentiful, and at first was not enough to satisfy them ; but it was good, and the steady work built them up after the hardships of their journey. Their spirits were higher than they had been since leaving New Zealand, but none of them felt such complete soldiers as when they were in Trentham Camp. Here they met many men who had seen terrible things and whose very faces bore marks of experiences such as they had not yet known. They knew the real thing was very close now, but they had made up their minds to do their best and meet whatever might come, so the future did not trouble them.

They marched out of camp to Bulford station with as good a heart and a much greater pride than they had ever felt in New Zealand. Leaving their training days behind, they were marching towards the enemy at last. The depot band helped them along the dark road, and as usual the draft was kindly and breezily cheered on its way by the unfortunate men in the Australian hospital, who always turned out to speed our parting troops.

Going out to fight for the first time, it gave the untried men a feeling of confidence to know that four

old hands, two of them sergeants, were hidden somewhere in the ranks in the favouring darkness. These four were boasters of the horrors of France, but they were sneaking back there again, contrary to orders which kept them on duty at Sling. Once safely in France they would report themselves grinning to the O.C. Draft, who would give them a rough tongueing, though he was inwardly pleased. Desertion to the front was always common in the New Zealand Division.

In the base camp in France the men were put through a final complete course of training, more strenuous and bloodthirsty than ever, each man being ordered to grind his bayonet sharp, and shown the spot in a man's back where two inches of steel kills instantly. It all tended to awaken the killing spirit, and the last few months' experiences had strung the soldier's spirit and temper up until, unknown to himself, he had mentally and physically the tension of a well-bent bow.

It had been nothing but repression, from the mild commencement in New Zealand until the time when the whole horizon seemed filled with men in authority checking him. He remembered the disease and mental suffering of the journey to England ; the casual attitude of the officers ; the training and bullying at Sling, and the constant correction and punishment for offences that were accidental and trivial. The yoke of discipline had become heavy, and everyone from lance-corporal to colonel, had powers to enforce it, and there was no escape but to submit. New from civil life, they felt the total absence of any sympathy perhaps more than the actual hardships, and they could not know that they would themselves consider expressed sympathy an unendurable mockery when they realized the callousness of modern war.

So the men looked forward to getting to the front

where, in one direction at least, they could give vent to their feelings without fear of restriction. As the detachment marched up the last few miles to the trenches, the men were in such good spirits that they began singing. Hearing this unusual sound, men remarked, "Hullo, a reinforcement draft; let's have a look at them." Late that night, and tired after a long walk through muddy alleys between earthen walls, the small party of tired recruits at last reached their company in the line. In the strangeness and darkness, with shells humming and bursting and machine-guns ripping out bullets somewhere, the company sergeant-major allotted them to their platoons, and they were at last able to lie down and rest.

Later they were conscious of a terrible thudding and crashing around them, and they crept closer under the parapet, where their new mates were sheltering and talking to one another casually about the shelling. "Old Fritz is walloping it in, isn't he?" and another remarked, "The front line is getting most of it"; then a sensation came of being lifted up and some said, "That's a dud," followed rather suddenly by the exclamation, "Damn him," as a shell whirled close by overhead. "I think he's easing off a bit now; he's sending in salvos," was followed by the fervent prayer, "I wish to hell he would stop; I was on patrol last night, and want a sleep." In a short time the trouble stopped and the men settled down again, only waking when the morning's duty began. The new arrivals felt that the plunge had been taken and found endurable.

Two men had been killed and a few wounded, but they did not know their names. The old hands were friendly, volunteering to show them round and put them up to the points. When they mentioned the night's affair they were told, "Oh, that was nothing; you should have been in the 'Mushroom.'"

The new arrivals were content to find that between the officers and other ranks of their new comrades there existed a kindly human feeling, where even the poor private was treated as a man, and shown touches of personal consideration and respect. It seemed to be recognized in the trenches that men there were doing men's work, all bearing a responsibility whatever the rank might be ; and a man might indulge in a feeling of pride in doing his part without fear of failure. They had shared with veteran comrades the perils of the night, and they felt that they could go about their duties and calmly face whatever the future had in store.

THE END

