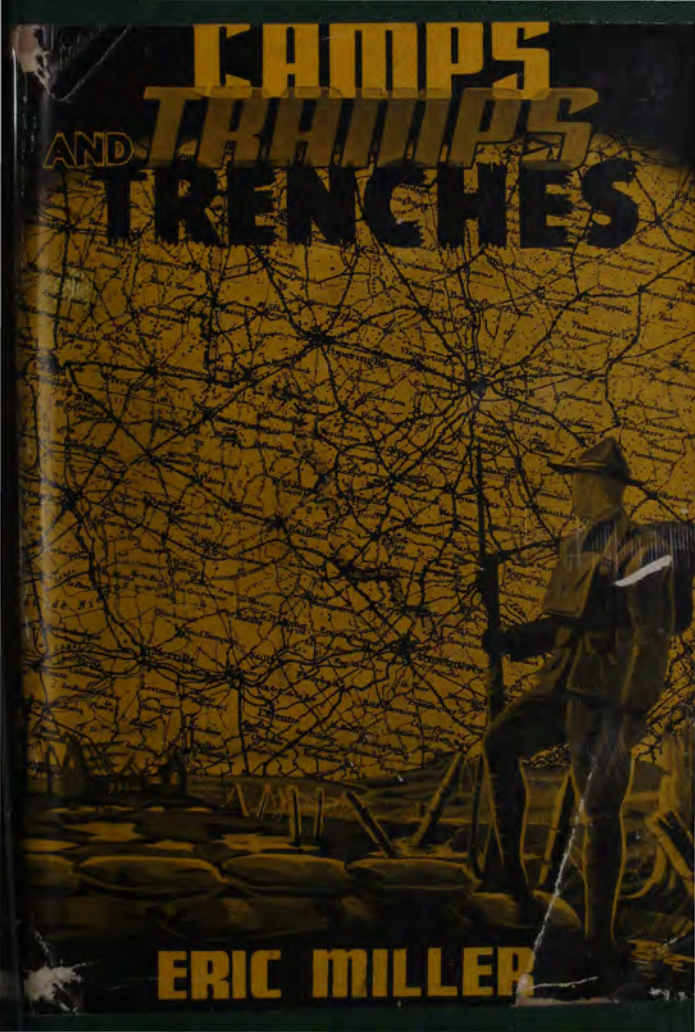
CAMPS AND TRAMPS AND TRENCHES



ERIC MILLER

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CAMPS, TRAMPS AND TRENCHES

AUTHOR'S DUGOUT, THE RAMPARTS, YPRES

Camps, Tramps & Trenches

The Diary of a New Zealand Sapper, 1917

By

ERIC MILLER

FOREWORD BY

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ANDREW H. RUSSELL, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.B.,
LATE G.O.C. NEW ZEALAND DIVISION.

A. H. AND A. W. REED
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FOREWORD

In this year 1939 a good many young fellows, after reading the morning paper, with its scare headlines, may be wondering if they too will have to go out on the great adventure; and this with a natural curiosity as to the life they would lead and the experiences they would be likely to meet if the call came. To these, "Camps, Tramps and Trenches" will appeal as well as to those who have already done their turn. A plain straightforward account of the doings of an engineer during the Great War, this book, which I have much enjoyed reading, deserves a wide circulation. There are those who have described the late war as a period of long drawn out monotony, punctuated by moments of nerve-racking terror, but after reading this lively account one realises that monotony, as is usual, lies not in the sequence of events, but rather in the mind which passes through them. That the restraint imposed by discipline, to which more than one reference is made, is irksome to humankind is true, and perhaps not least of all to the New Zealand soldier, but speaking as one who knew him, I would add my testimony to his generally cheerful acceptance of inevitable restrictions, provided they were dictated by commonsense and understanding; while his initiative, efficiency and bravery told their own tale in the world-wide reputation he earned for the N.Z.E.F.

A. H. Russell

PREFACE

THE majority of New Zealand soldiers, before setting out on the great adventure, received gifts of sundry articles of a portable nature such as wrist watches, pocket books and diaries. The diary with which I was presented by a group of friends was of an unusual type. It was a thick gilt-edged volume bound in black morocco. Fortunately its pages were unblemished by printed dates or divisions. The events of a day could thus be recorded in one line or fifty as the occasion warranted. But for this judicious choice, the story of my adventures as one of "Bill Massey's Tourists" would undoubtedly have been minus both the amplitude of detail which characterizes it, and descriptions of numerous incidents which lend colour to an account of the everyday life of an ordinary soldier.

This record of impressions of the beauty and the squalor of the War, of what our soldiers saw, how they lived, and their manner of speech was kept, as were most others, for the diarist's own amusement, and with a vague idea that it might be of interest to friends at home when the War was ended, if it ever did end. In actuality it served the purpose, unrealized at the time, of an escape from the grim realities of a life that was not at all times wholly congenial.

This diary was not written with a view to publication. I do not recall ever having enacted the role of journalist by seeking information for inclusion in its pages. It shows

evidence of a self-imposed censorship, a voluntary compliance with the wise regulation that diaries must not contain particulars of military tactics, fortifications or other information likely to be appreciated by an enemy Intelligence Officer.

The sketches illustrating the book are of subjects which excited the interest of an architectural student, and are not representative of scenes familiar to all who served with the Division in France. How greatly treasured now would be sketches of Ploegsteert Wood, Hellfire Corner, or even the Bull Ring at Étaples! Such localities, however, were entirely devoid of attractiveness at the time.

I am grateful to Professor G. E. Thompson of the University of Otago who encouraged me to have the diary published and rendered valuable assistance in preparing it for the press, and to Mr A. G. Smith and Mr John Robertson, B.A., B.Sc., for much kindly advice.

Not unmindful of the sterling worth of comrades who travelled the same journey, and of the many who did not return, I dedicate this story to those who from a far land sent their sons messages of cheer and encouragement, and bravely watched and waited through interminable years.

E.M.

Dunedin,
New Zealand,
June 1939.

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CHAPTER I

EMBARKATION

Signal Section,
21st Specialist Company,
Military Camp,
Featherston,
New Zealand.

January 17, 1917. Having completed a stretch of five months' training in this Camp, and visited our homes during the ten days allotted for Final Leave, we are now honoured, so we have been informed, by being classed as fit for Active Service. So far we feel no difference except in our heads, externally. The tormenting little machine clippers have been going round and round, getting blunter and blunter. We are almost as bald as nuts and feel unusually cool in the top story. Perhaps this treatment is the regulation antidote for cold feet, and we may receive more of it as we go further afield.

The new era dawned with a bump, for punctually at 00·01 hours this morning, our respected sergeant, who had been enjoying a merry last night of leave in Featherston, celebrated the occasion by tipping out of bed all who had already retired. Within a few seconds the stretcher beds were piled in heaps, in some cases temporarily on top of their late occupants. The free for all "general clean-up" which followed was in my opinion the best in which I have been privileged to play a humble part. As

variety items there were three wrestling contests, one boxing match, and a sort of duel with fixed bayonets going on at the same time. Meanwhile the rest of us were slogging into each other in the semi-darkness with mattresses full of straw. One man was pushed out of a window to follow his bed. A moment later his sparring partner was sent to join him. The pair finished their "dust up" outside, shirt tails flying. At one stage of the proceedings, through forming a case of mistaken identity, I lost a considerable amount of skin, so crawled into a bed about the first hour.

The day was spent in leisurely manner packing kits, obtaining goods from the Stores, and making up shortages of equipment by foul means or fair. Many fruitless attempts were made to satisfy our curiosity as to the precise date of our departure.

January 18. There is a base rumour in circulation that the reason why no parade was called this morning is that some of those in positions of authority met with a series of little accidents last night while on leave, and were therefore indisposed. The afternoon and evening we spent in getting gear in order, writing farewell letters at one or other of the Church Institutes and in saying good-byes round the Camp.

January 19. The prospect of the 4 a.m. reveille this morning acted as a deterrent on any notions of a rough house or general clean-up last night, and things were fairly quiet. The awakening at that hour was unpleasant, but there were kits to pack, the hut to clean out for the last time, and breakfasts to stow in by 6.30. Then after all this bustle and industry a monotonous and unreasonable wait till about 8 a.m. when our crowd moved off from headquarters in the railway goods wagons known as "dog-boxes" to the martial strains of the Featherston Band. We were attached to the 8.30 mail train, and after the

familiar journey over the Rimutakas and past the gates of Trentham Camp, arrived in Wellington three and a quarter hours later. At the grimy yellow-brown Railway Station, many of us who were fortunate in having relations or friends in the City, met them and spoke to them for a few minutes.

We now had to carry our possessions from the train to the transport, a distance of about five hundred yards, partly over railway sidings and sleepers, to the music of a quickstep played by a brass band. Some of the troops were sadly out of step at times. I have carried my swag over snow-bound mountain passes and found it a stiff pull, but never have I lost so much moisture in a given time as I did on that stunt with two heavy kit bags to be juggled. But one was more than half full of eatables! On board H.M. Transport *Waitemata*, I was allotted bunk No. 1004 somewhere in the port bow and had a feed of ship's biscuits. At 2 p.m. the troops formed up on the wharf and shortly afterwards broke off for an hour to speak to relations and friends.

With my mother I stood on the outskirts of the crowd near the entrance gates. She made a brave effort to be bright and happy, but when the fateful bugle sounded the call to every man to part and board the ship, the strain was a little too much and she almost fainted. I left her at last in the care of the mother of one of our company sergeants, and perhaps ten minutes after all troops were on board, I clambered up the gangway.

For the final scene I found a position by a railing near wharf level. All available vantage points and even the shrouds were packed with men in khaki. At 3.30 all people with tickets of admission were allowed on the wharf and then commenced a gay competition in shying fruit and confectionery aboard. A bruised eye from a large orange causes no resentment. I caught the orange on the re-

bound. At length, about 4 p.m. to the accompaniment of hearty cheers, the ship pulled slowly away from the wharf. Not far from me stood a little Welshman of the Jones clan known as "Emily" from his initials "M.L.E." His wife and three children stood opposite us on the wharf. In the moment's silence that followed a round of cheers from the ship, Emily shouted across the widening gulf a last message to his wife. "Don't forget Tubby's shoes!" Two thousand people heard and did not know whether to laugh or cry. Said a fellow on my left with feeling: "It seems a shame that a family man like that should be going on this job."

A quiet ship moved steadily out into the stream and dropped anchor for a few hours. At 9 p.m. the tender pushed off from our side and all communication with New Zealand was severed. As darkness fell we stood on deck in groups watching the twinkling lights of the city, thinking of those who we knew were gazing steadfastly at the ship.

CHAPTER II

SOLDIERS AT SEA

January 20. Our first day at sea broke fine with a light breeze and a choppy swell, not enough to disturb us. The northern coastline of the South Island was still in sight. We passed D'Urville Island and Light in the morning and Farewell Spit in the afternoon. We did not lose sight of land till after dark, when the light of a bush fire high up on one of the nearest hills formed a beacon bidding us farewell to New Zealand.

All day long we loafed about the decks in our sea rig and canvas slippers, amusing ourselves in sundry fashions, and going below only for meals. In the evening on the starboard side an impromptu concert was held by the Specialist Company, performers being forcibly recruited from the ranks of the artillery.

January 21, Sunday. The church service at 10 a.m. was very brief. We are now more or less on our sea legs and have healthy appetites. The meals, all hot, have so far been excellent. The midday dose of roast pork was the best feed that has been served up to me by the Government since I enlisted. I spent most of the day digesting a novel. There was a gentle swell on the sea and a warm sun. We are much interested in watching the half dozen albatrosses and molly hawks which follow the ship and seem to be able to glide along for hours between meals without moving a wing.

January 22. A fine day with a light swell till we ran into rain about 4 p.m. After breakfast "Tweedledum" Twomey and I scrubbed out the hospital on the boat deck. From 10 a.m. till 11 we had a lecture on the "Addenda to the Signal Book," our first bit of drill so far. The afternoon I passed with many others in trying to keep out of the wind as much as possible. About 4.30 I went below to inspect that part of the ship's interior which causes us to wallow along so slowly and so painfully. We are doing 8 or 9 knots on inferior Japanese coal. It is said that this old tramp has been so poorly designed that she goes well only on a down-hill run.

January 23. The weather now became rough with frequent rain squalls so that by the time dinner was announced the ship was tossing and rolling heavily. I did not parade for dinner. Donovan and I, with the intention of taking a little light nourishment, shared a large tin of Bartlett pears which I had nursed all the way from Dunedin. The only benefit we derived from them was the flavour. For the evening meal I had a biscuit and a drink of tea. The whole ship was on dry rations. In the earlier part of the evening many of us amused ourselves dodging showers of spray on the port side. The ship's bugler, neat and trim, blowing "Officers' Mess" at 6 p.m., was unhappily cut short in the middle of a note by a sudden deluge of sea water. When sufficiently recovered he bravely continued and played the call through to the bitter end, heartened no doubt by the uproarious applause of all within hearing. Whether it was from a sense of military precision, pride in musicianship so coldly slighted, or a desire for economy, he did not begin all over again but carried on from the note which had been so discordantly strangled. It may be that only in Heaven I shall hear that lost chord again.

January 24. A grey day. The swell has subsided con-

siderably. This old tub is a terror to roll; she wallows around on the slightest provocation. Some say she would roll in a dry dock. My theory is that her keel must have a twist on it like the edge of an aeroplane propeller. By now I have quite got my sea legs and don't notice the rolling so much. There are only one or two things we complain about. One is the poor ventilation, or rather, absolute lack of ventilation in the mess-room. This is down in the hold and has tons of wool underneath the floor, so that the stench is at times almost unbearable. The lighting is also bad. The wash-up arrangements are inadequate, half a dozen buckets of water in which to rinse the dishes of one thousand men.

In both morning and afternoon we signallers had practice on the "International Rags." This is quite a good game as played by the Navy. It is about as difficult as playing blocks only more fun 'cos we have lovely coloured flags to hang out and spell words with.

January 25. About 9 a.m. we sighted a full rigged barquentine on the starboard bow. For a short time only we caught a glimpse of her hull. She is probably making for Auckland. One of our passengers who has been in the Navy, and ought to know about these things, came across a man, a signaller no less, who to his horror did not know port from starboard. "Now I'll tell you how to remember it so as you'll never forget it," he said. "Sta'bud is right, always right. You know what a star boarder is, don't you, the landlady's fancy. Well he's doin' all right. Think of the good old star boarder."

At 10.30 more flags. Noticed a seagull or two amongst our following of birds. Amused ourselves both morning and afternoon hanging out groups of burgees with tack-lines between. When the sun went down it threw into relief land on the port bow, evidently Tasmania. Six days at sea! We are hastening slowly.

January 26. The watch reported that about 1 a.m. we passed close to Deal Island Light. Early in the morning I saw through the porthole some sharp rocks and bluffs to starboard, then Wilson's Promontory.

This is our washing day and the process is rather interesting. First each man draws, under police supervision, half a bucket of fresh water to wash his clothes in and vainly attempts to work up a respectable lather with the hard soap supplied. The usual procedure is to wash yourself first in the precious fresh water, then go for the clean-up. After everything has been well scrubbed by rubbing it on the deck, you get a further half bucket for rinsing purposes. If there's any over you may shave with it. This was our morning's "work." I finished at 10 a.m.

Afternoon: was sorted out for a job, which is not uninteresting. This is a signwriting job, lettering the alphabet on a canvas holder for the flags with a brush I had to manufacture out of a rope end.

In the evening a concert was held in the mess-room. The programme consisted mainly of popular songs in varied styles of rendering. Once again we wait "till the sands of the des-art grow ko-holed and their in-fi-nite num-bahs are toe-holed." No singer was counted out. A party of Maoris came to light attired simply in shorts and war paint. They obliged with several dances and a haka or two in most spirited style. The hearing they got chased nearly all the stagnant air out of the mess-room.

January 27. In the morning we amused ourselves as usual on the flags. We are becoming more skilful at this game and work in double sets with a tack-line intervening. In the afternoon we had a shower-bath which was compulsory, and according to orders was to have been followed by a sun bath, but the sun didn't come to light at the appointed time.

January 28, Sunday. A very fine day, but the ship had

a decided roll, so much so that during the morning church service, the "Chaplin," who was using a table for a pulpit, indulged in a daring leap for life during the first prayer, and landed amongst a group of officers seated below. However, he carried on. At dinner time we were served out some of the cake donated by the Women's Patriotic Association.

January 29. In the morning we had a lecture on "The Duties of the Watch" up on the bridge which I find is supposed to be regarded by us as sacred precincts—navy tradition or some such reason.

In the afternoon a general sports meeting was held. There was an exciting obstacle race followed by a pillow-fighting contest. The chief event was a series of boxing matches, organized by the Roman Catholic padre, in which many Maoris took part. Each company had a representative in the boxing and also entered a team for the tug-of-war. In the latter, the specialists, after many victories, were finally beaten by the Maori team. Too much bully beef.

A Maori boxing match is a treat for the spectators, an exhibition in which energy completely predominates over science. The preliminaries have a ceremonial aspect; the minute examination of the gloves, the careful note of the size of the ring, the quiet scrutiny of the opponent, the polite handshake, the unruffled sparring in the most approved scientific manner. Nearer and nearer they come, until, just for fun, one lands the other a hefty punch. The match has been set to the fuse and up go the works. Good-bye science, rules and whistle. Nothing can stop that whirling mass of arms and legs. Finally one of the combatants draws blood, and proudly posing with a victorious air, holds up his hands for removal of the gloves. It is all over.

In the evening between the hours of 6 and 8 I had my

first experience of watch-keeping and filled in the time writing letters. At 7.20 there was a pay parade, each man drawing ten shillings, a proof that we are nearing a port.

January 30. On duty from 8 to 12, we had signalling practice, and did a little tailoring on the flags which are the worse for wear. The afternoon passed uneventfully, and in the evening I saw out the First Watch, 8 to 12. It was fairly chilly but Groves and I found refuge beside the smoke stack. There was a very good concert on in the mess-room, nearly all the items being contributed by the Maoris. It lasted from 7.30 to 9.30 and I managed to see a considerable part of it.

January 31. I discreetly kept out of the way in the morning, except for attendance at a lecture by the Adjutant on "Conduct Ashore." On watch again, 12 to 4, but had absolutely nothing to do and passed the time in reading. Turned in fairly early in the evening as I was on the Middle Watch. Arrived on the bridge in time to catch the tail end of a signal from the lighthouse at the entrance to King George's Sound. So at last after 13 days of it we are near Albany. During watch I intruded myself by way of the skylight into the officers' cookhouse, which was of course locked, and made tea and toast for two. Our supper arrangements are not always a success. Sometimes the embers of the fire cannot be nursed into a glow, and sometimes there is no butter.

CHAPTER III

A DAY AT ALBANY

February 1. At about 1 a.m. I was asked some more questions on the lamp by the Pilot Station. Fortunately the boss Signal Sergeant was on the bridge and he stopped it all. We were anxious for dawn to break during our watch so that we could get an early first glimpse of Western Australia. It was not properly light till 4.30, so Groves and I stayed on deck. At 5 we went below expecting to sleep till 8, but the row made by the mob in getting up at 5.30 beat us for any chance of a little shut-eye.

About 7 a.m. we hauled up the mudhook, and after passing through the well fortified narrows, tied up at the wharf. Our sister transport, the *Ulimaroa*, otherwise known as H.M.N.Z.T. 74, followed us in. There are two or three colliers and H.M.S. *Encounter* in the stream. Albany, we find, is daylight saving, and when going ashore at 9.30 we had to put our watches on an hour. We marched up to the town, a distance of three miles, and broke off in front of the Town Hall.

Going into a shop we sampled some peaches and nectarines, also one or two other varieties of fruit which were unfamiliar to us, but I wouldn't recommend any one to try them. We looked round the town and had no thought of dinner till noon, when we found all six hotels crowded out. Finally at 12.30 we got into a feed at a boarding house, homely but good. Most of us then went scouting around to try and get a bath, but the shrewdies

had used up all the hot water in the town earlier in the day.

Some of us went for a ride in a motor bus that was bound for a seaside resort named Middleton Bay. We enjoyed a free ride to the top of the hill, where the axle broke, so down we came again. Thereupon, after visiting the Soldiers' Club, and having a wash in real fresh water, Lofty Perry and I went back up the hill to inspect a place that looked like a public park. We found it private property so had to trespass in order to see some Australian bush, which is charming close at hand. The varied colours, ranging from emerald green to orange, are so much warmer than the more sombre shades of the New Zealand bush. We were delighted with a variety of cultivated eucalyptus, the brilliant tangerine flowers of which are similar in form to the New Zealand rata. On the return journey we stopped awhile to watch a genuine aboriginal gin and her Jackie doing a song and dance act in somebody's garden for the pence and half-pennies of an admiring crowd.

Before falling in at the post office for the march back, we tried to buy some dried fruit but the town was out of everything except Mildura raisins. Peaches, the largest I ever saw, were given us by visitors who had come from the interior to escape the hot season. To show their appreciation of the town's hospitality, the Maoris lined up for a haka, much added interest being contributed to the performance by the topheavy condition of some of those wild warriors. There were many sympathizers present.

We cast off about 8 p.m. and left wishing we could have seen a little more of Australia. The glimpse we had was not in any way sufficient to give us an impression of the nature of the country. I turned in early as I was on Last Watch. There was a fairly rough sea running, and it was great fun to watch the pilot being dropped into a launch that was bucking in every direction.

CHAPTER IV

"MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG"

February 2. Nothing of interest happened during Last Watch except that one of the mates informed us such frequent cleaning of the brass on the bridge was becoming a nuisance and ordered us to desist. We were afterwards hauled up by our sergeant for not having cleaned it, but were promptly acquitted. In the afternoon we had signalling practice in semaphore and buzzer. Watch for the day was Second Dog, so at 6 p.m. we repaired to our "possie" on the dispensary roof and gossiped with the day men until relieved. It was a lovely moonlight night and the dog watch yarns went round at a rate.

February 3. Just the same as the previous Saturday I suppose. Perhaps this is a good place to describe the routine of watchkeeping. The watch is a Navy institution and the idea is that if we pass a man-of-war or go into port we shall most likely have to receive and answer signals. We find it a very decent job, as there is little or nothing to do. The only disadvantage is that we have a night shift of four hours almost every night. It takes fourteen men to keep all the shifts going and we have week about on it. We work in pairs. My partner is a Taranaki farmer. There are seven watches in the day of four hours each except for the two Dog Watches, 4 to 6 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. There is one called the Middle or Dead Man's Watch which is not very exciting. The

only thing to do is to curl up on the deck near the smoke stack where it is warm and indulge in a little shut-eye. When we have been on this watch we may sleep in till dinner time next day. We miss breakfast, of course, but that isn't much if it's only stew, though we generally have porridge which is very good. At midnight or 4 a.m. we go into the galley and make tea for ourselves. On the Morning Watch, 4 to 8, we usually sit on the hatch of the officer's cookhouse for the sake of warmth.

February 4, Sunday. Stayed in bed till church parade time. In the afternoon I was on duty, and while I was sleeping soundly on the top deck beside the smoke stack, a blast on the ship's whistle, only a few feet above me, gave the signal for life-belt drill. I had the rudest awakening it has ever been my lot to suffer.

February 5. As I was on the Dead Man's Watch, I stayed in bunk till nearly dinner time. There was nothing doing till 3.30 p.m. when we were all vaccinated in the dispensary. I found the vaccination not nearly as big an operation as I had anticipated. The lymph didn't seem to be very strong and didn't take well on me. A notice has appeared inviting contributions for a ship's magazine. Later in the day I interviewed the editor and then started to work on a design for the cover.

February 6. Had solid and consistent buzzer practice on the telephones for a couple of hours both morning and afternoon. I resurrected from my kit some music that had been given me when on final leave and we spent some time round the piano trying over songs. Being the owner of the songs I had the privilege of first pick, and wound up by coming on in the evening concert as first emergency, or last item before the National Anthem. I am not ashamed of my position on the programme. It is customary to reserve a good item for the beginning and the end, and put the rough stuff in the middle.

February 7. Lecture on telephones and their works in the forenoon watch. Wednesday afternoon seems to be a half holiday for us. There is usually a sports meeting of some kind. On this occasion it was only a quoits contest. The usual games of "House" accompanied by monotonous chanting of lucky or unlucky numbers were being played on the hatch covers. I visited the mess-room and there discovered an artist at work on a sketch of the Albany Church. He turned out to be Eric Phillips, a fellow architectural student, hailing from Auckland, so we conferred. In the evening I went as far for'ard as it is possible to get in order to sketch the front elevation of the ship for that magazine cover design. I finished a pencil drawing in the mess-room and sent it in as an entry for the competition.

There are dozens of rafts scattered about the ship, and we have all been shown our places on them. There is drill fairly often in "abandon ship" as it is called. A blast of the siren is the signal for a general rush for lifebelts. During the night, about 12.30 a.m., the siren blew loud and long. Every one tumbled out for a little lifeboat drill, grumbling at the choice of the hour for the performance. All hands arrived on deck in a hurry only to find it was a false alarm. A large canvas win'sle ventilator had broken loose and fallen foul of the siren line, causing as much commotion as if we'd sighted a tin fish.

February 8. A fine hot day with a very big swell on the sea. The old ship is taking tumbles bigger than any she has previously indulged in. We signallers are now giving some attention to the subject of map reading.

February 9. We spent our working hours sending semaphore with the flags from the house tops. After dinner I turned in for a small sleep and woke up about half an hour after parade had been called. It would have been all right but for the circumstance that our Dead

Meat Tickets (identity disks) were issued first thing and the sergeant had to come down below to hunt me up and out.

In the evening there was a good concert, items supplied mainly by F Company. They billed a very good comedian and patter expert, but the funniest act of the lot was unintentional. We had "The Song that Reached my Heart" served up to us by a singer who was past his best. I have heard some efforts at country concerts that were pretty flat, but never one so absolutely horizontal as this. The audience were doubled up with suppressed mirth after each high note, then vented their feelings in loud applause which the old chap took as deserved. He meant no harm.

February 10. During the night I had the unique sensation of being awakened from my dreams by a rat fight on the ledge at my feet. Just a few hisses and some scuffling, but loud enough to wake five or six of us. On Saturday evenings the boys delight in reminiscences of Saturday nights at home.

February 11, Sunday. I have been put on as mess-orderly for the week, a nasty job, but I may as well have it now and get it over. Two of us on duty together have to collect the grub and wash all the dishes for fifteen men, then attempt to dry them with only one dish towel. The first dozen articles are dried, the remainder wiped. So far good, but the water supplied is hot salt water which rusts everything in a couple of hours. Once a day the rust has to be removed from tin plates and pannikins, steel knives and forks, by means of emery paper and bath brick applied with elbow grease. The process takes two hours on the average. In this sport I must confess I have no desire to shine. The smears of rusty brick dust and emery paste are eventually removed to some extent by polishing with a dry cloth. What is left imparts to the

food a distinctive though not delicious flavour. Truly we have iron constitutions.

As it gets pretty hot down below we ply our trade clad in just a pair of shorts and a shirt, shoes optional, and have two or three shower baths a day. I notice the fellow in our mess who sports a silver spoon marked "Grand Hotel, Wellington," takes it home after meals and does not trouble us with the washing of it. I wish some others had had his foresight.

I lost no time in securing one of the few perquisites which come the way of the mess-orderly. After dinner I intimated to the cook that a bucket of hot fresh water was required to wash the dish-towels in, and was successful. I certainly scraped down and strained off the solitary dish towel in another vessel. I had a shave and a bath, then did some washing, and decorated the Sabbath by hanging pyjamas and towel on the rigging.

February 12. We are now believed to be approaching what is known as the danger zone. Many preparations have been made and rules laid down. All windows are made opaque, all lights are carefully concealed. No ports to be opened at night, no smoking on deck, no doors of deck cabins, etc., to be opened without first switching off the light. The rafts were got out and stacked along the rail. We were again shown our appointed places on them.

February 13. In the evening there was another good concert by H Company, artists being mainly N.C.Os. It was worked on the usual Savage Club lines. The costume, while being effective, is also very comfortable on a warm evening.

There was a peculiar phosphorescence on the sea, particularly noticeable in the shadow of the ship, little spots of light dancing here and there in the undulations of the bow wave. While I was drawing some water in the wash

house, several of these luminous bodies came through the pipe. All ports being screwed up at nights, it is very stuffy down below.

February 14. Some who slept out on deck got wet in a squall of rain which struck the ship suddenly and continued until dinner time. As fresh water is so scarce, buckets and basins were laid out under all drips by those wanting a wash. When it rained heaviest many stood out with only a piece of soap to enjoy a shower bath. During first sitting for breakfast, a wave broke in through an open port and drenched all our mess, besides floating away plates, pannikins and the dish of "stoo." This event was loudly cheered. It is an unwritten law in the mess-room that whenever any one takes a tumble, or slides down the stairs with a dish of curry, all spectators must cheer heartily to demonstrate their sympathy with the fallen.

After meditating on this and similar occurrences, I devised a number of rules for the guidance of spectators and forwarded them to the editor of the ship's magazine.

TO MESS-ORDERLIES AND MESSERS

Sympathetic Support

In order to regulate and define the welcome to be accorded to mess-orderlies on those joyous occasions when their descent of the mess-room stairs is made with spectacular precipitancy, it has been deemed expedient to formulate rules grading the degree of enthusiasm to be expressed by the troops. Hitherto it has been the accepted custom for the combined messes to cheer loudly at any unpremeditated descent down the companionway, without regard to the nature of the accident or the extent of the devastation caused. It has therefore been decreed that:

(a) For any minor catastrophe, such as an orderly and bucket slipping on the mess-room deck: One cheer shall be given.

(b) For a complete skid from top to bottom of companionway—one man with one dish of stew or other article—including one or more somersaults: Two cheers shall be given.

(c) For complete inundation of mess-table and sitters by wave bursting through open port: Three cheers shall be given.

(d) For any of the rarer accidents or major calamities not specified above, including, by way of illustration but not of limitation, two or more mess-orderlies with impedimenta slipping on the stairs and landing in one heap on the bottom, the collapse of a full-laden table, or the disappearance of three or more sitters beneath the said table: A loud burst of continuous cheering shall be given.

By Order

PRESIDENT OF THE MESSERS' ASSOCIATION.

February 15. The ship's electrician has rigged up at the head of the door of every deck-house a device for switching off the light whenever the door is opened. Though this may have its advantages it is decidedly awkward for any one inside.

I heard to-day the story of our cargo of frozen mutton with which we have been liberally supplied of late. It was bought in the Argentine, carried to England, thence to New Zealand, dumped on the wharf at Bluff for a while, and then put back on the ship. It is about to have its third trip across the equator in two years. As this much-travelled mutton is now grey-black in colour, stew made of it has the appearance of mushrooms, but not the flavour.

February 16. This morning there was announced the long promised washing day, our second so far. About 4 p.m. there came a very sudden shower, followed by a general stampede to the clothes lines to rescue the washing. I believe some flying fish were seen about 9 a.m. Some whales were seen spouting a day or two ago and I missed them also. The sea was particularly calm towards evening, and mirrored one of the most beautiful sunsets I have been privileged to see. A large heap of cumulus clouds in the east assumed a perfect rose colour, chang-

ing as the sun went down to a pearly white with a trace of green.

February 17. In the morning there was a little sunshine. Lofty and I took advantage of it to print some photos of Albany. In the afternoon and evening I wrote letters, for the mail closes at noon on Monday.

February 18, Sunday. Received a summons to attend a meeting of the staff of the Ship's Magazine in the editor's cabin at 9 a.m. There was a discussion for half an hour as to the size and title. Twenty or thirty suggestions had been sent in, some serious such as *The Waitemata War-Cry,* or *The Waitemata Ventilator,* some comic as *Jonah's Witness, The Innocents Abroad,* or *The Steam Roller,* even *The Corkscrew Roll.* The committee decided to christen it *The Waitemata Wobbler.* A wobbler is something that wobbles, and this ship certainly does. The connection is not very convincing. However, an important section of the magazine will be the Ship's Roll.

I have been awarded the prize for the best cover design and am to get on with the final drawing. I have also been put on the staff to do some clerical work, my title being secretary, a glorified disguise for office boy and waste paper basket superintendent. The staff consists of five. The editor, 2nd Lieut. de la Mare, a lawyer, is namesake of a famous living poet. This will give tone to the publication. There are two sub-editors, one of them, Lance-Corporal Harris, having been the editor of a Christchurch daily. The art editor, F. H. Cumberworth, a machine-gun corporal, was a professional cartoonist on the staff of a prominent paper. After the preliminary meeting we retired to the operating theatre of the hospital which has been placed at our disposal unless wanted for ordinary purposes. Our lease of the premises is uncertain for we may have to quit at a moment's notice.

February 19. We are somewhere near Durban, and to

TROOPSHIP MAGAZINE COVER

our great disappointment have no chance of calling, because there are half a dozen cases of diphtheria aboard. The staff of the magazine are served afternoon tea as an aid to inspiration and are living well.

February 20. Rounding Cape Agulhas, a good stiff breeze was blowing, making this our second roughest day. The old ship assumed a most annoying roll which was a great hindrance to my draughting as several times pencils and ink slid off the table. Heaven help anybody who might have to be carved up on that operating table on a day like this. The quack would either have to have his boots nailed to the floor or else make a stab at the patient each time he skated past. We all worked at the job till 8 p.m. as there is a rush on. Everything must be completed and ready for a quick trip to the printer the moment we tie up at Cape Town.

February 21. During the night the wind dropped and now it is calmer. I worked on the magazine cover design all day, and finished at 7 p.m. when I cleared out, there being nothing more for me to do. In the evening there was a concert at which I was asked to sing one of the songs I had contributed, but as I felt the invitation must have been given out of politeness, I did not accept the honour.

CHAPTER V

IMPRESSIONS OF CAPE TOWN

February 22. It was my Middle Watch. I always seem to get it just before arriving in a port. As we are now prohibited from making use of the main men's cookhouse during the night, we had to break into the galley and toast our dry bread on the embers of a dying fire. As soon as day broke, land was visible, rough mountainous country. At 10 a.m. we could see the outline of Table Mountain. The ship kept well out from land, coming round in a vast semi-circle to Table Bay. I was on First Dog, 4 to 6 p.m. and thus on the bridge during the final operations of coming into port and mooring.

The harbour itself is not very big; there is a breakwater with space behind it for about twenty ships. When we arrived these berths were all full, and a ship had to move out to let us in. There are also ten more riding at anchor out in Table Bay, all over 6000 tons. Of six transports in the harbour, four are chock-a-block full of Australians. So many ships have never been seen before in Table Bay.

We tied up at 6.15 p.m. Crowds of ragged Kaffir coal-heavers who were waiting to get to work came alongside and indulged in frantic fights for pennies which we threw at them. A more queerly dressed lot of mortals I never saw. The Maoris on board were greatly interested in this mob and didn't think much of them. The good people of

the Cape can't understand how we can associate so freely with "the coloured New Zealanders," but if you were to sort out the toughest characters aboard this ship, you'd find their skins are white.

The suspense caused by the delay in the arrival of the Medical Officer and the lowering of the yellow quarantine flag was eased by our being granted leave ashore from 9 p.m. till 1 a.m., rather late, but time for a good evening's amusement. The first thing Lofty and I did was to sample the South African fruit. Grapes are only 2d. or 3d. a pound, sometimes 1d. if you know how to buy. Pineapples are 4 or 6 for one shilling. At certain fruit shops you can acquire for 6d. an assorted plate; a pineapple, about 3 lb. of grapes, also peaches and pears, far more than you could possibly eat. They have the cheek to tell you that if you finish the plate full, you may have a return free; a land overflowing with milk and honey.

We wandered for a while through the principal streets, and wound up at the very fine municipal buildings. Hearing the sound of good music, we made our way to the gallery of the Concert Chamber. Here the South African Orchestral Society was in full blast. We were in time for only the last item before "God save." At the back of the stage there is a large and handsome pipe organ with thirty-two feet diapason pipes. We watched the crowd file out then made a break for a café for the ham and the egg, served up by a little Dutch waitress, and very nice too. We are informed that half the people in the town are Dutch, both languages being taught in the schools and all notices printed in both. At the café Australian and British uniforms were much in evidence. There were Africans, too, with their pith helmets and blue uniforms for the wounded. We saw for the first time the uniform of an officer of the Air Service and are full of admiration for its neatness, even an air of daintiness which we agree is in

keeping with the delicacy of touch essential for flying. We met a couple of transport mechanics returned from "German East" with fever and going back soon for more. They spoke with a thick Dutch accent which was at first rather difficult to understand.

Our new found friends piloted us around the town until they were due to catch the last tram-car home at 11.30. We went for a stroll somewhere behind the Parliamentary Buildings, but ran into a picket of South African Military Police who headed us back unless we wanted to be left for dead. We had been making for the native quarters which are reckoned to be a bit too rough even for our crowd. The cops are more or less scared to go on their beats there and pack a gun in each side pocket. Terrible show for sandbags, we were told. There seemed to be a cop on duty at every corner, so we went for a walk in the opposite direction through the factory and warehouse portion of the town. Thence we arrived in a quarter which as an unhealthy locality for whites must rank second only to the part picketed off, several mean and narrow cobbled streets staggering about near two breweries. Men were everywhere sleeping and smoking in doorways and out in the street. To their great amusement, a succession of mongrelly dogs ran out at us from dark alleyways and bit at our heels. Little nigger kids, wakened by the noise, and their elder sisters, kept awake by the heat, slung off at us in pidgin English. Most disrespectful to soldiers of the King.

All the houses opened directly off the street; many of them in their old Dutch style, whitewashed, with green shutters and wiggly gables, were very quaint. Trees somewhat like the common Australian eucalyptus, but having a pink flower, are sometimes to be found growing right in the middle of a footpath or a narrow street, forming an

obstruction which the native carts with their mule teams just had to steer round.

When midnight came we had had enough of sightseeing and proceeded to stroll back to the docks. At the ship's gangway we were searched for bottles. This is evidently a well established custom. At Albany there was a gangway guard which brought to light about a dozen flasks of whisky. No less than three officers were told off to smash these against the side of the ship. They had to do it, though, according to their own confession, they were almost in tears.

February 23. The view of the town from the harbour is magnificent: rows of tall buildings along the foreshore backed by greenery leading up to the bluff height of Table Mountain, which towers three thousand feet above the town. From this angle, the mass of its precipitous side appears to be broken by great rock buttresses which cast their shadows on the face behind, presenting an ever-changing and fascinating spectacle.

The town advertised its attractions so well last night that we were all anxious to visit it again. Finally, at 10 a.m., we lined up on the wharf. We soon discovered why shore leave had been delayed until this hour. All the pubs, both town and suburban are closed by law after 10 a.m. so that soldiers can't get served. We were told we were to go on a half mile route march, but it was nearer three, and it was hot. Some kindly person at one point was handing out lumps of ice.

We marched up Adderley Street, past the Cathedral and the Parliamentary Buildings to the Botanical Gardens, along an avenue shaded by oak trees wherein squirrels chattered. Here we were dismissed with leave till 11 p.m. Most of us proceeded to inspect the Gardens with its tropical foliage and gorgeous flowers. We noticed several varieties of huge cactus plants growing twenty or thirty

feet high. A well laid out walk led to the Museum with its splendid collection of African animals including a gorilla, a fearsome looking beast I shall not soon forget. One of its features is a roomful of casts of the various native races, coloured to the life. The Art Gallery is quite out of keeping with the town. It is only a small two-story wing of the museum, about thirty feet square, housing a few good water-colours of African scenery and some assorted British works.

After visiting some of the most important buildings of the city, including the Cathedral and the University, we felt the need of some "kai," or "skoff" as they call it here. We favoured the idea of an expensive meal at a first class hotel, but on interviewing the proprietor of one such, found dinner was not on till 1 o'clock, and we couldn't wait. We finally decided to dine at the Y.M.C.A. where they turn on an excellent four course dinner for one shilling and sixpence.

It was a toss-up now whether or not we'd go out in the tram the thirteen miles to Camp Bay, a popular seaside resort. We decided to visit some relations of Lofty's at a suburb called Wynberg, which is about ten miles out of the town and round behind Table Mountain. There are suburbs for about fourteen miles in that direction. The white population of the city is about 80,000 but I don't know if that includes these suburbs. It can't, and Lord knows how many niggers there are everywhere. Trams run out there every ten minutes, trains every half hour. By train it had to be because the trams run through the forbidden native quarter where pickets would not let us pass.

The railway station is extensive, containing nine platforms and an arcade of shops. On the run to Wynberg which is a double track, the 1.35 made six or seven stops. We were astounded at the brief space of time spent at

each station. We noted that it averaged ten seconds, just long enough for a fat woman to squeeze through the doorway. In New Zealand I doubt if any train ever gets away from any station in under three minutes, and it feels longer. Sometimes, on branch lines, the driver gives himself time to go across the road for a beer or two. Of course the carriages here are different from our waiting-room-on-wheels style; there are birdcages seating eight, having the floor level with the platform.

At Wynberg we sought directions from the post office, and obtained the loan of a telegraph messenger, who showed us the way to an old fashioned white house with grapevines growing on the porch. Lofty has a cousin, originally from New Zealand, now a prominent merchant living at Benoni in the Transvaal. This was his wife's home. We had the luck of Chinamen. These two people were actually down in the Cape for a holiday, at the moment out on a picnic. We were greeted by Mr Raymond Hutten, a member of the family lately returned from German East, where he had been since the War started. An excellent host, he entertained us for an hour or so with yarns of the campaign and enlightened us on many points that the newspapers had not made clear. From his account, soldiering on that front must be far more interesting than it is likely to be in Europe. There were attacks of wild animals to be contended with at nights as well as of the Germans. A sentry on night duty dared not fire and had to go for an evil intentioned hyena or other animal with the bayonet. But there were the ravages of flies and fever, not so exciting, not forgetting attentions at times from swarms of wild bees. The natives, who knew not the value of coin of the realm, would sell a sheep for four pence, and a bullock for six shillings and eightpence. It might pay to start a freezer there.

After a native servant had brought in drinks and

cigars, we were taken for a route march along the main road, which winds continually and is shaded all the way by oaks and elms. It was most interesting to see what would come round the bend next; niggers carting wood and fruit, or carriers, wearing cone shaped yellow straw hats with a bunch of red ribbon at the peak, blowing weird music on their horns, and urging on their mule teams with verses of poetry in Dutch or Kaffir. Our guide, at one point, after a few words in Dutch with a carter, mostly threats I believe, lifted a huge water-melon off the dray, and we got to work with our jack-knives at the side of the road. After heroically accounting for half of it, we stopped a passing motor car containing an assortment of Australian colonels and privates, and presented them with the food and drink. Soon we saw in a sheltered nook a grape farm, vineyard I suppose I should call it, hundreds of acres in extent, the largest in the Cape.

Returning through other vineyards, we were passed by a native funeral, a dozen happy faced men bearing on their shoulders the coffin with its red drapings. All wore red fez caps and were looking forward to a spree in the evening. Their ideas on life and death are the reverse of ours. The entry of a human being into this sad cold world is accompanied with much wailing and expression of grief, his departure with festivity. In the face of this, it is difficult to understand why the niggers go in for such large families.

Soon after we had landed back at the house, the picnic party returned. I was introduced to Lofty's cousin and his wife, also to this lady's younger sister, a pretty girl of about my own age. We had tea, much the same as at home except for the watermelon. As conversation was carried on around us mainly in Dutch, for a little opposition Lofty and I experimented with a few selected sentences in our best High School French. We were very

soon detected and wished we hadn't. Our hostess we found can speak fluently five languages, Dutch, English, German, French and Swahili. However, her younger sister kept a conversation going in English, and as I was the first New Zealander she'd met I received a good hearing.

After tea a party was made up to go to the "Bioscope." The pictures, what I saw of them, were good, but I had seen the like before, and my partner was a Dutch maiden whose like I hadn't seen before. At 10 o'clock the spell was broken by our having to scale for the 10.16 to town. A brief visit to a café with one of the signallers from the *Ulimaroa* concluded our joyous day. A cab like a glorified biscuit box on wheels that wandered through back streets, being deficient in lights, landed us at the old ironclad home only a quarter of an hour late.

February 24. We woke up in the morning startled to find that the rumour of yesterday was true: we were to pull out at 3 o'clock. It was a horrible disappointment to me. I had felt certain of another day's leave at least, never thinking the ship could be coaled so quickly. When you are working for Bill Massey you've got to be ready to expect anything at a moment's notice.

During the night the magazines came aboard, pretty smart work for only twenty-four hours in which the *Cape Times* Company had to make blocks, set up and print. From early in the morning I had to attend to their distribution and found time only to scribble a post-card for the mail which closed at 8.30.

After closing down the Publishing Department for a while I went on gangway guard to relieve Lofty who then obtained permission to go ashore and join his relations. After a while, being unexpectedly relieved, I hastily togged up and went to join the troops lined up on the wharf

without having had time for a wash or a shave. All this under a blazing hot sun.

At 10 o'clock we moved off on a route march over exactly the same country as yesterday except that on the way back from the Gardens we pulled up in the native market-place in front of the Municipal Buildings. Here the Maoris lined up and gave vent to a couple of hakas to the huge delight of the spectators. Passing the post office, we saw a long line of native flower-sellers exhibiting their posies in a gorgeous kerbside show. The flowers, except for one variety like Scotch heather, were of the most brilliant hues, and the crude combination of colours, nigger fashion, rather hit you in the eye. All along one side of Adderley Street are veranda cafés which were bedecked with girls. Our boys, who had been buying fruit from the nigger kids, amused themselves by throwing grapes with wonderful precision through any window up to the third story wherein a female head might appear. The compliment was sometimes returned in kind with pears and oranges. All the way down to the docks we were besieged by kids selling grapes and watermelons which were eagerly bought. Some of us bringing up the rear looked like a baggage guard, staggering along with huge melons on our shoulders.

We could not manage to break away from the ranks on that route march. Lofty found his relations at the spot where they had arranged to meet us with a car at 10 o'clock, and the party went on a shopping expedition. Lofty seemed to be haunted by our procession through the main streets. Every time he caught sight of us he had to duck into a shop for fear of being arrested on sight. They all came down to the ship afterwards and I talked to them for a while. They could not have been kinder to us, giving us presents of provisions, cocoa and tinned stuff. Later on Lofty handed me half a sovereign which

his cousin had given him for me. All I can do is write them from England to express my sincere thanks.

In the morning we shipped about forty naval men and a gun. Promptly at 3 p.m. we pulled out into the bay where it was a bit cooler. We stopped there only a few minutes, then headed for the open sea. During this period we were interested spectators of a mirage on the beaches where phantom trees and houses could be seen in the spray of the surf.

Our visit to the Cape, our one day's break in the monotony of the journey of eight weeks from Albany to England, though so brief, was exceedingly enjoyable, and made us all feel we should like to renew our acquaintance with South Africa. Full of ever-changing scenes, it was rather like an afternoon at the pictures. The cost of living seems to be less than in New Zealand, but conditions of labour do not approach our standard. There is too large a gulf between the status of employer and employee, too great a difference in the payroll. In most trades there are no unions and no defined scheme of wages. The ordinary employee stands very little chance of promotion. Evidently no place for an ardent office boy: he will never rise in the commercial world unless he gets the liftman's job.

CHAPTER VI

IN CONVOY

February 25, Sunday. We are now in convoy in company with five other ships and a cruiser which goes ahead of us. We proceed in two lines of three, this ship heading the starboard line, with the *Ulimaroa* close behind. Sometimes she comes alongside, and then we have some semaphore. There are plenty of signals to be attended to in all watches, but two navy men and our sergeant on the bridge take all responsibility.

A locust has come aboard with the onions and chirps energetically above our heads all night long. It evidently enjoys immunity from the effects of onion gas.

February 26. Our O.C. handed me a letter this morning containing the prize money for the magazine cover competition. I found this to be a guinea, much more than I had expected, which was a couple of canteen tickets. Apparently my fame as an artist has spread abroad, and as is usual with famous men, there are plenty of people wanting favours. Early in the afternoon I was sent for by the Adjutant, who passed me on to the Chief Officer, who set me to work lettering submarine signals in red and green on the glass faces of one of the docking telegraphs which corresponds with another one at the gun, aft. By means of the simultaneous operation of both telegraphs, and the directions thereon, the approximate bearing of any submarine spotted from the bridge can be instantly trans-

mitted to the gun crew, who it is to be hoped will make good use of the information.

At mess to-day we made the pleasurable discovery that some new jam had been brought aboard at Cape Town. It has a distinctly "Officers Only" flavour, and we feel that some dreadful mistake has been made by the Quartermaster's Department. Perhaps they don't grow turnips at the Cape. The jam is labelled and is "Cape Gooseberry" and "Strawberry."

February 27. On the job all day, clanking the bell of that telegraph. My home-made rope brushes are not stiff enough for fine work, and I was very fortunate in being presented by Corporal Cumberworth, the professional cartoonist, with a camel-hair artist's brush, apparently the only one aboard ship.

The *Ulimaroa* once came so close that we could get an answer to a shout. Some of the officers here are carrying on a chess match with a team on the *Ulimaroa*, a couple of our signallers being engaged to announce moves by semaphore. It is a very restful occupation, for there are long pauses.

There are a couple of green parakeets in our dormitory, belonging to one of the naval ratings, but they do not create much disturbance, and have not had time to acquire any verbal immoralities.

February 28. Crossed Tropic of Capricorn. When I think of all I have written about my day in Cape Town, and then of a day here on which nothing worth chronicling happens, I feel that I have lived a week in one crowded, glorious day, and that a day which has been entirely uneventful is a day of one's life wasted.

March 1. After dinner, a little land bird like a skylark perched for a while near the gun. At 4 p.m. after a warning had been signalled to the flotilla that we were not potting submarines, our gun crew had some practice,

five rounds at varying ranges. So beautiful was the moonlight in the evening that every one stayed on deck till "Last Post" was sounded.

March 2. One of the hottest days I ever put in. Whew! There was not a breath of wind. Smoke rose straight up, and the sun was beating straight down. The midday temperature was only 86 deg., but it rose soon after. During the night it was 74 deg. Most of the day I was up on the bridge signwriting, because this is the coolest part of the ship. All available awnings are spread.

Twilight came with a most beautiful sunset; overspreading the western sky was a mass of sepia clouds slashed with bars of yellow, orange and red, which threw into relief the black hulls of the four ships in the other line. Eastwards the sky assumed at one period a pure green tint, such as is to be seen in New Zealand down towards the horizon in winter time.

March 3. A bit cooler than yesterday. In the morning there was a fairly heavy shower of rain, so I went on deck with my lump of soap and enjoyed a good wash. As the ship cut into the placid surface of the sea, crowds of flying fishes were disturbed and flew away. Sunset was the loveliest I ever saw, similar to that of yesterday, but intensified. The western clouds were stormy and black, and the colours that peeped through the chinks in the curtain were orange, warm red, and vermilion, contrasted with light green. As if this gorgeous spectacle was not enough to hold us spellbound, there were electrical effects as a finishing touch, vivid flashes of lightning or wildfire occurring at several points of the compass every few seconds.

March 4, Sunday. At church parade things were rather warm. An impending tropical downpour politely held off till the minute the service was ended, then let itself loose upon us. I had another wash. Nearly all the Maoris turned out this time (there are about sixty all told), and,

clad in soap suds and ferocious looks, gave a real old-time haka on the top deck. It was a fearsome spectacle.

Ringa pakia pakia pakia!
Ringa pakia i torona kei waho mau tonu!
Tau ka tau
Hei!

And so crescendo fortissimo to the grand climax where the performers, all out, leap rhythmically three or four feet in the air, eyes goggling and tongues curled well under the chin. Enough to scare the weevils out of the flour barrel.

Preparations are being made for the advent of Father Neptune. I have landed the job of writing out his Royal Proclamation which is afterwards to be auctioned amongst the officers for a memento. Information regarding any crimes which may have been committed by important personages is being eagerly sought by the authorities.

March 5. All day I worked steadily on the Proclamation. It is a long screed done in red and black lettering on four sheets of foolscap, pasted on a canvas backing. At each end is a wooden roller which I finished with some aluminium paint and tricked out with red ribbon. Also ornamented the wooden scimitar of the Chief of Police and splattered some ber-ludd over it where directed.

At the evening meal dates and fancy biscuits were turned on for the specialists only, a reward for having won the mess-orderly competition for the cleanest mess. Quite a red-letter day.

March 6. This most eventful day, when His Royal Highness Father Neptune deigned to set foot on this our floating home "which has travelled a long way in a long time." His arrival was heralded by something of a tempest. We experienced the genuine tropical torrential downpour just after breakfast. There was a cloud-burst or waterspout on the horizon to the east, a huge column of

water that hung like a stalactite from the clouds and was gradually drawn up into them.

Promptly at 1.30 p.m. Father Neptune and His Court put in an appearance for'ard of the bridge. After due homage had been paid to him by the captain, the Royal Throne was mounted and proceedings commenced. Starting with the adjutant, all the military officers and many N.C.Os and privates, to the number of fifty in all, were examined by the doctor on a sort of sacrificial altar before the throne, were ministered unto and sentenced to complete immersion from the cucking stool. Two members of the medical profession were found to be in need of a very gory operation for the removal of the appendix (half a yard of tripe, duly severed and exhibited). The large canvas tank, when not filled up with the struggling subjects of Neptune, was occupied by four burly bears who carried out their duty of ducking all victims with the required lack of mercy. The ceremony of crossing the line gave us all a couple of hours of the liveliest fun, and for more than one reason I hope to see at least one other.

March 7. Many are sleeping out on deck. A great joke was played on one enterprising chap who had suspended a home-made hammock from a beam above the lower deck. It was made of canvas, and its trough-like appearance prompted someone to fill it with water from a nearby hose while the owner was down below. As the whole affair had been covered with a blanket to ward off smuts, the water was perfectly concealed. Along came the owner, who, in clambering aboard, unavoidably tipped the contents, about eight gallons, over the recumbent forms of three Maoris sleeping on the deck below. Things looked black for him for a while, but eventually he persuaded the infuriated trio that (1) he was not having a joke on them, (2) he was not likely to fill his bed with water before getting into it, (3) the tipping out of the water was

accidental. Supposing things had got a bit too hot for one man against three, I wonder if the Artillery joker who handled the hose would have been man enough to step out from his place of concealment and say, "He is innocent. I done it. Strike me!"

March 8. Saw a very big school of porpoises in the morning; a heavy shower in the evening cut short a Maori boxing contest. Some of the boys who were on deck report that about midnight there was a slight commotion amongst the flotilla which scattered in all directions, reforming line soon afterwards. During the previous night, some excitement was caused through the *Ancona* having accidentally dropped overboard a self-lighting lifebuoy. One ship actually signalled: "Is it a submarine afire?"

CHAPTER VII

HARBOUR OF REFUGE

March 9. About 9 a.m., while painting on the bridge, I sighted some native fishing smacks, and soon afterwards, land. We entered the estuary of Sierra Leone river about 2 p.m., passed through a boom stretched across the entrance, and an hour later dropped the pick opposite the town of Freetown.

We are about a mile offshore, all ships in single file. There are three warships in harbour, the *Swiftsure*, *Cambrian King*, and *King Alfred*, also a monitor and a dozen tramps. From this distance we cannot see much of the town, which is on the slopes of a densely wooded hill, or range of hills, 200 or 300 feet high. The best residential portion is on top of the hill, and the native compound on the flat. There are some immense trees at various points. Through the glasses we make out a couple of churches amongst a jumble of warehouses. There are no signs of any streets, which must be very narrow and mainly running round the side of the hill.

Some niggers paddled out in canoes and sold bananas, oranges and coconuts at prices no cheaper than in New Zealand: bananas one penny each, nuts threepence. I tasted a mango for the first time. The stone seemed to be disproportionately large, and the yellow flesh had a flavour of turpentine.

March 10. Still lying off the old town. No shore leave

can be granted, but boats are visiting between ships. Most fellows find occupation sitting on the rail and staring at the town in the hope that something of interest may happen, but it never does. A brief interlude was provided by the determination of one nice plump Maori boy to enjoy a swim. Clad in a pair of shorts he dived off the ship's side and made a perfect header, as though he had been at the game before. But evidently he didn't know about the sharks. Almost before his head appeared above water he was assailed by a veritable storm of orders from Captains down to Lance-jacks to "Come out of it you stupid cow," and similar instructions. The Maori is a born actor. This one just couldn't come out without doing one or two duck dives and porpoise rolls even at peril of his life. Eventually Henare condescended to be hauled off-stage on a rope let down by his mate, and the grin on his face no doubt came off "on the mat" later.

It must have been market day. Fifty or sixty native dhows coming from the flat country to the north, crossed the bay in the morning and returned towards evening. The crews paddled to a rhythmical accompaniment of their own weird songs.

March 11, Sunday. Early in the morning several nigger canoes brought up alongside, and their owners optimistically opened up for business by offering bananas at six for one shilling. A liberal application of water from the hose brought the price down by half and more. They had ugly coloured grass basketware for sale, also baby rattles, and bead necklaces for women. Anyway there are no babies aboard this troopship, though there are a couple of staff nurses.

Some of the canoes were marvellously named: "God Day," "Orfhan," and "God His The Best." They seem to favour the Cockney spelling in these parts.

Church parade was held forward at 10 a.m. as usual.

About 2.30 p.m. we were entertained with the strains of the military band from the *Anchises*, which the *Ulimaroa*, lying alongside us, had borrowed for the afternoon. But a little after 3 p.m. amusement was provided closer at hand by a concert party of four ladies and one man who sang to the assembled multitude from a vantage point on the deck below the bridge. They were members of an English theatrical company returning on the *Walmer Castle* after a South African tour. The Chief was responsible for their introduction. After a brief church service at 6.30, they sang again for two hours, treating us to some new ragtime and English vaud. turns. A popular novelty was the song:

Back Home in Tennessee,
Just try to picture me,
Right on my mother's knee,
She thinks the world of me etc.

This was rehearsed several times until every man on the ship knew the words by heart right through to "Hezekiah and Maria." The massed choir effect was magnificent, and was audibly appreciated by the other ships. Another favourite was:

Never take a lady out to dine
When all you've got is four and nine.

This was explained by the male comedian. Many bright interjections and much applause from down below kept things very lively. This is one of the best days we've had aboard this old sea-wagon.

March 12. Shortly after we had partaken of breakfast, a visiting nigger was observed to have pulled up his dugout right underneath the refuse chute. Not wishing to smother him with slops, the kind-hearted mess-orderlies shifted him along a few yards so that the scraps could be tipped. When he discovered that what they threw out

was nearly all lumps of bread and meat he nearly wept, and said: "Why you no tell me?" However, his luck was not entirely out. There was still a bucket of scraps and tea to come. Having carefully manoeuvred the recipient of charity into the exact position below the chute, a mess-orderly fired the shot. But that nigger was too fly for our gunlayer. With one firm sweep of his paddle, while the descending manna was yet in mid air, he urged the canoe ahead a yard or so and landed the goods safely in the stern, instead of on his person as had been intended. His skill having earned him a hearty cheer from the gallery, he departed in his floating pig trough all wreathed in smiles.

At 9 a.m. we pulled out of the shark-infested harbour, fourth ship in our flotilla of seven, passed through the boom and formed into line outside. We are now walloping along at nine or ten knots in the original formation. We passed an island with a lighthouse and many coconut trees, then further on a fairly large steamer high and dry on a reef.

In the afternoon we ran into whole schools of sharks, porpoises and stingarees. Never five minutes passed but we saw fins on the calm and oily surface of the sea. Certain sharpshooters and some officers got hold of rifles and let the fish have it. Some of the snipers, particularly one Maori, were surprisingly accurate, taking into consideration the constant variation of range. I'm glad they're on our side.

CHAPTER VIII

LAST LAP

March 13. On watch again, commencing last night with Second Dog. A submarine guard is now posted and works in shifts corresponding to ours. A dozen men are spaced out on each side of the ship. What they are required for at night I can't imagine.

March 14. In the evenings we usually play "five hundred." After "lights out" some artist started up a menagerie, and the number of boys who could render a presentable imitation of the call, cry, howl, or yell of some domestic animal was surprising. There were of course all the usual barnyard songsters, but there were redeeming variations. Two fluffy little chickens across the gangway, peep-peeping in answer to each other were most convincing. So also was an old ewe with a hacking, graveyard cough, and a mournful sickly baa. Lost lambs by the galores. The star turn was a life-like impersonation of a dog in distress, a tone poem in dog language.

March 15. In the afternoon there was a parade of all boys from Otago and Southland to receive parcels from the Women's Patriotic Association of those Provinces. They contain many useful articles such as two pairs sox, balaclava, housewife, handkerchiefs, etc., perhaps a tin of tobacco. We are all very grateful to our womenfolk working at home. As someone wrote of them in the Ship's Magazine, "for us the excitement and the adventure; for them the lonely vigil and the agony of suspense."

March 16. The weather is now becoming colder; all day a stiff head wind was blowing. The convoy was keeping well out in mid-Atlantic, far from the usual haunts of submarines. Someone has brought to light a cheap atlas which contains a map of the North Atlantic. We amuse ourselves by plotting the ship's course, position being noted by the signaller who happens to be on the bridge when the daily time and latitude readings are checked over with the other ships. Our exact whereabouts on the face of the globe is of course a deadly secret known only to the navigating officers.

Several of the English naval men took part in the concert by J Company. Delightful to hear the gen-u-wine Cockney haccent from East 'Am, and the sentimental coster love songs as you can't buy in the music shops—not 'arf bad.

March 18, Sunday. On watch in afternoon and Middle Watch at night. About half the ship's company is down with dysentery, caused by either the drinking water or the sudden change of temperature. Hundreds parade at the dispensary and get a dose of chlorodyne. Crook all day and had a rough time on the midnight to 4 a.m. watch. However this finishes my watch-keeping for the voyage, as we have only a week or so to go.

March 19. In the morning did a bit of signwriting on ammunition boxes at the gun and spent all afternoon sitting in the sun printing photos. Did great business in exchanging negatives with a couple of officers, but am running short of paper.

March 20. Crook with dysentery all day and can't find anything cheerful to write about. To cap it all some misguided clown let a "fireship" go sailing down the port "wireless station." This crude attempt at humour should be barred on days like this when we are not there just for pleasure.

In each shed there is a long metal trough through which a stream of seawater is constantly pumped. A crumpled up newspaper is set on fire outside the shed and floated down-stream fast enough to singe the first four in the row, before the alarm can be given. There is a wild scatter, howls and curses mingling with the laughter of the onlookers.

March 21. Feeling somewhat better in the afternoon. I wrote a few letters for the mail which closes to-morrow at noon. There was an issue to-day of a field dressing and a bottle of iodine. England must be a rough place like Cape Town.

March 22. Was once again appointed for duty as a mess-orderly. The day was the coldest we've had yet—real winter weather. Some of the boys predict snow in England. We have not many more days in which to get torpedoed, and the water is too cold for the prospect of that to be any pleasure.

March 23. In the evening our company concert came off and was a huge success. The nigger quartette from the Signal Section made a great hit. One comedian increased the extent of his natural grimaces by means of a set of the prominent false teeth sometimes worn by vaudeville artists. Some bunting decorations and coloured lights added a great deal to the stage effect.

March 24. Though the sun shone brightly, the day was bitterly cold. In the morning we saw eight or nine ships in convoy pass to the eastward. I spent some hours writing out, in my best copperplate, formal invitations to the concert to be held in the evening. The concert was the last of the series, and the performers were the pick of those who had already made an appearance. They had been selected for various reasons. For instance, the man who gained fame by his rendering of "The Song That Reached My Heart," now murdered "Sing Me To Sleep,"

and knocked out most of the audience. This artist gains more applause than any other on the ship.

For a while this morning the ship slackened speed to a crawl. Fires were drawn and refuelled with the famous Westport coal, a quantity of which has been retained in the bunkers for emergencies. It is hoped, by means of this fiercely burning coal, to coax an extra knot or two per day out of this old barge, and make her put on a last spurt as she comes up to the winning post.

March 25, Sunday. About 7 a.m., less than three hundred yards to starboard, we saw a "tall ship" pass, a full-rigged sailing ship with every yard of her canvas crowded on and bellied taut in the stiff breeze. Black ropes and rigging formed an intricate network over white sails. She was a most beautiful thing, clean-lined, swift, and graceful. Having seen this vision I can claim a faint understanding of the love the old-time shellback had for his ship, how she was to him a living thing, a goddess to whose service he was willing, if need be, to sacrifice his all.

But the event of the day was the arrival of the spirited destroyer flotilla which has come to protect us. In mid-morning they came all of a heap—seven of them, one to each dull lethargic leviathan of the convoy—racing neck and neck at a speed of 25 to 30 knots. They streaked away to the rear of the last ship of the line, in a body like racehorses galloping up the straight, then turned, and separating, proceeded each to its allotted station. Our particular guardian, Destroyer No. 86, the *Attack*, ran rings round us for nearly two hours. We signallers were much interested in the professional style of the signaller on the destroyer. He took a firm grip on the bridge with feet well spread and plied his semaphore flags, apparently oblivious of the fact that the little ship was con-

tinually bucking in every direction, washing her face and throwing her heels in the air.

March 26. We are now believed to be in the worst part of the Bay of Biscay, and are wallowing about in a dreadfully rough sea. The destroyer, which is still doing zig-zags ahead of us, is sometimes almost completely hidden from view in the troughs of the waves.

I spent several hours signwriting names on the cabin trunks of the two nurses and an officer. The stump of my one and only brush is now badly in need of some hair-restorer. We have been given orders to be ready to disembark in the morning, so packed my kit before crawling into bed. In the early part of the evening we saw the light of Cape Ushant.

March 27. Went on deck at 7 a.m. to see Eddystone Lighthouse which we were just passing, then, being a mess-orderly, went below for the tea. We were just in sight of land, and by the time I had finished my work we were inside Plymouth Sound. The country round about isn't particularly interesting, low hills, neat little fields bounded by hedges. There seem to be forts everywhere. A biplane flew over our heads first at 10 a.m., and then again at 4 p.m. We saw two submarines on their way to dock. A partly submerged cargo steamer in the offing has evidently been torpedoed quite recently.

We received orders to get dressed in our pretties and have our kits on deck by 10 a.m., but nothing eventuated. Had our last hot meal at 11 a.m. The 20th Reinforcements were being taken off the *Walmer Castle* and some of our crowd off the *Ulimaroa*. At 2 p.m. we were definitely informed that our disembarkation was postponed till 8.30 a.m. next day, so we lugged our swags down below again. We are not sorry as it would have meant a night journey by train to camp and we now hope to see the country by daylight.

CHAPTER IX

SLING CAMP

March 28. By 8.30 a.m. we had our kits up on deck and were ready to vacate our floating home of the past nine weeks. Three-quarters of an hour later a naval lighter took ashore every one except a few men left behind as a fatigue party. As we moved away from the ship and were able for the first time to gain a clear perspective, we were surprised at the ugliness of the old tub, a grim and unromantic form in grey and black, relieved only by the orange of rust streaks. None of us had great pangs on leaving her.

We passed behind Drake's Island to Devonport and were soon comfortably seated in the third class compartments of the L. and S.W. Railway. Girls on the platform were peddling amongst other sundries, wares of two brands whose fame had spread to New Zealand, though we had not seen them, the newspaper *John Bull*, and Woodbines, in paper packets of five for a penny, cigarettes which from their size appear to have died very young. Every man in our compartment bought a packet or two out of curiosity, and soon the air was full of tobacco smoke, though you could not expect the smoke to be very thick at the price.

Not far from Devonport we saw the great high bridge over the River Tamar and then the train plunged into undulating country with scattered farmhouses and innum-

erable clumps of leafless trees. It being winter-time, the scene was cold and comfortless but still beautiful. The cottages and barns with their thatched roofs are most picturesque. I hadn't expected to see quite so many. In Devonshire we saw a couple of particularly fine old mansions and some ancient ruins. The train would go through a cutting and burst into a little valley with its hamlet nestling by the river side. No valley seemed to lack a village. At Exeter we stopped for a while and had a feed—some tea and buns supplied from the Mayoress's Fund. All the pedlars on this station were girls in uniform and I noticed that even the stokers on the engines were young fellows of about eighteen. All the older men are over yonder. At Salisbury I caught a glimpse of the spire of the Cathedral, familiar to me from photographs.

We crossed a canal or two then turned off at right angles to Bulford on a branch line that follows a Roman road. About 6 p.m. we disentrained and gathered up our cumbersome swags which we had to carry as best we could for fully two miles to our own lines in No. 1 Camp, Sling. The strains of a band cheered us up a good deal. However we reached our huts with the loss of only one man by the wayside.

March 29. Arose at 6.30 to take our bearings—didn't like turning out. Had a short parade in both morning and afternoon, and the rest of the time had to hang around awaiting orders. The meals here are very good, but there's hardly enough to go round.

This camp is very big, stretching in sections for miles over the Salisbury Plains, which aren't really plains, but undulating "downs," grass covered in summer-time. There is an aerodrome not many miles away which sends over, mornings and evenings, twelve or fourteen biplanes, flying around in all directions and at all heights. One pilot, reputed to be a New Zealander, has an annoying habit of

rousing the camp early in the morning by flying low, just skimming over the ridges of the huts. I hope his machine will long continue to do just what he wants it to, and nothing else.* We are told that crashes are frequent, and two wagons are kept touring the countryside to pick up the pieces.

March 30. First thing in the morning we had to repack our kits and shift up to Hut 19 which will be our permanent quarters. Later on we had a dental inspection of a rough nature and an issue of clothing to replace losses. I scored a good cardigan which I did not apply for. We had our hair cut short, and then it was dinner time. The afternoon was occupied mainly by a medical inspection. In the evening mail from home was delivered, very welcome, as we have had none for ten weeks.

March 31. Having been issued with web equipment, we went on parade at 7.45 a.m., wearing this gear and our overcoats. Musketry instruction was received in a shed, as it was snowing at times. At about 11.15 every morning we go through a piece of agony known as "Piccadilly." All the New Zealanders in camp, three to four thousand strong, march along a certain section of road in column of fours. On either side are about sixteen Sergeant Instructors, beautiful fellows, their superb figures almost bursting through their London tailor-made tunics. Their duty and pleasure it is to blast us up in a loud voice for any little irregularity of deportment they may notice or think they notice. All the while, at the corner by the Y.M.C.A., the band is playing "Colonel Bogey," "Sons of the Brave," "Invercargill," or any other well-known march tune it has been endeavouring to learn. The Camp Commandant and half a dozen of the sherangs dressed in their best, stand stiffly in a row, to take the salute. There

* *Mac's Memoirs* records that the late Squadron-Leader McGregor was stationed at Upavon Aerodrome at this time, practising stalls and diving.

is one English Staff Officer in that waxworks show who greatly amuses us. He wears absolutely the most fed-up and blasé expression I have seen outside the pages of *Punch*. I am sure he tries to look aristocratic in contrast to these scummy Colonial cow-spankers and bush-whackers and makes the mistake of overdoing it.

In the afternoon, musketry again. We are to go through a complete course of infantry training of three weeks' duration before starting our specialized signalling course. Crawled home to the hut about 4.40, tired and thankful that the day was ended. Tea is at 5.30. Meanwhile there is time to get a wash, our first for the day. This life is very strenuous. From 6.30 a.m. till 4.40 p.m. I did not have an opportunity to sit down for a rest except during two brief smokos. There is a scramble to get out of bed and to breakfast which occupies from 7.5 to 7.25. Then we fix up our rifles and equipment for parade at 7.40. Dinner is ready at 12 but we have usually been kept late, have to bolt it down by 12.30, return to hut with eating tools, and be on parade at 12.40. Not a moment to spare.

In the evening, having heard of the presence of some friends from the old home town, I sought out Frazer Barton who is training some of D Company, 21st Reinforcement. Found Harry Butcher in the same hut and Jack Bathgate was produced from across the road. Frazer conducted Jack and me on a route march through Bulford, thence over the River Avon to Darrington, a picturesque old village. Darrington has some thatched cottages and a quaint inn which was crowded with Aussies. Just off the main street there is a gipsy circus and fair. We stopped at a little refreshment shop and loaded up on slices of mince pie with brandy in it, at three half-pence a time, and cups of cocoa. Very nice, and will call again. We returned through Tommy Town with its rows of bar-

racks and huts, two theatres, and hundreds of parked motor transports.

April 1, Sunday. All Fools' Day. This is rubbing it in because we had to work to-day just the same as on any other day. During the night there was a heavy fall of snow, which thawed about 8 a.m., making the parade ground of black loam into a sea of dirty slush. We had musketry instruction all day and no Piccadilly. There is rest on the Sabbath from this; I suppose the Heads can't be bothered turning out or, what is more likely, are up in London on leave. In the afternoon we had some shooting at a miniature rifle-range.

April 2. Again it snowed during the night which to me felt miserably cold in spite of five blankets. The fall, which was three inches deep, did not melt till afternoon, so it was somewhat chilly standing at attention for lengthy periods.

More musketry in the shed followed by the 'dilly. Shooting at the butts in the afternoon for grouping at fifty yards. I scored my possible. Later on we were sent out to mark targets, which was an interesting change.

In this weather I am wearing a thick singlet, jersey, cardigan, heavy tunic, and greatcoat, and still I sometimes feel cold. Our hut is fortunately right next to the canteen which has a panelled reading room with about three hundred books, armchairs, a piano and a stove. All the huts have stoves. My shakedown is luckily right alongside our stove. Last night we had no fire as coal is unprocurable on Sundays. The wash-houses are convenient and the water is very soft. There are drying rooms for clothes and a bath-house with hot water on tap all evening. We have no complaints to make with regard to our lodgings.

April 3. Woke up in the morning to find about six inches of snow, which lay all day and greatly impeded

our progress. We spent the morning doing musketry in a shed, and in the afternoon started our shooting at the butts. It was very cold waiting about for our turn to shoot.

April 4. Shooting all day. The rifle issued to me was a crook one that fired high and left, but I allowed for this and did fairly well except in the "rapids" when the blasted thing jammed. Give me a good rifle! But away went my chance of the Marksman's Badge I was chasing.

April 5. Still shooting at two hundred, three hundred and four hundred yards. Very sloppy as all that snow has now melted. Somehow I didn't get interested in this shooting; it was too monotonous hanging round and stamping our feet to keep warm between shots, with no place to sit down. A distinct contrast to the days way back at Papawai Butts when we used to go to sleep in the sun beside the mound while some other squad was banging off good ammunition.

We are hardly acclimatized as yet after our trip through the tropics, but I think there is another reason why we feel the cold so much, shortage of nourishment. We signallers are at present attached for rations and discipline to the Pioneers (Maoris) and have a Maori O.C. The grub is very good nowadays, but these hefty fifteen-stone boys are fast workers, and a dixie-full of anything deposited on the table disappears like lightning. Not a crumb is left. Having to snatch and grab for every crust as we do, our table manners are becoming deplorable. I have become a firm believer in racial separation.

Though we lose out in the battle for sustenance, we are hugely entertained. Some of these boys are regular circuses and keep us laughing at the way they chew up the English language. When a Maori sergeant drills his mob he generally gives his orders in anything up to half

a dozen different voices, each being a clever mimicry of one of the well-known staff drill instructors.

April 6. Had to make up our equipment for full marching order first thing in the morning, so were rather busy. Shooting all day, barrage fire, covering fire, snapshooting, etc. For the snapshooting there are red clay tiles as disappearing targets, and in spite of the evident desire of the markers in the trench to conserve the supply, for they gave us only a fleeting glimpse of them, a very appreciable number were knocked to chips. We also had shooting practice, wearing clammy flannel gas helmets which partly obscure one's vision and are not at all comfortable to wear. They should have reserved their tiles for this event if they were afraid of running short.

April 7. In the afternoon we had our first introduction to the famous "Bull Ring" which didn't hurt us much. We received instruction in the use of the Lewis machine-gun, had some squad drill, and a little bayonet fighting which warmed us up considerably.

April 8, Sunday. I believe this to be one of the greatest days of my life, because I saw in reality dozens of things I had longed to see from earliest childhood, quaint villages with crooked streets, thatched cottages, old stone manor houses, rooks cawing in elm-trees, rural scenes of Old England.

After church parade, Lofty and I joined Frazer and Jack and set out to walk to Amesbury, a small town about five miles away. It was a glorious day, with a feeling of spring in the air. Once we were out of sight of the camp, and old houses and gardens began to appear by the roadside, I could have wished nothing better.

Amesbury is a small town, just over the village size, I should say, with all the usual appurtenances thereof, the grocery store, the draper's, the chemist's, the doctor's house —a sixteenth century place right on the street with the

night bell at the door, and three inns, not pubs or boozers, but genuine inns. The largest of these, the "George," is in part pure Elizabethan and has in the centre a very quaint three-storied gable, from the ridge of which no less than five old brick chimneys nod at tipsy angles. We had dinner at the "New Inn," which simply had to have a wrought iron sign over the door and a low-roofed back parlour. The dinner of roast beef and pie, which cost us half a crown each, was worth the price, for it was enough for four, even though consisting of only two courses. However, with the cold weather and the training we have had, I could put away enough for six without any difficulty.

We crossed the bridge over the Avon on the Durrington Road, and then set out for Stonehenge, two and a half miles past Amesbury. We caught a glimpse through trees of a great Classic house of four stories, reputed to have been designed by Inigo Jones; then ascended a small hill past some pretty thatched cottages, much photographed I believe. Now comes a fold in the hills wherein lies a pleasing group of houses and great barns. At the top of this hill are clusters of gaunt elms, sheep shelters, and a huge oak growing out of one of the numerous tumuli. Set in poorly grassed downlands lies Stonehenge, record of the religious zeal and skill of a prehistoric race. We pay threepence at a toll gate and enter the enclosure, which is crowded with Aussies whose huge camp is in sight from here. The nature of the ancient rites in accordance with which this great pile of stones was laboriously erected is, I understand, mostly conjecture. I have a greater respect for the intelligence of these men of 1600 B.C. since observing their handiwork. It is evident that they were no fools where masonry is concerned. They knew how to cut out mortice and tenon and lift great weights with few inventions. If their civilization grew

apace with their religious observances, it could not have been of the very low order the school history books would have us believe. It does not seem logical that the Early Britons, who possessed the knowledge of geometry necessary to set out this work would stroll down to the job of a morning attired merely in sheepskins and woad.

This monument is of the simplest style that could be constructed, and therefore will endure longest. The builders made only one mistake: they did not sink their monoliths deep enough to allow for the wearing away of the earth around them. Two-thirds of the whole has collapsed, the remainder being propped up with tree-trunks.

Returning to Amesbury we attended a brief service at a church which advertised a sixpenny tea to follow. On proceeding to the hall where this bun rush was to be held, we found the place so crowded out with soldiers who had not been game to attend the church service, that we left disgusted and made back to camp, concluding a perfect day with tea at the Salvation Army canteen.

April 9, Easter Monday. A bitter day with a cold wind blowing, and the Bull Ring, but still we smile. Instruction in bombing, bayonet fighting, gas, company drill, and wiring, five subjects every day. We spent the first hour in throwing dummy bombs over a high wire and trying to keep warm. The "gas" consists of how to put your sticky "P.H." cloth helmet on in time. We had an instructor who delighted in telling harrowing tales. A shrewd student of human nature in our ranks who has apparently a distaste for exercise or perhaps just a love of fresh air noted that the instructor flashed on his sleeve no less than three gold wound-stripes. With no trouble at all he induced the sergeant to tell the story of how each was won. This thoughtful act enabled us to keep our heads out of the bags for at least fifteen minutes.

The bayonet stunt makes you keep your wits about you.

Your sparring partner lunges at you with a stick having a pad on the end like a small mop. If you do not parry his thrust with your bayonet, you get one in the eye or have your Adam's apple pushed through to the back. So far I have not observed any one fail to parry the vicious thrust. Talk about the ancient knights in the jousts!

Got back to the hut very tired, intending to have a bath and crawl into bed, but instead had to attend a lecture on "standing orders." It is a great pleasure, though, to have a warm bath at 8.45 and a mess tin of soup at 9, two remarkably good things, more remarkable still, provided by the army free and as a matter of course.

April 10. Just about the same as yesterday, except that the morning was exceptionally miserable—a cold, penetrating 40 m.p.h. wind and no shelter. The taps were frozen and there were big icicles in the wash-houses. On Monday morning the clocks everywhere went forward one hour, so that when we awoke thinking it was 6 a.m., we found it was 7 a.m., and had two minutes in which to get dressed and scale for breakfast.

April 11. Bulling around the ring as usual. The bayonet fighting provides plenty of excitement. The morning smoko, supposed to be of ten minutes' duration, was a ludicrous farce—got out a cigarette but found it wouldn't be worth while lighting up. In the evening another lecture. The lecturer was a very poor speaker, but probably a good soldier.

April 12. Half an inch of snow on the ground. At reveille an optimist remarked that apart from the snowstorm and a few other things there was nothing wrong with the day. The bayonet stunt has now resolved itself into charging at a number of stuffed sacks in various positions, jumping trenches at full gallop, hurdling over sandbag parapets on to the prospective corpse, all the

while taking care to avoid sticking your skewer into the ground and doing a somersault over it.

April 13. A really fine day, the warmest yet. Same old bull ring, pretty strenuous. Gas drill in box respirators, a decided improvement on the flannel variety. After the evening lecture I went for a stroll to Miss Perks's Soldiers' Home in Tommy Town and sampled the pies. Pork pies are two-pence halfpenny, and jam tarts eightpence. Very filling. A contract for more than one of each would become an endurance contest. Come all ye who hunger and be heavy laden!

April 14. April showers all day. There is no half holiday here on Saturday. What could be better after a very strenuous day than the bath, the bed, the *bouillon* and the book?

April 15, Sunday. Again we were lucky in having very fine weather on Sunday. After church parade, six of us went for a tramp over the downs and through many pretty villages. We first had a meal at the Y.M.C.A., then walked over the hill to the quaint little hamlet of Ablingdon, a cluster of twenty or thirty houses, one of these being a very fine example of sixteenth century half-timbered work. Figheldean came next. It is noted for the smithy under the chestnut tree, supposed, probably by the local vendor of postcards, to have been the original of Longfellow's well-known poem. However, the tree was guarded by a picket posted there to prevent any one getting away with a lump of it. Across the way is the old parish church which displays some Norman arches and pillars, and two life-sized stone figures in the porch.

We now followed the right bank of the Avon to the aerodrome, thence to the village of Nether Avon, tucked away in a hollow by the river. The church with its square tower, spire, and corner turret is the prettiest I have yet

seen. About a mile away is the Fittleton church with a couple of Saxon doorways still remaining.

We followed a winding road to Durrington, which has some Druidical weeping stones on the green at the cross-roads. The church has a fine Norman porch and font. We had tea at the Y.M.C.A. there. On the way to Amesbury we passed several small villages and an Australian two-up school. I reached home feeling as contented as if I had been away for the week-end. While we were on our travels a plane from the aerodrome we visited came down in Bulford and resolved itself into about a drayload of chips.

April 16. A cold, bleak day in the bull ring. I was much cheered on returning at 5 p.m. to find a New Zealand mail had come in and five letters were awaiting me.

April 17. Had a fairly easy morning doing extended order drill. In the afternoon, as there was nothing in particular on the programme, we were put in the charge of a Maori corporal for some squad drill. After doing a little, we faded away behind some ancient earthworks for a smoko which lasted three-quarters of an hour. A man was posted at either end of the mound on the lookout for the enemy—officers.

On the opposite side of the valley, a big review of about 50,000 Australians was being held in the presence of His Majesty the King, or "George, Mark V," as he is known here, the various patterns of service rifles being designated by the word MARK followed by a Roman numeral. All day long we could see multitudes of Aussies moving about. Numbers of them passed us during our protracted smoko, and some halted near by. Amongst these casual bystanders one of our boys espied a cousin he had not seen for seven years. What luck! We were told that as the King was taking his departure from the

parade ground, an Aussie yelled out, "Three for George." The mob nobly responded and "George" smiled graciously. The King was accompanied by some Duke in a belltopper, and the next call was for "three for the joint in the box hat."

April 18. In the morning we had an uninteresting route march of a couple of hours to Bulford. In the afternoon trench warfare was explained in a practical manner at some trenches cut in the flinty soil of the hill above the camp.

April 19. Went up the hill after dinner to the bombing enclosure where each of us, wearing for the first time a steel shrapnel helmet, the ordinary "tin hat," had to throw three live Mills bombs into a little gully from the shelter of a solid but purposely low trench parapet. The bombs go off with a loud bang within three seconds of release and send up the dust in all directions. The bombing officer in charge prefaced his instructions by telling us the sad story of an accident that had happened in that very trench not long before. Some butter-fingered soldier had dropped his package of concentrated dynamite in the trench, the officer then instructing had been just a second late in fielding the ball, and there are two more white wooden crosses in the cemetery. Second Lieutenants were no doubt plentiful, said our instructor, but he had survived a year in France and didn't want to bother the bugler just yet. We all promised to be good and oblige by putting our shots in the proper place, and nowhere else. We did. As a mark of appreciation of our co-operation he let us go home early.

In the evening there was a lecture on Discipline—very stale.

April 20. Another trip up Beacon Hill, this time to the "Chamber of Horrors" to be gassed. This is a small underground room full of good strong chlorine. Groups

of six or eight men wearing "P.H." cloth helmets file in through the gas-proof doors and are fumigated for two or three minutes. My helmet was a good one, and I felt absolutely no ill effects, though a couple of whiffs of the stuff would make one like a rotten log. In there, brass buttons are changed to a dark brown or black colour, and gold rings go purple. These buttons now have to be cleaned. I hope this doesn't occur again.

April 21. Had the most solid day we've put in here yet. Company drill in review order, march past stunts, etc., for over eight hours. Dame rumour, known in our company, as "the barmaid at Taihape," declares that we are shortly to be reviewed by the King near Codford.

Very fine programme by the "Bristol Concert Party" of girls at the Y.M.C.A. in the evening.

April 22, Sunday. As we had the prospect of a morning route march for the next four days hung out to us yesterday I did not feel inclined to go tramping o'er the downs as usual. Spent a quiet day in the hut and the Institute. In the evening attended a church service preceded by a sacred concert, the programme of which was provided by the camp orchestra and some vocalists.

April 23. This morning we had a route march of eight or nine miles to a pretty little village near Shipton Bellinger, called Cholderton. There is a quaint church, and at one side of the main road a winding stream, with numerous bridges leading to thatched cottages.

In the afternoon we suffered more of that confounded company drill. At last something has come out of all the rumours we have been hearing about leave. While attending a concert given in the mess-room by a London party, we received notice to sprint along to the orderly room for our passes. Finished out the concert, had a bath, and then got busy cleaning up for the morrow.

CHAPTER X

LONDON LEAVE

April 24. My first day in "the Big Smoke." Paraded at 9 a.m., all dressed up, and marched the two and a half miles to Bulford Station. Rather uninteresting journey until we reached the suburbs. There we dived under a pall of smoke which reminds one of bush fires. Crossed high over the Thames twice and reached Waterloo at 1.45. Made for the Union Jack Club, as recommended, to book a bed and a feed. The place was full of soldiers from all countries and sailors from the seven seas. Went for a stroll over Westminster Bridge past Big Ben to the Abbey. My two companions, who were bent on investigating the truth of the adage that "a bird in the Strand is worth two in the Bush," did not care to fall in with my suggestion that we enter the famous shrine of Empire. I could not resist the temptation so we parted company.

Greatly impressed I gazed at the stately nave and chapels, at the soaring vaults of stone that the centuries have mellowed to a dark brown colour, at the traceried windows, the marble tombs and memorials of kings and poets. It was a little disappointing to find many of the more important tombs concealed from view beneath tons of sandbags, a necessary precaution against Zeppelin raids. Soon I was approached by an elderly lady who lived in the Close and was, I understand, the wife of one

of the Deans. Her kindly pleasure it was to act as guide to visiting soldiers, and what a difference her intimate knowledge of the great cathedral made to my pilgrimage. For two hours I listened entranced to stories of the great men of England whose dust lies beneath these venerable stones. At a side door near the cloisters I thanked my charming guide, and stepped out of the romantic past into the present with its dominant, inescapable theme of a war to be won.

I walked on past Whitehall, under the Admiralty Arch, visited Trafalgar Square and the Strand, seeing many notable buildings familiar to me from views of London. Back to the Union Jack Club for tea. Arthur Miller, a fellow signaller, turned up there, and we decided to set out for the Lyceum or some large theatre. We lost our bearings in the dark, got into the wrong tube and landed up somewhere near Oxford Circus instead of at Charing Cross. However there were plenty of theatres in the vicinity. We dropped in at the first one offering, a place called the "Globe," where there was a musical comedy in which Mlle. Gaby Deslys took the principal part. She danced with gay abandon, and made strenuous love to the handsome hero in a vivacious and sparkling manner. If this is the French style, I don't see how they can keep up the pace for long.

After half an hour or so of this, we heard that Harry Lauder was on in "Three Cheers" at the Shaftesbury across the road, so we went over there. As it was after half time we did not bother with ten shilling seats, but went up in the Gods for a shilling. I feel sure Harry Lauder would have approved of this economy. What charmed me most was the splendid orchestra, at times like a sweet-toned organ. Harry sang a fine song, "the laddies who have fought and won," and told the usual tales of intimate domestic affairs. He gets a laugh out of very

little. The play was based on the adventures of a Jock amongst the French people.

On emerging from the theatre we were nabbed and drawn into an unlit doorway by a lady whose story was that her Canadian boy had failed to keep his appointment. She wanted some supper. We expressed a dislike for all things Canadian, rather a sweeping statement, and enjoyed the telling-off she gave us. She was middle-aged, stout, drab and wholly unattractive. Arthur remarked that the last remaining reserve battalion must have been called up for service. We bought ourselves some supper, found the right tube from Charing Cross to Waterloo, and retired to sixpenny shakedowns in the billiard room.

April 25. Reveille at 6 a.m. while on leave was rather a rude awakening, but we did not get out on the streets till nearly 8 o'clock, and walked at random for an hour or so through the nearby slums. We had been told that the best way to see the sights of London was to take one of the all-day trips organized by the Y.M.C.A. for overseas troops. A brake left the hut at Waterloo Bridge at 9.30. The party consisted of Canadians, Australians, South Africans and New Zealanders.

We passed by St Mary-le-Strand, through a maze of crowded city streets, past the Mansion House and the Bank of England, to Tower Hill and the Tower of London, where we spent two hours vastly interesting to every one. Our guide explained fully the history of this tragic grey pile. We saw the room in the Bloody Tower in which the two princes were murdered and the stair under which they were buried, the site of the scaffold where Henry VIII used to farewell his wives, the executioner's block and axe. Those were the days when wives were accustomed to honour and obey. A girl of the independent modern type would have carved the old rooster up for cat's meat any night she chose and got clear. We

peered through the bars and plate glass at the Crown Jewels and the profusion of salt cellars. We saw in the White Tower a complete collection of armour and weapons dating from the tenth century, including a specimen of every kind of cannon and popgun ever invented.

All aboard and off to St Paul's. The majesty of the interior fairly took my breath away. I could imagine nothing finer. The Grinling Gibbons carvings in actuality were more wonderful than I had anticipated. In the crypt are the tombs of England's great military and naval heroes and of many statesmen. All the familiar names, so many of them also immortalized in New Zealand place names. The Alfred Stevens monument to the Duke of Wellington interested me most. I saw Dick Seddon's memorial tablet down a side alley. It can be no mean honour to end up under the floor in St Paul's. I hope they will be able to spare a few square yards for Bill Massey.

We picked our way among the pigeons on the great flight of steps at the entrance, and drove off along the Embankment to Westminster, where we had an enjoyable dinner at the Australian War Chest. The service, being voluntary, was excellent. The kids in this district have acquired a new language. As you pass along the street they sling off at you in polished Sydney slang, accent perfect—some accomplishment.

On tour once more we were taken through the Abbey and I realized how lucky I had been in meeting my guide of yesterday. We were unable to gain admission to the Houses of Parliament. The next stop was at the Royal Mews, where the King's horses are kept in palatial stables tiled and cleaned like a dairy. The horses are even more beautiful than their chaste surroundings. Said an Aussie horse-lover in the party: "I'd like to see my old hack at home get in here. He'd blasted well fall down and die of fright and so would all those other neddies." To get the

true Australian flavour, spice with at least four choice adjectives. I reckon that if a dinkum hyphenizing Aussie had to send a tele-flamin'-gram and got someone who knew how to cancel the superfluous words, he and his cobbers would be surprised at the amount of money saved. We Pig Islanders are not nearly so hot-blooded in our manner of speaking.

The ornate and fantastically sprung State Coach, housed nearby is a truly wonderful affair, built of gilded oak about 200 years ago at a cost of £10,000. It is seldom used, and they say it costs nearly as much per mile to run as it does to hire a London taxi.

We finished a very enjoyable tour by a long drive through Hyde Park, along Oxford Street, back through the heart of the city by Leicester and Trafalgar Squares to the Embankment and Waterloo. We saw in one day most of the principal streets, but it would take a month or two to see all the important buildings.

On the streets we observed officers and men of nearly all the Allies. It was fun spotting the various uniforms. There were British galore from land, sea and air, overseas men from Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, Malay States, West Indies, from India, and Canadian Indians, besides Belgians and French. We saw one Russian officer, but the Italians were busy elsewhere. I was struck by the number of women workers everywhere, taxi-drivers, bus conductors, bill posters, women in all sorts and shades of uniforms from land girls to motor cycle dispatch riders of the Air Force.

At 6.10 p.m. after a rushed trip to Charing Cross, I took a train through Kentish hop fields and Sussex downs to St Leonards-on-Sea, on the South Coast. There I was met by an uncle and aunt, who had left New Zealand nine years before. We sat talking far into the night. Tumbling into a first-class feather bed in a cheerful bed-

room all to myself was a luxurious ending to a wonderful day.

April 26. After a leisurely breakfast, my uncle and I wandered down the streets of the town and along the promenade to Hastings. The place was full of convalescent Canadians, every untenanted house having its quota of thirty or forty men. I seemed to be the only New Zealand soldier in the town. In a side street I noticed a tavern which bore the fascinating name of "the Dripping Well."

The afternoon was spent in a pleasant round of visits to charming people in Victorian drawing rooms. A few friends came to enliven the evening hours. There was a supper, specially prepared by my aunt whose skill is of a high order, and whose memory of schoolboy preferences is unimpaired.

April 27. Had to say good-bye to the South Coast at 10 a.m., when I caught a train for London, arriving there about 1 o'clock. I had made arrangements by telephone from St Leonards to meet at 3 p.m. a cousin I had never seen, so had a couple of hours to spare. Took a bus to Ludgate Hill and made some purchases there, changing golden sovereigns I had brought with me from home. This part of London is dominated by St Paul's to which I was drawn as by a magnet. I had time to inspect the Cathedral in more detail. I whispered the round of the whispering gallery and started to climb up to the lantern, but I had spent so much time in the Library amongst the old plans and documents that I had time to ascend only to the base of the dome, a circular walk behind a high parapet.

To keep my appointment, I made my way through narrow squalid streets to an immense powerhouse, the largest in London. My cousin, who holds the responsible position of chief engineer for eight hours of the twenty-four, spent an hour or so in showing me round the building. There are no less than forty-seven boilers in use.

These are coupled up to a pair of immense turbines which drive the generators. I am sorry my knowledge of electricity and engineering is so elementary.

After we had completed our tour of the works, we walked up town to one of the numerous Lyons restaurants for tea. All these places are strictly on rations and you are not allowed to spend more than one shilling, I think it is, at a time. We got into trouble at the cash desk for having piled up the huge bill of two shillings and sixpence. Still, "orders is orders" and that girl might have been quite amiable when off duty. They are very short of sugar here. For three half-pence you get three small cubes in a paper tray. The other thing they are most short of is spuds, which we soldiers see about once a week.

My cousin had to be back at 5.30 to watch the wheels go round, and I was left "alone and unprotected" in London till the train left Waterloo for camp at 9.10. I walked along to Westminster, hoping to see the interior of the Houses of Parliament, but the session had closed at 4.30, and I was disappointed. Instead I had a look over the Roman Catholic Cathedral, that masterpiece of the bricklayer's art. The marble mosaics in the side chapels which have been completed are very fine indeed. The tall tower is used as an observation or listening post in connection with air raids and I couldn't get up there.

The remainder of my time in London I spent travelling on the tops of buses. I went northwards by Edgeware Road to Cricklewood, then on to Child's Hill and back to Charing Cross. In various parts of the city are to be seen great buildings such as the London County Council offices left in a state of half completion, a jumble of unset stones and steelwork red-brown with rust, tower gantries rising in the midst of chaos and derricks leaning at crazy angles,

mute evidence of the fact that every available man is wanted for war service.

I made a bullocky rush for the train, and boarded it two minutes before time. We had a non-stop run to Andover, reaching Bulford about 11.30 whence it is two and a half miles in the dark to one's own particular bed. The trip took me three-quarters of an hour as I was very tired. I flopped into bed and was stunned till reveille.

CHAPTER XI

WILTSHIRE DOWNS

April 28. London leave has not done the crowd much good as far as this job is concerned, but they all seem contented though looking a bit washed out. We had company drill solid till about 3 p.m. when came the much-needed spell. Every time we were given the order to "stand easy" during the day, the troops would lie down. Our colds are much worse. Mine has dropped down to my chest. Maybe I shall have to go on sick parade some morning soon. The chief objection to doing so is that one has to get out of bed over half an hour earlier than usual.

April 29, Sunday. At 9 a.m. we stacked rifles and attended church parade. Drilled till noon, then were free except for having to mess around for an hour or more in the afternoon to collect our rifles—the latest (1917) pattern with many improvements in mechanism but rather clumsy to handle.

April 30. Turned out at 6 a.m. to go on sick parade. It is a three-quarter-mile walk to the medical hut, and the whole business is such a lot of bother that fellows are usually pretty crook before taking it on. The quack felt my pulse and told me to get my temperature taken. I was rather surprised to find it up at 100·8 and still more so when they ordered me into the Observation Hospital for a while.

It's a very good home, though just an ordinary hut converted. There are only six patients besides myself. The orderlies are very decent and the tucker is good. Smokes are free and there is a gramophone with some records which have quite a bit of life in them yet.

Sometime during the afternoon the 20th Reinforcement arrived from Codford for to-morrow's review, and after a spell of about five minutes, went on parade again to rehearse. They had just marched seventeen miles with full packs up and this was the last straw. I am told they were falling over like poisoned rabbits.

May 1. The day of the big review at which, I believe, there are to be 8000 or 9000 New Zealand troops on parade. In spite of my desire to see King George, I'm glad I'm not one of them, for I hate the idea of standing at attention with full pack for about three hours. I'm lucky to be in bed while my mates are doing it hard across the valley. In the evening had a visit from Jack Bathgate, who is leaving for Codford in the morning.

May 2. Felt very cold in only a couple of blankets and didn't sleep much at night. There was a good gramophone concert all afternoon. The smokes here are much better quality than those sold at the canteen, evidently special for sick soldiers. Two of the lads called in about 8 p.m. to see how I was progressing.

May 3. Got the order of the boot from hospital and departed after dinner. Spent all afternoon at the Y.M.C.A. and returned to the hut in time for tea. Have been informed I have two days' "excused duty."

May 4. The day was gloriously fine with a feeling of summer in the air, but I remained in the hut, going out only for meals. Spent some of the time in sewing brass buttons on my tunic and squaring up my kit generally.

May 5. Went on parade again in the morning. At Signal Square we had some tests on the lamp and shutter.

The signalling course here does not appear to be as exacting as the one we went through in Featherston.

In the afternoon we had a short route-march along the road towards Tidworth. We are no longer encumbered with rifles, and this makes a lot of difference. We were dismissed at 4 p.m.

May 6, Sunday. A very fine spring day. Shortly after church parade our long awaited mail came to light, and I received six letters.

After dinner Lofty and I went for a stroll over the hill to Cholderton, where I spent half an hour making a sketch of some thatched cottages by the roadside.

We walked a couple of miles further on to Shipton Bellinger, a small village, which has little to offer in the way of scenery. As we were unable to obtain a meal anywhere, we moved on to the Australian camp at Parkhouse where the Salvation Army chaplain treated us to a good feed of tea and biscuits. A couple of Aussies accompanied us to our camp for a walk and a talk and we all had some more tea at the Y.M.C.A.

May 7. Made my début at Signal Square and got rather bamboozled through having missed the week's practice, but survived it. Flag drill for an hour, then we adjourned to the plantation to read lamp and disk. The lamp is very severe on the eyesight. You have to peer and stare so fixedly that after a minute or two you begin to weep and the message book is bespattered with tears. All our previous training in lamp reading was of course carried out at night time. Something wrong here!

May 8. Another glorious day, spent in acquiring the art of sending signals snappily by flag and lamp. In the evening I repaired to the quiet of the Regimental Institute with a book. My comments in this diary are for the present necessarily confined to signalling practice, but it cannot be said that my interest is flagging.

May 9. Signal stations in the shade of trees. This is luxurious. Lofty and I have become smitten with the desire to expand our knowledge of England by doing a little touring on the highways and byways of the County of Wiltshire. After tea we made a raid on Tommytown in search of a pair of bikes. We adopted the method of bailing up every one we saw riding a service bike. Lofty did the hold-up part of the business, and I immediately followed with the short talk on the beauties of rural England. In every case we were sympathetically received and met some very decent Tommies. At the sixth attempt we introduced ourselves to a corporal whose grid would be doing nothing on Sunday. He stoutly refused to consider any payment for the use of the machine, and accompanied us two-thirds of the way back to our camp for a walk, enlightening us on many aspects of English life.

May 10. A little rain fell during the night, so in the morning we repaired to an empty hut for a lecture on map reading, a subject on which I have been keen for two or three years as a Territorial. In the afternoon more reading of those blinking lamps. We hear that the work over yonder is all telephone and buzzer so there's no need to cry our eyes out over them. In the evening we had to clean and polish our web equipment, which is some bother.

May 11. Morning: Test in reading signals. Afternoon: Reading signals but no test. The reviewing stand at Piccadilly was occupied by no less a personage than Field-Marshal Sir John French.

As Lofty and I had managed to scrounge only one bike in Tommytown, we resolved to try our luck with the Aussies. We walked over to Parkhouse Camp, but there was not a chance in the world. At Shipton Bellinger, to which we were directed from Parkhouse, we also drew a blank. On the way home we argued at length on the question of who should have the bike on Sunday. The

generous-hearted Lofty finally threatened to knock my block off if I did not take the bike and go alone.

May 12. More lamp reading. The afternoon was spent mainly on map reading, study of contours, etc. During the lecture I wrote a letter home. In the evening there was another splendid concert by the Bristol Concert Party.

May 13, Sunday. Early in the morning there was a heavy mist hanging around, but when it had dispersed the day was as fine as one could desire.

I collected my road pass at 8.30 a.m. and the bike at Tommytown at 9.0. Having decided to take a run up to Marlborough, I pedalled first to Tidworth and Ludgershall, then through some pretty scenery to Savernake. Here I left the main road in company with two Tommy signal sergeants, similarly mounted, in order to ride through Savernake Forest, the largest in England. The beautiful Grand Avenue, shaded by huge oaks and beeches, is straight for about four miles. We saw several herds of deer grazing in the forest glades.

Shortly after passing through the gates we stopped on a hilltop to enjoy a view of the town of Marlborough spread out in the valley before us. A short ride down a steep hill brought us to the High Street. I had dinner at an inn with the two sergeants, one of whom, recently married, withdrew to write the daily letter to his wife in Manchester. One of the penalties of the blessed state of matrimony, I suppose.

For an hour I wandered round the town, taking the opportunity of seeing the buildings of the famous Marlborough College from the outside. Near the entrance to the Quadrangle I attempted to engage two boys of about Fourth Form weight in a conversation about the college. They evidently took me for a suspicious character; they looked most uncomfortable and their answers were of the briefest. Their embarrassment communicated itself to

me, and suddenly remembering that in this country speaking to strangers without an introduction is not done by gentlemen or the sons of gentlemen, I fled like a truant.

I left town by the Devizes road. As I felt too tired to go the whole gamut, I decided, after consulting the map, to follow a shorter route via Overton and Pewsey. The bike was a particularly heavy affair built more for durability than speed, and hills were a hard grind. From Overton the road led over a rise to Alton Priors, passing a fine example of a long barrow, or prehistoric burial mound, and an ill-drawn white horse, of the kind immortalized in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. There are others in the vicinity.

To my intense delight I was stopped at a gate by a genuine "rustic" of the "Oop from Zoommerzet" variety, funny little beard and all, an elderly man and obviously a shepherd. He needed only a smock and a crook to be the complete nursery book character. He wanted to know the time, which I told him was three o'clock. From the position of the sun he thought it was after four. I saw my watch had stopped and set it to his solar time which, later, proved to be only a few minutes out. We chatted for a long time, though I could understand only a word here and there, his burr being so thick. He must have had his work cut out to understand me. However, we did not have to descend to the language of signs.

At Pewsey, where I had tea, a motherly soul in the bar, who was sinking her pot of ale with relish, advised me that the best thing to buck up a weary cyclist was orange bitters. This was a variety of poison I had not before sampled. A dose of it made a power of difference to the remainder of the dusty journey.

From Pewsey I followed the Avon Valley road home, passing through Upavon, Nether Avon, and Durrington. As erratic as a dog on a picnic I went out of my road

on several occasions to see villages lying to my right. As I had to mend a blow-out in the very tenacious rear tyre I didn't get home till 9.30. It was altogether a glorious day. I greatly enjoyed the experience of riding through sweet-smelling country lanes in the welcome shade of spreading oaks and elms.

May 14. As I was a bit tired after my fifty-five-mile ride, it was fortunate for me that we had an easy day. Merely lamp reading in the morning and a lecture on the prismatic compass in the afternoon.

May 15. Much the same as yesterday except that at the morning parade four of us were pulled up by the Maori sergeant for "being improperly dressed on parade," to wit, not having our brass "titles" N.Z.R. on our shoulder straps. I shall never forget the gleam of joy in that Maori's eye when he noticed these omissions. One would think he had discovered a heap of golden sovereigns instead of some missing brassware. At the conclusion of the afternoon parade we sinners were awarded two days' C.B., "Confined to Barracks," commonly termed "Chasing the Bugle."

> Trumpeter, what are you sounding now,
> Is it the call I'm seeking?

We started on the job immediately after tea. When answering the first bugle call at 6 p.m. I was summoned to the orderly room where a piece of paper was put in front of me marked "N.Z.E. Reserve—parade at 10.30." It appears that the engineers have sent an order to Sling Camp for the delivery in good order and condition of all available men classified as "draughtsmen." They must be planning some big schemes. I am not furious about having been selected for the job, for though I regret being separated from Lofty and the rest of the mob, we all realize that trained signallers are liable to be pitchforked

into any company in the division and have no more chance of sticking together than African slaves.

Well, I've got out of one day's C.B. at any rate. This performance kept the four of us pretty busy with calls at half-hour intervals. We had to spend the intervening time putting our packs together or taking them to pieces, in order to have a different arrangement of the web equipment at each appearance. The hour's drill with full packs, 7.30 to 8.30 under the superintendence of a very energetic Maori corporal was undiluted joy. Finished for the night at 9.45.

CHAPTER XII

BLUE PUGGAREE

May 16. Said good-bye to all the boys and took my kit down to Ordnance Stores. At 10.30 I paraded and found there were seven other draughtsmen going for a trip to the South Coast. We were inspected at least six times and finally marched off to Bulford at 11.30. We changed trains at Salisbury, and were to have had another change at Redbridge, but as the train was late we had to proceed to Southampton West where we changed for Christchurch. By 5 p.m. we and our kits had arrived at the camp, which is smaller than I expected and a canvas town.

After tea we were made into engineers as far as the flaming-grenade collar badges and blue-banded hat puggaree go. Having an hour or two to spare before lights-out, we boarded a tram to Boscombe Arcade to see the sights, then walked back. We were issued with only two blankets each, and it went hard that first night sleeping on a wooden floor with no straw-filled palliasse to conform to the bumps on one's figure. As a slight concession to the comfort of the troops the floor boards were of soft deal and not hardwood.

May 17. About 10 a.m. we were all paraded for inspection by the Adjutant and questioned. Four of the squad, myself among them, who admitted knowing a bit about surveying were pulled out and labelled "France."

This is so sudden! Now that we have come from Sling to this paradise we have been hoping for a month in it. Four other boys were pulled out of the company to go with us, and there is a gay dog of a Lieutenant in charge of the party. We were fully equipped and had all shortages of kit made good. The afternoon was occupied mainly by a dental inspection.

This over, we visited the quartermaster's tent to receive our identity disks, or "dead meat tickets." Instead of being issued with a circular disk of tin as worn on the troopship, we were presented with two thin tablets of some asbestos composition, one red, one green. Taking his turn at the anvil, each man, with hammer and set of dies bumped on the imprint of his name, number, and religious denomination, C.E., R.C., or PRES.; finally he punched a hole for the old bootlace to be worn round the neck.

After tea, three of us proceeded to the quaint little town of Christchurch, which bears little resemblance to its very English sister in New Zealand, except that it is situated near an estuary well supplied with mud flats.

May 18. We do not know definitely when we are due to leave and are at present in "details." There was a light rain in the morning which we spent in King's Park, Pokesdown, about two miles from here, digging trenches, a messy job in damp weather. All the crowd belonging to the Tunnelling Corps were there too. Afternoon: More mudlarking. Evening: Washing without ironing, and writing a few letters.

May 19. In the morning we were issued with our web equipment and messed around generally. After dinner I packed my valise in the manner prescribed for service in a foreign field and wrote off some more correspondence.

Having secured Bournemouth passes in the morning, immediately after tea we made for the tram and got off at

Landsdown which boasts an imposing new art school. We walked along one of the main streets to the Square. Bournemouth is a very beautiful city. One of its chief attractions is the splendidly laid-out gardens which lead down to the sea, and are at present gay with numerous beds of tulips.

We had a good meal at a café and then repaired to the Winter Gardens, a huge glassed-in conservatory, seating about 2000 people. During the first half of the programme we listened entranced to an orchestra of fifty players. After half-time we were entertained by a concert party styling themselves, "The Georgians." At a nearby table, accompanied by an elderly man, sat an officer of about my own age in the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps. He was tall and dark, handsome as Apollo. Never have I seen any one so beautiful. I had imagined that such loveliness of feature and "peaches and cream" colouring of complexion was confined exclusively to the fair sex. Some of our women in New Zealand may be as lovely as the rose, but we men are mostly potatoes. Evidently the women of England do not have it all their own way.

May 20, Sunday. One year to date since I enlisted in Bill Massey's Army.

The morning was beautifully fine, but about 3 p.m. it started to drizzle and the rest of the day was spoiled. Church parade was held at 10 a.m. in the open air. In the afternoon we decided to go along to Bournemouth again and reached the city about 4 p.m. By this time it was raining heavily. After an hour or two of keeping dry in the Y.M.C.A. and various other places, we burst through the swing doors of a pretentious white and gold grill room for a snack, which developed into a large and expensive five course meal. After some more aimless blowing about the town, we took an early tram home, our Sunday almost completely spoiled by the rain.

May 21. We expected this would be our last day in England, but are still here at the finish. Had a pretty easy day. I landed the job of message boy to the Dump, and was tearing round on a bike all morning, mostly on my own business which took me to both Christchurch and Boscombe.

In the afternoon they put "details" on the job of laying water pipes to the cookhouse.

May 22. The morning was overcast and very close, about the worst kind of day that could be selected for a route march. But after noon the weather was perfect. The whole company turned out in full marching order with packhorses, tool carts, limbers, pontoon wagons, and all other transport. I learned, but too late, that many of the old hands, instead of carrying twenty pounds or so of clothing and greatcoat on their backs, get their valises to assume the required shape by means of inflated air cushions and a sock at each corner.

We went for a circular trek in the country to the north of the camp. The scenery was exceedingly beautiful. Part of the way lay through forest, and nearly all the rest of it was shaded by huge trees, chestnuts, oaks and elms. In all the gardens lilac was in full bloom.

As we returned in mid-afternoon, I took the chance of going into Christchurch to look over the Priory. We had a guide who was also conducting a French family. The Priory is interesting mainly on account of the antiquity of everything. The Norman interior is wonderfully well preserved, and there is a very fine late Gothic carved stone choir screen.

My friend Charley who has received a letter of introduction to a family dwelling in the more aristocratic section of Boscombe invited me to support him on an evening visit he had arranged. All dolled up we arrived at the house about 8 p.m. As mentioned in the letter

there were two girls in the family. Their parents were very genial, and told us yarns of smuggling and wrecking on the Cornish coast, which they knew well. We retaliated with stories of life in New Zealand. The girls let fall the information that all their male friends without exception were officers in the Army or the Naval Air Force, and most of their conversation concerned the doings of these heroes on leave and abroad. Whether intentionally or not, they made us poor sappers feel decidedly *de trop*. In spite of a cordial invitation from our host and hostess to call again soon, we walked home feeling somewhat depressed. Those two flappers did not need to spend the entire evening showing us how beastly expensive they are.

May 23. In the morning we were instructed in the art of making "bridge piers" out of barrels, ropes and spars. After the midday bread and cheese we had some squad drill followed by a very informal lecture on the duties of a sapper, but no advice was proffered on how to deal with a contingency such as Charley and I met with last evening.

After tea I saw the dinkum orders for us to proceed overseas to-morrow night, so I chased round to get three late leave passes and we hooked it into Bournemouth. Again, as we neared the town, it came on to rain. I'd like to see the place without the sky falling on it. We dodged into a café for a while then went to the Winter Gardens to hear the Municipal Orchestra. The concert was extremely enjoyable. Home in a taxi. Quite a good evening for our last this side of the Channel.

May 24. Had a kit inspection at 9 a.m. and an inspection by the O.C. at 11, also received the pay due to us to date. We were given leave passes from noon till 5 p.m., so after dinner we sauntered into Christchurch. At Hart's natural history museum we spent a very enjoyable hour,

having many curious facts about the local wild birds explained to us by the naturalist himself, who has made the study of their ways his life work. The exhibit of greatest interest to me was a number of specimens of one species of wader collected at intervals by generations of Harts over a period of one hundred years. This bird, through the drying up of the marshes and consequent necessity of digging deeper in the mud for worms, has been forced to develop a beak that is much stronger, hard-tipped and two inches more in length. I had imagined evolution to be a very slow, gradual process, working its changes over many thousands of years, while here was an example of a very definite alteration in natural form in a brief space of time.

After a pleasant hour of rowing on the river, we returned to camp to pack our few belongings. At 7 p.m. we paraded, said our farewells and marched off to the railway station. When we got there, we found that through a mistake in our passes we were an hour early, so we blew up to Christchurch again. Our train left at 8.50 and before we had travelled far it was dark. Every one was quite happy except one corporal who kept crying about a terrible disaster that had befallen him. A full bottle of whisky he had planted in his pack had somehow got smashed and not a drop remained. He is of Highland extraction and so was the whisky. In spite of the sight, sound, and smell of this tragedy we slept all the way to Waterloo, which we reached about midnight. Our train for Folkestone left at 12.45 a.m., and got there three hours later as dawn was breaking.

CHAPTER XIII

ÉTAPLES

May 25. We marched through some splendid avenues to No. 3 Rest Camp in company with some Tommies. This camp consists of two whole blocks of huge "mansions," four and five stories high. The boundary of the camp is a high fence cutting the surrounding streets in half. Where gardens have been there are now cookhouses, Y.M.C.A., etc. We had two meals there and rather a slow time. Eventually, at 11 a.m., we lined up and marched off along the parade to the transport. We were the only New Zealanders on board. Three transports go across every day, convoyed by destroyers and an airship which scouts around for submarines. The ship did twenty knots on a glassy sea.

We arrived at Boulogne at 3.30 p.m. after a run of 1½ hours. We formed up on the quay, then marched through some narrow streets and up a steep hill to the rest camp which is situated on top of the cliffs near a huge wireless station. This camp is known as "One Blanket Hill." The scenery around here is very green and pretty. The most conspicuous landmarks across the valley are some windmills and the dome of a big Classic church. We had our first sight of the French people here. Women who came along the quay selling oranges and sweets seem to speak very fair broken English.

We were ushered into a tent and made a meal of our iron rations, biscuits and bully. Engineering and allied professions were well represented in our group of nine men. The tent held four civil engineers, one sanitary engineer, two surveyors, and two architectural draughtsmen. Conversation among the members of "the Engineering Commission to the Battlefields" became at times highly technical.

May 26. One of the most strenuous marches I ever had. At 8.30 a column of about 700 men moved off in the direction of Étaples. They were mostly Tommies, Irish and Jocks. We marched through many little villages, passed half a dozen huge cement works where the road was very dusty, and were passed by a trainload of cheery German prisoners. All along the way we encountered women and girls selling "orangees, chocolat, sperement."

I was struck by the peculiar construction of French ironwork. Instead of using one solid section of iron as the British do, the French fabricate their telegraph poles, railway signal standards, etc., out of numerous small bits of very light iron bar all riveted together with cross braces everywhere. An engineer in our party explained that the reason for this was high cost of raw material and cheapness of labour in the engineering shops.

There was a halt of ten minutes every hour, and one and a half hours at a rest camp for dinner. During the afternoon hours numbers of Tommies and Jocks did the "stagger and flop" act, to be picked up by chars-à-bancs following in the rear. A lot of the Tommies were diminutive men of poor physique from the Midlands, going out to join the Labour Battalions. Approximately one-third of the column fell out during the march. The New Zealand contingent lost only one man whose feet gave out owing to badly fitting new boots.

The Base Camp here is about three miles long. We passed bull rings galore and then a huge hospital, the biggest in France, I understand. Judging by the number of wooden crosses in a field not far away this hospital certainly has a tremendous turnover.

A guide conducted us through the Canadian lines, then past the Portuguese or "Pork and Cheese" camp to our lines, situated in a hollow amongst the sand hills. We were glad to get there and have a shower after eighteen miles under a broiling sun with all our worldly goods on our backs.

May 27, Sunday. A day of rest for the stiffies. At 9 a.m. we were paraded and went through the tear gas chamber wearing box respirators. There is a splendid canteen here stocked with goods, such as biscuits and fruit, which are of exceptionally high quality. They sell French lemonade and ginger beer brought in great earthenware jars. The grub at this camp is pretty good.

On getting hold of a copy of the *Daily Mail* we found that there had been a big air raid on Folkestone, the largest yet inflicted, at 6.30 p.m. on Friday. We left the town at 2 p.m., four and a half hours before.

In the late afternoon we went for a short walk across the fields. Every place here is out of bounds and you can't go near any of the villages. Just up the hill behind our lines there is a wonderful listening post, where, by means of telephones and microphones, even the rifle fire at the front fifty miles away can be distinctly heard.

May 28. Resumed our workaday life. Spent the whole day in the bull ring studying the ways of gas. As a final test we went through a trench full of chlorine with box respirators on and through a trench of lachrymatory or tear gas without them. We were a sorrowful procession. Running through the trench to get it over quickly was strictly prohibited. Our comrades for this instruction

were mostly Manchesters, a poor lot, I thought. One lad, new at the game, ran through the trench against orders, and was pulled back for a second dose. Again he ran. The third time he became paralysed with fright and refused to go. The Tommy sergeant, piqued at being disobeyed, lost his temper, and the way he kicked, cuffed and bumped that poor wretch through the gas made our blood boil. Not one of the Tommies standing around clouted him one or even told him off. Not one of our N.C.Os would risk handling a man like that, or only once.

May 29. Got ready for morning parade in the usual bustle, but when stepping on to the parade ground we were told it was a washout, all available men having to get ready to proceed up the line. After we were lined up and numbered off, it was found that our draft of engineers did not need to go—can't say I was either sorry or glad.

Was put on fatigue erecting fences and put in a few posts, including of course the "last post." We made a lovely soft job of it and in the evening went for a quiet stroll just to give ourselves some exercise. The French roads with their avenues of trees and absence of fences are ideal for a pleasant walk; there is much colour in the landscape and the air seems very fresh and invigorating.

May 30. On fatigue all morning levelling off a clay bank hard by the officers' cookhouse, but nothing worth while eventuated from the proximity. Afternoon: On the end of a chain measure, surveying one of the camps. There was a picture show at the Y.M.C.A. in the evening, good films too.

May 31. The survey party are still being made useful. Under instructions from the jovial Sergeant Bill Body, who seems to be in charge of the Works Department here, we set to work taking levels and grading with boning rods a bump on a road near our lines, about half a chain in length. When the levels, all neatly plotted in a

field book, had been presented to him by one of the civil engineers, the sergeant congratulated all nine of us on our work, and said he had never seen so many professional engineers and surveyors engaged on such a small job, so it ought to have been done exceptionally well. Before we were dismissed for the day we might as well get some picks and shovels and barrows and level the road off. Complete collapse of the Engineering Commission! However, this work is better than bull ring by a long chalk.

June 1. More road. About 10.30 a.m. we had a very enjoyable break. A Fritz plane flew overhead at a great height, puff balls bursting all around it, but it kept steadily on its way. While we were gazing upwards, something screeched over our heads to land with a thud beside a shed a few yards away. We all thought it was a bomb, and I was rather concerned for the safety of a wheelbarrow that sheltered me. However, nothing eventuated, so we dug down five feet and found a dud 13-pounder Archie shell, which we presented to the Y.M.C.A. for a souvenir, for if it had been a bomb, there would have been no Y.M.C.A. building to contain it.

June 2. Were kept on the ends of our picks or shovels all morning—no smoko, but we had the afternoon off, Saturday half-holiday I suppose. Went for a walk down to Paddy's Market where the chief wares are postcards hand-worked in gay coloured silks, price sixpence each. The prettiest ones always seem to have the wrong inscriptions. You get plenty of "kisses from France," "my dear Aunt," "my own dear sweetheart," etc., and inside there's usually a card "to my wife" or some other relation you don't possess.

I purchased one or two bearing the flags of the Allies, and made the mistake of addressing the girl who sold them in French. I was answered in perfect English, and laughingly told I had made a mistake in grammar. The

lesson was continued for a considerable time to our mutual amusement, and is the first really enjoyable French lesson I have ever had.

Later on I passed by the railway yards and saw numbers of German prisoners working there. The railway guards signal to the engine drivers by means of tooting a trumpet, a novel and pleasing musical effect.

June 3, Sunday. Another perfect day. We went on quartermaster's fatigue at 8.15 so didn't get to church parade. Knocked off about 9.30 and went for a stroll, then wrote a few letters and buried myself for the afternoon in a French novel, *The Poor Young Man*, by George Sand. The title seems appropriate and the practice in the language may help in future encounters with maidens in market places, if there are any up the line. At the Y.M.C.A. I ran into Padre Herron from Auckland and had a chat with him.

After tea, the contents of the tent went for a walk along a road till balked by the usual red hats on boundary duty. Thus far and no further. Saw a circular brick tower that had been erected for observation purposes by the French army about the time Napoleon was wondering how to cross the Channel. The evening was absolutely perfect. There is still enough daylight for reading at 9.30 p.m.

June 4. Three of us were selected from the road gang to clear a blocked drain at one of the cookhouses, the dirtiest bit of work I was ever called upon to undertake. The trench was full of tins and the decomposed greyness of last year's stews. The bull ring brand of chlorine is attar of roses in comparison. Digging out tins is not easy. One of the party was the imperturbable Jack Huggins, drainage expert, whose stock expression in any eventuality is: "Now what could be nicer!" We made him say it lots of times.

About 2 p.m. we found the cause of the blockage was that the level of the outlet to the sump was higher than the intake, so we gave it up for a bad job, and hoped we would soon be sent up to the ordinary trenches in the firing line, even though the Poilus nickname them "sewers." Another of Bill Body's little jokes, I presume.

June 5. Another blazing hot day spent in scaling up and down our road on the end of a barrow. Am quite an expert navvy by now. But the great event of the day happened at 6 p.m. when the N.Z. mail was delivered amidst great excitement. I received no less than ten letters from the old town, and put in a pleasant evening reading them all.

June 6. The day was the hottest we've had yet, too hot to do much work we thought. Shortly after tea a severe storm hit us. This came rather rough on our "nap" party. Seeking a more permanent shelter, we retreated to the Y.M.C.A., where there was a very fine concert by the N.Z. Concert Party. During this entertainment lightning started to flash and we witnessed an aerial bombardment of Étaples of a different variety. The rain all night was torrential, and the lightning, a combination of sheet and forked, the most vivid I have ever seen.

June 7. Saw my name and those of three others in the tent on the leave list for Étaples so hopped it after tea. It was my first experience of a French town and I didn't think much of the place. Some of the back streets are as narrow and rough as can be. All the household refuse is thrown in the gutter, so that if it hadn't been for last night's deluge the stench would have been nauseating to us. At the lowest level of the town, in an open square near the church and surrounded by houses, is a small lake formed of all the sewage. From there it percolates into some chalkpits which we refrained from visiting.

The town seemed to be full of pickets; there was

little other khaki to be seen. Only four men out of each company are allowed in of a night, so the considerate sergeant-major sends in a picket of ten men presumably to look after the four. The pickets take up duty and other things inside one of the *estaminets* of which there are dozens. We visited several, bought some Parisian papers and reached home at 8.15, when our passes expired. Officers enjoy the freedom of the town from 8 p.m. onwards.

June 8. There is a rumour that our division has been engaged in a big stunt somewhere near Armentières with a lot of casualties, so I expect we shall get our marching orders soon.

In the evening we attended a splendid lantern lecture on the "Castles of France" by an officer who had at one time been holidaying in the Touraine district.

June 9. In the morning I was given the job of levelling off some spoil, which I soon completed, so managed to write a letter or two. Afternoon: Engineers' half-holiday. Went to Paddy's Market. Am told my French has improved, but these girls would tell you anything. The boys who were so unwise as to stay at home were put on quartermaster's fatigue.

In the late afternoon, when visiting the canteen, I espied a notice behind the counter, advertising "Rhubarb and Custard," while further along was "Fruit Salad" at the same price. On the counter was one huge earthenware basin of a mixture that looked like the former. The uniformed V.A.D. who was serving indicated that my guess was correct. As I am not particularly fond of the thick end of a stick of rhubarb I asked if I might be shown the fruit salad. The lady pointed defiantly to the same basin. Tickled with the idea of this magic bowl, I laughed, and so did a lot of Tommies round about me. No word spake she, but if a look could kill I was blasted from the face

of the earth. Somewhat abashed, I beat a retreat, having bought neither one nor the other. I was afterwards informed that I had been in the awful presence of a lady of importance in English society who is doing this sort of thing voluntarily. No doubt she had prepared the delicacy with her own fair hands, and cooks are touchy.

June 10, Sunday. Church parade in the morning. In the afternoon we were informed of our impending departure up the line on Tuesday morning early. At a church service in the evening a couple of sacred songs were rendered by a soloist from the choir of Westminster Abbey, and he could sing!

About 9.30 it started to rain—the commencement of a thunderstorm even worse than that of Wednesday. Towards midnight, when the rain was coming down in torents, some half-stunned digger had the misfortune to mistake our tent for his own. He called us all the names he could think of for refusing to let him in, then tried to pull the tent down but eventually fell over a stay and crawled away to try somewhere else.

June 11. Heavy rain in the morning. Had any shortages of gear made up and was given a thorough medical examination by a young medical officer whom I had known in his student days. He told me not to be so shy and put me quite at my ease.

Spent most of the afternoon getting ourselves and packs in order. There happened to be no concert in the evening so we had to resort to the canteen. Inspection of the whole reinforcement at 5 p.m. by Colonel "Hoppy" Mitchell, who addressed the troops and explained that there were six reasons why he was not anxious to take a trip up the line himself, namely, a wife and five children. Slept as soundly as usual with only one blanket.

CHAPTER XIV

HAZEBROUCK

June 12. Reveille at 4.30—got up at 5 a.m., breakfasted at 5.15, moved off at 6 a.m., with a pretty solid load—120 rounds of ammunition besides tin hat, rifle, gas helmet and swag. Got aboard the train at the siding in one of those wagons used for either *chevaux* (8) or *hommes* (40). About 8 a.m. we moved slowly in the direction of Boulogne, passed over the canal of that city, and then through a tunnel filled with sulphurous smoke in which some of us found our box respirators useful. Passed through some vast quarries and engineers' dumps in which Hun prisoners were working, or were supposed to be. They all laughed derisively at us.

The journey was very interesting. We passed through several large towns, and saw a base containing dozens of locomotives and a few tanks. Often we crossed over canals where the Inland Waterways Division were peacefully piloting their barges. Old men and women who were tilling the fertile fields waved to us as we passed by. For several miles we travelled on top of the trucks for a change of air and scenery, but at length had to get down on the platform at St Omer after a stirring lecture by a Tommy Staff Lieutenant on "discipline," as it should be respected by "you damned Colonials who think you can do just whatever you damn well like." (Cheers.)

While we were sitting in the open doorway of the truck, admiring the view, Jack Huggins remarked that two British planes flying above us looked as though they might collide. His neighbour argued that they might actually be a mile apart, for distances in the air are deceptive. A second later they did bang into each other, and, locked together, fell slowly towards the earth. Soon one lost a wing, which fluttered like a leaf in an autumn wind. Someone remarked that the broken propellers are used in place of wooden crosses.

Eventually we arrived at the town of Hazebrouck where we were shunted around on railway sidings for over an hour. Finally we marched a couple of miles over a cobbled road to a camp near a farmhouse. We dumped our packs on the grass of a field at 5 p.m. and were told that this was to be our bivvy for the night—quite all right as long as it doesn't rain. I can now sleep any end up.

June 13. Had the morning off, so did some washing, then went to sleep under a hedge, waking just as the midday scramble for sustenance was over. In the afternoon, coats off, we all went down to a canal about two miles away for a swim. The narrow lane, winding by several white-walled farmhouses was very pretty. Three or four of the houses had large cage-like dog-wheels, one of which was being trundled round by a big black mastiff.

The swim wasn't at all bad, but in clambering out of the canal I skidded down a pile of the retaining wall on my back and had to get the skin over my spinal column bandaged by the medical orderly.

June 14. At 3 a.m. was awakened by a very heavy bombardment, possibly a barrage preceding an advance by our boys. When next I woke the sun was shining. Three or four yards away I discovered the prostrate forms of Hedley and Murray Scott of the Divvy Sigs. (Di-

visional Signal Corps), who had been ushered into the paddock during the night.

At 8.15 all engineers in camp were marched off to the N.Z. Stationary Hospital in Hazebrouck. There we set to work in the yard erecting some Nissen Bow Huts, patent contrivances with semi-circular roofs of heavy corrugated iron, wood floors and all parts ready for bolting together. While passing by a large tent on the way to the shed in the hospital yard where the coffins are knocked together, I was hailed and ordered to fetch a bucket of water. Inside the tent a couple of young medical officers were holding a post mortem on the brain pan of an Air Force pilot, probably one of the two who crashed the day before yesterday. It was all strange to me. I excused myself from the job of assisting further on the grounds that I was not a hospital orderly, and went chasing coffin nails, which was more cheerful.

June 15. A very hot day. We are still on the hospital job and likely to be so for a week or more. In the morning a huge amount of war supplies passed along our street, a whole division of troops, chains of lorries of all units, and many troops of cavalry.

We were greatly amused at the antics of the French blacksmith and his helpers while fitting iron tyres on cart wheels in the smithy nearby. They got so hot and excited about it. The boy was cursed so vehemently for failing to do the right thing at the right time. It would have made a hilarious turn for a vaudeville show.

In the evening we again went swimming in the canal.

June 16. Reveille this morning was most entertaining. I dimly remember being awakened at dawn, about 4 a.m., by a tremendous bellowing close at hand. Someone had let a few cows into our paddock. They strayed over many of the recumbent figures, which of course came suddenly to life. In one corner of the hedge there was a regular

mêlée between four cows and six men in shirt tails, who called the cows "cows" and meant it.

Had to pack our swags, then moved off at 8.15 to new quarters in a marquee alongside our job. We toiled more or less through an exceptionally hot midsummer day, then wandered into the Square for some coolers. We are still sleeping on grass, but regret having left the pleasant field of Morbecque. In no other camp have I been able to lie in long grass under the shade of big trees, or enjoy a life free from the bugbears of drill and discipline.

June 17, Sunday. Woke up in the morning to the fact that we were required to work as usual, but didn't get much done, mainly on account of the heat. After dinner two of us went for a swim in a pool just beyond the railway station. We were favoured with the company of a dozen Fritz prisoners while in the water. Their French guards watched them from the bank. The water was tepid and not very cooling.

After tea, we toured the town and devoured a considerable quantity of fruit. Cherries and strawberries were fairly cheap, but for grapes we were asked to pay six francs a bunch, while pineapples were eight francs each. Much cheaper to buy grapes in a bottle, and pineapple in a tin. I am told that in the line "pineapples" are served up free by Fritz.

June 18. Each day seems to be hotter than the previous one. Our heavy uniforms seem to have been designed for winter conditions. Rain showers in mid-afternoon cooled the air. Had a carpentering job hanging doors in the huts. The programme at the divisional cinema at night was excellent.

June 19. Did my washing after dinner. Rain in the evening prevented us from taking the usual stroll. I passed the hours reading a French novel.

June 20. Arrangements are being made for swimming

sports to be held on Sunday. Shortly after tea, six of us repaired to the swimming pool to practise for the relay race in which good time should be made, for we are unimpeded by swimming togs, which are not on issue. As we commenced proceedings, a very heavy shower came on and we had to get into the water to avoid getting wet. Our clothes, which were stacked in a leaky boathouse, became a little over half soaked.

In town we discovered an appetite, and to go with it some omelettes served by an old lady who knew little English, but obligingly conversed with us for half an hour in a variety of French we could understand.

June 21. Put on a spurt in the morning and nearly finished our job, so slept half the afternoon. Just before tea we received orders to shift our quarters to new digs in a school in the next street, not as convenient as our tent but quite comfortable. I don't quite know what I mean by that unless it is that the section of floor I sleep on is under a window. The oldest hand amongst us, a driver who talks of doings on the Peninsula, has sorted himself out a secluded possie inside a large cupboard and passes on his carefully chosen words of advice to the youngsters through the half-open door.

June 22. Finished our hut.

June 23. Started a new one.

June 24, Sunday. As there has been some slackness on the job, particularly on the part of some who are returning to the line for another dose after having been wounded, and I don't altogether blame them, we have been instructed to start work at 6.30 a.m. in future. However, this morning no one got up till just on breakfast time.

At morning parade there was a call for volunteers for work in the hospital. A list of jobs was read out. Jack, to every one's surprise, yelled eagerly for the first job offering, that of scrubbing out the stone-flagged corridors.

He afterwards said he could have sold the job for 100 francs. He knew about hospitals.

I volunteered to lend a hand in the quartermaster's store. This proved to be the work of sorting out all the hospital washing, also clothing removed from wounded men—some of the stuff in a ghastly state. Most of the articles had to be bundled into the two steam disinfecting wagons stationed in the yard. As compensation we were promised the afternoon off. The others were to stick to their jobs, but strange to say only two turned up after dinner. Shortly afterwards, they disappeared. While in the Q.M.'s store, I took an opportunity of getting down on a brand new pair of slacks and threw my own in with the mutilated remains.

So Eric Morilleau and I took a walk along the Cassel road until we came to a windmill as picturesque as any to be seen in the pages of *Don Quixote*. Just as we were about to pass on, a breeze sprang up and the young miller came on the job. We assisted him to crank up by traversing the whole mill to the required direction and heaving on the sails. In return he showed us over the mill, pointing out machine-gun bullet holes made by a squadron of Uhlans who passed that way in 1914. It was built in 1768 and had the names of all successive owners and hands carved on the great beams.

Having returned to the billets, at 6 p.m. I swam in a relay race against the poultice wallopers from the hospital. Six a side, 250 yards. We lost by about 25 yards, but it was a good go.

June 25. Worked and slept.

June 26. Immediately after tea took a walk out to the aerodrome—an hour's solid going. Saw several planes rise and descend, also witnessed some circus stunts by a new plane being given a try-out. An obliging sergeant showed us the working parts of one of the planes and

some of the parts that don't always work. First time I have been close to an aeroplane.

At 11.30 p.m. a Fritz plane paid us a visit and met with the usual hot reception from the anti-aircraft guns, aided by searchlights. He came over the town no less than four times, so there was plenty of noise. Shrapnel pattered down on the tiled roof of the school and a dud whizzed down somewhere close at hand. As the old hands say, everything that goes up must come down.

June 27. My particular job was hanging and adjusting fanlights. A little knowledge of the use of woodworking tools is very useful.

Had tea in the Square, strawberries and cream, followed by an altercation, not so sweet, with Mademoiselle over the true value of a glass which I accidentally knocked off the table. A Tommy artillery captain who was apparently experienced in such matters, came to my rescue and advised me to plank down half the amount asked. This I did, and we marched out to the tune of loud lamentations—"brigands, thieves and rogues."

The declining sun still shone brightly, casting deep shadows on the buildings round the Square. Having a pad of paper in my pocket, I took a notion to try a sketch and climbed the staircase of a printing establishment. I sat at the window of the empty upper stair hall and got to work. When the sketch was but half finished, a rather pretty fair-haired mademoiselle came down the stairs from above and glanced over my shoulder to see what I was doing. She made no comment, and straightaway scuttled off downstairs to the street. Two minutes later she was back accompanied by a Tommy sergeant of the Military Police, red hat, revolver and all.

I was about to be arrested as a spy. Only a Boche spy would be making a sketch of the Square and all the soldiers. The M.P. asked a few questions and on demand

I fished out my pay-book for his inspection. He winked at me, and in fluent French at once started to comfort the lady with endearing words, telling me to hop it while he went upstairs to take down the evidence. Some people like them brainless.

June 28. Three of us, having worked hard all yesterday, intended to knock off an hour or two earlier in the afternoon and proceed to the aerodrome. I had been promised a flight for this afternoon and was keenly looking forward to it. Pilots delight in taking new chums for a joy ride, and I was resolved not to show any signs of sickness when we landed, which we were sure to do some time or other. However, bad luck cut me short again and the trip in the sky didn't come off.

At 11.30 news came that we were all to proceed up the line immediately, if not sooner. Downed tools and went to the billets to pack up. Did not move off till 3 p.m., as some of our mob had strayed. We then hoofed it underneath our swags to our former camp at Morbecque, where we found only a bare paddock and an officer who hunted up a motor lorry for us.

Moved off at 5.30 and had an hour's run to the Engineers' Base Camp near Steenwerck. Here we were billeted in the loft of a farmhouse. Took off my boots and retired for the night deep down in the straw; had rather a rough passage with rats and some insects like mosquitoes. One man claims to have seen a rat perched on his knee. There was a thunderstorm at dusk, and I saw the lightning strike one of our observation balloons, causing a big explosion thereof. The observer dropped quite a distance before he pulled the rip cord of his parachute. I am told they are given a period of rest after the excitement of having to get out in a hurry.

During the night I received unto my bosom my first

quota of greybacks. They must have queued up in the straw waiting their turn to clamber aboard me while I lay asleep. Now I come to think of it, the old hands gallantly permitted the new chums to enjoy the luxury of the straw and contented themselves with the bare boards of the floor.

CHAPTER XV

THE DIVISION RESTS

June 29. Our first orders were to move off at 10 a.m., but the lorry didn't arrive till five hours later. Went a few miles along the road and were dumped at Engineers' Headquarters at Vieux Berquin. Our mob of twenty-four was split up amongst the four Field Companies. We who came from the infantry camp at Sling have been attached to No. 3 Company.

After tea we went for a walk "round the block." Bought a hatful of ripe cherries for half a franc, but you could see our boys up nearly all the trees. The noise of gunfire is now very pronounced. Heard many stories about the taking of Messines Ridge by our division three weeks ago.

June 30. Our party was split up among the four sections of No. 3 Company according to occupation in civil life. Each company of engineers is supposed to have its complement of bricklayers, blacksmiths, carpenters, surveyors and what not. How some of the ex-bookie's clerks in this outfit qualified as engineers is a puzzle to me.

I am with No. 4 Section. I shifted my swag to the barn of a picturesque half-timbered farmhouse, finding a comfortable possie in a corner amongst some pea straw which is guaranteed pure. Time will tell.

After dinner we went for a hot bath to a town some

BILLETS IN A BARN, DOULIEU.

miles distant, over an hour's ride in the pontoon wagon. At the baths you stand under one of several hot showers formed of an oil drum suspended from the ceiling of the shed and rub down with your own soap, if you have brought it, or borrow a lump from someone else. If you stay long enough the shower goes cold without your having to move over to the "cold" department. One great advantage of the baths is that you get your shirt and underclothing changed—saves a lot of washing.

July 1, Sunday. Church parade at 10 a.m. Saw all four companies of field engineers lined up, rather a good show. The day was cool and the roads bad, so hung around the bivvy all day. One of the boys named Grantham, commonly known as "Grannie," is permanent cook for the section, and as there is a mess fund with which to purchase a few little extras, such as a variety of fresh vegetables and tinned goods, we have some jolly fine feeds. The cooking is the best I've submitted to yet in the army.

Judging by the number of courses, the meals we have would do honour to an exclusive restaurant. Soup and meat are only two courses, but if in addition we have gravy, potatoes, carrots and parsnips, that is a six-course dinner. If you don't believe it, ask the cook. Or ask the mess-orderly; he points to six large black dixies which have to be washed out. No question about it!

July 2. Morning: Marched out to Sailly, about three miles away, and did rifle exercises and infantry drill in a field alongside a canal. The bridge near by had been blown up by the Germans and temporarily reconstructed by the British. Afternoon: Marched out again to a spot a little farther along the canal and had a swim. The water was very cold. In the evening I walked into Doulieu to visit the canteen and take back general supplies for the section.

July 3. After the usual line-up for scrutiny by the O.C., our morning was taken up by a kit inspection. Discarded my heavy winter underclothing and am now travelling very light. We all had the afternoon off to get into training for the sports to-morrow.

July 4. Drill in the morning for our section, making bridges with the Weldon trestles. In the afternoon, the Engineer Sports Meeting, which was a huge success. There were several races, mounted events, driving competitions, and climbing the greasy pole. For the final event there was a greasy pig race. The pig wasn't much of a goer and our drivers swamped it. First prize the pig.

Had to leave the Sports Ground early to turn out with the guard at Headquarters at 6 p.m. Did my shift from 10 p.m. till 2 a.m. Plenty of noise up the line for the Fourth of July. Slept from 2 a.m. till 7.30 on some straw in a wagon.

July 5. On guard from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and again from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., most uninteresting except for conversations with the girls who came around selling fruit and chocolate. The Major, "Davie" Gibbs, hearing me struggling with the French language, tried me out on it for a while. I admire his very precise pronunciation of "Doulieu," instead of "Dooley-oo" as the troops have it, and "Ça ne fait rien" for the usual "San ferry ann."

July 6. Inspection in the morning by the C.R.E. (Officer Commanding Royal Engineers), at a point about three miles away, so had a nice little route march. All equipment had to be cleaned up to the knocker, in fact past it; all brass on the web equipment had to be polished and the canvas scrubbed.

In the late afternoon and evening Fritz shelled an observation balloon near us with shrapnel at eight minute intervals. After about a dozen shots he was getting the

range too accurately, so the sausage was pulled down with the observer still in the basket.

July 7. I was mess-orderly for the day, and really busy only at meal times. In the morning I went to a farmhouse where they knew not one word of English and negotiated quite successfully for some spuds and peas.

At a much larger farmhouse I also visited, there were two rows of horselines under a dense growth of small trees in the quadrangular courtyard. Happening to notice a tree with bark suspiciously like that of a cherry, I climbed up through the foliage to investigate. A driver who was busily grooming a horse tied to this tree was very curious to know what my game was. When I returned with a hatful of ripe cherries his eyes stuck out like golf balls. He had been valeting horses there for a week. I got out before the rush set in.

July 8, Sunday. Wet day. Church parade in the morning in a damp atmosphere. No excitement whatever—easiest day we've had yet.

July 9. Spent morning cleaning up equipment some more for a ceremonial parade in the afternoon—presentation of decorations for the Messines stunt at a village about four miles away. In the field, representatives of every unit were arranged in a square. A large number of decorations were given out: M.M., D.C.M., M.C., and D.S.O. As each medal was presented, an officer read a brief account of the deed which had earned it. A member of No. 4 Section, Arthur Mackie of Dunedin, was awarded the Military Medal.

July 10. In the field outside the billet, we practised wiring with iron screw pickets and tangles of antagonistic barbed wire.

Having the afternoon free, I set to work on a sketch illustrative of life in French billets for the Divisional Magazine, notice of which came out in Orders. The

farmer's son, little Maurice, aged ten, in braided jacket and boat-shaped cap, sat beside me as I drew, chattering unceasingly. I am beginning to understand his patois.

July 11. Was pulled up by the O.C. at morning inspection for "no shave." Wasn't aware of anything wrong myself, for I had shaved as usual, but the razor was a bit blunt. More wiring practice. From 9 till 10 p.m. had a gas parade, chasing round the paddock at the double in the dark with respirators on.

July 12. On the mat. Short shrift. Sentenced to three days C.B., which fortunately is no worry here at all as you can nearly always dodge the first parade at 6 a.m. by squaring the guard. At 2 p.m. you appear for an hour's pack drill (go and hide somewhere) and at 7.30 p.m. you merely call in and clear out as quickly as possible in case you get a job. In the morning, as the section had gone to the canal pontooning, I was given the job of painting a wagon. We are now getting drill in the afternoon.

July 13. Down at the canal we made a raft of oil-sheets stuffed with straw, and in the afternoon rode to the Divisional Baths, on the pontoon wagon, a very enjoyable jaunt, for the countryside is looking its best just now.

At 7.30 p.m. two of us had our strenuous hour of pack drill—in an *estaminet* about a mile distant, and actually got back to billets late—very cruel of the orderly corporal to keep us doing overtime. The blonde lady who kept the *estaminet* plied us with so many questions about the movements of our troops, that she gave us the impression of being in sympathy with the Germans. We gave her a lot of "news" about our Division, all wrong side up.

July 14. Mess-orderly again, so there is little to report. At tea time we were spectators of an exciting engagement between a Fritz plane and the Sailly sausage. He had two swoops at it with his machine gun going but did no

good. I think our machine guns below made it too warm for him.

A complaint having been received from the owner of the adjoining farm that a dud bomb was reposing in one of his fields, our section officer and two N.C.Os were told off to explode it. This they did by tenderly wrapping on a slab or two of gun-cotton and lighting a time fuse. Quite a sizable hole was made, and what a noise!

July 15, Sunday. Church parade in company with the Machine Gun Section. At 1.30 p.m. I received a leave pass for Estaires, a town about three miles distant, and went in to buy some sketching materials, etc., unprocurable in the surrounding villages.

The Tommy Army Service Corps were holding a sports meeting in a field on the outskirts of the town. About 5 p.m. Fritz started lobbing shells into the railway station nearby. His first shell came screaming right over the sports ground and rather perturbed the civilian spectators. Several of the mademoiselles straightway bolted for the town in a panic, black skirts flying. Their escorts did not seem to know whether to risk losing their dignity by sprinting after their guests, or to stand firm like soldiers unafraid. I'll guarantee the etiquette books give no answer to this one. Most of them walked away very rapidly, trying to appear invisible.

July 16. Made an all day trip to the canal for a bit of pontoon drill. Juggled around with Weldon trestles all morning, making bridges then taking them apart again. Had a swim to work up an appetite for the dry bread and jam dinner. We held an impromptu sports meeting after dinner—sculling races of about 220 yards down river in the pontoons. Got home to be informed I was booked for guard duty. Struck the last shift, 2 to 6 a.m.

July 17. On guard duty all day. Whiled away some of the time on my early morning sentry-go by writing letters

after daybreak. Orders are out for a move up the line to-morrow.

July 18. Kits packed first thing and billets cleaned out. Said good-bye to the farmer and his family. Very decent people they were, and very kind to us. When the troops were lined up ready to depart, the eldest girl shed as many tears as if she had just lost a near relation. Well, she wasn't mourning for me. Went along to Headquarters and managed to score a bike for the trip. Passed through Steenwerck and so on to De Seule which has lately been under shell-fire, three *estaminets* having been caught. Spent the night in a hut at Watts' lines.

July 19. All the men of No. 4 Section except myself went to have a look over the trenches we are to occupy. I was left behind in the capacity of mess-orderly and did great execution amongst the spuds. Half the section went up the line to stay there permanently.

July 20. At 1.30 p.m. I climbed aboard the pontoon wagon to go to the baths at Pont de Nieppe, only a short distance from Armentières. This is the first smacked-up town I've been in, and there's little of it left undamaged. The church has no roof, and the Town Hall isn't there any longer. Few of the inhabitants remain. Those who have stuck it out look careworn and anxious.

The baths are in a big brick brewery beside a canal. You slip into a huge vat filled with hot water up to your neck and are enthusiastically greeted by the half dozen bathers already there. Each group of performing seals is allowed only five minutes. If this brewery survives the war and is again opened for business, the flavour of its brew should become world famous—beer with body in it.

The building is frequently a target for shells, and there have been occasions for a general exodus to the village streets of a large number of men wearing nothing but startled expressions. During our occupation of the

bathroom a couple of shells landed in the canal, but no additional holes were made in the walls or roof, so we carried on. I changed my shirt, as some of the eggs were starting to hatch out, but the one I got in exchange proved to be even less to my liking; so full of presumably dead eggs in the seams that I didn't fancy wearing it after I got home. The laundering and ironing of shirts is done in a room adjoining the vat house by a squad of buxom peasant women.

CHAPTER XVI

TRENCH LIFE

July 21.

> The engineers have a jolly good time,
> Digging the trenches behind the Line,
> Inky, pinky, parley-voo.

The day of my first experience of life in the trenches. Reveille at 5.30 (we got up at 6.25) and moved off at 7 a.m. with everything we possessed. An hour's ride in the wagon brought us to the support lines near Ploegsteert Wood. All buildings round about have been pancaked, and shell holes are to be seen everywhere. Some batteries on our right and left were being strafed continuously. Each man had to carry a bag of rations in addition to his swag, but we soon came to a tramline and put our gear on a trolley. This we pushed up to the support lines, often lifting the whole affair bodily where shells had blown gaps in the line. We reached our particular trench about 9.30 and sorted out bivvies in it, soon making ourselves at home.

In the afternoon we walked up to what was the front line before the recent advance, and inspected our job on which operations are to be conducted at night. At 9.30 p.m., with box respirators at the "ready," and our rifles, we went to our dump to meet a working party of infantry and pick up the required tools. Worked on the job of

raising huge embankments to form trenches across low-lying country. At 1 a.m. we came home as there was a stunt about to come off. Things were fairly quiet. Only three shells landed in our vicinity, the nearest a hundred yards away. There were plenty of star shells going up over Fritz's line.

July 22, Sunday. We were awakened about 9 a.m. by a man with a dixie of bacon and beans. Breakfast in bed is a luxury confined to life in the trenches. Slept till dinner time on the wooden duckboards of which the floor is composed. The sky was blue and cloudless, with plenty of aerial activity and goings on for us to watch. We were also entertained with tales of what can happen on Blighty leave by one of the boys who has just returned, proudly arrayed in his new set of undergarments, which are beautifully handworked and have insertions of blue silk ribbon.

After dinner our heavy guns opened up with great enthusiasm on the town of Deulemont behind "his" line. It was a great thrill to observe a direct hit on a sizable brick house which dissolved into a cloud of dust. In a few minutes it was all over, and when the smoke had cleared away, the once trim and pretty village was hardly recognizable.

At night we worked on our job. On the way there I was warned to keep strictly to the track and on no account to set foot in the long grass for fear of kicking one of the rusty old Mills bombs which have been left carelessly lying about. I was delighted to come across in the infantry party a friend who has often been my companion on fishing and shooting trips during holidays at a bush farm in the Catlins forest. We spent a few minutes having a yarn in the lee of some sandbags. Not a single shell was fired anywhere near us. Knocked off at 2 a.m., just as our guns commenced to open fire. We did not want to

be in the vicinity when Fritz commenced to retaliate. When we reached our trench in the subsidiary lines, the cook had a feed ready for us, and it went down well.

July 23. After dinner, about 1.30, there was some promiscuous lobbing going on and a couple of the shells landed very close to our dugout—one blew a shower of dust into the trench. During this time, the two mess-orderlies, who were crawling about on top, grubbing carrots and parsnips from the garden of the ruined farmhouse behind our trench, had a very narrow squeak. They think they must have been observed.

Owing to infantry changing over, we had no working party for the night, so a few of us set out for our job at 6 p.m. to work till 10 p.m. erecting wicker hurdles to keep earthworks in place. When we were passing through the Forward Dump, the sapper in charge showed us with pride the hole made by a huge dud which had burrowed under a pile of Stokes mortar shells. Half-way to the job, while passing the remains of a farmhouse about two hundred yards on our left, Fritz delivered a few large shells, nine-inch, I think. Bits of shell and earth were flying all over us, but we were moving along an old trench at the time and had plenty of cover.

Before starting work we crossed over what had been No Man's Land, a very short distance too, and had a look at his old front line, sections of which are still standing in spite of the fact that the sandbags are made of paper. Saw some of the concrete dugouts I have heard so much about.

We reached home a little after 10 p.m., just as Fritz was commencing his nightly strafing of our neighbourhood. He very nearly collected the cookhouse. I am told that he landed some whizbangs very close to our bivvy about 3 a.m., but I didn't bother to wake up.

July 24. My turn has come round again to be mess-

orderly, an easy job except for bringing up the rations at night. After dinner I went along the trench a mile or so to visit friends in the Otago Infantry. While I was returning, Fritz delivered five H.E. shrapnel bursts about one hundred feet up, and almost directly above the trench. As each one arrived I made a respectful bow. A nice big piece came humming along and landed with a "plop" in a sandbag six feet away. A miss is as good as a mile.

At 9.40 p.m., I met my partner for the rations job, a mysterious fellow, who is reputed to have a wife living in Paris and speaks French like a native. The rations are landed by the drivers at "1875 Farmhouse," about a mile away, and are supposed to be brought up that tramline on a trolley. We came across four breaks in the line, two of them pretty big hits, so this means of transport was rendered useless.

We found the rations dumped in the farmyard, tipped them into sandbags and carried the lot on our backs, using the trolleys wherever possible, which was not one-third of the way. The tramline is in open ground and a favourite dump for Fritz's iron foundries. With my companion setting the pace and exhorting me not to dally too long in this unhealthy district we covered that stretch in record time. I wanted just one spell, but he told me I was too ignorant to realize the danger. I had one sandbag full of tinned stuff slung over each shoulder and a third balanced on top, so I was nearly bent double. The top load was always falling off in the hurry, and I was tripping over things in the dark and barking my shins. I had over 100 lbs. of stuff aboard. I can ordinarily stagger along under one cwt. for a few yards, but I am no piano shifter.

When at last we reached the cookhouse I was almost completely done in. No sooner had we subsided to rest

than Fritz opened fire with whizbangs, and so shook that cookhouse about that we decided to make for our own bivvies. Fritz has a particular set on cookhouses. We got it all the way along, however, being thrice showered in mud from shells landing close by. A dud skimmed the parapet just behind us and a live one made me pop into the bivvy like a rabbit into a burrow. I was soon asleep and unconscious of the row going on outside.

July 25. Heavy rain during the night made the surrounding clay somewhat sticky. Stayed in the bivvy all day, as there was nothing else to do. An infantry party had been detailed for night work so we floundered through the mud to our job about 10 p.m. All went swimmingly until Fritz opened up with heavy shells, apparently searching for us. He let it fall in threes all over the place, but by a miracle not one landed on our earthworks or wounded a man, though many had narrow escapes. He dropped them alternately over and short of our trench. One landed fourteen yards from the bay where I was keeping my head down. No work was done after 11.30 though we hung on till 2 a.m., expecting the bombardment to cease at any moment. When time was up we were glad to leave and he may be shelling the place yet for all I know.

While we were coming down the communication sap, our guns opened fire. The continual flash almost blinded us so that we were bumping into all sorts of obstacles and continually floundering into water through holes in the duckboards. The man who was wallowing along in my rear kept muttering a form of imprecation that is new to me. It consisted of an interminable list of all the diseases that man is heir to or can acquire. In civilian life he must have been a doctor's clerk.

July 26. Got up about 11 a.m. and packed my few belongings. Breakfast was brought round under whizbang fire, but none of the tucker was spoiled. Moved off

about 1 p.m., and swagged it for a couple of miles or so over fields that grow only shell holes, till we reached the road where the pontoon wagon was to be waiting for us. Of course it wasn't so after a spell we dumped our swags and hoofed it, meeting the wagon half a mile down the road. Got a lift back to our camp at Watts' lines whence we started for the trenches a week ago.

CHAPTER XVII

TRENCHES ON PAPER

July 27. Most of the section are on guard duty. Some have gone to work at the Catacombs, a huge dugout near Red Lodge. I was one of the lucky ones they forgot, and so had the day off. Lay on the cool grass beneath the trees amongst a group of infantry men engaged in a microscopic inspection of their shirts.

July 28. The heat inside the huts was stifling. Mess-orderly again, but it is only an hour's work in the day. We missed our bath yesterday because the baths we should have gone to had some heavy weights dropped on them and got badly bent.

Accordingly, three of us walked over after dinner to the Australian baths and did the business there. Was issued this time with a shirt minus the eggs. The trouble with these baths is that the Aussies don't like wearing sleeves on their shirts, and hack the offending members off near the shoulders, apparently with the blunt edge of a bayonet.

In the evening I worked on a design to be submitted in the competition for the Engineers' Christmas card. Fancy worrying about Christmas in July! But time must be allowed for printing and for despatch to New Zealand at the rate of ten knots per hour.

July 29, Sunday. About 8 a.m. I observed the boys getting dolled up for church parade, so discovered it was

Sunday. Half-way through the sermon the sky darkened so much that one could not see to read. I thought we were experiencing an eclipse of the sun, but apparently it was only the gathering of storm clouds on account of the heat.

It rained all afternoon and I put in my time working on that Christmas card which I finished in the orderly room with the aid of some coloured pencils. While I was there, our O.C. came in for some maps and inquired the names of the draughtsmen in the company. When told that one such was working in a corner of the room, he interviewed me, and sorted me out for the job.

July 30. Worked in the orderly rom all day plotting a maze of new trenches on old maps and found the work fairly interesting.

July 31. Draughting all morning. In the afternoon I went with our section to the baths at Pont de Nieppe, which we found still in commission. Managed to strike a brand new shirt. Received a "pair" of socks, one brown and the other grey.

August 1. Put in rather a rough night. I happen to be sleeping under the stove-pipe hole through the roof, and some time during the night it came on to rain very heavily. At 4 a.m. I awoke to find myself lying in a pool of water with my greatcoat soaked through in one place. I struck a light and shifted down to the bottom end of the hut near the door. Then a kitten started to kick up a row, wanting to be let inside. I didn't let it in. There was also the noise of a terrific bombardment going on all the time.

It rained heavily all day till dark. I spent all morning and part of the afternoon comparing maps of No. 1 Company's lines, two miles away. About 4 p.m., Fritz dropped four shells close by, rather shaking the orderly room about

with the concussion. One shot went clean through the trunk of a large elm tree which naturally snapped off.

August 2. A very wet day. By now there is plenty of mud and slush everywhere. The day seemed to acquire an added miserableness because it was my twenty-first birthday, and there was nothing and nobody to remind me that this was supposed to be a day of importance in my life. Had I been at home, things would have been different.

In the morning I paddled through the mud to the Romoron Camp for further particulars of trenches and strong points.

August 3. Still raining hard. In the afternoon, they piled about a week's work on to me, so started to go for it. A committee met to select the winning Christmas card and verse. The winning design is simply the engineer's badge and motto on a scroll, suitable for reproduction in one colour, drawn by Lieut. M. K. Draffin, who was an Auckland architect. The mistake I made was in trying to be funny, doing a sort of Heath Robinson conception in three colours, of a party of engineers building a trestle bridge.

At 6.30 p.m. our section moved up into the trenches again, taking up residence in the Catacombs, but on account of my new job I have to stay behind. I'd far sooner be amongst the rough stuff with them again, than hanging around here, shaving and button cleaning every morning and being chivvied about by my immediate superiors.

August 4. Heavy rain all day which was uneventful.

August 5, Sunday. Worked all day on the maps as usual—nothing to indicate that it was Sunday. On coming back to the hut for tea I discovered a bundle of no less than sixteen letters reposing on my bunk—the largest mail I've ever had. But they were all months old letters

that had gone astray; letters I had given up hopes of ever receiving.

August 6. Started off after dinner and went to the Palmer Baths (Australian), but found I should not be allowed in before 4 p.m. As it was only 1.30, I came back and joined a party on the way to our own baths at Pont de Nieppe. As I was leaving the ex-brewery, I met the section just in from the line. On returning to Company Headquarters we learned that a shell which landed in the transport lines during our absence had smacked up four horses.

August 7. A little after 9 p.m., when I was thinking of going to bed, I was sent for by the O.C., and given instructions to go up to Brigade Headquarters, get particulars of the new front line from the sketches there and proceed to the Catacombs with the information. It was a beautiful moonlight night so I enjoyed the bike ride. The roads were good except through Ploegsteert Wood. I got away from Headquarters with the corrected map at 11 p.m., and by midnight was at the famous dugout, having found my way by the road map, which I had carefully memorized.

In the gloom I could not see the entrance, which is marked by the figure of a large kangaroo, cut from a sheet of tin; so hailed and was picked up by a major who guided me to my own officers. The Catacombs, with its long passageways and rows of bunks in tiers reminded me of the interior of a troopship. The place seemed to be ill-ventilated and was very close and damp. I found No. 4 Section down one of the alleys. The place is electrically lighted till 11 p.m., and blowers are installed to circulate the air a bit. Its great advantage is that it has about thirty feet of earth on top through which no shell can penetrate. The entrance is dangerous, being unprotected. Next morning about 9 a.m. two men were killed

there while talking to Bill Fix, who guided me to the door when I left at 1 a.m. I had the road all to myself and reached home within the hour.

August 8. When up at Brigade Headquarters last night, I heard mentioned the name of a cousin, who is Officer-in-Charge of Brigade Signals, and whom I had never met. In the evening I went up to Romoron again and introduced myself. We withdrew to his hut and yarned for a couple of hours. While there a few shells fell uncomfortably close to the hut. We both lay flat on the floor till the bombardment was over. Some landed in the camp across the road. One found the Divisional Band, two men being killed and several wounded. Then came a heavy thunderstorm. When this had cleared off I made a break for home.

August 9. During the night many bombs dropped about the neighbourhood. One of them settled both General Braithwaite's horses in Romoron Camp. Had to go up to Headquarters in the afternoon to get further particulars from their maps.

Bob Evans of our section was killed in the trenches by a whizbang. His inseparable cobber, "Beauty," will miss him sorely. I assisted in the sad duty of parcelling up Bob's few effects for return to his next-of-kin.

August 10. All my maps are in use at the Catacombs, so there was little to do. About 7.30 p.m. we watched a thrilling parachute descent by the observer of the Nieppe balloon which was being shelled. On his way down he was very nearly collected by a low burst of shrapnel.

August 11. Worked all day setting out strong points on paper. Terrific thunderstorm at night. The first crash of thunder was so sharp and sudden that we thought it was the noise of a certain ammunition dump going up. It proved to be a cloud burst over Fritz's lines and many of our trenches became filled right up with water.

August 12, Sunday. Enough work came in to keep me busy for a Sunday morning. In the afternoon I took a walk as I haven't had much exercise lately. Fritz was shelling our balloons as usual, and while on the road home I saw a hunk of eight-inch shell come down looking like a cricket ball in flight. It just missed arriving as a big stake in the circle of an Aussie two-up school which was open for business in a field behind an *estaminet.*

August 13. Beginning to think I've got a soft job as I have plenty of time to spare.

August 14. First thing in the morning I had a bike ride up to 4th Field Company H.Q., and as the country was new to me, I made an extended tour of it on the way home.

August 15. Hurt my right knee a little in a wrestling match on my bunk during one of the usual roughups, so had to go slow all day.

August 16. Swelling subsiding and condition improving. Just about "lights out" there was a grand commotion up above, caused by a couple of Fritz planes on an egg-laying expedition, searchlights, A-A guns, machine guns and our pursuit planes. But as is usually the case, after a while Fritz decided to go home for another load of bombs. Once more quietness reigned serene, and it was safe to lessen the gloom with the aid of an issue candle.

August 17. Plenty of work came in, but I was allowed an hour off in the afternoon to go to Palmer Baths for a wash. Found them closed owing to water supply being cut off. "Thousands turned away." This is the second time these baths have let me down.

August 18. Again, just at dusk, a Fritz plane came over to drop his load, but the Steenwerck searchlight picked him up in next to no time, causing him to get the wind up and jettison his cargo of five bombs which whaffed down almost as quickly as one can count. Our

A-A guns stirred him up a treat. The shooting was very exciting to watch. The plane, mercilessly held in the white beam of a searchlight, looked like a tiny strip of burnished gold. But Fritz was doomed. He was overtaken by a fast pursuit plane which pumped him full of lead. Down he came, a gyrating ball of fire, leaving in his train a pillar of dense black smoke which hung for a long time in the still air

August 19, Sunday. Worked at my job all evening. At dusk four enemy planes were picked up in our search-lights, but I do not think they were the slow-moving bombers, for though our planes waged a valiant combat, they did not succeed in repeating last night's success. We have long since learned to distinguish the intermittent droning noise of a Fritz plane from the steady hum made by our machines.

August 20. In the afternoon I took a walk over to the baths, cross country through fields where the crops are now all stooked.

Started off at 5.30 to walk to the picture show at Romoron. Found a "full house" so shortly afterwards returned to camp. Met Harry Johnston who informed me that Donald Hosie, a fellow student of ours was camped not far away with the Otago Infantry Battalion. We looked him up and had a yarn for a while. It must be exactly a year to-day since I last saw him. Hearing that Frazer Barton was also camped nearby, and that they were all pulling out next morning, I went over to visit him. Imagine my surprise, when on being shown into his hut in the gloom, I encountered instead Jack Bathgate and Maurice Claris. They quickly had me bumped down hard on the floor and sat on me. When I had recovered breath I was called upon to account for my doings. Shortly afterwards Frazer came in. We sang all our favourite quartettes and made much noise. I had thought Jack was

still in hospital, but he has recovered. Here they had been living for the last five days within five hundred yards of our lines, and I had no knowledge of their presence. Accidental meetings are very enjoyable.

August 21. During the night we had a little taste of Fritz's gas. About 3 a.m. a sentry came round creating an awful noise to waken everybody. We all started coughing and sneezing for we were getting a dose of the new patent mustard gas. This was followed by a wave of phosgene. Only a very small quantity of the gas penetrated inside our hut and none of us bothered to wear our helmets, though the occupants of other huts had them on for an hour or so. Evidently some mixed gas shells had been dumped over near Romoron, and the slight breeze was gently wafting the poisonous fumes in our direction.

August 22. Rumours of a shift for this crowd, and another stunt up north. A fairly hot day. In such weather, these huts with their black tarred coverings are like hothouses, and it is much cooler outside. They are also very much infested with flies.

August 23. After dinner, while under some trees near the orchard, I indulged in a little nature study. Consider the leaves of the aspen, how they grow; they toil not, but they do spin! I discovered why the leaves of this tree are in a constant flutter in the slightest breeze. They have a double curve like an aeroplane propeller, and the wind, striking the concave half of the leaf, turns it round till the long flexible stem will permit it to go no further. The stem then unwinds and so it goes on. A restful study of restlessness.

August 24. Immediately after tea, Kaye and I took a walk to the Divisional Theatre at Nieppe, where there was a very fine programme, first pictures and then the "Kiwis," the N.Z. Pierrots. Being wingless birds they cannot escape any half-bricks or other confetti which may

come their way. Their stunt was a lot better than I expected; in fact this troupe is reckoned to be one of the cleverest on the whole front. There was a gay pantomime in which the jovial and rotund Dave Kenny of Wellington appeared as a rather matronly Fairy Queen, dressed in white, with a garland of flowers on her perspiring brow.

August 25. We move out to-morrow. Spent a busy day and evening getting maps and all gear in order for handing over to the incoming company of engineers.

Most of the section, who were out on the spree to celebrate their return from the Catacombs, wandered home about 11 p.m. As there were not enough bunks to go round and some of the Catacombs crowd were faced with having to sleep on the floor, it was decided that all those possessing bunks should do it hard as well. One by one, the protesting owners were emptied out and the bunks tugged about until not one timber remained upon the other. All the debris was stacked in the middle of the floor. I managed to get to sleep unobserved about 1 a.m., and before it was all ended.

CHAPTER XVIII

ARCADIAN INTERLUDE

August 26, Sunday. We breakfasted at 7 a.m., and soon had our packs in marching order. The Tommy R.E. Company who are to relieve us, arrived at 9.30, just as we were setting out. Shortly after passing through Bailleul, where the cobblestones, slippery as glass, threw some of us, we were advised to dump our packs in a pontoon wagon, and went on our way rejoicing. Every half hour there was a halt of ten minutes. About 2.30, when passing through Caestre, we picked up our advance party of cyclists, and in another half hour were at our destination, a large brick farmhouse two miles from Hazebrouck.

I was rather surprised to find I was familiar with the place, which is only one hundred yards or so from the windmill we inspected one Sunday afternoon when we were on the hospital job. We had tea, and sorted out possies for ourselves on the floor of a huge draughty barn. About 7 p.m. Morilleau and I felt an urge to revisit some of our old haunts in Hazebrouck. Just as we reached the town it came on to rain heavily, but we took no notice of that. Near the hospital, which has now been evacuated, we saw a four-story house which had been hit by one of Fritz's 16-inch shells, and had collapsed internally. All the windows in the street had been shattered by the concussion, and the shopkeepers we used to know had all

fled. A little further on we were directed to go through an alleyway to see the father of all shell craters, now one of the sights of the town. This shell landed squarely between fences of a backyard and was responsible for the loss of nine lives. The hole was forty feet in diameter and about fifteen feet deep. On the rim of the crater, near the back door of the house, there reposed the corpse of one large black domestic cat.

Shells have been dropped all over the town which has now only one-third of the population it had two months ago. The great square was deserted, with not a light visible. While we walked home it still rained heavily, with the result that we got as wet as could be expected. All the dry clothing I could find in my pack was a cardigan, a pair of socks, and my greatcoat. In these, every half hour or so, I went to sleep.

August 27. It rained heavily all day, and was bitterly cold. The only things to do were to sleep or read. I had brought with me *The Lightning Conductor*, by C. N. and A. M. Williamson, which I judged must be a well-written book because the united brains of two authors were required for its composition. At 2 p.m. there was an inspectional parade to make up shortages of gear. I wish I had a few shortages so that there would be less to carry.

August 28. Slept all morning in the warmest corner I could find, and in the afternoon wrote letters. There were no parades. Besides rain there was a high wind which was turning the wheel of the mill in spite of all sails being furled.

About tea time the weather was kind enough to clear up and the gravel surfaced roads rapidly became dry. Why can't the French have these roads everywhere instead of that jolting *pavé*? Went for a walk to a neighbouring village and returned at dusk. In the window of

an *estaminet* I saw a curious example of English as she is spelt. "We sell heer," amongst other things, "Fruet, Ananas, Pears, Peache, Apple and Sardine's, Cooked Lunch Tongue, Biscuit."

August 29. We were awakened by the guard at 4 a.m., but did not turn out till an hour later when breakfast of bacon and beans was ready. We quickly packed our kits and moved off at 6 a.m. Many fellows lost their blankets through the action of our O.C. in ruthlessly chucking them out of a limber in which they were concealed. I had none so was one of those who laughed. Marched about three miles to Caestre railway station. We had two hours of solid work as a loading party, getting all our limbers and horses and those of several infantry companies aboard our train, which didn't move off till 11 a.m.

We reached the little town of Wizernes, past St Omer, about 2 p.m., and then had all the fun of unloading again in pouring rain. We got things off with a rush, so much so that we landed a machine-gun company's limber on the ground wrong side up, and it took a lot of setting upright. The only damage done was to someone's rifle, which was bent to an elegant curve, making it suitable only for shooting round corners.

After a cup of tea and some biscuits at a hastily rigged up Y.M.C.A. shelter, we lined up for the march to our billets, which we were informed lay twenty miles away. Averaging $2\frac{1}{2}$ m.p.h., any one who cared to keep going would get there at 1 a.m. I'm afraid most of us would have turned up about two days late. But our O.C. has his good points, and managed to charter half a dozen motor buses of the old London type. I was lucky enough to score a seat on the upper deck, and away we went, up hill and down dale, through leafy hollows, clustered villages, and over bleak ridges. It was a glorious trip, and the scenery towards the end was very beautiful.

The journey occupied an hour and a bit. We found ourselves dumped at the locality of Longueville, the only building in sight on the hillside being the railway station.

A turn to the left, and a walk of a mile down a winding hedge-bordered road brought us to our billets, which I don't think are very great considering the distance we've come. I secured a good possie in a sort of offset to a barn, formerly used as a vegetable store. The "ginties" (N.C.Os), being shrewd men, monopolized the farmhouse kitchen and bought up all available bread, and eggs, which they boiled. At 7 p.m., not having had a decent feed for fourteen hours and seeing no prospect of one being supplied by the outfit, as the transport hadn't arrived, the company tailor and I decided to explore Longueville on a foraging expedition. We found an *estaminet* of a sort but 'twas liquid only, so tried a house. The place we entered was the home of the village cobbler, and his wife was able to supply us with *deux oeufs omelettes*, and coffee. The cobbler obligingly turned on his most distinct style of speech, and we managed to understand each other quite all right. He had four little ones, three girls and a boy, and that family seemed as affectionate and happy as one could wish. The little girls, who were decidedly pretty, all paraded at 8 o'clock to kiss the guests good night. A custom of the country, and a very nice one.

August 30. Find we are in for no rest, just the usual. Parade at 10 a.m. followed by a two-hour route march along the foot of a hill, through leafy lanes, and home across the wind-swept fields at the top. The country is undulating and very richly wooded; the landscape is a maze of high hedgerows and clumps of big trees. We are about fifteen miles inland from Boulogne; from the hilltops on a clear day one can see the waters of the Channel. "Miles from nowhere," too, the nearest large village be-

ing four miles away. Some of the boys growl like blazes because it is such a route march to the nearest beer.

I could write pages on the beauties of the hedgerows which enclose the byways and lanes so that often one is unable to see into the fields on either hand. All the queer kinds of berries that grow in them are almost ripe. Soon we shall be having feasts of blackberries. The clematis, which has now lost its petals, and displays the seed surrounded by a halo of white threads, must have been a sight worth coming far to see.

August 31. Still raining. Had a trek of a few miles in the morning, full packs, and all transport on the road. Called a halt in a lane where there were any amount of hazel nuts to be had in the hedgerows. Shortly afterwards I saw nestling in a quiet nook in the hills, the most picturesque group of farm buildings possible to imagine, brick walls mellowed with time, moss-grown tiles, smoke from quaint chimneys rising straight up amidst the overshadowing trees, an artist's paradise. I must go back there some day.

After tea we had a march past of the geese on the farm, the section cook taking the salute. The best pair was halted for further examination.

September 1. A miserable wet day. In the morning we walked up to the plateau behind Longueville for instruction in map reading and location. The O.C. put me through a severe cross-examination and chuckled with delight when at last he bowled me out on a point relating to the reading of magnetic bearings. He had it all off so pat that I think he must have put in the whole of last evening cramming up the subject

In the afternoon, when we were supposed to go for a little route march and record a compass traverse of the winding road, our section officer kindly guided us to

the Divisional Canteen. I expect the traverse was worked up from the map afterwards.

September 2, Sunday. A day of the kind most worth having—all day off and no parades, besides perfect weather. In the still air we could hear the deep-toned tolling of the bell of Desvres, miles away across the fields.

Every morning now we parade from 7 to 7.30 for physical jerks, and a run as far as the nearest crossroads. This gets up a fine appetite for dinner. The geese went *tout de suite*, there being great content among the guests at our hotel.

September 3. Had one of the best picnics possible in this outfit. At the drivers' quarters we loaded up with some ropes, an axe, and a maul, then went to look for a certain stream. A short distance past Henneveux we got on the wrong road, but eventually came to the bank of a very pretty little stream in time to have lunch. After that, having selected a poplar on either bank, we rigged up a passable suspension bridge. There was, of course, no planking, but several of us managed to scramble across. Then, having dismantled our creation, we marched joyfully home in time for tea.

September 4. On the mess-orderly stunt. As there is now only one orderly allowed for the day, there is plenty to do in the morning, but the afternoon is free. The sole source of water supply for general washing purposes is the duck pond in the yard. This water is brownish in colour and full of tiny living things, so that a wash has to be just a lick and a promise. Moreover, if you have a cut on hands or face it stings like blazes. The water for cooking purposes is drawn from a deep well at the rear of the farmhouse by means of an oaken bucket on a chain and windlass. The well is much patronized by one of the corporals, who winds up all the water for the red-

haired girl in the farmhouse, and I had to wait my turn. I like to see these fellows doing some real toil.

After dinner I had a hot bath, and boiled my shirt for a couple of hours, together with some soap and creosol, hoping that this would unstock the farm. Just my luck! After tea the ration wagon brought every one a change of shirt, socks, and towel, and last but not least, a blanket. I enjoyed a pleasant sleep till awakened at 2 a.m. to go on guard for a prisoner till 6 a.m., so after getting dressed, resumed my sleep, knowing the prisoner, who had wandered back to the happy home completely broke after a week or two of Paris without leave, would not depart without his breakfast. Woke up at sunrise. Prisoner still snoring lustily and dreaming about the fatted calf.

September 5. On guard all day, or rather in spasms. We were lucky in having no inspections. The prisoner being so genuinely quiet and well-behaved, I didn't really feel I was on guard. I spent most of my time of vigilance sitting in the doorway making some sketches of the farm buildings.

To-day being pay-day, a barrel of beer, much more powerful than the usual *estaminet* variety, arrived at the cookhouse after tea time, so the section settled down to a large evening. I missed most of the "tangi," for at 7 p.m., at the urgent request of Wili, the farm boy, I went out to lend his Uncle "Bushywhiskers," a hand to get in a couple of loads of stooked clover before the rain came on. *Pas bon temps* and much head shaking. I can understand but little of what Uncle tries to tell me for he speaks a rural patois. These people can read the signs all right. I noticed only a rift in the clouds and a patch of red sky, but sure enough, at 9 p.m., we had one of those electrical thunderstorms so common here, and it rained all night.

September 6. Spent the whole day at a spot about three miles over the hills doing a little shooting. We

fired fifteen rounds each at twenty-five yards range, and I discovered that my rifle is about two and a half inches out even at that short distance, but not before it had let me down in the sweepstakes. The major, who is a crack shot, wouldn't believe me when I told him the rifle was at fault. He had a few shots with it to show me how it should be done, and clocked all round the target. Then he threw the rifle on the ground in disgust and said he'd ruin his reputation if he kept on trying to shoot with it.

September 7. An all-day route march was on the syllabus for to-day. Our section officer for some reason did not accompany us. We started off at 9 a.m., intending to make for the town of Desvres and blow in some of our pay, but on reaching the hamlet of Bournonville about 11 a.m., we had the bad luck to run into one of our officers who advised us not to go into this town without passes, so there was nothing for it but to say a few words and return by a shorter route to be in time for dinner.

Afternoon: Squad drill in a nearby paddock, lasting about ten minutes. After tea, having borrowed a bike and listed the orders, I made a tour of a couple of canteens.

September 8. Went to the baths in process of erection at Henneveux and had a good hot shower. A march home at a rapid pace, then half an hour's practice in knotting and lashing ropes before dinner. A little after 1 p.m., I was sent over to No. 3 Section's billets, in a neighbouring farmhouse, to do a draughting job—working drawings of stage, screen, etc., for a cinematograph theatre.

September 9, Sunday. A glorious day. Three of us, having obtained a pass, proceeded to the town of Desvres by way of the village of Selles. We reached the town a little after midday and immediately hunted up the best

restaurant, which happens to be near the railway station. Here, for four francs apiece, we enjoyed the first civilized meal I've had since leaving England. There was a cloth on the table to begin with. Hors d'oeuvres, soup, roast pork with vegetables delightfully served, various salads, new to us, followed by dessert of grapes and pears. After that lot we felt strong enough to endure a little coal dust, and inspected the largest of the many cement works which the town possesses.

The town lies on a ridge and is spread out along a lengthy main street. There are more real shops in it than in the larger towns nearer the line, where there are a great many small shops selling nothing but souvenirs and rubbish, or else a bit of everything. I saw the first French book shop with more than fifty books in it, but the stock consisted mainly of translations from the French for the use of English people. I still have doubts as to whether the French ever do any reading.

We found the main street decorated with festoons of coloured paper, strung across high overhead, while the barber's pole effect was much in evidence on the shops. And we observed many girls in curious costumes hurrying towards the cathedral where a service was in progress We learned that this was to be followed by a large procession to celebrate and consecrate the erection of a wayside cross by some family of the town. Round the little square before the cathedral, on the steps and the balustraded terrace, were about three hundred New Zealanders, waiting to see the procession.

At last in its varied and beautiful clusters it came, the most majestic pageant I have ever seen, and of a type I shall be extremely lucky to witness again. There were banners from no less than twenty parishes, each one followed by a group of *jeunes filles*, some of them very pretty, as so many of the girls in this hill country are.

There were impersonations of the saints and the apostles, and representations of various scenes in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, who came, a beautiful figure of a man, with bowed head, bearing His cross on the way to Calvary. And there was Mary, a saintly-faced young girl, arrayed in flowing robes of deep purple, followed by a group of attendant worshippers. Perhaps prettiest of all were the groups of Sunday School children, who bore emblems, and were daintily dressed in bright but harmonious colours. In the scene there was nothing jarring or haphazard, as the clash of colour at a carnival; all the colours had been chosen with care, and most of the figures were worthy of perpetuation in stained glass. On its way through the town the procession was preceded by a band of a dozen youths mounted on black horses, and arrayed in black coats and leggings, white trousers, and red hats, the French equivalent of the Scotch tam-o'-shanter. Last came the choir, chanting. The leader, a tall man in a white surplice, sang superbly well in a rich powerful baritone. A boy chorister at either elbow conducted him down the long flight of steps and guided him with gentle touch: he was blind. He could not thrill to the feast of colour spread before him, but his soul loved music. So dignified was his bearing, that to me he appeared to be the most impressive figure in that whole army of saints and martyrs.

After climbing a steep hill behind the town for the reward of an extensive and beautiful view, we chose a road that we could see winding through a wood near Henneveux and set out on the return journey in happy mood.

September 10. Spent all morning polishing up equipment and covering our tin hats with sandbag scrim. At noon we paraded by the Longueville church and marched to Engineer Headquarters at Colembert. After an hour's

wait in the grounds of the château we were inspected by the G.O.C., Major-General Sir Andrew Russell, and addressed by the Hon. Sir "Tam" MacKenzie, who told us truthfully, amongst other things, how glad he was that his duties as High Commissioner prevented him from fighting at the front with us.

To-day two local visitors were received at our billets. One was a friendly hen which obligingly dropped in to lay an egg on Frank Smythe's bunk; the other, a hedgehog, which persisted in crawling about near the cookhouse door just before tea time—a dangerous position.

September 11. Morning: Demolitions. Blew up some tree trunks and an iron rail with gun-cotton, just to make a noise. Had practice in making various joints in fuses, and in crimping on dynamite-filled detonators, a job at which one has to be careful. After dinner, eight of us mounted on bikes went over to Bournonville, where there are a couple of bridges on the main road. I was set to work making sketches of these, and then we calculated the weight of explosives which would be required to demolish them. I wonder if some day I shall have a chance of going to a real bridge party?

September 12. The afternoon was spent doing company drill with all the transport in a sloping paddock. I was given the job of leading a packhorse. A more self-assertive and determined animal I have never met. Apart from showing a disinclination to follow the others, his one idea was to keep his head down all the while and gorge himself. It is just as improper for a horse when on parade to keep feeding as it is for a soldier standing at "attention" to keep on smoking his fag. Unfortunately the horse had never been told about this. However, I discovered that a smart punch on the nose at the right moment, every few seconds, made him keep his head up and his ears back.

September 13. On fatigue in the morning, cleaning wagons as a result of yesterday's circus. We then cleaned ourselves up for a parade at Colembert, where we had a rehearsal of the performance set for to-morrow, a review by the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies, Sir Douglas Haig.

September 14. Reveille at 4 a.m.—got up at 4.30. Reveille was done by the company tailor, who volunteered to stay up all night, reading by the fire. He woke up just in time to be useful. By 5.15 breakfast was over, and we had started for the parade ground in the village. The O.C. kept us waiting only half an hour, and we moved off at a little after 6 o'clock, having about nine miles to walk to the review ground near Harlettes. We covered this distance in three hours and lined up on the right flank. There were about 10,000 men on parade, an enormous crowd. At 10 a.m., Sir Douglas Haig, accompanied by Winston Churchill, who was attired in civilian riding kit, various aides-de-camp, and a bodyguard of lancers, rode along in front of the battalions, having a few words with each major and colonel. After this there was a grand march past in company column. When passing the saluting base, all eyes seemed fixed, not on the Commander-in-Chief, but on a French staff officer, rigged out in all the colours of the rainbow, and wearing a monocle. D'Artagnan at a fête was dull compared with this bird of paradise.

Immediately after the last official photograph had been taken, we set out for home. Our O.C., having had speech with the great General, was exceedingly pleased, and granted us the rest of the afternoon off.

September 15. Wiring practice all day in a field near the brickworks inhabited by our drivers. After tea we first sought a feed of blackberries, now nearly over, then

went for a stroll into the village of Brunembert, where there is a comfortable *estaminet*.

The cost of living is kept well under control in this country. Now that the apple season is in full swing, the people in the farmhouse have lived on nothing else for the past week or more, baked, stewed, and done up as fritters, with fish on Friday night by way of relief. When the potato crop is ripe they must have an orgy for weeks.

September 16, Sunday. A great pleasure not to have to turn out till about 8.45, and no parades. Having lately received a letter from Jack Bathgate, I set out after dinner to visit him. His crowd is camped in a valley about ten miles from here. After being half an hour on the road, I caught the first lorry that passed. By good fortune it was going right there. We pulled up beside a paddock where some Otagos were playing football, in order to take aboard a casualty. From these fellows I obtained directions, and having gone down a long steep hill, eventually discovered Jack and Maurice in the Y.M.C.A. Jack has been appointed a company sniper. He was always a useful man with his old Mauser in our pig-shooting expeditions at home.

As I was unable to purchase a meal in the town, Jack insisted on making me eat the greater portion of his own tea at his billet. I left about 6.45, and had walked for an hour when I was offered a lift by one of those lightning staff taxi-drivers who had stopped to light his lamps. He whizzed me into Longueville in ten minutes, saving me a walk of about two hours.

September 17. Morning: We climbed up to the top of the hills to lay out imaginary trenches and space out working parties. Had a tremendous feed of blackberries up there. Afternoon: Section drill with our transport, otherwise known as "Gibb's Circus." After tea someone started fooling round with a stick and a tin can. The

idea developed until shortly we had a five-a-side hockey match going on the stubble in the next paddock, sticks being cut from the nearest hedge. The game ended in a draw, but will be resumed to-morrow night.

September 18. Baths in the morning with buckshee cocoa at the Y.M.C.A. in the usual thick white china unbreakable mugs. After we had come home it set in to drizzle so hard that we were given the afternoon off, ostensibly to clean and scrub our equipment. But the weather cleared up sufficiently to enable us to have our proposed game of hockey in a neighbouring cow paddock. The "ball," an empty tin bashed into something approaching the desired shape, was continually getting bogged in hoof holes, and was once hammered completely out of sight. Towards the end of the second half, a hot clearing shot by the opposing goalie struck me on the left wrist, and made a nasty hole. By the time I had hunted up some iodine, the game was finished, our side losing by one goal.

September 19. Morning: Squad drill. Afternoon: Company parade in a field near Henneveux, and an inspection, the stiffest yet. This lasted two hours and was exceptionally minute. I was pulled up because the leather portion of my bayonet scabbard though clean and well-oiled, had not been given a coat of dubbin according to orders.

Someone found a wooden ball, so the evening game of hockey was much faster than it has been.

September 20. Spent all morning along at the drivers' quarters where a steam disinfector mounted on a lorry had arrived. We took blanket and greatcoat with us, disinfected blanket, tunic and trousers, and had to knock around for an hour in only a shirt and greatcoat.

Afternoon: Trestle bridging across a small gully in the drivers' backyard. Interesting work, at which the time flew. Another good game of hockey to finish off the day's

FROM A TREE IN LONGUEVILLE (*See Page 139*)

hard work. Our goalkeeper, on one occasion, being pushed, described a complete somersault backwards and stood up smiling, all in one motion.

September 21. Had a job painting bikes. Was given four to do, usually reckoned a day's work. Finished my lot in four hours and cleared off home. More hockey, but unfortunately the ball split in two just as I shot a goal. Only one half went through, the other piece going a few inches outside the goal post. Thereupon a fierce argument developed between both teams and the referee. Finally, the referee, to save his life, awarded our side half a goal, and ordered both teams off the field. Score, 4 : 2½. The game was ended in any case, for we had no other ball to carry on with.

September 22. Marched to the château at Colembert and erected a pontoon bridge across the moat, once only. We were allowed a holiday in the afternoon to attend a sports meeting in a neighbouring village.

As hockey is now out of the question, and the field unsuitable for rugby, the game has changed to soccer played with a rugby ball, giving opportunities for some pretty footwork and surprising accidental effects. The evening concluded with a great sing-song in the barn.

September 23, Sunday. Missed getting Boulogne leave, so decided to put in the day sketching. About 10 a.m. I repaired to the Longueville church which I thought would make a good subject. The church is on an eminence above the road, and partly hidden from it by a high stone wall. In order to get a clear view I had to climb a large tree on the edge of the footpath hard by the *estaminet*. This is the place which refused us a meal on our first evening here. When negotiating a stiff piece of the trunk that was minus limbs, and wondering whether I could make it, a portly lady dashed out of the *estaminet* to inform me that the tree belonged to her and she wasn't standing for any damage to it. Then as she saw me continuing to clamber

up the trunk she got it off her chest so rapidly that I couldn't understand a word. When at last I had reached a perch on a horizontal branch, and had breath to spare for a reply, I asked her if she had a ladder handy, thinking to avoid scratching the bark on the way down. She opened out again with all guns and nearly finished up in convulsions. I think I must have annoyed her in some way. The artist's life is a hard one. This is my second experience of complete lack of sympathy and understanding of art on the part of the ladies of France.

Towards noon, having finished my sketch from the tree, I went inside the church and there had rather a strange adventure. I climbed the winding staircase of the tower, right up to the bell staging. The bell, cast in bronze, was so beautifully ornamented that I proceeded to examine it closely. While I was bending down trying to translate, in the dim light, a somewhat puzzling inscription in archaic French, suddenly the whole affair kicked up into my face. With the unexpected movement and the awful din, I toppled over backwards, right off my perch. I just managed to clutch a beam under my right arm and saved myself a fall of about forty feet to the next landing. That bell rather put the wind up me while the row lasted. It clanged four or five times more to announce the hour of noon. I took the hint and went home to dinner.

While passing through the village of Nabringhen, on the way to Colembert, I have always been fascinated by the quaint old stone church with its square tower. After dinner I walked over to make a sketch of it. In spite of the experience of this morning, I climbed up to look at the bell. It was also a work of art and according to the inscription was donated by the Marquis de Colembert in 1646. I took the wise precaution of tying a knot in the bell-rope hard against the floor, and, by the way, I forgot to undo it when I left. "The curfew shall not ring tonight!"

CHAPTER XIX

INTRODUCTION TO FLANDERS

September 24. On guard all day. Was "on duty" from 2 to 6 during the night, but they graciously omitted to wake me. Being entitled to a morning off, after having been on night shift, I took my boots to be mended, and filled in an hour of waiting by making a drawing of a 16th century window of the church.

On duty again at 2 p.m. The prisoner and I strolled down to the drivers' lines where he had a painting job. While there we learned we were due to move off at 5 p.m., so I lent him a hand to finish his painting, and we reached home at 3.30. It took the section a good hour to pack, clean up the billets and have some tea. By 5 p.m. we had paraded at the church in full marching order.

We moved due east along the main road till at 9 p.m. we turned off into the field in which the big review was held. We piled arms and downed swags, then repaired to a Y.M.C.A. about a mile away for cocoa and biscuits. Some of us slept out in the open of the wide, wide world; others built little bivvies out of a few sheaves of wheat. The O.C.'s batman built for his master a most palatial affair, and unlike the walls of Jericho, it did not tumble down at the sound of trumpeting. It was a clear moonlight night, not very cold, and we all slept soundly.

September 25. As we had to fall in line behind the

1st Brigade, we did not get on the road till 9.30 a.m. The town of Lumbres was reached about midday. Here we halted for an hour's spell. At Wizernes, where we commenced our bus ride a month ago, we were glad to dump our swags in the pontoon wagons. With spells we reached our destination, Campagne, about 7 p.m., after a march of fourteen or fifteen miles.

After passing through the town of Arques, our way led through brickfields in which there were several Fritz internment camps, complete with barbed wire and sentry boxes. We stopped for a rest beside one camp where a couple of hundred healthy-looking Huns stood motionless looking at us, all in the custody of a diminutive Jock with fixed bayonet. Our resting place for the night was a disused Fritz cage alongside a canal, wherein most of us had a swim.

September 26. Only seven miles were done to-day, but they seemed very long, for I took it into my head to swag my pack all the way, as one is supposed to do. We started at 10 a.m., and with an hour's halt for lunch, reached Wallon-Cappel at 4 p.m. The road was *pavé* nearly all the way, and for a mile or two we marched along an avenue of pear-trees. Our billets were in a barn with plenty of fresh, clean straw. The first thing I did was to go to sleep, waking at 6 p.m. when tea was ready.

Some of the section went for a walk of half a mile into the town, which was full of men of the R.E. Labour Battalion, and Canadians. We all piled into an *estaminet* which was already fairly full of Tommies. A pompous and portly old sergeant was entertaining the crowd by singing some of his native Yorkshire songs. He welcomed us with ceremony, and picking on me, insisted I should sing the company a New Zealand song. The only one I could think of at the moment was our National Anthem, "God Defend New Zee-ee-land." He made me

sing a couple of verses of this, even though the crowd all had to stand up. For an encore, one of our mob gallantly chipped in with a Maori love song, well known in the North Island. Getting stuck for the words after two or three lines, he filled in with place names as they occurred to him:

Te Awamutu,
Taumarunui,
Wairakei, Taupo,
Eh—Porirua.

The sergeant, in his part of the village squire at the "Pig and Whistle," demanded to be told the words in English. This was rather a poser. The singer didn't know. But one of our sappers had an inspiration and related the famous story of Hinemoa's swim by night to meet her lover on an island in Lake Rotorua. This satisfied the old boy, and thereafter songs that every one knew were sung with gusto. Altogether it was a great night.

September 27. Another fine day and a long one. At midnight the sergeant-major told us we were to arise at 5 a.m. and move off at 7 a.m., in order to march the six miles we had to go to be at our starting place by 10 o'clock. Yes, when we had got there our day's march would commence. Well, we got there in ample time, taking a road to the north of Hazebrouck.

After dinner, I scored a bike, which eased my feet for an hour or so. About 2 p.m. we passed through the town of Steenvoorde, which we found full of Aussies, and at 3.10 passed over the border into Belgium. By 4 p.m. we had arrived at an old Tommy camp of brown canvas tents and immediately settled down for the night.

September 28. After three and a half days of travelling we are to have a spell. All day off except for a

9 a.m. parade which I missed, being cook's off-sider, whose principal job is to collect wood. As there was not a scrap of portable timber to be seen in the countryside this was rather a problem. The cook and I started to attack a large ash log, but a farmer arrived on the scene and went crook, saying it had been left there for seasoning. We reminded him that if it were not for us he would be heading for the coast with his bedclothes in a wheelbarrow, but he was adamant. There was not a dry stick in the hedges, so as a last resource we pinched a hop-pole that had fallen down from its wiring.

In the evening Bert Lee and I walked into the nearest village, where there is a large camp of the 18th Division. A soccer match between Essex and Berks was in progress, and a whole division of Tommies seemed to be crowded round the field to watch the game. The tricks they did with the round ball fairly opened our eyes. We had never seen footwork or headwork like it. While we were there, three planes flew over at a very low altitude. One of them circled round twice at a height of less than fifty feet in order to have a glance at the game.

On the way home we passed the camp of a Chinese Labour Battalion. At the canteen we bought some cigarettes done up in bright blue paper packages. The tobacco was as black as tea and too deadly for us. We could not manage more than one apiece. Those Cochin China boys must have tough flue linings. We can afford to be generous with smokes for a day or two.

September 29. Spell-o all day except for a little drill in the morning. Most of us wrote letters. At 6 p.m. we moved off, this time without the transport. We passed through the famous town of Poperinghe then along the Switch Road towards Ypres. After the first hour's march we called a halt not far from a large railway crossing. It was well that we did so, for half a minute after we had

tossed our packs off at the side of the road, four bombs whaffed down in line a few feet from the road and a couple of hundred yards ahead of our column. If the whistle had not sounded precisely when it did, we should undoubtedly have been a few men short.

Then searchlights got going on all sides of us, Archie shells were bursting up above and bombs dropping near the main Pop-Ypres road, setting several houses on fire. The next half hour proved to be very interesting, for there were at least four enemy bombers circling above us. While all the searchlights would be concentrated on one plane, and the Archies doing their best with the target, the other planes would bomb the searchlights, but without any luck as far as extinguishing them was concerned.

Our night's fun did not end there. At 9.30 we arrived at a large four-story hop warehouse, now used as barracks for troops, and were soon settled down in the wire-netting bunks on the second floor. As the moon was full, Fritz was in evidence all night, throwing away bombs as if they grew. At a little after 10 p.m. our blankets arrived, and then I turned in but could not sleep for the noise of the bombs. Finally, about midnight one dropped on the other side of the road, plastering the front of the building with mud and metal fragments. A piece of bomb caught the driver of a passing caterpillar tractor, whose bloodcurdling yells announced his accident loudly enough to waken up everybody in the place. Some of the boys on the lower floor rushed over to do what they could for him. The building, which rocked with the concussion, was so loosely stuck together that I believe if a bomb hit the roof the whole card castle would collapse internally. We were glad to get out of it in the morning.

September 30, Sunday. By 9 a.m. we were on the road once more, threading our way through the tremendous stream of traffic on the Ypres road. Two hours later we

were in the town, perhaps the most historic spot on the whole front. In the early days of the war I had often read about it in the news, but little expected to see it in actuality. Nor when reading about the famous Cloth Hall in text books on history of architecture did I think that soon I should be viewing the ruins of it, for that was all we saw—part of the tower and a few portions of the outer wall left standing, the rest merely a jumble of broken masonry.

Our Company Headquarters are about a mile north of the town on the bank of the Yser Canal, in a series of elephant-iron bivvies, each containing about a dozen men. On arrival I went with some others for a dip in the canal. The water is stagnant and of such an evil odour that no one since has had such little regard for his personal cleanliness. A hundred yards away, beside the bridge, there are the remains of at least two horses or mules stewing in the water.

In the afternoon I made a tour of inspection of some batteries of heavy artillery in the immediate neighbourhood. They are mostly 6-inch, and there is one 15-inch monster which has recently been erected. It makes one's heart glad to see the size of shell she fires. This howitzer is mounted on a platform of steel joists tied to some trees with hawsers. The huge shell is lifted inch by inch by means of a differential pulley and chain, a very slow process. These shells are used as pill-box crackers, and the gunners certainly do their best to ensure a hit. When the gun-layer has exercised all his skill with the sights, the sergeant replaces him on the seat and checks over everything. When he has given his "all correct, sir," the lieutenant in change climbs up the ladder and spends five or ten minutes giving the finishing touches. Then all scatter, spectators included, a cable is run out for about one hundred feet, the little lieutenant pauses ceremoni-

ously for a moment, jams down the handle of the exploder box, and up she goes! There is a deafening roar, a great burst of flame, the recoil mechanism springs to life, and all stand by to watch the flight of the projectile. It can be seen till it has passed the peak of its trajectory, six or eight miles away. Then it falls so rapidly the eye cannot follow it. From behind the distant ridge on the skyline comes a faint boom. It was not a dud at any rate. The lieutenant then hastens to the telephone to ascertain from the observer whether or not Fritz has good cause to use bad language.

INACTIVE SERVICE—DIGGERS OFF DUTY.

CHAPTER XX

THE ROAD TO PASSCHENDAELE

October 1. Early in the morning there was such a heavy fog over the canal that we could not see more than a yard in front of us. At 9 o'clock parade I was told off as one of a party of surveyors to go up the line to explore a mule track and mark it on a map. Five of us went up in glorious weather and had an exceedingly interesting day. During the first hour, we were amongst the heavy artillery, which must stretch wheel to wheel across the front. A considerable number of H.E. shells were lobbing in on our left. One I saw score a direct hit on a gun. Up went the gun and some of the team. The survivors scattered. Two of them ran but a few yards and then collapsed. We made a detour to the right and then saw the spectacle of an ammunition dump going up in the air. At the time we were in another dump and standing beside some light railway trucks loaded with shells. We saw Fritz was specializing in dumps and moved off *tout de suite*. Sure enough, five minutes later, a shell landed fair in one of the trucks and up went the whole train. It seems to be safer to keep moving. Working parties were to be seen on the roads almost everywhere here, and the hollow was crowded with groups of men.

Further on we came to a region that appeared to be

deserted by the living, and was free at the time from shell fire. Scattered about were numerous German pill-boxes, strong posts of concrete, their massive walls heavily reinforced with iron bars and rails. The lids of some were six feet thick. This was captured country taken in battle a week before. Numbers of dead Germans and Tommies were still lying around unburied, for this area is frequently shelled and there are so many other things to be done. Evidences of German occupation were many: Signposts, grave crosses, a light railway with a few trucks, and gear of all descriptions. In a depression we came across a battery of the N.Z.F.A., and had lunch in a gun-pit. Our track continued but little further, ending at the Subsidiary Line held by some of our machine-gunners. Here were three disabled tanks, one of which we looked over. It had received a direct hit in the port bow but was otherwise all right.

Having completed our survey, we now turned homewards, and with a few halts, arrived in mid-afternoon, feeling fairly tired. In the evening I walked to the nearest canteen and saw a tank drawn up at the roadside while the driver had a drink. Being curious to examine a tank in working order, I had a good look over it.

October 2. Went with the sergeant-major in a wagon to a dump to collect some nails and other material. On the way down we travelled for about three miles on one of the new patent plank roads, and it was absolutely the roughest ride I ever had. We were glad to keep in the gutters wherever possible. We passed a beautiful white château with a tower surmounted by a bulbous dome. A curious device to be seen near here, consisting of a very long wooden bar fixed to the top of a high pole by a hinge is, I am told, a catapult used by Belgian gun clubs for sending clay pigeons to their doom.

On Sunday night, at the drivers' camp, a bomb burst

on the roof of one of the bivvies. The nosecap was driven down clean through two men who were sleeping in bunks one above the other, and a third was wounded. We were shown the place and the nosecap. On the return journey I acted as guide for one of our carts which had picked up a load of signboards at the dump. To avoid the corduroy road we made a detour to the north which proved longer than we anticipated.

In the evening I guided a party to the Divisional Canteen which I had espied in the morning. Found it sold out of everything, shelves clean and dusted down. Passed crowds of our infantry going up to the line in battle order. Also stopped to have a yarn with some Canadians just to hear their Yankee twang and peculiar expressions. In the bunch were a number of American Indians, probably an Eskimo type from the Far North, for they were more yellow than red, and had a Mongolian cast of countenance. They were not very communicative. During the night a few bombs fell round about us, one landing close enough to rock our dugout.

October 3. At work all morning gasproofing dugouts. In the afternoon Lee and I happened to be nosing around some empty dugouts near the bridge, looking for articles of furniture with which to improve our residence. We found a Y.M.C.A. starting to move into one of them and fell in for a job. By 2.30 we had put up three shelves and built a counter. After that I made three signs and painted on the red triangle complete with fern-leaves. The secretary was very appreciative and turned on as many drinks as we could accept. To-morrow is the day of our stunt—my first, but I expect I'll stand up to it all right. Most of the boys are writing letters, so I think I'll do a little of that too. The Y.M.C.A. secretary has just sent

over a tin of toffee and fifty cigarettes in return for our help, so the air is blue with smoke from all the boys.

October 4. At daybreak, between 5.30 and 6 a.m., we heard a terrific bombardment; the guns in front of us were going at top. This was the noise of the barrage behind which our boys were to advance. At 9 a.m. the first string of Hun prisoners came over our bridge, conducted by a couple of Tommies. At 10 a.m. we paraded in front of our dugouts and moved off in single file up the duckwalk track to the line. We had not gone far before we met the first of our stretcher cases and walking wounded. The bearers were nearly all captured Huns of poor physique, and some of our boys looked like princes in chariots of state, except for the mud, borne as they were on the shoulders of four prisoners. Others, walking cases, were leaning on the shoulders of a Fritz or vice versa. On we went through all that desolate recently captured country until we reached the large pill-box known as Kansas Cross House. We were now close to the point from which our boys had hopped off a few hours before.

The job allotted to our company was the laying of duckwalks across the swampy and shell torn ground at the foot of Gravenstafel Spur. Macmorran, who is a professional surveyor, Findlay, and I were given the task of erecting about a dozen locality signboards in their proper places. The battlefield hereabouts is like a ploughed paddock full of great holes, or the clay pits of a brickworks. Where were once trees and grass and houses, now not a vestige of them is to be seen. There are a few shattered tree stumps left standing, that is all. One picks one's way along the ridges between the holes, which are anything from three feet to sixteen feet deep. Imagine the difficulty of locating points by map references in country like this.

Fritz was lobbing a few shells promiscuously, and at

one point on the mudhills, when we three were sitting in a shell hole diligently studying the map, a big shell landed close enough to plaster everybody with wet black mud. Before we could proceed we had to scrape the map clean with a penknife. We now made for a spot on the top of the ridge where a farmhouse had once stood. We were successful in finding a few scattered fragments of brick which gave us the location to within a few yards. We planted our sign, a buoy floating in a sea of mud. Again we stopped behind the remains of a pill-box to study the map of what once was. Having located a point which would enable us to get rid of another signboard, my two mates went back a few hundred yards to fix it, using a German machine-gunner's axe as a hammer. I was left to guard the remaining boards, and took shelter in a large shell hole. My companions here for the next half hour were one of our own boys of the Hauraki Company, dead from wounds, two dead Tommies, and a Fritz, amongst whose scattered effects was a long German pipe with a partly carved bowl. After a while two wounded Huns came along and sat on the crater facing me. The next arrivals were some stretcher-bearers and wounded on the way to the dressing station down the hill. They brought in an officer hit in the head and leg. I recognized him as Major Thoms, who as a Staff Officer used to drill us in the High School Cadets. He was very thirsty and I was glad I had some cocoa in my bottle.

We moved along the top of the ridge, covering the ground taken in the first rush. Fritz had been living in shell holes just about fifty yards from where our boys lined the tape. They and our artillery evidently caught him napping for his dead were lying around in dozens.

The ruins of the next farmhouse on our list were now visible a short distance ahead, so we made a bee-line for them. A chorus of yells from a trench some yards be-

hind us woke us up to the fact that we were well out in No Man's Land in broad daylight. We did a very smart "about turn" and took cover in what was for the time being the front line trench where our boys were waiting to hop over for the third assault at 3 p.m.

When the preliminary barrage came down, we sat for about half an hour in the remains of a dugout which had been an officers' mess. A few boxes of cigars had been found. Every one was smoking them, and we joined in. There was also a case of soda water and some beer. Some of the boys had picked up the coveted German field glasses and automatic revolvers. One chap had souvenired an iron cross and a collection of coins from all parts of the world. All I brought home was a belt buckle bearing the famous motto: "Gott mit uns," a writing pad and an unopened bottle of ink, of which I was in need.

As the three remaining farmhouses for which we had labels had not yet been captured, we retraced our steps, picking up on the way a wounded Hun whom we had observed crouching under a blanket in a shell hole an hour before. Mac and I put his arms round our necks and walked him slowly to the nearest pill-box used as a dressing station. He talked away to us in a very musical voice. How we wished we could understand what he was saying. After a while Mac asked me to change sides with him as he was getting all the weight. I did so and found the real reason was that as our friend had been wounded in the hip and was streaming with blood all down one side, Mac wanted me to get messed up as well. He thought it a great joke.

Going down a trench held by machine-gunners, I met one of my shipmates of the *Waitemata* steadfastly working his gun while behind him lay the bodies of Jim, his mate, who also came with us, and two other gunners, all outed by one shell. I had a yarn with some of the gunners

and passed on. Somehow it seemed to be just all in the day's work.

When we rejoined the mob we found it was knock-off time, and started the long tramp of four or five miles home just as a heavy rain was setting in. We were thoroughly soaked before we reached Wieltje. The Y.M.C.A. at the canal provided us with hot cocoa on arrival. After tea we all turned in, hanging our wet clothes out to dry on a line stretched down the centre of the dugout.

October 5. It was drizzling during the first half of the morning, but afterwards cleared up. While going up the road to the line we saw a few prisoners and wounded coming in. About half way up, at a dressing station, Mac and I saw our wounded prisoner sitting on a stretcher, but he seemed dazed and did not recognize us. Our day's work was very light and consisted of sticking up the remaining three notices. In doing so we traversed most of our new front line trenches and much of the captured territory.

About 1 p.m. while having our dinner in the lee of a pill-box now used as a signallers' dugout, we had the pleasure of seeing our mates, about half a mile distant, running for their lives when Fritz shelled the job, which is under direct observation through a gap in the Passchendaele Ridge. No one was seriously hurt. Yesterday only one of our diggers got a blighty.

In the evening we witnessed an air fight directly above us in which a Hun machine was driven down towards the line, but unfortunately two of ours, British and French, collided at a great altitude, and came slowly corkscrewing down, landing together in a heap about half a mile away. Thousands of men must have witnessed this sad spectacle, for everywhere were groups staring skywards. Shortly afterwards about two dozen of our planes hovered

over the spot to see what had become of their fallen comrades.

During the night I woke in a fit of the horrors. A water rat which was apparently bound for the far end of the dugout was inconsiderate enough to clamber right over my face. One of its feet skidded on to my eye and I saw stars. Furthermore, its feet were wet.

October 6. I will say straight off that this has been one of the most miserable days I have ever put in. It rained heavily all day, commencing after we were a little distance on our way, and continuing till shortly after we arrived home. Fortunately I had my oilsheet cape, but still I became soaked from the waist down. Going up we were in the thick of an awful congestion of mule teams and all kinds of traffic. The Tommies were having great sport with their pack mules. Four were so hopelessly bogged that they had to be shot. At one place in the road a big 6-inch howitzer, weighing about twenty tons, had sunk up to the axles. A party of the Royal Engineers had rigged a sheerlegs crane over it, and were endeavouring to haul it out.

On the job we were sandbagging for a mule track across a swamp. The clay was so sticky it would not fall off the shovel. When a large party carrying duckwalks came up our track, Fritz observed them and shelled us out of it, keeping on the spot intermittently until we left. In a fruitless search for duckwalks we tramped two or three miles over or rather through a road a foot deep in mud. A couple of the infantry party attached to us were wounded.

October 7, Sunday. Just after we started on our way to our job it came on to rain, and then we ran into a regular storm with a high wind. At a dump near the tanks we picked up a duckwalk each and carted it to the end of the track up on the ridge, a distance of a mile and

a half. The track was disarranged in many places through mules having upset the walks, which are intended for foot traffic only. The wind, catching on our loads as on a sail, tended to blow us off into the shell holes, every one of which was full to the brim with cold water. There was many a slip and many a splash.

We all went back for another load, which we dumped at Kansas Farm, then, standing in the lee of the largest pill-box, we had our lunch. Here there is a string of pill-boxes of various shapes and sizes. One of the smallest is reputed to contain a heap of no less than fifteen Huns. We were all soaked to the skin, and when Fritz started on his usual 2 p.m. strafe, our officers took pity on us, allowing us to go home *tout de suite*. The only thing to do was to turn in under the blankets at once. They brought us our tea a little after 5 o'clock.

October 8. The high wind in the morning dried up the ground considerably, making the going much easier. Carried duckwalks—three trips of one and a half miles each way. Coming home, we had to take our chance through a barrage of H.E. shells that Fritz was putting down on the Field Artillery. One lobbed amongst a dozen mules which were congregated in a little hollow on our left. The few able to run stampeded. When we reached our crib we found the mess-orderly for the day had constructed a fireplace in the end wall and had scrounged a sizable heap of firewood. After tea we gathered round for a sing-song.

October 9. After a very good night's sleep in a warm atmosphere, I was dragged out with some others at 5.30 to walk half a mile down the canal for a load of notice boards for Nos 1 and 2 Sections. We are now changing over to night work, so had the day off. By good luck a parcel containing shortbread and cake arrived from home, so am on a win to-day. The fire is still keeping the mob

at home of an evening. Tom Hatfull and Shorty Coburn amuse us greatly after "lights out." For extra warmth they have pooled their blankets and sleep on the floor together. Tom plays the part of the husband and Shorty the wife. Both good natural comedians, they discuss the events of the day, their family affairs, and usually manage a quarrel which is patched up satisfactorily by the tearful spouse.

October 10. As my heel has been troubling me for the last two days, I went on sick parade at 9 a.m., getting Excused Duty for the day and three hot fomentations.

Towards dusk I walked the few yards to the Y.M.C.A. for a cup of cocoa. On the way back, at the crossroads, I saw a tall young Tommy standing by himself, evidently waiting for someone. I kicked off the ball of conversation with the usual sing-song query, "'Ave you got a match, choom?" If he produced the match he would receive a cigarette. Tommy looked sorrowful and maintained silence. He was wearing slacks, puttees and an ordinary greatcoat, on the shoulder strap of which I at length noticed one pip. I said, "Sorry, sir, never mind about the match." He turned on me a look of reproach and pain such as I have observed only once before, on the face of a dying dairy cow. I departed forthwith. How these officers of the Guards Regiments must detest their peculiar field uniforms which lay them open to such mistakes!

October 11. Had a good job laying duckwalks about half way from the line in fine weather for once. We laid about eight hundred yards. While we were coming home it commenced to rain and kept on all night.

October 12. My second stunt—I have no desire for a third after this lot. Our Dinks (Rifle Brigade) and 4th Brigade went over the top with the object of capturing the high ridge near Passchendaele. At 10 a.m. our Nos 3 and 4 Sections and infantry working party set out to

do our bit. At a dump near English Farm we each picked up a bundle of whitewashed stakes to be used for marking tracks, and with a short spell at the tanks reached Kansas Farm, where we had lunch about 1 p.m. When we were but a few yards from Kansas, a loose duckboard tilted sideways when I stood on it, precipitating me into a deep shell hole. I was in water up to the armpits. This wetting was in a way an advantage, for I did not have to bother trying to keep dry during the rest of the day.

We did not notice the mud much till we left the duck-walk track on the ridge and started to travel cross-country. Here we went over our boot tops at every step, often right up to the knees. While making for the pill-box called Calgary Grange, I had my first experience of machine-gun fire. We were advancing down a slope in full view of the enemy gunners entrenched on the misty heights above us. When we were within sixty or seventy yards of the pill-box a sudden hissing and sizzling noise made us flop unceremoniously into the nearest shell holes. Mine happened to be full of water, but in I went and lay still. A minute later Shorty crawled over to my pond to see how I was getting on. He said I had dropped down so suddenly that he was sure I had been hit. Some bullets had banged into his bundle of stakes, placed in front of his head for protection. I told him I could not possibly have dived in quicker. On again for another rush, more bullets spitting, and another flop down. A Dink officer got one in the arm. A final sprint and we were in the shelter of the pill-box.

This, unfortunately, was only a small one. All available space inside and out was taken up by wounded Dinks, stretcher cases, some in a pitiable condition. There was not room for all our mob, so Lieutenant Draffin asked two or three of us to take shelter behind the remains of some trees a few yards to the right. Mac and I went first. I

had run only five yards when I got bogged to the knees between two shell holes. Then swish, swish, ping. I couldn't struggle up out of the mud and moreover didn't want to. I just lay down to it. The boys say only my tin hat showed above the water. They call this my "great submarine act." The machine-gun bullets were tearing into the further lip of my shell hole and several splashed in the water just behind me. I have never been in a worse situation. In a few seconds, that seemed like hours, he knocked off, and I crawled out of the mud on my hands and knees, back to the shelter of the pill-box. Mac reached his tree stump with only a hole through the fold of his trousers at the knee.

Things were also happening near the other end of the pill-box. Old Charley had espied nearby the corpse of a portly Hun lying face downwards in the mud. Thinking this would make a comfortable seat, he sat down on the most prominent part. As he did so, the corpse let out a grunt. "Beg pardon, I thought you were dead," said Charley as he leapt to his feet. At the same instant a sniper's rifle cracked. The bullet, aimed at Charley, hit the Hun on the head and knocked him out. Charley returned to the pill-box with a grin and the comment: "It's not every day a man gets a seat killed for him!"

After this reception from the two pill-boxes on the ridge above us we decided to make back till later on, and returned to Kansas, arriving there without any casualties. At 4 p.m. we "rallied" and returned to the job, getting right up to Calgary without event. We passed a number of wounded crawling to the dressing station on hands and knees. The stretcher bearers were having an awful time struggling through the morass with their loads; never had it worse; many of their number had been knocked out too, by snipers. We picked up our stakes and passed through a gap in the row of shell torn trees at the left

of the pill-box. A Hun lying in a puddle between two trees was made use of as a stile, but before the last man had filed through he had sunk out of sight. We planted the stakes at intervals of fifteen paces, calculated of course by eye, or by guess, for pacing distances was impossible. Soon we arrived at the support lines and found ourselves amongst the ranks of a Scottish regiment.

Every attempt to continue marking the track was met by a withering fire from machine guns and snipers, concealed in the misty wooded hillside above us, so we thought it best to seek cover. Then Fritz started shelling the machine-gunners behind us, so we moved over to the right. The shells followed us. The party scattered, four of us taking refuge in a bit of a trench. Near by were some ammunition carriers, one of whom, almost unconscious from excessive fatigue, lay on the ground above our trench and took no heed of our entreaties to seek shelter. We should have hauled him down by force. My particular refuge was a soggy hole under the roots of a willow tree. In a moment we were in the thick of it. All around us big shells nosed into the mud, exploding underground, some harmlessly, some erupting great geysers of broken earth. Two fell together almost on top of me. One blew in the trench on my right, the other half filled it on my left. The willow tree stood firm. The concussion jarred me through and through like a gigantic electric shock. It robbed me for a moment of all feeling and all power of action. After what seemed an age, I scrambled to my feet and looked around. A few feet behind me was the body of the ammunition carrier. Weary to death he had found peace.

The storm of shells swept over to the right to deal destruction to our tired troops. Immediately our S.O.S. went up and our guns opened fire with a will, increasing till the distant roar of the drum fire was like the sound

of angry breakers on a rock-bound coast. To our consternation some of our own shells were falling short. But after half an hour all the commotion died down and we were still unhurt. At 6 p.m., when it was almost dark and still raining heavily, we decided to make a break for it and assemble at Calgary. When we were approaching the line of trees, I thought our corporal, George Miller, who was walking just ahead of me, was a casualty. A stray shell which burst a few yards from us brought him to his knees. We found he had merely received a blow on the tin hat from a tremendous clod of earth. As he remarked: "Everything that goes up must come down!"

On the sloping field beyond Calgary our only guides to direction were the gun flashes from both lines and an occasional coloured star shell sent up by Fritz. On we went stumbling and falling into shell holes full of water out of which we crawled on hands and knees. Towards the top of the rise I fell into the miry water right up to my neck. I clutched at a dark object above my head. It slithered off the edge and fell right on top of me. Down we went together to the very bottom of the hole. I thought I was never going to come up. He seemed almost alive, but I shook him off. I sprang out of the pit like one possessed, took a great gulp of air and spent it again on an unholy yell. Another of our boys posted "missing!"

I stumbled on in the general direction of Kansas Farm till I heard the voices of my companions. They had come upon an overturned aeroplane which lay about a hundred yards from the end of the duckwalks. Unfortunately nobody had noted how the body of the machine pointed in relation to the track. There followed a period of scrambling round in a half circle until at length somebody fell over a duckwalk, and passed the word along. Soon we overtook a party of our mates engaged in the arduous task of carrying out our section sergeant, Bill

Brown, whose foot had been almost shot off by a shell which was on the point of burying itself in the mud.

Past Kansas Farm the track was in an awful condition. For about a mile there was a break of two duckwalks every twenty yards, always two, somehow. An ammunition mule had been bogged there. We ploughed through these holes with just sufficient strength to pick ourselves up when we fell. It still rained heavily, and to add to our misery, when we were in amongst the artillery the blinding gun flashes frequently caused us to fall off the track. Past the tanks the going was better. But it was my fate not to reach home without yet another unpleasant experience. Near a point where the track led through a row of trees, a heavy battery on the left opened up without warning. I was right in the line of fire of a gun only a few feet from the track. The blast from the barrel blew me over like a straw and again that jangled-up sensation came over me. As I fell I struck my chin on the sharp corner of a duckwalk.

When at length I pulled myself together I was alone. But like a tired horse that can always summon a little energy for the last mile home to a good feed, I kept going and reached the dugout about 10.30 just in time to hear my name being taken in vain by Sam Forsyth,* who was making inquiries as to where I had last been seen. There was a cheerful fire, a large hot meal was in progress, and then there was bed on a clean board floor. Pity the poor chaps out on the ridge sitting in the rain without shelter or hot food. Our section's casualties for the day were luckily only three, the sergeant, our section officer with a buckshee, and a sapper who is the envy of all. He sat down in a mustard-gas shell hole and raised a beautiful crop of blisters at the point of contact. But for

* Sergeant Sam Forsyth, whose courage and initiative at Grevillers on 24 August 1918 earned him the Victoria Cross, was killed in action on the same day.

the mud our casualties would have been very heavy and this diary would have come to a full stop.

October 13. Yesterday I felt consoled by the knowledge that I was due to be mess-orderly on the morrow and could stay at home. I am now very ungrateful in view of the fact that the mob are having a day off, it is still raining, the usual supply of water is cut off, and water has to be carried by hand about three hundred yards. Walking along the road clad in a suit of pink woollen underclothing and an oilsheet, I must have presented an amusing spectacle. We kept a roaring fire going, but still there was trouble in drying clothes stiff with mud. However, we made a very cheerful day of it.

October 14, Sunday. For once, no rain all day. At noon we started off to repair the holes made by ammunition mules and shells in the duckwalk track between the tanks and Kansas. As the Dinks and 4th Brigade were changing over, there was much traffic on the track. Fritz's planes had a day out to-day—complete supremacy of the air. About a dozen big Gotha bombers came flying very low when we were on our way to the job. We had some anxious moments. "Stand still and don't look up!" was the order. The usual amount of sky-bursts from the Archies, of course. A piece of shrapnel, about an inch cube, bounced off the cobblestones of the road and hit me with some force above the ankle—nearly got a buckshee.

Coming home we scored a ride on the light railway. The conductor, a quick-witted Cockney, who had evidently navigated a London bus before the war, caused much amusement by pointing out and commenting on places of interest to the tourists. At dusk a single Fritz plane burned down one of our balloons. Later a plane came down in pieces. In the words of our imperturbable Cockney friend, "if it ain't one of Jerry's, it's one of

ours." Arrived home to find a couple of parcels from England awaiting me—joyful evening.

October 15. The fun commenced at noon. At the dump each man hoisted on a duckboard, which was to be carted up towards Kansas Farm. At a dressing station nearby I came across Basil Wilkinson, an old friend, who is in the Medical Corps, and stopped for a few minutes to have a yarn. This probably saved me from getting into trouble further on. As I reached Artillery Headquarters, Fritz opened out with 9.2 shells on a dump about four hundred yards ahead, also on the road the same distance behind, getting six mules and one driver, who was rushed off to the dressing station, leaving both his legs at the side of the road. One of our boys got a buckshee in the head. A dump of large shells near us went up with a fearful explosion. The shelling continued. As we could not go through the barrage without serious loss we went back for another load of duckwalks which we dumped as far on as it was safe to go.

October 16. Lumped our duckwalks right up to Kansas Farm where we are bridging a string of shell holes full of water. As we arrived at the site of the job I deposited my oilsheet cape on a spot of dry land a few yards from the track. While walking towards the others a shell landed about twenty feet behind me, but I stopped nothing worse than mud, though plenty of that. My oilsheet lay on the very edge of the crater. In case more should follow we all sprinted over to the pill-box. The man who won the race by yards was Ritchie of our dugout. To our surprise he had been badly smacked in the leg by a piece of the shell. By the time I arrived, a bad last, he was being bandaged up. A few more shells fell round about. After a decent interval we started work and continued without interruption, Fritz's policy probably being

to let us finish the job so that he might have the fun of blowing it up later on.

After lunch, a burial party of three men and a padre worked round our vicinity to remove some of the Tommies and Germans, who have been there a long time and are becoming landmarks. One of the party was a young chap, evidently a new arrival, for he wore a nice clean uniform. After the padre had read his piece, the final act of the ceremony was performed by this boy, who was violently sick over the grave. He did this three times in succession. Our crowd, much amused, were laying side bets as to whether he could rise to the occasion a fourth time, but the wells of sorrow were dry. "Talk about having flowers on your grave!"

When returning, not far from the tanks, a shell lobbed close behind me. I dashed forward and almost ran into another one, which burst underground just as I threw myself flat, lifting the two duckboards immediately in front of me. I was glad to get home, for a cold I have makes me feel very tired.

October 17. Working on the same job as yesterday, under direct observation from Fritz. A 4.2 shell which lobbed in the water at the head of the duckwalk bridge almost drowned our two corporals who were working there. They retreated behind the pill-box I had also selected. He then switched on to some field guns over to the right. One gunner was wounded in the scatter. Later on, when I happened to be looking round the corner of the pill-box, a big one came right over the top, landing only fifteen or sixteen feet from us. Some mud and stuff hit me pretty hard, and the concussion deafened my left ear for a minute or two. When at length I sat down for a breather one of my companions asked what the hole in my box respirator was. I looked and found that a piece of shell-case the diameter of a shilling had lodged inside

the metal chemical container on my right side. The contents, mainly granulated charcoal, had stopped the fragment from going right through and giving me a buckshee in the right side or arm. I have carried that respirator for a long time, have never had to use it for gas, and am glad to know it can be useful as a shrapnel shield. None of us did any more work as Fritz made it hot for some time.

October 18. Had a very nice quiet time laying duckwalks near Wieltje railway siding, the only interruption being from a huge fleet of bombers which flew over about 2 p.m., but dropped nothing very near us. A case of gifts from the New Plymouth Branch of the Overseas Club arrived for the company during the day, and so every one was happy all evening.

October 19. On the same job as yesterday. Absolutely no interruptions. One or two showers of rain damped things a little, but did not hinder our work.

October 20. Holiday to-day. At 8 a.m. we paraded for a trip to the baths at Vlamertinghe, between two and three miles away. The showers were but poor affairs. I have been wetter out in the rain. However, it must be weeks since we had the last hot shower, at Henneveux. While we were coming home an impudent Fritz plane flew over our heads not more than a hundred feet up, skimming the mist that the morning sun had not yet dispersed.

After dinner, Morgan and I walked along the canal to Ypres to visit the 4th Field Company, and then explored the town. Coming into the historic Square, we took the opportunity of making a closer examination of the ruins of the Cloth Hall, not even a portion of which remains intact. Fragments of only two of the numerous statues of 13th century burghers which once adorned the façade are still in their niches. Only the four corner buttresses of the upper portion of the tower are left. Nooks and

crannies of the masonry form nesting places for hundreds of cawing rooks. The harshness of their voices is in keeping with this scene of desolation. Quoth the raven: "Nevermore!"

October 21. Another quiet day on our track. Landed a parcel containing a large and very rich fruit cake in perfect order. When supper time came, it was divided into eight hunks, this being the number remaining in the bivvy. That's the stuff to give the troops!

October 22. The Canadian Engineers are to take over the sector from us very soon. We were under the impression that we would not be called upon to go to work to-day, but at noon we had to turn out as usual. However, the afternoon we spent on the track was particularly quiet and uneventful. Early this morning orders came through to shift out of it to-morow.

CHAPTER XXI

RETURN TO LONGUEVILLE

October 23. Got up somewhere about 7 o'clock and packed our swags, moving off from the canal two hours later. The day's march was very short, only the three or four miles to the Hop Factory wherein we spent such a rough night on the way up. The day was miserably wet and cold. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible, putting in the time playing cards, while sitting round the candle, warming ourselves by its heat. In the evening I was lucky enough to land a couple of parcels from friends at home—socks, shortbread, tobacco, tinned milk, sugar and nuts, and other things that don't get mixed coming through the tropics. Both are in answer to "your long and most interesting letter." I'll write lots more such letters. Young Charley suggests I should make them still more interesting, but shorter, and get more done for each mail.

October 24. During the morning the weather cleared up, so after dinner Lee and I went into Poperinghe by means of clambering aboard the first lorry that passed. The town is of the usual type, full of little shops selling trashy souvenirs. The streets and *estaminets* were crowded with Tommies and Canadians. We did not find the place sufficiently attractive to justify remaining long in it, so caught a lorry which brought us home at the

right time for tea.* Our transport has now trekked through to meet us, so we shall be off in the morning.

October 25. Reveille at 4 a.m.; the marching men moved off at 5.30. I was assigned to a bicycle, and started at 6 a.m., reaching Vlamertinghe railway station a few minutes later. Here, in the usual army style, we had to wait a few hours, till 10.30, when at last we moved off. The train travelled very slowly, being pulled by a decrepit engine built on the Meuse in A.D. 1886. With many spells we reached Wizernes at dusk, which nowadays falls about 5 p.m.

We of the cycling party immediately disentrained and started on our way. The others came on in lorries. My bike, rifle, and pack were of such weight that it was heavy pushing, especially up hills, and eighteen miles to go. However we reached the billets at Longueville, our old ones, at 10 p.m. I found a place had been reserved for me in the loft above the bakehouse. After having slaked our thirsts with generous draughts of apple cider, provided by Madame in the farmhouse kitchen, we made the s'prisin' discovery that it has properties decidedly different from the innocent beverage we sometimes drank on summer days at home.

October 26. Three or four of the cyclists with whom I started off yesterday, being men of initiative, passed the night in comfortable beds at a wayside inn and came in early this morning. I wish I had thought of it.

At night orders came out for an inspectional clean-up for the morrow. "Hats to be damped and ironed, web gear scrubbed and polished, buttons polished," etc. etc., same old story. It seems to me there are two distinct types which we are alternately. In the line we do our work efficiently, and there is no nonsense as regards our appearance. Out of the line we do training which never seems

* We were completely unaware of the existence of the famous Talbot House, "Toc. H."

to be of any practical value, and have to spend a solid hour each morning dolling ourselves up to stand the O.C.'s careful scrutiny.

October 27. Survived the inspection. As it was raining heavily, we were given the day off and told to scrub our equipment. It is becoming very chilly at nights now, moonlight nights, clear and frosty as a rule, but we wake up in the mornings feeling refreshed. We are now sleeping on a few inches of straw, and it feels rather queer after the hard boards to which I have become accustomed.

October 28, Sunday. The weather was considerably brighter to-day. We spent the morning going to Henneveux for a bath and a change of clothing.

October 29. Was detailed one of a party of rough carpenters to make additions to a Brigade Baths building, about ten miles away. We were to travel by a motor lorry due to leave Headquarters at 8.15. By that time the lorry had not arrived; we gave it three hours' grace, and then went home—a good day's work.

October 30. Dodged the working party to-day and went on parade. Only three of us represented the section. We were detailed to go to Headquarters at Colembert, to act as brakemen for three pontoon wagons. The rain, which commenced soon after we left home, continued for several hours. At the château we found we were on a wild goose chase, for the pontoon wagons were not yet loaded. We returned at once, spending the afternoon drying our clothes.

October 31. To-day I filled to the best of my ability the position of mess-orderly, cook's off-sider, or third cook, which means a *bon* holiday. About tea time the old farmer came excitedly to us to say that an *Allemand* had just called at the house to ask his way. We thought of escaped prisoners, and two of the boys went in the direction the man had taken, but did not discover him. We

afterwards deduced that he must have been a Portuguese, whose uniform is Hun-like. The old man had never seen one of these Allies of ours.

November 1. At breakfast time I was ordered to report to Company Headquarters, all cleaned up. On getting there, I was asked on account of my training as a signaller and in map reading, to take on the job of dispatch runner for the company. The sergeant made reference to the fondness he had noticed I possessed for touring the countryside whenever I had an opportunity. After some consideration I decided to accept. The one disadvantage is that I shall no longer be able to live with the section, and will not be in such close contact with many good friends.

Brought up my swag after dinner, and had a trip of two miles on a bike to Colembert lasting about forty minutes.

November 2. Made two trips to Headquarters at Colembert, one after dinner and one at 9 p.m. The orderly room is accommodated in a room of the village school. To-day I happened to notice the wall map of the world in two hemispheres, and now understand why the local residents know nothing whatever about New Zealand. At the right hand bottom corner of the map are two shapeless blobs denoting the North and South Islands, bearing the names of the four principal cities, Auckland, Wellington, Ashburton and Dunedin. The teacher's pointer rests on this spot probably for only two or three minutes in the life of each pupil. No wonder both children and adults have asked me if there are lions and tigers and elephants in my country. I have been honest with them in spite of their disappointment. I am sure our neighbours the Aussies, who love a good story, would not be so disobliging to an eager audience.

November 3. There is little to do during the day on

this job. There are two of us, so that there is always at least one runner on duty ready to dash off anywhere at a moment's notice. Our busiest time is in the evening with runs to Colembert and round the sections. The Y.M.C.A. recently started at the drivers' lines by Sam Forsyth is a great boon, especially to me, for when passing I can always get a cup of hot cocoa and some biscuits. In connection with it there is a small library and some sets of games. A programme of recreational activities is being arranged for the coming winter, so it will be a great help and cheer to us.

November 4, Sunday. My Sunday off. I set out early on a bike to Harlettes to find how many of my friends in the Otago Battalion were alive after the stunt. Out of five I had hoped to see, I was informed three were wounded and two missing, believed killed, one of the latter being Donald Hosie, probably the most brilliant architectural student New Zealand has ever produced. Maurice Claris was the only one of my friends still there, and he had been in reserve at the time of the stunt. A parcel recently received by him had contained two briar pipes. One of these he presented to me. At 3 p.m., in a very cheerless frame of mind I departed, arriving home in time to do a trip to C.R.E., at Colembert.

November 5. For some days past in collaboration with a highly qualified electrical engineer, I have been working at odd times on drawings of a device which might possibly help the anti-aircraft gunners to hit something before this war is over. The sky is so vast that they cannot be expected to plaster it full of shell bursts. I am sure that if they have ever brought down a Fritz plane it has been by accident. My idea is to have a master sighter, built like a rifle, fixed by a swivel bearing to a stand a few feet away from the gun, which, by means of an electrical control and motors will move simultaneously with the

sighter in any direction. By this means, the gun, after being sighted on the target could be instantaneously snapped forward a few degrees to allow for flying speed as one does in duck shooting. When at C.R.E. for the usual evening trip I handed the papers over to the Adjutant and hoped for the best.*

November 6. Very wet day. At night I shifted my swag down to the château, the barn thereof, where in future I am to sleep.

November 7. In the morning I managed to obtain leave to walk into Henneveux to have a bath.

November 8. No. 4 Section moved out to a job at the village of Seninghen. The recreations committee, having successfully negotiated the loan of the top half of an upright piano, the proud possession of one of the other engineer companies, produced its first concert of the season in the Y.M.C.A. The tinkling accompaniment, relentlessly dogging the singers, seemed to urge them to greater efforts. The concert was a huge success.

November 9. Landed a trip to Seninghen, which is about eight miles away, and had lunch with the section in a stable, promoted to use as a cookhouse. I was able to spend the whole afternoon there, for a man sent out to a dump for information didn't get back till 5 p.m. The journey home, fortunately not the bike as well, was broken through a little spill on a greasy road while hanging on to the tailboard of a lorry.

November 10. Easy day with little to do. Somehow I don't feel I can settle down to making much use of my spare time.

November 11, Sunday. "At home." Spent my time

* Weeks later a reply was received from the War Office Inventions Department. The idea had been considered but had been turned down on account of the delicacy of the mechanism required, and the danger of getting it clogged up with mud under active service conditions. I know something about mud. However, they did not offer to try it out on the Navy.

reading. At 5 p.m. there was a bun struggle at the Y.M.C.A., but as it was my mate's day off duty I was unable to go.

November 12. Packing up, for we are on the move to-morrow. One trip late at night to the nearest signal office. Had a day of chipping things. Broke a tooth on a piece of toffee, and later on managed to remove a piece from the stem of my new pipe.

CHAPTER XXII

BEHIND THE FRONT

November 13. Reveille at 5.45. Breakfast 6.15. At 7.45 we moved off, full packs up. With four spells we arrived at the Reinforcement Camp at Samette near Lumbres, and had dinner from what rations we carried. After tea, which consisted of only a slice of bread and jam and a drink of tea, Arthur Windle and I obtained leave to visit Lumbres. We sought out a café and had some steak and eggs, followed by coffee cognacs to keep out the cold a little. As our allotted "home" for the night was under canvas on a damp hillside, and our blankets might or might not arrive, we decided to negotiate for a bed in the hotel, taking the risk of an early start and roll call in the morning. So about 8.30 we both tumbled on to a feather mattress about a foot deep, and were soon enjoying an untroubled sleep in a real bed. It must be seven months since last I slept between sheets. We left instructions for reveille at 6 o'clock. On going downstairs we found Madame, a refugee from Douai, had hot coffee ready for us. She charged us only one and a half francs each, one shilling and three pence in English money, for our time of blissful repose under her roof.

November 14. We followed the railway line to camp, entering with the utmost stealth about 7 a.m. We discovered, almost to our disappointment, that everything was


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still there and no one had any notion of moving. We did not leave, in fact, till 5 p.m., when with everything up except blankets we set out for Wizernes. The mob, singing or whistling, kept a tune going for the three hours of the march. After a meal of cocoa and biscuits at a temporary Y.M.C.A. stall, we entrained in the usual horse trucks and, huddled up on the floor, tried to get to sleep.

November 15. The train moved off about midnight, arriving at Hopoutre at 5 a.m. We disentrained an hour later. After passing through the streets of Poperinghe, deserted at that hour, we struck off in the direction of Dickebusch. Eventually, after climbing a little hill on a newly constructed clay road, we reached a camp near Voormezeele. Here we jammed ourselves into little canvas bivvies with space for five men in each. At noon they turned on a feed, which we badly needed. We are camped at a ruined château near the balloon line, Polygon Wood being the nearest part of the front.

November 16. Inspection parade in morning with buttons, etc., cleaned. Oh Lord, what next! After dinner I had a long trip on the bike to the headquarters of the Pioneer Battalion. The mud on the *pavé* road was of an especially sticky nature. Every few yards the tyres would pick up enough mud to clog the forks with the result that I had to dismount and clear them with my knife before I could push the machine further. During the night a shell or two droned overhead.

November 17. One trip to the nearest signal office in the morning. After dinner I made a raid on the Royal Engineers' smithy in the next field to knock a piece of sheet copper from the Cloth Hall at Ypres into the shape of a matchbox cover.

Camped near here are two or three battalions of West Indian negroes, employed in carrying ammunition for the artillery. Some of them are well educated and not at

all bad coons to talk to. A sergeant explained the difficulty of proper diet. At home they obtained the equivalent food values of fats from fruit and vegetable oils. Here the only substitute was the usual army ration of fat bacon which they could not digest, with the result that they suffered severely from the cold, and large numbers went on the sick list. We could do with a regular issue of bananas and oranges too, but think how untidy the battlefields would become with fruit peelings littered all over the place!

November 18, Sunday. A very quiet day. Two trips to C.R.E. in the evening. At the Divisional Canteen I bought a copy of the book, *New Zealand at the Front*, just out, an excellent publication, full of sketches and brightly written articles.

November 19. Spent most of the day reading my latest acquisition. One run only. My mate, Sid Perry, and I have taken up residence in a small bivvy built for two, a few yards from the orderly room.

November 20. Letter writing and so forth. The infantry working party arrived and the sections departed to work in the line, one of our men being wounded.

November 21. As the use of cameras in the front areas is prohibited, one of our boys who wanted a record of his brother's grave to send home, conceived the idea of getting me to make a sketch of it. This I did, visiting a small cemetery about two miles to the rear. Just a mound and a white painted wooden cross amongst many others, not a subject one can do much with. However, I did my best.

November 22. At night I made two trips to the same headquarters in succession. A parcel containing a cake and a tin of *café au lait* arrived for me; two of the others in the next bivvy had also received prizes, so we had a large supper.

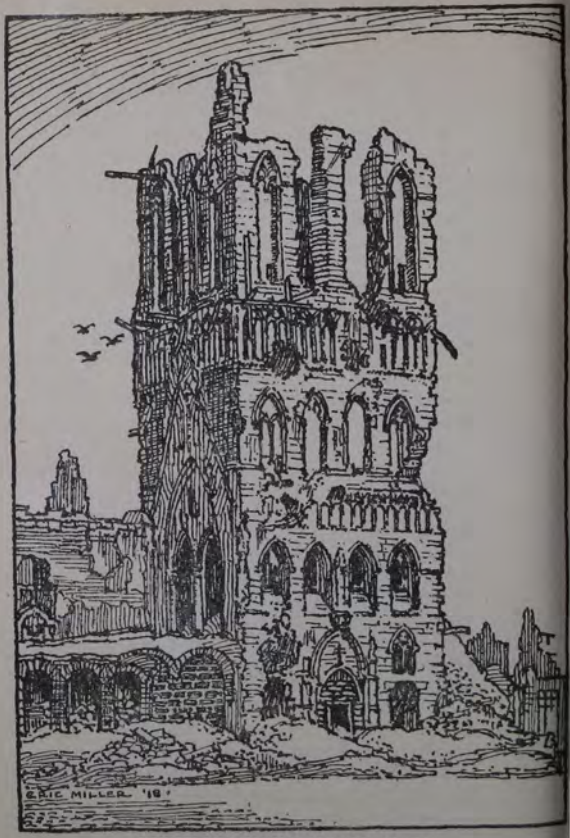
November 23. Took a walk to the baths in the after-

noon, but owing to excess of business and shortage of hot water, was turned away unwashed. However, I managed to score a wash at a Tommy baths about a mile away. While there, as Fritz's planes were in evidence overhead, a couple of anti-aircraft duds just cleared the building, and shrapnel bullets rained down on the roof. In such circumstances even a pair of trousers would help to reduce the feeling of insecurity.

As the result of this tour of inspection, the bombers came over in force by moonlight, and dumped many loads of eggs round about our vicinity. One bomb dropper who thought he was on to something good, plastered five in a row in an empty paddock just across the road from our place of abode. In the evening I did three consecutive trips to Anzac Camp, my busiest shift so far.

November 24. Writing letters, and in between times kicking a football about to keep warm. Had two trips in succession to the C.R.E. at night, but I received from a friend of my mother a round tin containing a large black plum duff with a kick in it. As there are only two of us in this bivvy we invited the four occupants of the next one to lend us a hand with it, and settled half of it for supper. One of the guests remarked it was the best thing he had tasted since the rum issue finished last winter.

November 25, Sunday. During the night it rained and wet things a little, notably part of the interior of our bivvy. While on an afternoon run in the back areas, I took a short cut along the light railway line and was overtaken by a loco. and trucks returning empty. Was delighted to find amongst the crew an old friend who proudly displayed his latest acquisition, salvaged from a ruined château, a tin bath with only three shrapnel holes in it! Suffering ducks! What luxury! I told him where he would find some pretty blue and white tiles in Ypres to make a dado round the bathroom.



TOWER OF THE CLOTH HALL, YPRES.

CHAPTER XXIII

WINTER QUARTERS IN YPRES

November 26. Order of the move. At 7.30 the first party moved off in motor lorries to our new billets in Ypres. After having delivered the marching out state to headquarters, I followed on a bike. The journey was not long, only a couple of miles to the famous Lille Gate and the Ramparts.

We were just a little disappointed in our new home, which is to be our winter quarters, a few iron bivvies covered with loose bricks, scattered about in the ruins of what was once a row of shops and houses. Our bivvy is on the bank of a stream that formerly flowed under the town in a huge brick conduit, most of which has been blown in, leaving a ragged ditch infested by rats. The front half of our residence has suffered a direct hit and is badly bent. Only a small area at the rear is habitable.

Sid and I spent all our spare time for the remainder of the day in making improvements, shoring up the roof with some heavy timbers. At 9 o'clock we retired to bunk, but could not sleep for the noise of shelling in the town. About 10.45 Fritz greeted us with a salvo of five-nines, three of which fell close enough to earthquake our rickety bivvy. The last shell to fall landed fair in the middle of the stream five or six yards away, deluging us with water and fragments of brick which swept up the open bell-mouth of our refuge like sea spray in a cave.

Shivering and grousing, we hastily bundled up our wet blankets and made a dash to a tunnel in the ramparts inhabited by the infantry working party attached to the company.

November 27. After my early morning trips to the transport lines and other places, I assisted Sid to pile a lot more bricks on top of the bivvy. In the afternoon, on the way back from Dickebusch, I rode all through the town of Ypres which must have been a beautiful place in *ante bellum* days. Not a single building has escaped the bombardment.

Until our bivvy has been made reasonably safe we must sleep in the tunnel, which is provided with a triple row of duckboard shelves. The bottom row is two or three inches above water, while the top row, on which I sleep, is only eighteen inches below the plank ceiling, through which water drips continuously. Rather cramped quarters. This doss house has the peculiarity of being constructed immediately underneath a cemetery, so that there are several dozen assorted Australians, Tommies, and Frenchmen sleeping a few feet above us.

November 28. Worked all morning putting the bivvy used for the orderly room into decent shape. A baths building is situated only a hundred yards away, beside the ramparts, so we shall be well off in this respect, but it is a dangerous place for shells. We find we are in a direct line between Fritz's heavy guns and the railway yards, a favourite target. Shells falling a quarter of a mile short of the mark are very liable to arrive in our backyard. These guns are known to be long-range naval guns of high velocity. The boys call the shells "tout suiters," because they come with such a rush. Being as we are in a direct line, the report of "the rubber gun," miles away, can be distinctly heard. The shell arrives two or three seconds later.

November 29. Busy day. Made two trips in succession in the morning to 2nd Brigade Headquarters which are in a deep dugout at Hooge Crater, some distance past Hell-fire Corner. While I was walking across the embankment at the foot of the hill on which the Crater is situated, several large shells fell in the hollow below the road. A fragment of shell holed the petrol tank of a motor cyclist dispatch rider who was scorching through the dangerous area at full speed. He was very much annoyed by this rude frustration of his desire to get out of the place as quickly as possible.

About 3 p.m. I set off for the transport lines on foot, trusting to luck in picking up lifts from passing motor lorries, at the game of getting aboard which I am now fairly expert. On these greasy cobbled roads with their high crowns, the rear portion of an empty lorry sways alarmingly backwards and forwards, though the front wheels keep straight on. The usual method of boarding them when moving is to sprint along the road and make a flying tackle at the tailboard the instant it passes. Most drivers will not stop to let you aboard, and they will not stop to let you off either, the reason being that in 1914 a Tommy driver had a packet of cigarettes pinched from his locker by an unauthorized passenger, reputed to be a Frenchman.

Still, hopping lorries in this way is often preferable to trying to ride a bike, which also skids and side-slips. With practice, I have mastered the art of parting from the machine when I feel it slip from under me, by pushing it away with one hand, throwing one leg over the handle-bars, and then running along the road till I can slacken pace. I walk back to the bike, bend the handlebars into position and go off again. Failure to do this neatly means torn clothing and a nasty jolt. Once I skidded right in front of an approaching lorry and managed to save the

bike from being run over. Some dispatch runners claim that when they hear the sudden scream of a shell landing very close they can quit the bike while going at full speed, and take a header into the ditch, all in one motion and without getting hurt. This trick comes within the category of acrobatics, and I have not yet had occasion to try it.

I returned to camp proudly bearing a length of stove pipe from a hut which is temporarily vacant. Sid has found an oil drum which we will convert into a patent slow-combustion stove. While I was away a few shells fell just behind the camp, one infantryman being killed. At night Fritz put about a hundred shells in the empty field just over the ramparts, where they will do little damage. We counted up to fifty-six in the half hour before we turned in.

November 30. Left at 10 a.m. on a run to Hooge Crater. Some 4.2 shells landed close to the road, two hundred yards ahead, but I got through all right. At the same place, on the way back, a dud landed ten or twelve yards behind me.

In the afternoon there was heavy shelling for about two hours to the right of our camp and also on one line two or three hundred yards to the rear. One of the first shells landed beside a group of infantrymen at the baths, wounding several. Our medical officer, Captain Finch, an elderly man, who lives in a dugout immediately across the creek from our shanty, saw what had happened, and as if the explosion had been the pistol shot at the start of a race, sprinted at top speed towards the scene of the catastrophe, careless of further shells. He was followed a few seconds later by our medical orderly who was handicapped by having to pick up a bag containing a few things. I doubt if medical aid was ever rendered more

expeditiously. Our quack deserves a medal for winning that race.

Before the day ended I was witness of yet another accident, being unfortunately the innocent cause of this one. At 6 p.m. word came through that the Menin Gate-Hooge Road was being severely strafed near Shrapnel Corner. I was sent with an urgent message to stop our drivers who were about to make their usual night trip up the line. In my hurry the bike skidded and got out of control at a corner near the Cloth Hall. Bike and I crashed into a Tommy artilleryman who had just stepped off the footpath. From his yell I knew I had hurt him badly; his leg was broken. I was full of apologies, but to my surprise the injured man bore me no grudge whatever. He seemed rather pleased. His mates gathered round, congratulating him on securing a nice clean Blighty. A happy party, they bore him off to the nearest dressing station.

On I went, past the railway siding, and down the Dickebusch Road. On one stretch where the stone causeway was particularly greasy, I had eight spills in about two hundred yards, with the result that the shape of parts of the bike was somewhat altered, but I got there just as the wagons were pulling out of the lines.

December 1. Trip to Hooge Crater at 10 a.m. No shelling. Also the usual afternoon run to headquarters.

Our bivvy, in spite of our work on it, is apparently too badly bent to be fit for human habitation throughout the winter. As sufficient heavy iron sheets to build a new one have been promised, we have decided to tear it down. Three men of the infantry party have been told off to assist us in the building operations.

During the night, three shells landed in the cemetery on top of our tunnel, which rocked like a boat. It must have been raining wooden crosses for a while.

December 2, Sunday. As yesterday, worked most of the time on our bivvy, the demolition of which is almost completed. The straining and twisting to which the iron sheets have been subjected has made them very difficult to unbolt. In this work the experience and resource of Sid, who was at one time a genuine engineer of the black-faced variety, is of the utmost value. A good direct hit by a big shell any meal time, when we are absent, would solve a lot of problems. On top of a heap of bricks only four or five yards from our future home there reposed an immense 15-inch armour-piercing naval dud. We had arguments as to whether a direct hit from another shell would bring it to life and if so, how far beyond the limits of our bivvy the resultant crater would extend. We agreed that if we wished to ensure a sound sleep at nights in this world, it should be removed.

Accordingly, Sid and I carefully tied the end of a 100-foot length of telephone wire round its middle, then after giving the "take cover" signal to all onlookers, we retired behind a convenient wall and pulled the string. The figure worked as intended. It fell from its pedestal with a crash, making no further sound. If it had exploded we should have been able to feel at least a sudden slackening of the line. Still distrustful of this father of all shells, we rolled it by means of the wire to the bottom of the nearest shell hole, and covered it well with bricks.

There is a sequel! Even as the British Boy Explorers in the *Chums* serial story rolled away the great granite stone from the mouth of the Andean treasure cave, so our courageous handling of a harmless dud opened the way to the discovery of a secret underground chamber, stored from floor to ceiling, not with ingots of gold or sacks of rubies, but with other treasures of western civilizations in

the shape of cases of American pork-and-beans, and "Fray Bentos" tinned bull from the Argentine.

The find was not made till an hour or so after the guardian of the hoard had been vanquished. In dragging out some wooden beams now made accessible, we uncovered in a cellar a dump of food and material formerly the property of the Australian Tunnelling Corps, who once resided in this undesirable locality. There were, in addition to the items of food above mentioned, a case of powdered soup in tins, really useful, some assorted jam minus the usual flavour of petrol from the tins, ration biscuits, not so valuable, also sundry items of hardware—miners' lamps, picks, crowbars, and gumboots, too tough for the digestion of even an Aussie tunneller. The eatables were evenly divided amongst the five who hold the secret. Sid and I hope to be able to discover at least one lump of the elusive pork in our whole case of beans.

CHAPTER XXIV

STUNT AT POLDERHOEK CHÂTEAU

December 3. About 9.30, Bert Lee and I received orders to pack our blankets and proceed to 2nd Brigade Headquarters at "the Tower," there to act as runners to our Captain, "Sandy" McNab, during the assault to be made on the Polderhoek Château. All went well till we reached Hooge Crater. A heavy barrage laid across the road for the special benefit of some of our guns held us up for over an hour. We took shelter in the deep dugout which I have so often visited, interested observers of how a stunt is conducted by the General Staff.

When the shelling had ceased we proceeded up the Menin Road to Inverness Copse, passing groups of walking wounded of the 2nd Brigade, and a number of prisoners. From this point we followed a duckwalk track. When we were within four hundred yards of the row of pill-boxes which was our objective, Fritz let down a barrage of high explosive shells through which we ran as fast as the slippery track would permit. It happened that only one shell landed really close to us. As it burst well below the surface of the pulverized ground we received nothing more than a shower of black earth. No sooner had we reached the shelter of the concrete tower than there was an explosion several yards in front of us. Instinctively I backed round the corner, with the result that

my trousers made contact with a barbed wire entanglement and suffered serious damage. The safety pins with which I had to effect temporary repairs were not at all comfortable to sit on.

We found our captain in a small square pill-box used for the time being as Advanced Headquarters. Lee and I, seeing no place for us inside, sat in the doorway, a rather exposed position. Brigadier-General "Bill" Braithwaite, noting our plight, considerately rearranged the battalion signal staff to make room for us. From 5.30 to 6.30 the line of pill-boxes was consistently shelled. The stunt was unfortunately not completely successful, some objectives not being taken. At 8 p.m. in pitch darkness I took a message to Hooge Crater to stop a working party of Pioneers, not now required. All was quiet both ways.

Sleeping accommodation was provided in a pill-box a few yards away from headquarters. The designers of this structure had with no lack of foresight, left the side facing their own rear almost entirely open, so that in the event of its capture it could easily be depopulated by a well-directed shell. A sandbag wall across the opening afforded protection of a sort. Three times during the night our shelter was thoroughly strafed with five-nines and extra heavies. No direct hit was registered on the roof, which would probably have stood the strain, or of course in the doorway, but some landed close enough to knock chips out of the walls. The shaking and tremors of these violent explosions by no means served to rock us to sleep.

December 4. At daybreak Lee and I were much relieved to receive orders to return home. Accompanied by a batman we set off on a sort of "Retreat from Moscow" for it was snowing fairly heavily. We passed down the Menin Road, reaching Lille Gate without

event about 10 a.m. After having breakfast, my first act was to apply to the quartermaster for a new pair of slacks, but there had been a run on these and the store was out of all sizes. Any size would have done, as usual.

Spent the rest of the day working on the bivvy, excavating, except for a short trip in the afternoon to the other side of the town. When walking along a street near the Convent I heard the screech of brakes and a staff car, chock full of "brass hats," pulled up at the kerb beside me. From the pennant flying on the radiator, the car must have belonged to a Corps Commander. Out popped the General's errand boy, a young Tommy Captain, and to my great surprise he accosted me. What did I mean by walking through the main streets of Ypres with my trousers in such a disgraceful condition? A digger officer would have worded the message quite differently. I replied that I had been caught in the wire near the front line, I had tried to get a new pair that morning, but our Q.M.'s Store was out of trousers. The Captain reported to the General and returned in a minute with a chit ordering my Company O.C. to get this man a pair of trousers from Divisional Stores immediately. I turned on an extra good salute as the car sped away on the King's business. Something should come out of this. I felt the episode very embarrassing, especially when I discovered that an important safety pin had come unstuck. A good soldier never looks behind.

CHAPTER XXV

THE "GHOST CITY"

December 5. Managed to score two sheets of elephant iron for the bivvy, with promise of more to come. We put this in then built the back wall and fireplace. Night trip to C.R.E. A pair of trousers for me and some spares for the store arrived with the rations after dinner. The General's magic has worked. Not a bad fit either. All I need now is a turn at Paris Leave.

December 6. Now informed that we may have no more elephant iron, and ordered to take down what we have just put up. Very nearly went mad but retained enough sanity to make a start on bivvy No. 3 with smaller sized English corrugated iron. Assembled one section.

December 7. A tragedy happened at the railway siding this morning—sheer bad luck. As I approached the railway yards on the way to Dickebusch a few shells from "the rubber gun" were being splashed round the district. Fritz has the range of this spot to a yard. Half a dozen lorries were backed in to the loading platform. At the sound of the first shell they started up and were off down the road, all except one. In spite of the furious efforts of the driver's mate at the cranking handle, the engine would not fire. Six more shells fell in the vicinity. One could imagine Fritz was witnessing their plight. The eighth and last shell scored a direct hit on the lorry

and blew it and its crew to smithereens. Only the tangled wreckage of the chassis was left on the cobblestones. There is a saying that some shells have a man's name written on them.

December 8. Still struggling with the ironwork of our bivvy, drifting holes for the bolts which do not fit well, with the result that we have to spring each sheet into position. Saw a small bird with a touch of red plumage at its throat, hopping about the ruins. This must be the robin redbreast whose picture we frequently see together with bells, snow, and a sprig of holly on English Christmas cards.

December 9. Rather a wet, miserable day, but we carried on with the job, getting the last sheet of iron into position by midday. On duty all afternoon, and had the night run to C.R.E., rather a cheerless job, for the roads are bad and the bike lamp refuses to keep alight owing to the constant jolting on the cobblestones.

December 10. Busy all day and evening on interior work. Made a door, then fitted up bunks of forest poles and wire netting, so that to our great joy we were able to move in and sleep in comfortable quarters instead of the dripping duckwalk shelves of the Catacombs.

December 11. Making table and other furniture. About 3.30 p.m. was sent down to Dickebusch to deliver a message to a section officer who is in charge of a working party. The map reference given me led me to the intersection of two ditches in flat uninteresting fields. I inquired at all the farmhouses within half a mile, and spent three hours wandering round the district in fruitless searching. On my return to the orderly room I was accused of being unable to read a map. Further investigation proved that the map reference showed an error of exactly one mile. Someone has blundered.

December 12. In the evening we had our "house-

warming" party. We found room for eight in the bivvy, including the three infantry boys who had worked so hard in helping us with its construction. We played cards till a late hour. A fruit cake, a bottle of wine, some rum issues and the contents of several parcels saved up for the occasion constituted a splendid supper, cigars following.

December 13. Greasy roads made cycling difficult. Sid and I travelled fifteen miles each. Corporal McDonough, of the orderly room staff, is considerate, too, and does not send us out on any unnecessary trips.

In the late afternoon, a mob of a dozen sappers invaded our front yard to indulge in the pastime of smoking out the rats which reside in large families behind the broken masonry walls of the water conduit. When the mouths of all the burrows except one had been blocked up, and the boys, each provided with a heap of half bricks, had disposed themselves in all vantage points, the stage was set for the firing party. A generous supply of cordite from a shell-case was shoved into one of the burrows and set on fire. The first whiff of acrid smoke was followed by a procession of large water rats, eager for fresh air. The shooting was marvellous. Such a concentrated barrage of brick bats descended on the unfortunate rats that only two out of eleven were able to escape out of range. I bowled over one in mid air by accident, but Sid lays claim to two direct hits.

December 14. In the evening, one of the sappers from across the road, who has recently rejoined the unit after having been wounded, brought me for translation his usual weekly letter from a mademoiselle in Étaples. Once he is satisfied that she is enjoying perfect health he does not seem to care whether I read the rest of the letter to him or not. A pity to see so many fond endearments going to waste.

My friend had a narrow squeak in Armentières last year. When he was asleep in an upstairs room a large shell ripped through the wall above him, penetrated the bedroom floor and burst in the kitchen below, almost wrecking the house. He was bruised by falling bricks, but his companion merely suffered a fainting turn from which she soon recovered.

December 15. After dinner, I put in a pleasant hour or two making a sketch of the ruined tower of an old Romanesque church a couple of hundred yards away. Noting some activity inside the church, I found a party of Maoris hauling from beneath a pile of masonry some large oak beams which were formerly the roof timbers. Solid heart of oak, blackened with the passing of perhaps seven centuries, staunch and true as when they left the hands of the builder-monks. But firewood is scarce in Ypres, and the rarest cedar of Lebanon would not be despised as fuel for an army stew.

December 16, Sunday. There was a slight fall of snow during the night. After dinner I was assigned the job of excavating a platform in front of the orderly room. Spent the evening drawing a frontispiece in Jim Bryan's photo album of Egyptian views.

December 17. N.Z. mail and some magazines arrived last night, so all my spare time between shifts was pleasurably occupied. During the night, at 10 p.m., and again at 1 a.m., there also arrived a few presents from Fritz, out of the rubber gun. They were delivered in the backyard of the Maoris, across the way, but nobody was hurt.

December 18. Time we had another rat hunt. There are still a few running about in our peaceful suburb. Awoke this morning to find my felt hat, which reposes on the foot of my bunk, had bits chewed out of the edge of the brim all round, sort of pie-crust effect. The orna-

mentation, being fairly even and regular, is much admired by every one except myself. Not that it matters much, tin hats being worn daily, but one treasures a felt hat as a reminder that Blighty Leave may eventuate in the dim distant future.

Was kept on the run most of the day. In the evening Sam Forsyth, who is now temporarily attached to the Y.M.C.A. staff, dropped in for a chat as he often does. He got me to do a large cartoon of Prime Minister Bill Massey delivering a political speech. Something in connection with the new Y.M.C.A. Hut he is getting built. I borrowed some coloured pencils from the orderly room and did the job while he waited.

December 19. Changed over from the night shift to the midday run. Did a sketch of our happy home for Sid in the afternoon, and spent all evening finishing it off. He is going to make a frame for it from a piece of the church oak.

December 20. My spare time all went on a copy of Sid's sketch I made for myself. Towards midday Fritz massed three divisions of his troops at the château for an attack, but our artillery nipped it in the bud. Oh what a noise, and no doubt what a mess! Our gunners are said to have been expecting this surprise party for some days and had evidently laid in a good stock of supplies.

December 21. Was surprised on waking to find the ground covered with a heavy white frost and the air thick with mist. The moat is frozen over and many are taking advantage of it for skating. In the collection of debris near our dugout I have discovered one rusty old skate (lady's pattern) but so far am stuck for a mate for it. History records that skating was first performed by the Dutch on brisket bones, whatever they are. Unless mules are equipped with these, we are out of luck.

December 22. During the night a few shells came

over, two of them landing in the skating rink. Having damaged a tooth in trying to make a dent in a dog biscuit, I paid an early morning visit to the Dental Corps Smithy at Dickebusch, where they levered it out.

On the return journey, just after passing the dreaded railway yards, I had a weird experience. I have invariably followed the main road which runs parallel with the railway, but this time, at the moment of reaching the intersection of a street I had never explored, a sort of voice within me seemed to say, "Go this way." In obedience to what I thought might be a prescience of danger, not having had one before, I turned the corner in a hurry, wondering what it was all about, expecting something to happen. It did. Before I had turned the mangle for ten yards there was a roar overhead, and just round the corner, at the side of the road where I should have been had I not taken the hint, a "slippery Dick" burst with tremendous clatter. Later on I ventured to return, and just as a man would contemplate his hat after a bullet had whizzed through it, inspected with interest the crater by the roadside where 1 Service Bicycle and 1 Sapper were nearly lost.

December 23, Sunday. In the morning, several of us walked over to the bank of the moat to watch the skating. Two shells fell almost simultaneously near the centre of the rink, sending up great geysers of water and ice. The surrounding ice cracked alarmingly. Two Maoris who happened to be but a few feet away had to sprint to the shore for their lives to the accompaniment of cheers and great bursts of laughter from a crowd of their brethren who were looking on. Fritz is no spoil sport to these happy warriors.

Saw a great air fight, in which one of our pilots, reputed to be an American, caught up to and downed a Fritz. Perhaps by way of retaliation, there was a great deal of

aerial activity and bomb dropping over our lines during the night. A dud bomb fell a few yards away from our bivvy.

December 24. This morning we heard about the results of some of last night's bombing. Fritz found an unnecessarily good target in a party of Pioneers (Maoris) who live under the ruins of the Convent. They had foolishly lit an open fire in a corner of the yard and were busily engaged in singeing the carcass of a porker they were getting ready for their Christmas dinner. A direct. hit. Up went pig, fire and everything.

Put in most of the day and part of the evening working on a back cloth for the stage of the newly-erected Concert Hall, in collaboration with the sapper who usually does the sign-writing work for this company. My suggestion for the scene was some peaceful corner of rural England, a village street, simple thatched cottages, complete with hollyhocks and garden walls. The corporal in charge of stage management insisted that as we were not peace-time soldiers, the only fitting background was the trenches and battlefields we live in at the present time. My mate wasn't fussy whether it was to be a scene from Dante's Inferno or the Persian Gardens.

So with buckets of grey, black and yellow-brown we gave them a sandbagged trench wall, and above it a "field of fire" full of shell craters, barbed wire, ruined walls, and shattered tree trunks. In the distance a forbidding pill-box formed a climax to the composition. One had only to glance out of the door for an inspiration. This stuff was all around us. We slapped it through in a fraction of the time any other subject would have taken; not a straight line in the whole job. The corporal was highly pleased with our interpretation of his dream and congratulated us on our artistic achievement.

We returned to our bivvies to join in the revelry of

Christmas Eve. As we were turning in, at a late hour, the occupant of the next bunk coldly rejected my suggestion that as the bivvy possesses a chimney, he should hang up his sock on the bed post. He was afraid that if he did it might be stolen during the night.

December 25. Missed breakfast, being too lazy to get up and go for it. Besides, it was snowing hard as is appropriate for Christmas Day on this side of the world. The great event of the day, of course, was the dinner with the section at 1 o'clock. An awning and tables had been rigged up at the cookhouse for the occasion. The snow on the roof started to melt and intrude itself on the table so that some of the guests had to wear their waterproof sheets, but this small discomfort merely added to the general hilarity of the proceedings. The menu had been specially composed, drawn and blueprinted for the occasion, but a number of the items, such as Stewart Island oysters and toheroa soup had question marks after them, and were found to exist only in the imagination of the artist. The most important items which actually appeared were poultry, and duff with rum sauce. Everybody came the double. There was dessert followed by nuts and wine, numerous toasts being drunk in Port, specially procured from England. Towards the end of the proceedings, in accordance with an established custom, our respected Skipper rolled in to wish us all a Merry Christmas.

At night we had a Grand Concert to mark the opening of the Y.M.C.A. Hut, the only complete building in Ypres at the moment. The programme was provided by Maoris and Engineers, Maoris in full war paint, their repertoire ranging from plaintive love songs to rousing hakas. The engineers produced some good comedians, besides an excellent tenor who sang sentimental ditties, such as "Coming Home" and "God Send You Back to Me."

XMAS. 1917.

No 3 Sect. 3rd Fd Coy N.Z.E.

MENU

SOUP

A La Julienne (Mixed)

FISH (Perhaps)

Oyster? a la Stewart Island. Cockle? a la Waiheke Winkle? a la Pakatoa

POULTRY (Feathered or otherwise)

Ducks (S)tuffed a la MO Larks??? & Kiwis (if in season)

JOINTS

Purri Peef (Roast) Cochon

VEGETABLES

Pomme de Terre, Carrots & Puha Beans, peas or mangles (Peut-etre)

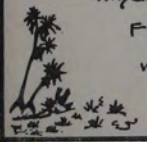
SWEETS

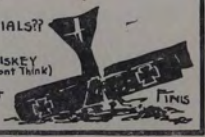
Xmas Pudding & Sauce Slippers Dick & Chinese Ballast

FRUIT, NUTS, CORDIALS??

WINE, WATER, BEER or WHISKEY (I Dont Think)

Passed by Censor





CHRISTMAS DINNER MENU.

Drawn by Sapper Tyerman.
Died of wounds 26/8/18.

God send you back to me
Over the mighty sea
Dearest, I want you near.
God dwells above you,
Knows how I love you,
He will bring you back to me.

The most ambitious item was a complete performance of the famous boarding-house comedy "Box and Cox" by three engineers and the prompter. For this act the management mercifully obliterated our battlefield back cloth with plain hessian which simulated fairly well the dingy wall coverings of a very inexpensive bedroom. The show was very much appreciated. Those standing at the rear who had not room to clap their hands made up for it by whistling and stamping their feet.

December 26. Very cold snowy day. Changed over to night shift. As the roads were frozen I elected to walk the five miles to headquarters. But hob-nailed boots are not ideal for use on iced cobblestones, and walking was painfully slow and bumpy.

As Fritz was thinking about making a raid, our boys in the line put up the S.O.S. flares at 7.10 p.m. Such a bombardment I have never heard. It was even heavier than drum fire. I believe Fritz got about half way across No Man's Land.

December 27. In the afternoon, certain members of headquarters staff, after enduring repeated shelling by a section of the infantry working party, went over the top armed with snowballs, gaining their objective, the top of the ramparts, and burying their opponents in the cemetery there, up to the neck in snow.

At night the moon was full, making my trip through the snow-shrouded "ghost city" a pleasure.

December 28. In the morning, went over to the Y.M.C.A. Hut. Found a sing-song in progress and joined in. Later on I busied myself cross-cutting firewood for

our stove. After the section had returned from their day's work in the line, I entrusted myself to the tender care of old Charley who makes an excellent job of cutting hair, having been at one time a shearer. I was in the fortunate position of being able to find the price, one rum issue. Payment is made in advance and consumed immediately after the work has been done. I have seen Charley put through four or five customers in quick succession and never nip anything but his rum.

December 29. Quiet day on the Western Front, at any rate for me. Landed four Christmas parcels from friends at home. Wrote a letter or two near the stove at the Y.M.C.A., and browsed through the small library there. Have had Batsford's catalogue of books on Art for some time, and after having had a chat with Nugent Welch the Wellington artist, whom I encountered at the Divisional Baths this afternoon, I have decided to send to London for one or two books to study in my spare time as a change from writing up a diary.

December 30, Sunday. Managed to make arrangements for a trip to the back areas, and shortly before dinner time rode through Dickebusch to the camp of the 11th. Battery, N.Z.F.A. By a stroke of luck I caught Nat Wales just as he was leaving camp on his way up the line. He put me on the track of two other old friends, Alex Duncan and Gordon Watson, who have arrived quite recently in this fair country.

What a supper we had at the bivvy from the contents of some of our Christmas parcels! Puddings, cakes, *café au lait*, and Virginian pipe tobacco that had travelled almost twice round the world.

The roads are still very slippery. I walked to Anzac Camp at night as usual, taking with me a nicely balanced tomahawk, formerly the property of a Hun machine-gunner. With this I had a great deal of sport, for the

big black rats which abound near camps and old trenches are very easily seen on the snow by moonlight. I cannot claim to have bowled any over, but a dozen or so did some remarkable high jumping or else showed a pretty turn of speed.

December 31. For us all was quiet; not much noise up the line, nothing to indicate that the old year was fast drawing to its close. Here in the zone of activities, in the midst of this present great conflict, years and their beginnings and endings have no significance. We count achievements in 1917 only as they have helped to end the struggle, and time only as it drags on to the close of a long period of misery for us all. Each man hopes and prays to God that the year to come may bring about a termination of hostilities for the sake of humanity and all its ideals.

Only one occurrence, sad and majestic, seemed to farewell the old year, and to typify the very spirit of it. Late in the afternoon, towards the time of the setting of the sun, five more graves were covered in at the little cemetery on top of the ramparts. And two Maori buglers, come from the ends of the earth, sounded over their departed comrades the solemn strains of the "Last Post" in the last pale light of the departing year.

EPILOGUE

THE abrupt cessation of the story is like a break in a cinematograph film—the gilt-edged writing book had come to an end. Good resolutions for New Year 1918 did not include the continuance of literary efforts.

Those who served in France at this time have indelible memories of the sequence of events in the final year of hostilities. Readers to whom the Great War is but a tale of "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago" may not recall the part played by the New Zealand Division in halting the last determined drive of the German Army along its trail of glory, at the Somme in March. Open warfare was followed by the more familiar routine of trench life. Our turn to advance came in August. From Hebuterne the Division progressed steadily through Bapaume and the Hindenburg Line to the walled and moated town of le Quesnoy, where news of the Armistice reached us. Again we marched, this time without hindrance, and joyfully, over the plains and rolling downs of Belgium, to the German border and to the Rhine. How can the activities and journeyings of an exceedingly busy year be chronicled in a paragraph?

There were the inevitable casualties in our ranks, but the majority of my friends, and all but one of those mentioned in the diary, came through alive if not unscathed. For my part, I continued until "the end of the piece," alternately a dispatch runner and a sapper, in the

latter capacity being employed on a great variety of jobs from erecting bridges under shell-fire to manufacturing wooden crosses. From the village of Refrath near Cologne, where unauthorized deer-stalking in the Kaiser's private park was greatly enjoyed by our sappers, I was lucky enough to be transferred to London, one of a party of students who were generously granted bursaries at the most famous English universities and schools.

In reviewing the events both grave and gay of the year 1918, the highlights and shadows of experience come most readily to mind. I have a vivid recollection of two incidents, trivial in themselves, which afford the maximum of contrast. One night in the village of Pas-en-Artois a bomb blew off part of the roof of a huge barn in which half a dozen of us were sleeping. Nobody was hurt. After the thick black dust of centuries and a generous sprinkling of birds' nests had descended upon us, not a man was recognizable. It was a dark and dirty night!

On the brightest night I can remember, I heard for the first time the fervent song of a nightingale, sweet music pouring forth from the garden of a château which nestled in a hollow of the downs. Returning from a long cross-country run at midnight, I had paused to rest, and gazed upon the moonlit valley from the shadow of a grove of trees wherein a profusion of honeysuckle perfumed the still air. I was enchanted, and no discordant sound of war intruded to break the spell.

In spite of statements now being made to the contrary, it has always been obvious that the colossal spectacle enacted on the Western Front was initiated by sundry German War Lords for their own gratification and amusement. Unfortunately for their desires the party got somewhat out of hand. It is regrettable that in spite of the wealth of the world having been lavished on this stupendous production, I for one was sadly disappointed with

the entertainment provided. In looking back over the last season of the performance, my most pleasurable recollection is merely the song of a nightingale on a peaceful summer night, an isolated item which had no connection whatever with the principal theme. Though numbers of men enjoyed themselves hugely at some distance from the theatre of war, I am convinced that the majority of the audience, particularly those who occupied the front rows, found little to applaud. Such unappreciated performances will recur until this majority can make itself heard in all lands and has power to decide whether war as a means of self-glorification and entertainment for a favoured few is worth its cost in human sacrifice.

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