LETTERS *from* FLANDERS

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By ....A R CURRIE.....

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LETTERS

written in the trenches near Ypres between May and September 1915, by H. M. Butterworth, 9th Rifle Brigade, who fell in action on September 25th, 1915

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MEMOIR.

Extract from the London Times, October, 1915:

"Lieut Hugh Montagu Butterworth, 9th Rifle Brigade, who was killed in action in Flanders on September 25th, was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Butterworth, of Christchurch, New Zealand, formerly of Swindon, England. He was educated at Hazelwood, at Marlborough and at University College, Oxford.

"At Marlborough he was captain of the cadet corps, a member of the cricket, football and hockey teams, racquet representative and winner of the athletic championship cup at Oxford, where he went in 1904. He was a very good, but unlucky, all-round athlete. At different times he represented his University at cricket, football and hockey, and he won the Freshmen's 100 yards, but a bad knee only permitted him to obtain his Blue at racquets. He played in the doubles with Mr. Clarence Bruce as partner in 1905 and Mr. Geoffrey Foster in 1906. In 1907 he went to New Zealand and became assistant master at the Collegiate School, Wanganui."

The above reproduction gives the facts of the early life of Hugh Butterworth up to the time when he came to New Zealand. Apart from his achievements as an all-round athlete, his school and university careers were much the same as those of hundreds of gallant Englishmen who have fallen in the war.

His real life's work began in 1907 when he joined the staff at Wanganui: for seven short years he gave of his best to the service of the school. He played no small part in this difficult period of its history, which included the change from the old to the new buildings. His influence was great and always increasing: he was wonderfully popular and yet never courted popularity. Beneath a modest and somewhat careless exterior he had a strong and

inspiring personality, the outstanding features of which were a large measure of human sympathy, his enthusiasm, his cheerfulness, his sense of humour, his unswerving loyalty to his friends and to what he conceived to be right. Such qualities could not fail to attract boys; he possessed their complete confidence and won their intense admiration. One could write at length of his many acts of supererogation and the innumerable occasions when he gave a helping hand to the younger members of the community. Nowhere was his influence for good used more effectively than in his House Dayroom, Selwyn has reason to be deeply grateful to its first House Tutor. When he went to England early in 1915 he received a commission in a battalion which had been in training for some time. To a man of his temperament the routine and environment of Aldershot were by no means congenial, but he worked hard to make himself efficient, and when the battalion left England in May it is clear that those in authority regarded him with considerable favour.

He spent his four months of active service in the neighbourhood of Ypres: when he went into action for the last time he was in command of his company. In the intervals of duty and sleep in the trenches he found relaxation in writing letters: to quote his own words:—"It's a great joy when one gets a moment's quiet to sit down and retail one's moderate experiences." His letters to me, written in a style with which many of us are so familiar, give a complete and intensely interesting picture of his life in the trenches. When the suggestion was made that they should be preserved in print I readily agreed, because I feel sure that there are many people, both here and in other parts of the world, who would welcome the opportunity of possessing them in a permanent form.

In the last number of the Collegian, a member of Selwyn House wrote:—"We remember him best on the

cricket field." A fine cricketer in the best sense of the word, he was able to inspire others with his own enthusiasm for the game. He devoted himself heart and soul to coaching and, above all, he strove hard to create a cricket atmosphere without which one's efforts are of little value. As a bat, he was in a class by himself here, he made prolific scores in all parts of the country but his greatest joy was to watch a good innings by one of his own boys or to see the School XI. play good cricket against Wellington. Before he went to England he made a complete list of all his scores of 50 and over, it is probably a unique record of its kind.

More eloquent than any words was the universal sorrow and the sense of irreparable loss which the news of his death in action called forth.

The chaplain of his brigade has written:—"He was loved at University (University College, Oxford) and he was loved in the Rifle Brigade."

We can fill in the gap and say with all sincerity—he was loved at Wanganui; we shall sorely miss him.

Wanganui, J. A.
January, 1916.

Externally Hugh Butterworth's life calls for little comment. He went to the conventional English public school, shone at the conventional games, did the conventional minimum of work, and went on, conventionally, to the university. Then came a break in the smooth course of things. With his family he migrated to New Zealand before he had finished his time at Oxford,—without the many "blues" that were within his reach and without a degree. He came to Wanganui in September 1907, and till he left for the war in December 1914 lived in and for the School, "a presence that was not to be put by."

Butterworth's great merit as a school master was that he was entirely unprofessional—and completely human. He was a man of parts, not of knowledge. Energy was the keynote of his character, though partly disguised under a slouching gait and a lackadaisical manner which deceived the unwary. His physical energy expressed itself in the number of games which he played with exceptional skill. Wanganui boys do not need to be reminded of his wonderful scores at cricket, and of his inspiring captaincy. In Rugby football, hockey, racquets, tennis and running he held his own in the best company; while golf, dancing, riding, swimming and motor-cycling claimed his powers, each in due season. But if any thought he was a mere athlete whose bolt would be shot when his muscles began to stiffen, they made a great mistake. Behind the body lay a mind equally instinct with energy that expressed itself in racy prose and light verse and black-and-white sketches of no little merit. Academic he was not, but his love of life led him to love its reflection in literature. He knew Dickens, Thackeray, Kipling and Bernard Shaw minutely; he read the "Ring and the Book" in the intervals of tennis and cricket one summer holidays. In order to explore unfamiliar regions of thought he would study works on socialism or evolution or religion. In the same way he would read Euripides and Aristophanes (in translations), Tolstoy (in French), and occasionally, in their original tongue, Horace and Vergil. We had all hoped to see the School enriched for many years with these many gifts and wide sympathies, deepening and maturing with the flight of time.

As to his private friendships nothing can be said; they are their own record. A man as cheerful, as sincere, and as loyal as he, could not only attract friends, but keep them; and there was no bitterness or cynicism to repel or hurt. One of his Oxford friends has written since his death that he was "one of the most loved and lovable of

men.'' We who knew him in later years will not wish to alter those words.

When the war came, he allowed his sense of duty to conquer his strong love of life. He was not long in making up his mind. He left New Zealand in January, was gazetted in March to the 9th Battalian of the Rifle Brigade, and was in Flanders by the end of May. Until he fell on the 25th September he plied his friends with letters, written in an unadorned, colloquial style that mirrored both himself and his surroundings. As the months went by, though he never lost his light touch, the shadow of his approaching death seemed to add a seriousness to his letters which was absent at first, and now and then he lifts the veil from his inner thoughts and feelings. The programme allotted to him for the great offensive in September convinced him that the end was near, and his last letters, written just before going into battle, strike the note of farewell. In the last sentence of his last letter he wrote, ''I don't doubt my power to stick it out, and I think my men will follow me.'' His friends are sure that his men followed him, and in those words he has penned his own best praise. Hugh Butterworth was a leader and inspirer of boys who became a leader and inspirer of men fighting in a great cause;—Felix opportunitate mortis.

Wanganui, H. E. S.
January, 1916.

Copied from ''The Marlburian,'' November, 1915.

The short biography of Hugh Butterworth which appears in ''The Marlburian, mentions the achievements by which he came into public prominence, and the events and changes which marked his life: but it says nothing of his high sense of honour, of his affectionate nature, of his straight forward manliness of character, of his strong common sense and clear-headedness, of his cheerfulness, of his

humour: it says nothing of the willing sacrifice on which he insisted, when, in spite of their unselfish wishes he decided to accompany his people to New Zealand, and to give up his honour degree, an assured position in the legal profession for which he was intended, and an excellent chance of a cricket "Blue": it says nothing of his second great sacrifice, when, having by sheer merit won himself a happy and comfortable position with good prospects at Wanganui, with congenial work, immense popularity and every opportunity for the athletics which he loved, he resolved to leave all and to offer his services and his life to his country.

He was a splendid athlete, and, whatever he played, he played hard: but he always recognised games in their proper proportion. He accepted his many disappointments at Oxford with philosophic resignation: it was indeed hard that one who was regarded as the best hockey forward in Oxford and who made 130 in the Seniors' cricket match should have been deprived by ill-luck of the crowning honours. In New Zealand he devoted himself to coaching the school teams, and he met with marked success: nor was he less successful in his other teaching. He had inherited a strong love of English literature and he taught his pupils to appreciate all that was best in it. At school, at college, at Wanganui and in his regiment everyone who knew him loved, trusted, admired and respected him: and it can safely be said that he never made an enemy. Marlborough never produced a more worthy son.

L. W.

Extract from a letter written by Colonel Villiers-Stuart, commanding the 9th battalion of the Rifle Brigade, to Miss Butterworth:

"Dear Madam,

I cannot express my sadness at having to tell you of the death of your gallant brother, in the action on September

25th. He led his company most bravely, and for a time all went well, but the German counter-attacks were very heavy and our men were forced back by bomb attacks in great force. It was in leading a few men to counter-attack one of these that your brother met his death. With him I lost all my officers but three. All his time with me your brother showed the most conspicuous coolness and courage, and he can never be replaced as an officer. I have no words to express my regret for you at his loss. Your brothers's name had long been sent in for Captain's rank.

Yours sincerely,

W. VILLIERS-STUART."

LETTERS.

May 25th, 1915.

Cheer Ho! We pushed over here the other day *via* Blanktown and Censorville. Spent a day at latter place and then marched to Xburg where we entrained. To our surprise we meandered on, and were finally shot out into the murky night at about midnight. We heard the guns booming away on the starboard bow. At 2 we slipped off on what we were told was a 5 mile hop. It turned out to be 16 kilometres, and the men having had no food for 12 hours we had a rough time. However we finally bumped into a village to accompaniment of distant cannon. Sank into billets. We are absolutely on clover. Our Company is billeted in a ripping farm, the men in barns and we in the farm. We've got a ripping pond. In fact the back of the front is a good spot. We live like lords with unlimited food and beer. We are about half a mile from the village, and one can get into comfortable garbage. We've had some Company sports this afternoon. Great success. I figured in a Platoon Relay race, and ran like a hare, and almost collapsed at the finish. We've dug splendid baths, and put a waterproof sheet in to splash about. One trips over there in the dewy morn, dodging the cows. We are a great push at this farm, including one of the funniest of men, and we spend the day laughing chiefly and strenuous work on occasion. Shall push on to Bloodville shortly I suppose.

June 4th.

I've written two letters during last week, only they've been blown away or melted or got into the butter or something. I forget when I wrote last; somewhere when I was in the North of France. Well, of course, I can't say where I am, but we're in a mighty interesting spot—a place you've heard of several times. We're out every night

these times within a mile of the Germans, but our battalion has had no casualties so far. It's very strange. There are guns all over the place wonderfully hidden. Flares go up all night continually, and then suddenly from some spot comes terrific rapid fire and the — — — of machine-guns. It lasts about 5 minutes, then silence there. The trench is either taken or not. We shall be in the front trenches next week. You would have liked to see But: doubling through a dangerous and shelled-out village reeking of badly buried corpses and horses. Doubling for men carrying rifles, ammunition, spades, etc., is a good game. Baths are impossible, one sort of puts in a wash of sorts in the morning. We're in camp at present—of sorts. Up to lately we were in very good billets, but the time for good billets has now departed. However things are quite entertaining. Thank boys for letters. Will write when I can, but we're never in bed till 4 a.m., and one has things to do by day. We're usually out from 5 p.m. to 4 a.m. If I don't get into too grim a place I think I'll enjoy things pretty much. The officers in our Company are splendid lads, and we shall extract humour out of most things. Love to all. Give Wanganui my best wishes.

June 10th, 1915.

We are in the trenches and having a thoroughly satisfactory time. My platoon is in with a Company of the ———s, and we are all being instructed in trench-fighting. We came in last night, passed through various shattered villages and then came up an immense communication trench with the bullets singing over our heads. We are about 90 yards from the Germans, and I have been out to the listening post in front which can't be more than 50 or 60 yards from them. Being so near them is really rather an advantage as they are very chary about shelling us. They are magnificent trenches with splendid dug-outs. My dug-out is

made of sand-bags, with a corrugated-iron roof and with a glass window facing the rear! I am the guest of the —— officers, and we live like lords. At lunch to-day we partook of beef and tongue, pâté de foie gras, comabere (or however you spell it) cheese, stewed apricots, biscuits, almonds and raisins, white wine, coffee and benedictine, and this with bullets pattering up against the wall! Very gentlemanly warfare! The only objections are (1) lice (2) bad water—the Germans have a habit of dropping in arsenic (3) the fact that the ground has been twice passed over in the early days of the war, and the corpses are a bit lively. When one digs, (which one does 5 hours a day and most of the night) one usually rakes in a souvenir of sorts!

I'm glad to say we haven't yet been gassed, but we are provided with respirators, gas-helmets, and sprayers, so should be all right. We're just expecting what we call "a little frightfulness," as the artillery have just rung up to say that they intend to do a bit to it. When our new batteries open up we take to our burrows like rabbits!

I was out in front this morning for a bit with one of the subs. Men who have been out some months usually stroll about full in view of snipers with telescopic sights without caring a straw. We also selected quite the worst possible spot to stop and discuss the merits of chevaux-de-frise. However a festive Bosche got busy, and we hooked it hurriedly.

My men are very pleased with themselves. They averaged about 20 rounds during the night—without I suspect hitting anything,—and were full of joy. Also, I was pleased to note, they put their heads well over the parapet and took a proper sight before shooting. Many men their first night, I'm told, hold their rifles well above their heads and loose off anyhow. Men look fearsome ruffians in the trenches. The water is bad for shaving, as if you cut yourself you may get a bit poisoned, so they mostly grow

beards. Personally I take a tot out of my water-bottle, but I haven't washed yet to-day (2.30 p.m.). We're in for four days and can't have our boots, putties or equipment off all that time. We've had rain, so I'm slopping about in gum-boots fairly covered in mud owing to crawling operations this morning. Shall get a wash before dinner to-night. However officers don't get much sleep—about 4 in the 24. Also rifles and ammunition get filthy dirty and have to be continually inspected.

I am going out with the Captain soon to some spot where we can see the German lines very well. Of course I have looked at them through periscopes, and when flares are shot up at night. Shall probably work off a big mail before I go out, as there's plenty to talk about, and one can dart into one's dug-out when things are quiet. Best wishes to all. The only thing I object to is censoring my platoon's letters!

My servant has just got one in the head—not badly—which is highly annoying to me!

Rest Camp,

June 13th or somewhere near.

Back for a snooze. Got relieved night before last. We had rather a rotten time getting back, as our relief was very late, and the platoon ahead of us went the wrong way; we did'nt get back till 3.30 and had to be up and off at 6. But we are now in camp. I have built a fine 'whare,' 2 water-proof sheets fixed on wire between trees, and my Wolseley valise to lie on. Très bon.

Last night 6 of us burst into —— and had a splendid dinner. Also I had a historic bath. I don't seem to have amassed any lice. I slept yesterday from 2 to 6 and from 9 to 8.15!! The worst of trench work for officers is the

sleeplessness. The men get a good deal of rest, and of course as officers get scuppered the work gets harder for the remnant.

I've just re-read letter and see that I haven't told about last day. We had a fair amount of frightfulness. Our artillery opened and we got plenty in return; 120 shells at trench to our left. No one killed! We got to it with rifle grenades. They replied with trench mortars and grenades. I went out with a cove very much ventre à terre in the literal sense, and we crawled up to about 20 yards from their trench. Grass high and remains of old French trench. We decided on a bombing base, and we were going out in the evening to have a go. Unfortunately we were relieved earlier than expected, so it fell through.

I suppose we shall be in again in a day or so, but at this game you are never given orders long before, and they're always washed out and altered at least twice the next hour.

Au revoir, mes amis. Best wishes.

June 16th,
3.10 a.m.

I, H. M. Butterworth, a man of peace, possessed of few virtues, but rather a good off-drive, am sitting in a very narrow packed trench, about to take part in one of the biggest battles in History. Shells are fairly hurtling through the ether. With luck the sun ought to be up in half an hour,—at about which hour my watch ends. But what a life! I went out yesterday morning to sort of "reconnaisce" the ground, as it was my duty to lead the Company to its appointed support trench. We spun along on bikes without disaster though a few Jack Johnstons buzzed around. Past through Historic City, (d—— the Censor), and found the way. To-night we stepped forth at about 10. Had a desperately slow march; (most of the

British Army was coming along, I fancy), and ended a cheerless walk by a double along a railway-track from sleeper to sleeper. You have seen life in your time—have you every seen a Company armed to the teeth and shovel doubling along a very much "Jack Johnsoned" railway-line with splendid shell-holes all over the place? A delightful experience made more so by the fact that telephone wires would trip you up every now and then.

6.15. A terrific bombardment has been going on for the last 3 hours. We must have hundreds and hundreds of batteries at work with whips of ammunition. Aeroplanes flutter round and have a look at us and get well shelled, but they go on rejoicing. I expect the main attack will develop (good word that) in an hour or so. I shall probably not be in the limelight till a good deal later. It will very likely be my pleasant task to stop a German counter-attack or something genial of that sort.

On the whole I'm rather disappointed with the noise of the bombardment from our end. We are very near about 100 guns I should say, and one can talk in quite a low voice.

We've got no washing or shaving kit with us, just 2 days' rations and a waterbottle of water. We shall be a quaint collection when we've finished—what's left of us.

The German's aren't replying to our artillery fire much just at present; I expect they are meditating something very unpleasant. Well, au revoir. This is June 16th, and we ought to get something done by Waterloo Centenary. Perhaps we are about to make history—perhaps not. Anyway best wishes to all. Curiously enough I feel as if I was playing bridge with you all—quite normal.

6.28 a.m. News through Canadians taken first line of trenches. Au revoir.

Trenches,
Sunday, June 20th, 1915.
3.15 a.m.

What a night! We left camp at 7, marched through Ypres, the most impressive sight I've ever seen, the whole place is absolutely gone. Every house is smashed to bits, absolutely a wonderful sight and very awesome. Well—at about 9 or so I picked up a couple of guides, (we were marching by platoons), Scotchmen, and they brought us up to these trenches. We got gassed just as we came up. We were entering the most complicated trenches imaginable and we got the gas good and proper. My men were distinctly panicy and I had to mix profanity and jest in even quantities, slight preference given to profanity. Every platoon in the British Army seemed to be mixed up. Fortunately we had respirators and good smoke helmets so we got through. It's rotten though. After a bit I collected my platoon, (I reached my position the first time with one corporal and one rifleman,) and got them told off in their places and then things started. We had continual shell-fire, shrapnel and gas-bombs and some very heavy rifle and machine-gun work away to the left and right. So far my platoon is unhurt, but we've had some close calls. I had a sand-bag whipped off just above my head at about 1.15 this morning. Bullets of course whizz the whole time. The chief objection to this trench is the fact that it is more or less littered with dead, and if you dig you invariably hit some corpse. It's quiet at last now and I'm penning this. It's a gruesome business, but perhaps we get used to it. One does'nt seem to have a dog's chance when things are moving. Oh! inter alia, I was knocked clean over by a shell coming in this morning but was unhurt—a quaint sensation it was too. Why it did'nt slay me I know not. I will continue anon if I am still cumbering the planet. Au revoir. I must take a turn round the trench and see that all is serene.

8.45 (Can't find out whether day or night). Have you ever gone round the corner of a traverse and found a very dead Englishman lying exactly as he fell with his sword fixed in front of him on the firing platform? Don't do it as an experience. It almost put me off my "brekker." We've been working like niggers since five getting the trench a little safer. By to-night I think we'el have eliminated the more serious danger. I already have quite a decent dug-out. This trench has been held by various people X + Y times. We've found everything in the Army and Navy catalogue except a grand piano. We have garnered in 15,000 rounds already, and all sorts of tunics and lots of bodies and things. We have just been bringing in a man killed last night. One of my platoon produced a prayer book and all was well. By the way—do you ever read "Watch Dogs" in Punch? That is the very trench I was in a fortnight or so ago for instruction. A quiet soft place, very different from the present gay spot! Do you remember the incident of the "Verrey Pistol" he tells. A "Verrey Pistol" is a pistol one shoots flares up with. It does no one any harm. Eh bien! The Germans had been a frightful nuisance one afternoon and these coves wanted a sleep, and so a fellow in a rage seized a "Verrey Pistol" and fired it off. The Germans obviously thought it a new form of frightfulness and at once ceased fire and went to bed likewise. I can vouch for this yarn because I was there! Continue later. My sergeant is taking over for two hours, so I'll get some shut eye as I've been up all night and shall be until relieved. Incidentally I see Gresson has been wounded.

Monday. Another very fairly sultry evening. On the whole Sunday was quiet. Towards evening there was a certain amount of shelling. Just about 10.30 our Ration Party went out and did'nt get back till 2 and had a pretty gay time. However I wasn't there. At about 10.15 p.m. I was sent for by the Commanding Officer and

told to take a note to a cove in another trench. I was given a guide but he lost his way in a woolly maze of blown up trenches with dead all over the place. Fortunately we dropped into the right trench. You see this part is recently captured and there are very bad communication trenches as yet. We thought we were dished as star shells went up and though we lay as still as mice they flung some shells near us. Well—I had to stay in this trench all night on some duty and a very nice night we had! A dug-out was blown in and several men killed. We got about three shells and trench mortars plumb in the trench and lost some men and one poor fellow had an arm blown off and I think died. The stretchers couldn't be got through properly and I had to go back once and bring the bearers up. Personally I prefer open ground at night to bad communication trenches. They know the latter and can shell them. But in the open you can put your ears back and run, tripping over barbed wire and corpses. Well—finally I had to bring a man back to our trench and I told him I was running for it. We picked up two stray men who wanted to get back, and we ran like sin and jumped into a bit of communication trench plumb on the top of a ration party coming up! Horrid struggle. I forgot to say that earlier on I flung myself down to avoid a star-shell and landed on a corpse. Mon dieu! We've been losing men pretty consistently the last 36 hours—mostly shell-fire but a few sniped. I managed to snatch an hour's sleep towards morning. I shall probably have to take out a ration party to-night—a rotten job as the Germans shell all the roads and trenches on chance. The men are very cheerful. I hope they relieve us in four days as its very messy work. Continue later.

8.45 p.m. (probably Monday). A pretty moderate day I got a certain amount of rest till 9 and then had to reconnoitre with the Major (one of God's good men) to find the best place to get a communication trench

through to the company somewhere in front. The present trench is very bad. We simply waded about among dead Englishmen and Germans, in fearfully decomposed state. Horrible! We then went back and turned out the whole company to get to work on the trench. It was in dead ground mostly and we escaped notice for 2½ hours. A burial party carried on in front and all but one, (23 out of 24) were physically sick, but they stuck it out splendidly. I had just given the burying party orders to come in when the Germans spotted us from a baloon they sent up, and they got our range about the second shot. I got the men back along the trench in about five minutes—none hit—under fairly severe shelling. You can have no idea of the awful state of a captured trench. It has probably had three hours heavy bombardment to start with and been knocked to bits, and of course there are dead men in all sorts of conditions without legs, arms, etc. One man I found naked. Then of course there's equipment, rifles etc. of all sorts. The men get used to horrors after a bit and collect souvenirs as they call them. I'm afraid I have by no means done with horrors for the day as I believe I'm going out with some Scotchmen to go on burying.

Later (date unknown). Such is the extraordinary effect of this work and the want of sleep that I have been trying to decide whether it was yesterday or the day before that I finished the lines above. After mature consideration I've come to the conclusion that it was last night. Well—I went out with the Scotchmen and we dug in a lot of corpses. So much for that! Incidentally we had a pretty lively bombardment in the evening. I got an hour's sleep before we "Stood to" and after that function I dashed off to my sergeant and a corporal to try and find some badly needed sand-bags that had been dumped down somewhere by a party last night. There are few couples in the British Army that move quicker or more doubled-up than my sergeant and I when in shallow trench under fire

from snipers. After a bit we ran into gas but had not time for respirators and our eyes streamed. We picked up connection with a youthful subaltern, fixed up a carrying party back to the accompaniment of sniping and then had to get them passed on to A and B Companies in front. I took forty men laden with food and sand-bags and we dumped the things down and then had to stand by for a bit wedged in a narrow trench. We got back fit and well. We are getting this place in great order. When we came in, it was hopelessly unsafe and full of dead. Now we have cut communication trenches all over the place, but we lost a good few men. However the work had to be done. The men have worked splendidly—to-day for instance having gone a little wrong, we've had no water, but no one is growling. I'm awfully pleased with my bunch. I've come to the conclusion that I never lived till I breakfasted, (as I did this morning) after forty-eight hours of almost continuous work in a crazy dug-out, on a hard-boiled egg, some bread and neat whisky. Continue later.

Wednesday, 4 a.m. At about six in the evening we were suddenly told that we were in for a stunt taking a redoubt. Our company was in "support," (fortunately!.) Affairs started at seven-thirty. We began an intensive bombardment and the Germans came at us with equal intensity. Believe anything you are told about concentrated artillery fire. To say I've never been in anything the hundredth part so terrific is merely banal. How can I describe it? It was like every noise you ever heard, crashing over your head. I suppose, —this is true talk, ten or twenty shells passed over or burst all round us per second—we were ordered simply to lie "doggo" at the bottom of the trench. This lasted for two and a half hours. For the first half hour one was in imminent fear of death. Sand and earth fell on you in heaps. The air and earth trembled and shook withal. For the next half hour you rather hoped you would be finished

off. It would be easier you thought. Mind you, one's nerves are a bit on edge after four practically sleepless nights—or is it five? I forget. Then you thought "well hang it, if I hav'nt been 'scuppered' yet, I may as well carry on." I was in a traverse with a corporal of mine —a great nut, a most independent cove, who in times of excitement becomes delightfully familiar and says "This is a bit of 'orl right, eh?" and so on. He also possesses "guts." After an hour the battalions on the left and the right moved. We supported with rapid fire and machine guns, and were receiving a terrific fire. By midnight things quietened down though the most mysterious things were happening. We were getting quite a brisk fire from a quarter where no Germans should have been and a subaltern in the left reports much the same—but we call him a liar! I may say that in the midst of all these things we had a ration party half a mile away, more or less concealed, dumping rations. At about two o'clock there enters a very weary subaltern from C. Company who had been having a terrible time. Owing to blunders, two of their platoons had been caught by the bombardment in the wrong place and had been badly hit. He'd got a lot of wounded, he said, and could not get them away. The genial task of getting off with ten men fell to me. I started off in the dark and could not pick up the right communication trench. Flares were going up and we were lying on our stomachs when a jovial fellow came out of the mirk and said he would get me down. Off we went, lying down in pools and bending double. When we got down to the road—this is quite unintelligible geography, but it can't be helped —I met our Sergeant Major—a splendid man—who apologized to me in the sort of tone he would use on Barrack Square and said he had got all the wounded away and I wasn't wanted. So we started back and finally reached the communication trench. We found it was blocked by C. Company. I tried to get a message up, but couldn't, so

we darted back and tried for another. We found it had been knocked right in by shell fire. I collected my party in the safest place I could find and sent out a man to move on the men in the communication trench. Later I went myself and as I couldn't get them on and it was getting light. I brought my men up over them and got them in. Mind you, all this time we had only to be seen to be shelled off the earth and flares were going up all the time. On getting back I thought the situation warranted a neat whisky for myself and my corporal. Incidentally I'm covered with mud and wet through.

8.30 p.m. (date unstated). Well, we're not being relieved to-night and have to stick together twenty-four hours. We've had a good deal of shelling but nothing continuous. I have got three hours' sleep, but otherwise we've worked sans cesse building up where we were hit last night and so on. The ration question is very difficult in a trench like this, our position is such that we are further from the base than any other trench on this line. We work it like this—our transport bring up the stuff nightly to about one and a half miles away. We send down a whole company under two officers, they are always shelled, and they bring it up to us. We then divide it up and parties have to take up rations to two companies somewhere in the front. That's over the explored bit where I spent my early hours burying and digging. We've had rain and the trenches are filthy. We're all sitting down in the trench at present as the shells are coming fairly regularly. I am coated with mud, feet soaking of course, but that ceases to worry, and bound about the waist with a waterproof sheet. We lost two officers killed and one wounded, and a good few men, last night.

Thursday, 7.30 a.m. We seem unable to avoid thrills these days. We expected trouble all yesterday. Bosche aeroplanes were looking at us all day and they were taking our range systematically by single

shots from machine guns and occasionally trying a ranger and getting terribly near, bursting our parapet again in one place. Well, in the morning we heard we were not going to be relieved, so we waited on as it got dark for their bombardment to start. We had a good many shells but no real bombardment. We could hardly believe our luck. I was on duty till midnight and I had just came off when our delightful little major hustled down and with the air of a man imparting cheery tidings told us that a message had come through that a number of Germans had got through between two of our trenches, and we might expect an attack. This sort of thing sounds incredible but the trenches do not run on parallel lines. Then there are lines of trenches unoccupied (except by the dead) and altogether you wouldn't be surprised at anything happening. Anyhow, there it was, so we all "stood to" and looked out. In my anxiety to give the Germans a cheery reception I told my platoon to fix swords (you'd call them bayonets but I am an R.B.) and the message went right along the company past headquarters. It appears I was wrong, and messages came hurtling down the line "Who gave order to fix swords?" I put on my best countenance and waded up to Headquarters and told the commanding officer I was the culprit, having contravened army order 3241 paragraph 14 (*a*) (i)!! However the commanding officer was very nice and explained the "whys" and "wherefores" and we parted on excellent terms. News soon came that the report of the Germans was false, so we stood down. The awful part of the work is the ghastly weariness. Imagine five whole days—each lasting twenty-four hours to a minute—when you are on the stretch the whole time. Add to that, that you are very dirty—probably wet. Add to that the fact that water doesn't get up perhaps in proper quantities. Add to that that in a small rough trench like this you eat anyhow in a small cavern in the earth, lying flat when shells arrive. Add

to that that the men are so tired sometimes that you have to pull them up when they fall asleep at "stand to." Do we earn 7/6 a day?

Later, (time not stated). The worst has happened, I've broken both available pipes. Later. Out of trenches. To conclude, we've been out two days now. Our getting out was an absolute miracle. We were to be relieved at eleven p.m. At twelve o'clock there was no sign —my watch ended, so I turned in. At twelve fifteen we had a gas alarm. I was pulled out by the boots by an enthusiastic rifleman. It turned out to be very mild, so I slept again. At two o'clock I was again led out and told that A. and B. were being relieved, then C. and we were to leave after them. Of course it was almost daylight. Well, I was the last platoon to leave, so I sat in a mud wall at the head of my platoon and waited. I was so certain that we were bound to be cut up that I didn't mind a button about anything. So much so that I had my one and only breeze with my company commander. The fault was entirely mine and I must have been extremely irritating. Well, at three o'clock we got away. By the most terrific luck a thick mist came down, of course it was broad daylight otherwise and we waded off. We had coats on, fullish packs and a shovel. I had a shovel and a rifleman. My sergeant led and I brought up the rear. My orders to the sergeant were to leg it as hard as he could go. We disdained trenches. Trusting to the mist we moved across the open on to the road and moved down it like race-horses. When we reached——— we knew the worst was over. No shells were particularly near one and we lost no men at all. After that I had rather a nasty knock. I jested the men through the town —or what once was a town—and on passing safely through issued the historic order—"thank God, and go easy." I then got hold of a military policeman to find out the way. At that unfortunate moment up popped the

Colonel who told me we were marching like the Grenadiers—which, he as a Ghurkha—regards as a horrid insult. I apologized and told him we had made the trip in record time and mollified him somewhat. All was plain sailing after that. We marched six or seven miles more and here we are in a delightful town awfully comfortable. We are fairly leading the life, hot baths and beer are the chief attractions. I hope this is fairly intelligible. We ought to get a week off. On re-reading this I think I exaggerate my importance in the scheme of things. This letter merely tells my own jobs. Every other officer has other jobs all the time, so don't delude yourself into thinking that I do anything more than attempt to run a platoon.

July 2nd, 1915.

I hope you don't get over-deluged with my letters, but it's a great joy when one gets a moment's quiet, to sit down and retail one's moderate adventures. Yesterday I had a noteworthy day. I was awakened at midnight by our sergeant-major with a note from Headquarters to say I had to start off at seven o'clock with fifty men in motor lorries to ——— (that dear old famous spot I'm always going through, you must have guessed it by now.) We turned out at the said hour and at seven o'clock we were tooling off down the road, the men in lorries, Butterworth in a "Sunbeam" belonging to the A.S.C. We reached the spot and waited a bit on the railway station and was joined by a signalling subaltern, who like all the casual men and children I drop upon here, was a ripper. We strolled off. A certain amount of shelling was going on in other parts of the town—I'm not putting on side—one really does not mind now provided it's a street or two away. We had to dig a trench for the telephone wires, linking up batteries, a most necessary thing as they

get blown to bits and communication is lost. We had to take this line through the heart of the town or ruin, as it is now. After some time a Major man came up and looked on and opined that we were digging a trench. According to orders I merely stood at attention and said "Yes, Sir." He waited a bit and passed on. Enter in one minute two artillery officers—both with eye glasses—and two sergeants. "Did I know the man?" "No," well, they thought he was a spy, no one knew his face. So I gathered in my revolver and off we sprang. We failed to find him. About two hours after I saw the man coming through again. So I approached him with drawn revolver (isn't this a good yarn?) told him that I was sorry but I must stop him and take him back to be identified. I called out two riflemen as a guard. Of course they fairly loved it—so did I. I then marched him off to a captain of engineers and he questioned him. Finally he seemed satisfied and let him go. I wasn't satisfied at all and followed him up on the quiet, I struck some artillery men and asked them if they knew him. "Oh! yes," they said, "he's our Major!!" So I've arrested a full-blown Major: However when I reported the matter, I was told I'd done absolutely right. In this war anyone can arrest anyone on suspicion and nothing is said. In fact it is the only way with spies in uniform all over the country. Rather funny though, wasn't it? We had a smoke for dinner and a swim in the moat, ripping. There must be a lot of corpses therein but that did'nt worry me at all. Every now and then I darted off and examined the town and had a good look at the cathedral and ...., in ruins, of course. The place is more or less looted by now but you can pick up more or less what you want for the asking. We went back to our lorries and I went out to play bridge with some men in another regiment. So ended a good day. We're having a fine rest. I suppose we go to the trenches again at the end of the week.

July 5th, 1915.

Still sleeping! One begins to wonder what has happened to the war. True they shell the town occasionally and we see wounded coming through, but we ourselves still lead delectable lives. Yesterday—being Sunday—we went forth on nags to the Oxford and Bucks. Having lunched—we played cricket! A wonderful pitch of course but great fun. We made ninety-six, the Wanganui willow-welder taking a scratching quintette. It was terrifically hot. They then journeyed to the wickets and Butterworth (not captain I may say) bowled unchanged and snaffled seven wickets. They beat us by two wickets. We then returned "au galop" to our billets. I had a delightful pony that pulled like the very mischief. On the whole a great day. At present I'm riddled with mosquito bites, the brutes. The only stuff I can get for it is Eau-de-Cologne which isn't very effective. We had a genial evening last night sub luna. Divers genial sports rolled into our bivouac and we ran through every comic opera from San Toy to Rag-time. We always sing at our meals and during bombardments. I've got a wonderful rifleman in my platoon. My priceless sergeant said to me one day "You know Sir, I don't think Quick is right in the head, very religious man Sir." The aforesaid Quick uses the biggest words known. He always says "declivity" instead of "slope" and when in the trenches the other day, I asked him what the——— he was doing—this being the military form of interrogation, he confided to me that he was making an "aperture." I wish we could get some more officers sent over. We started with thirty-one, and have lost six one way and another, and two are off on special jobs. There remain twenty-three including the Commanding Officer, Second in Command and the Adjutant. Result—that we are continually out for trouble in the trenches. However, I expect offi-

cers are not too easy to come by these days. Not much news but I daresay a regular budget will turn up this mail from me.

Friday, July 10th [9th],
aux Trenches, 9.30 a.m.

There is a so-called bombardment going on. I don't think much of it at present, but as we have to be more or less umbraging, I can scratch a line. I just dash up and down the line now and then between frightfulness to see that parapets remain standing and that the men are awake.

We 'came in' last night in the true military style. Everything was mapped out to the square inch and we came cheerily up. I came with some of the men on O.S. waggons. We had to drive about ten miles, and then detached and had a hasty meal. Then we toddled off, Butterworth rather taking it in the neck as he was leading and moved off at 8 p.m. as per orders, but omitted to send orderly to adjutant to report departure. However he wasn't unduly moved. On reaching———(our old friend) we were met by our Company Commanders who had gone ahead, with the news that all arrangements were washed out, and everything had to be done differently. That was a jolly situation when you're in Shellville and companies are marching at fifteen minutes interval. Followed a scene of unparalleled profanity. Tandem we got re-sorted. Fortunately it was a particularly quiet night, off we got. We then tooled off over the open—dead ground—and then went through about two miles of communication trench—a wearisome performance as they're so narrow. However we got in safely and "took over" in approved style. About ten minutes later we got a parapet blown in, but no one was hurt. I rather objected to its being the parapet I was behind at the moment.

We are in the front trench and in a tricky place, as is usually the case with the R.B. The Germans are about one hundred and fifty yards off, and we've got a listening post going half-way out. It's eerie out there at night. Also we're not wired yet, which is bad. I expect I shall have to do some of the wiring,—a rotten business—at night of course, and if you're spotted, what ho! for the machine guns. Sed faciendum est. The night passed away quietly and we hoped for a good day's work—spoilt by our confounded gunners wanting to bombard; it's a sort of obsession of theirs. Oh, incidentally, according to the Daily Mail and other experts, they're just due for another go at Calais. If they do it while we're here, we shall probably be scuppered, the front line always is. I've got a ripping map of all the trenches round here taken from an aeroplane photo; I wish I could send it you. It's an extraordinary thing. You never imagined such networks of trenches.

We had a ripping rest before coming in. I finished with a momentous dinner—the sort of dinner that makes you very nervous when you have to halt and be identified by a sentry on the way home. But I think we'd earned a little dinner, don't you? We get dashed little water (observe the train of thought) in this front trench and it's very hot; otherwise it isn't bad—for a trench. I must tool off and look round.

Friday, 4.30 p.m.

They've started the bombarding again. Our people must have too many shells or something. They hit it up for an hour and a half at nine, then started again at three, and I believe are going to have another go at 5.30. We haven't had many very near us so far. However it's a dashed nuisance as one can't get anything done. The artillery aren't a bit popular with the infantry in this trench war except in emergencies. On a good quiet day

the artillery tee off behind, and of course the Germans retaliate on our trenches. We can't do anything except sit still and hope for the finish. I've had rather a good day really though, as there wasn't much doing, and so I have snatched five hours' sleep altogether since we got in. That's the best I've ever had in the twenty-four hours of trenches. We've got a rum selection in my bit of trench, a machine gun section, and six bombers up the listening-post in front. If only we had wire out I'd be easy, but as it is one may so easily be rushed at night.

Saturday, 7 a.m. [*July 10*].

A very nasty time since I wrote last. The third bombardment proved one of the intense variety. In the middle of it one of my parapets was blown in and all the men buried, and one man horribly hurt. It was a ghastly business. His eye was taken clean out, his nose broken, and several of his teeth driven down into his throat. Of course he was smothered in blood. He was wonderfully plucky. We patched him up as well as we could, and after things quietened down managed to get him away. He may live. Later when night came on we started wiring, but didn't get a lot of work done as the Germans got wind of it, I fancy. One man drilled plumb through the leg—I should say by an explosive bullet. We got him in over the parapet and dressed him and tied the leg to a rifle and got four men to take him down. This is a hopeless trench to get wounded away from. It is impossible by day, and frightfully difficult by night. One of our men went right out to the German lines last night and got to their papapet, and tried to find out what they were doing. He was nearly nabbed, but got back.

It's comparatively calm now, but we shan't get much peace, I fear. It's an awful thing to see your men knocked out in this way. Thank the Lord, the wind is

still blowing the right way, so we are spared the additional joy of gas. I hear rumours of more bombarding today.—! Must stop for a bit.

Saturday, 2.30 p.m.

An absolutely beastly day, so far. Bombarding has gone on more or less incessantly. Considering, our casualties have not been large. Three men were killed and one badly concussioned by one shell. A gruesome business. They were all completely buried, and three of them hit by high explosive. When I got up to them they were being dug out. The first man was on his face almost in half. The next had his arm taken clean off and was dying, and the third was dead; (we never found the legs of the third man). The fourth was dug out more or less unconscious. He is at my side now, sleeping, and still pretty bad, waiting to be taken down to-night. One dead man is three yards to my right waiting for a lull for burial. The others are buried, I think. Shells are whizzing all over the place as I write. I am writing as much to keep my mind clear as anything else. The man next me is an Australian-American,—the coolest man I've seen—a rifleman. He is at present studying the Daily Mail, the next man is asleep! the next two are cooking! My Australian-American friend and I passed a portion of the time before dinner in trying to put together Omar Khayyam; perhaps a curious pastime between an officer and a rifleman in a trench, but one strikes curious anomalies in Kitchener's First Army. (——these shells!)

About three quarters of an hour ago our shrapnel began to burst over us. As it synchronized with the appearance and disappearance of a soi-disant artillery officer in a trench near, one may conclude he was a spy. Every so-called observing officer that turns up should be arrested.

Well, I'll write again later. I got a letter from A.... H..... during bombardment. Posts and rations turn up regardless. It's awfully cheering to read the Daily Mail in a trench and see that the Germans are supposed to be preparing a terrific move in the exact spot you happen to be holding. However!

Saturday, 7.20 p.m.

The day goes on. Things have quietened considerably, tho' shells still hurtle; in fact they've done nothing else since dewy morn. But the foe have devoted their energies more to other trenches. I must say our artillery have been in some form on the whole. From my periscopic views and occasional peeps over the parapet I have observed German sandbags and redoubts leaping heavenwards a good deal. Whether we have slain any enemy I don't know. Perhaps what cheers one most is that the wind remains honestly in the west. In previous existences I have watched the wind at Wanganui, to see how it would effect me biking to the links, but never have I viewed a good sharp breeze with such joy as I do at present.

I wonder what we shall all be like after the war—those of us who happen to scrape through—I suppose a few will. If anyone drops a bucket or anything noisy we shall all with one accord drop behind an invisible parapet. If the word 'gas' is whispered we shall all finger our pockets and necks for respirators and smoke helmets, uttering weird and deadly oaths. We shall always expect to find a town in ruins, and the first thing we shall do will be to dig in in case of shelling. At moment of writing a taube is up and is being shrapnelled and high-explosived, but it isn't hit. Aeroplanes are hardly ever hit—an aeroplaner's life is the safest job here except perhaps the A.S.C. Funny, isn't it? Then come cavalry,

but they have to go to trenches sometimes. Then artillery, they have their purple patches:—lastly (easily) infantry who dwell on intimate terms with death for twenty four hours a day. This afternoon I went to bury two of the poor fellows killed this morning, and get their equipment and identity discs, and pay-book, etc. A month ago I couldn't have faced men in that condition. One man had lost both his legs and most of one side. The other was horribly mutilated too. Our stretcher-bearers are fine fellows. They have to do the grimmest things, but do them willingly.

Goodnight; it's just 'stand to,' and I must prepare for my third examination of rifles to-day.

I hope the Germans don't attack to-night!! [Shrieks of 'No, No,' and 'Coward.']

Sunday, 10 a.m. [*July 12*].

Quite a good night after the alarms and discursions of the day. Things had quietened down by 'stand to' in the evening, and so we decided to do some work. I took out two men to wire in front. It's most entertaining work; I really enjoyed it like anything. First we threw the wire over the parapet,—French concertina wire—then scrambled over landing on all fours. Then the two men came over and we dragged it forward about two yards; then opened it out and pegged it in. The first bit took us some time, as I got it too close and had to alter position. Every time flares go up you hide your face in the earth; the grass is fairly long. We got a little mild sniping in two places, but they were shots aimed at our parapet, not at us, I think, and when we got the idea of them we could keep out of line all right. Having got it pegged down we crept back and swarmed over. Was in considerable danger of extinction from one of my own sentries, as it being darkish I came back to the wrong bay.

The sentry I'm glad to say stood the men to on catching sight of us, and I narrowly escaped man-handling from one of my corporals. Quite a good night in fact. There's fun in that sort of thing, and the excitement to keep you going, whereas this shell-fire is simply rotten and you can't do anything at all. I got to bed at three and slept like a top till eight, the best sleep I've had in a trench. We're expecting more bombarding this morning, and then peace for a bit, I believe, is the programme. There was very heavy firing away to the north last night, Belgian or French it was, I should think. We shall hear of the result I suppose from the papers later. Such is war.

Cheer Ho! I'm just going for another wander. It's rather monotonous work. Every sentry you pass has to say as you pass; "No:—post, no:—platoon, all correct," or whatever it is. You say "Right," or "Thanks" or "Carry On,' or some other genial remark, have a look yourself by periscope or over the top, and carry on to the next bay.—Au revoir.

Sunday, 2.30 p.m.

A delightful day so far. We are doing great work too. We have got all our men ranged on certain points of their line, and a very sharp watch is kept, and when anything moves, or a spade shows, or a sandbag heaves we let them have it. In fact we're brewing all the frightfulness we can for them. It makes all the difference with the men. A fortnight ago in these particular trenches the German was top dog. If we hove over a shell they threw back three, their snipers simply dominated the line. The brigade before us did excellent work, and I think we're carrying on. Now we fling shells at him regardless of expense, and really we've stopped his sniping tremendously. It improves the morale of all concerned to feel they're on the offensive. Shelling to-day is mild; the only shell that

has been nastily near us was one of our own high explosives, which caused us to warble down the 'phone to some tune. However it doesn't often happen. There's a lot of work to be done to-night. I expect I shall have to be in front most of the night, wiring and building up the parapet a bit.

Monday, 7.30 a.m. [*July 12*].

A night with the wind up? That is the army expression for an evening when everyone suspects everybody else of sinister designs. Towards evening my captain became convinced that we were going to be attacked. His only reason seemed to be that things had been quiet for some time previously; so we stood to with some zeal. Things began to buzz when I noticed that flare lights were being shot up from some way in front of the German trenches. Immediately afterwards listening-post reported same thing, and that there were Germans in a sap place running out to our lines. This was endorsed by a man I sent out to reconnoitre. Mind you, it's very easy for men to get a bit rattled on a dark night with shrapnel about, and with a general feeling of suspicion around. The officer's rôle is to patrol the trench in a supercilious and easy manner, as if he was absolutely happy. I tried to do this. At about this stage we had several shrapnel casualties. One not very bad case was sent down the communication with one of our men. The latter soon came darting back with news that C.T. was blown in. I consigned him to blazes, and told him that if it was blown in he must walk round the bad places over the open; then detailed three men with spades to put things right. These men darted off and returned later to say they'd walked all through the trench and out the other end, and couldn't find any place blown in. Apparently our friend had met a few sandbags on the floor and was rattled so jumped to conclusions.

At about this time the following messages came down the battalion. (1) 'Stand to and prepare to fire.' (2) 'Fix swords.' (3) I forget the third. (4) 'Stand down and continue working parties. These messages nearly drove us mad. We refused to take them as their source was not stated. Apparently a company had spotted some Germans, and orders had been given, and the message came all round. At the time it was confusing and not very funny. I felt like a man in the maddest of plays, for a bit. So things ambled on. I had 'Germans in front' reported to me several times, but I think they were imaginary. After midnight we got some wiring done. Owing to reduced number of officers I always get duty till 3.30 a.m., and get a bit of a rest then. We are relieved to-night and go to a support trench, fairly comfortable, I believe.

Wednesday, [*July 14*].

Why not go on writing? The night before last we were relieved from front trenches. What a night it was! The battalion relieving had never taken over a trench before, and they didn't half mess it up. Any way it's an intricate business, and our trench was difficult to relieve. Any way everything went wrong, and for half an hour my trench was held by five sentries and Butterworth. I was preparing to fire the last cartridge and die laughing, when some cheery lads turned up. True, they walked through and round and disappeared again, but I gathered them in. I then proceeded to place the men. They were absolute fools, and I did it entirely by profanity and man-handling. The child-sub. relieving was a good boy and did what I told him. I then gave him all the necessary tips, handed over stores, and tooled off with my faithful five. Later on we ran into a lot of sappers who were doing the wrong thing chiefly, whom also I cursed with such fluency that their officer (whom I hadn't seen

and who wore whiskers) said, 'What d'you mean by talking to my men like that, Sir?' Further on the whole trench was choc-o-bloc with some of these relieving coves. We cursed them and got them more or less right, and I got out by climbing over the parapet and running for it. We got away finally and down about two miles of trench to our present place in Brigade Reserve. We live beneath the earth here in dug-outs and have to dive if an aeroplane arrives. We spend the night rationing ourselves and the men in the trenches. Rationing consists of 1. Carrying food. 2. Carrying water. 3. Carrying stores, wire, etc. 4. Falling over wire. 5. Falling into holes. 6. Swearing heavily and heartily. 7. Being shelled all the time. But to me shelling doesn't have half the same terrors if one's out in the open. I'd much rather move over an open field and put up with indirect shell fire than have direct fire in the safest trench in Belgium.

The officers of two of our companies (including ours) were called up before the Commanding Officer this morning and praised for our work in the trenches. It is about the first time on record that he has praised anyone. My chest assumed unusual proportions. It *is* nice though when you come out of trenches tired and feeling you've worked your eyes out, to have a few kind things said about one.

I think as far as our battalion goes we're at just the worst point now. At first everything is fresh and even shelling has its points. Then you get nervy and are afraid of death, then one gets callous. My nerves are surprisingly steady, I find. Several of the officers are awfully jumpy. My turn will come, no doubt, but I am pleasantly surprised that I am not more terrorized. But it's fairly rotten really.

I dare say you'd like to know how the trenches are worked. A division has a certain front, half a mile to

one mile. A brigade takes up the front trenches, half in firing trench, half in support. Behind the support—about two miles—are the brigade reserve, either in dug-outs or trenches (where we are now). Then there is a brigade about three miles back again, and the third about three miles further back again. It is the depth formation, and effective, I should say.

Wednesday, 6.30 p.m.

The day drags on, deadly dull. We have nothing to do by day except keep hidden from aircraft. The atmosphere in this dug-out is awful. It is eight feet by six, and we've got three in here at present—singing. Also it's raining, and we have to be out all night rationing. Of course we've got no sort of change of clothes with us, and it's beastly cold at night. Like an ass I brought up a Burberry instead of a great coat this time, and it's frightfully chilly. Also and beside which, lying in a dug-out all day is very demoralizing. I didn't bring a book up this time, but shall in future. We've actually had no shelling for over an hour. Long may it continue! In fact things are a little boring at present, as I have indicated.

Oh, by the way, get the Sphere each week, Matania's pictures of life on the English line are jolly good. He's been over here and knows something about it. He's had a lot about our particular bit of Hades.

The Huns have opened up the shelling again. As a matter of fact it always starts about now; we call it 'The Evening Hate.' Let me discourse to you about shells and their habits. Firstly there is Jack Johnson. He is simply terrific, of course, and makes a hole big enough for a motor-bus to get in; this is true talk. Then there's a fellow we call 'Rubber-Heels,' I call him Alfonso sometimes. He's a long distance bloke, and creeps over very slowly, well up. We like him, 'cos he doesn't come

near us. Then there's the high explosive sport. I think he's what they call the Coal-box. We call him 'Crump,' 'cos he sounds like that. He's a nasty fellow and makes a beastly mess. He is fairly local, I'm glad to say. Then there's shrapnel of course. I don't think we've got a nom-de-guerre for him. My hat! he goes off with a crack, and the bits go whizzing over one's head—if one is lucky. Then there is the 'Whizz-bang.' I fancy he's a howitzer, frightfully fast. He's used on the front trench chiefly. He comes so fast that it's almost impossible to get down to him; rather a beast. Then we have the trench mortar shot from near to. He goes well up and then owing to law of gravitation comes down again; a powerful bloke. There are also rifle grenades and bombs, all hostile folk. Then the gas shell. I think he doesn't hurt much on explosion unless a bit hits you. I've had 'em burst pretty near too in the open and have only been knocked over. But the fumes are nasty; I think I swear at them more than at anything. However I can usually worry through them without a helmet. It touches the eyes up. Lastly we have gas proper squirted at you out of a tube. If ever I catch a man suspected of squirting gas, I'll slay him in a peculiarly painful manner. I think we're all a bit afraid of it. That's more or less the complete set. One hardly counts rifles and machine guns except in an actual attack. Snipers snipe all day, of course, but one doesn't mind that hiss of a bullet after shells; also if they hit you they do it decently, and don't cut you in half or tear your inside out. I found some dum-dums in an old German dug-out the other day—the bullet turned. One finds all sorts of things in German trenches.

This letter is assuming alarming proportions. Awful thought! We've got at least two more days in the underground. In future days I shall build me a sky-scraper and live on the roof. Au revoir.

Thursday, 10 a.m., July 15th.

More experiences, but this time not necessarily of a warlike kind. I left here at 8.45 with 100 men to carry up 4000 sand-bags to the trenches. Never having been along that particular bit before I was a bit nervous, but I managed it all right. It's very trying work leading 100 fairly heavily laden men. One is sniped at intervals, and shells appear now and then. But you must not go more than just over a mile an hour; you long to hustle, but you can't, As we tooled along it began to rain. Later, on the return journey it was pouring. By the time we got home we were fairly dripping. We turned in and the rain got worse. My dug-out leaked a little, but nearly all the men's leaked a lot, and some were inches deep in water by morning. So we all turned out at 4, and got to work making fresh dug-outs and draining and so on. It took us till 9. Rain however has two points. It prevents gas, and it seems to drive the artillery indoors. Result, a wonderful quiet reigns over the land. I expect we shall have a lot of frightfulness this afternoon to make up for it. With luck we get out to-morrow evening, but of course anything may happen. No news at present.

Thursday, 4.35.

We've just had a very unpleasant hour. Our gunners behind started whanging away like lunatics. I should say they flung 100 shells over. So of course the Germans replied a little later. We had a fiendish time, 2 men killed and one wounded. One shell pitched 10 yards from my dug-out, and another 3 yards. Fortunately they weren't big shells and the explosion was forward. They fired wonderfully well, got our range in a minute. No doubt we shall get it again to-morrow. On the whole I think it was the crispest hour we've had yet. Both the men died instantaneously, I am glad to say. We've very sick with the gunners, though. They're going away to-night and being

relieved, and I believe they were simply shooting away to amuse themselves—The artillery get all the fun out of this war, and the infantry get slain for it.

Friday, 1 p.m., July 16.

I fancy the worst has happened, and we're not going out to-night, but have to wait till Sunday. It's a nasty blow as we're sick to death of the place. Six days in dug-outs under constant shell-fire is quite suffish. We have been shelled this morning practically all the time. I suppose it's the battery hard by they're aiming at, but we get a good percentage of it. The firing trench is bliss as compared with this.

The rumour is going round this morning that the Turks are suing for peace.

10 p.m. On the whole I think the most depressing day I've ever spent. There are at least two batteries just by us—one about 40 yards behind us, and they fired without ceasing from 10 to 6. Apparently they took over last night and had several days allowance of ammunition in stock, and so loosed it off. The Germans didn't reply with the venom we expected, but we had it quite enough, thank you! Imagine us cooped up all day in dug-outs that are barely splinter-proof, let alone shrapnel or shell-proof, while these infernal shells whizzed and whizzed and burst. Heavens! we were sick of it. Swear? I don't think! Give me fire-trenches every time. However as we shall be in reserve again from time to time, we are importing a gramophone and numerous records, so that when these gunners start off on their morning's hate or their afternoon's frightfulness we shall turn on ragtime.

Also it's raining, and my roof leaks. Everyone else is out with ration parties. It's my turn at home. They'll have a jolly time, roads, trenches and paths swimming in mud, men falling down, every one at his profanest.

I have now had my clothes on without change for eight days. I slip off my socks and boots and wash my feet in the morning, also shave, wash face and hands, and, if lucky, neck, and give my teeth a scrub. But apart from that I go unwashen. Nice, isn't it? However, I find one gets used to dirt in time. Anyway, I'm feeling better now. I've had a good tot on it, and the shelling has stopped (incidentally that confounded gunner loosed off again as I wrote 'shelling.')

It is quaint in reserve at night. Here I am in my dug out with a candle and the door blocked to keep in the light. On the floor my waterproof sheet and a few sandbags. My pillow is my haversack, my knapsack thing and an inflated pillow affair that is punctured and disinflates in about half an hour. All round is the incessant rumble of rifle-fire, with now and then guns and machine-guns. Rifle-fire one regards now as a mere incident, but I must confess to a respect for high explosive. They make such an awful mess of one, and I hate lying about with my inside hanging out and my body in Belgium and legs in France. But no doubt that's mere prejudice on my part.

Have you ever studied the great theory of re-action? e.g. I have been horribly hipped all day, lying doggo to accompaniment of shells, and now quiet (relative) reigns, I have fed and had a good drink, I feel as happy as a king—reaction. When we 'touch bottom,' the orsifers of 'D' Troop gather in this dug-out and we sing. It does us good, but we are not encouraged to foregather during shelling, for they say, 'We don't want the whole lot of you scuppered together.'

The great point of this war is that everyone is expected to be going to be killed some time, unless he has the luck to be wounded instead; that is quite the understood point of view. No doubt sound. I'm not par-

ticularly afraid of death, but I dislike the thought of dying because I enjoy life so much and want to enjoy it such a lot more.

This dug-out life gives one plenty of time to think, I tell you, and the danger is one gets down to a minor key and stays there. There's no doubt you want to be a man like———with absolute faith in the universe, and then you'd sit and listen to the crumps and bless them all. Anyway I feel that I've expiated every crime I ever committed. I fancy that when we warriors fetch up at the Final Enquiry, They'll say 'Where did you perform?' We shall reply, 'Ypres salient.' They'll answer, 'Pass, friend,' and we shall stroll along to the sound of trumpets and sackbuts. If anyone ever puts me on a salient in private life I shall hate him. Consider a salient. In ordinary war they shoot at you from in front, but in a salient they also enfilade you from both sides, and if they can make the ball turn at all they get you in the back. But now our artillery does that, so that doesn't matter.

If only we'd brought up a pack of cards! Never again shall we omit to do so. Well, I've perpetrated a lot of drivel to-night. I think I'll gather my Burberry about me and snatch a bit of sleep. Unfortunately my dug-out pard will turn up at midnight (unless he's dead) very wet, very profane, and very thirsty, so I shall be awakened and we shall discuss the iniquities of gunners and snipers once again.—I'd give a lot for a snug rubber at Wanganui to-night. I'd compromise on Upokongaro! Salute the Brethren, and tell them that despite several things I remain cheerful. Good-night. God bless the man who invented tobacco. It is a very present help in trouble.

Saturday, 2.30 p.m., July 17.

Quite a good morning. Wet, I admit, but our gunner-sport has lost his ammunition or wanted sleep, or gone

to London or something, and we've been quite peaceful. The first item of interest this morning was the fact that my roof dripped. I got out all my match-boxes and tobacco-lids and cups and so on, and placed a fairly clever field, but I soon found I wanted three slips, an extra cover, and a short leg. However as I am certain to be wet now until I get out, it doesn't worry me a lot.

Later we found a pack of cards belonging to an acting-corporal and borrowed same, and fixed up a quartette in a ruined barn. Our table was a shutter blown off the chateau near by, covered with sand-bags, our seats water-cans. We had three rather good rubbers, and hope to continue shortly, only it's raining,—also the Huns are flinging a few over at us in the direction of the barn. We hope to re-incipiate shortly. I think that barring accidents we shall be relieved to-morrow. Of course there's always the chance of an offensive starting in, and then we shall trot up like good little boys and act as living targets.

My word! this will be some life in the winter. It's chilly and damp enough on a wet day in summer. I tremble to think what winter will be like. Of course one wears goat-skins and gum-boots, but even so I shall take very few tickets on it. But it's a long time till then. I can't really realize it's summer, as summer without cricket and tennis seems meaningless.

They've just served us out with motor-goggles to keep the gas fumes out of our eyes. We *do* look knuts, I tell you.

The modern warrior is not a picturesque sight. He wears a noisome cap with ear-flaps now-a-days and motor-goggles. And of course we all get frightfully untidy, except a few men who always manage to look as if they were in Piccadilly. I fear that is not my forte. But never mind!

Saturday 7 p.m.

Such a peaceful day. Raining—which accounts for it. At 9.15 I bone off with fifty men to meet a guide. They select as our rendezvous the worst shelled spot in Belgium. I don't know what we're going to do; carry stores, I expect. Cheer Ho! Going out to-morrow!!!!!!

Sunday, 10.30 a.m., July 18.

Had a night of considerable moistitude. Bumped off from here with fifty men, and met a guide, and all sorts of strange things we had to carry. We strolled off, and after going some way along an unspeakable road fell into the correct communication trench. Words can hardly describe the state of said trench. It was over ankle-deep all the way in water, and often over the knees. We waded about, fell in, cursed, climbed over and under telephone wires, and reached the spot at about mid-night. We got a few whizz-bangs over at that stage, but no damage done. As we started down we ran into a party of two hundred men carrying rations up. Fortunately it was a very wide trench and we could swim past each other. I tried to cheer up my down north-country guide by asking (1) if many people had been drowned yet, and (2) if they allowed mixed bathing there, but nothing altered the severity of his outlook. Lancashire probably! The other party apparently thought we moved too slowly. It is part of the Rifle Brigade religion never to let parties lose connection. So they came past us in what I was pleased to tell them looked like 'Column of Rabble.' However it didn't worry us a lot. Later when we got on to the road, they had to form up and call the roll, and swear themselves faint, and we moved past in that particularly quiet and offensive Rifle Brigade manner which is ours when we consider ourselves superior to the rest of the British Army. Got back finally at one fairly soaked up to the

knee. I then took off boots and puttees, put on dry socks, (I always carry six pairs), wrapped my legs in dry sandbags, ate two hard-boiled eggs and some apricot jam, drank a good whisky and water, smoked two cigarettes, and then slumbered. I slept so successfully that I was not awakened by quite a bombardment around us. Fortunately the sun has eventuated this morning, and I've dried puttees partially. In the army we dry boots by burning paper inside them. It seems to work all right.

One has very funny conversations in the dark with unknown men. One's platoon gets blocked by some other party perhaps, and while we disentangle ourselves one chats to some genial subaltern. One picks up some quite amusing bits of gossip and perhaps hears a good story and then passes on into the night. There is 'a certain liveliness' this morning. They tell me our artillery knocked spots out of the German front trench opposite us two days ago, so much so that a lot of Huns (Saxons probably) got up and legged it back to their supports, what time our lads browned them. Perhaps true, perhaps not. Our artillery is good, I think, and now that it is getting munitions makes a fearful nuisance of itself (to us among others).

This letter is becoming so immense that I shall shortly have to ring down the curtain, or it will never pass the censor. I fear we are in for a complete day of 'Hate.' The gunners are in immense form, but somehow I don't mind it to-day. I expect it's the fact that we're going out to-night that makes the difference. Also if you've been in a dug-out for five days and they haven't dropped a high explosive on you, you hope they won't be rude enough to do it on the sixth. Deuce of a lot of aeroplanes up this morning. They haven't been able to do much last thirty-six hours owing to wind and rain, so they're making up for it to-day, I suppose. But it means we

have to remain hidden all the time, and our sentries are such fools that if the 'plane goes into a cloud they always signal "all clear," and out swarm the men and have to be chased back again. The men really are appalling fools. They take it as a fearful affront if you stop their building enormous furnaces to cook on. They don't seem to realize that if spotted by a 'plane we should be shelled to blazes. The only thing to do is to put man after man under arrest. When we have our first Orderly Room after our return, I shall spend about an hour stepping smartly forward, saluting, and saying 'Sir, on the night of the twenty-third instant the accused, etc. ——,' you know the jargon. Incidentally I've got a corporal I want broken. When we went out at nine-thirty last night our party was one short. It's very difficult to trace a missing man on a dirty night, when you have to move punctually. I think I've got the brute though.

I don't like Orderly Room at the best of times as the Commanding Officer has a way of proving that the thing is much more your fault than the prisoner's! I'll end this letter. Only about nine hours to go before relief. Bless all Selwyn and salute the staff. Cheer Ho.

July 22nd, 1915.

I got a letter from you to-day and was very cheered to get a certain amount of gossip. The general opinion is that the war will be over by Christmas, but no one can say why. At the moment of writing Warsaw is tottering, and if it falls I suppose we shall have an odd million or two flung at us hereabouts. Anyway there is such a crush on this salient that we shall all fall over each other. If there is a real big scrap on this front there will be the most fearful mess on record. The whole place is full, full, full of guns and men, and both sides will spend a day or two

passing through "curtains of fire." However let me dismiss that for a day or two more. The chief news from my own point of view is that my particular bit of trench is being mined. We suspected it a fortnight ago. I reported and had up mine experts and even offered to make a bomb attack! However things hung fire and I understand the mine has gone too far to be stopped. So I'm expecting a good "tour" next time. Nasty things these mines. I saw one go up the other evening. It is pouring with rain at the present moment and I shall most certainly be orderly officer to-morrow. Result—things very moderate. I have been building a redoubt these last two days. The subaltern-in-charge—a sapper fellow, had lived for five years in Auckland and we had a splendid chat. It was great sitting on a parapet next a great 9.2 howitzer, talking about Takapuna and the "Masonic" and so on. Yesterday was a typical rest-day. Having been out for two days running, digging a redoubt, we were promised a rest. I also was orderly officer. The adjutant came charging round to my bivouac to know why A company lines were dirty. I was at the moment inspecting D lines and had not reached A company, so mutual recriminations followed. I then proceeded to mount the guard. When I had finished the worst parts the commanding officer turned up and began to look on in his most crushing manner. When I told the guard to move to their post, the commanding officer recalled them three times. Each time I tried to find some new fault in what they had done. Finally the brigade sergeant-major, suggested that I had better ask the commanding officer's permission to move off the men. I did so and it was graciously granted. The sequel was a biting note to all officers (we get these three times a day) explaining that they had better learn squad drill, and they might also learn that it is not etiquette to move off troops without the commanding officer's leave, if he is present.

Personally as I have been moving parties numbering from ten to a hundred about under shell fire for some weeks, the etiquette of moving three men across a road, leaves me a little cold. Well—at three-thirty (this being a rest camp) I departed on a horse with ten men and a government service waggon, to a place where we loaded five thousand sandbags. We then departed to Ypres and laid them out neatly packed in bunches of twenty-five. We then sat down and expected a hundred men at seven-thirty. I need hardly say they arrived at nine-thirty. By that time I was asleep in the middle of a square on six sandbags. On arrival we loaded up and strolled to our working place. Some sappers met us and told me we were making a "high command." I thanked them for the information and asked how they did it. Our men, who have an uncanny way of doing the right thing, seemed to know by instinct and we got great work done on the said "high command," which is a sort of trench that goes up instead of down. Very dangerous I should say. Owing to that strange providence that watches over us, shells had been all over the place before we arrived. But none came over while we were there. At one o'clock we began to sneak home. A fussy major of the 60th, who was in charge of the whole party of four hundred men, got the horrors that we should be slain by our own guns. I tried to persuade him that it didn't matter whether we were or not—that being my state of mind always at two a.m.—and he rushed about and worried us a lot. At length, we struck some motor-buses and after putting various drivers and people under arrest, we returned home and sank into bed at 4.15 a.m. No doubt we shall be turned out for another job to-night. As a matter of fact, I rather enjoy these stunts, especially when I am given a few men and move off on my lonesome. I will write before we entrench again.

Considerably later,
Day unknown.

After messing about for sometime we get out of our trenches and dashed about under a very heavy shell fire, and finally settled down, packed like sardines, under a railway embankment. We had two of our guns—enormous great beasts—just behind us, and of course the Germans were dropping shells all round us. The first thing I knew was that a shell had exploded in the midst of my platoon and had more or less removed the head of one of my men. We had to lie quiet under this for three hours. My platoon was lucky and lost no more men. The stretcher bearer and doctor were hard at it all the time. Then things became hotter and hotter. The Germans began a fierce counter-attack, with terrific artillery fire. At about seven o'clock we got the genial news, "The——'s will advance." So up we get. The men were splendid. I don't think a man in our battalion flinched or wasn't cheerful. Well, off we whipped down this railway line, and over it, where we were all spotted by the Germans, and hit a field where we had orders to dig in. The Germans got our range in exactly two and a half minutes and we got shrapnel and all manner of nastiness. A sapper-fellow,— a major I fancy,—loafed up to me and asked if they could help us dig in and I graciously gave permission. So we dug in. During this genial performance the ——'s were legging it back to some tune. Well—while at this job, to a continual shout of "Stretcher Bearers"—we suddenly got orders to retire. We did so in excellent order and collected our kits which we had stacked under the ramparts of ——. Quo facto we were off to some other gay spot but to our joy someone else had mopped up all the available trenches and we turned back to a shelter camp. Some other parts of our division had a much worse time. The —— who were in barracks with

us at Aldershot were in the thick of it, and came through with flying colours. We only saw the severe rear-end, and that was quite cheery going for peace-living citizens. However we saw a few German prisoners which cheered us up. I hear the Canadians did excellently again. Rumour says that the Dardanelles are forced. I wonder if it is true. If so, good for New Zealand, Australia and the British Navy. Well, given fine weather I may still be alive when you get this. I was tired last night, I hav'nt shaved for three days. All our kit is somewhere to blazes, but I got a wash this morning. If I get through this racket, I'll never move out of a slow walk again and shall probably develop into a hopeless slacker! I wonder! We are very bucked about the men though, they stood it all easy. I was pleased to note also that I didn't feel the terror-stricken rabbit I expected to. I'm not very clean and I've got a grisly beard, but I am quite cheery!

Trenches,

July 27th, 2 p.m.

Here we are again. We left camp yesterday at four, marched to near Wipers, had a meal, and off we got at eight. We were cheered by the news that by information received from agents, spies and others, a German attack was due to eventuate that night; we were to relieve if we could. If we ran suddenly into our old friend the 'Tir de Barage' or curtain of fire we had to do various and diverse things, as seemed fit unto us. We therefore departed in a fairly military state of mind, trusting that we should behave in a fitting manner. About half way up an attack began away to our right, the old familiar rapid fire, machine gun and guns. One had time to speculate, as one wallowed along, on whether it would develop into a general attack or whether it was local. It proved to be local, I know not with what result.

We then effected a beautiful relief, I took over from a sergeant with a shrapnelled nose and was all in and posted by eleven-thirty, a good performance. I am now absolutely in the fore-front of the battle. Our company is honoured by being right up against them twice running, the same two being in support again and the same two in front trench. I found that the trench had not been wired and the grass is very long in front. I have indented for wire and sickles and shall take out an agriculturist rifleman and get to work, if possible to-night.

Unfortunately there is a full moon to-night. The chief fly in the ointment is the fact that we are undoubtedly being mined. We are also counter-mining, but there is always the chance of a sudden leap to glory. However, personally, I believe one is right except with an east wind. I'm certain the Germans won't attack in strength unless they have a 'gas' wind and of course blowing up a mine is followed by an attack always. I may be wrong, very likely am, but while the wind is south west it is cheering creed. So far to-day as I noted in the trench log, the situation has been quiet. They fire a lot of rifle grenades at us, and the whizz bangs are very enfilading, but so far we've had nothing serious to growl about. I've got a palatial dug-out, which is good.

Am glad to say I've picked up some very sound men out of our last two drafts, older men than most.

4.15 p.m. Life continues its placid course, which probably means we shall have a 'windy night'—that means in civilian parlance that everyone expects immediate attack from all sides. I don't think myself that a quiet day means an attack, as to my mind the batteries would be doing a little bit of ranging and so on, and 'experience teaches' that a quiet night usually results.

We are getting sniped a good deal but without disaster so far. Ours is such an extraordinary position that

if you drew a circle round my dug-out and had the correct value for R and π = and so on, and then divide the circumference up into ten equal parts, you would find that you could be sniped from eight of them. We're quite used to having the enemy on three sides of us by now. It's a wonderful sight at night. One sees flares going up absolutely all round. What I chiefly object to in a salient is the getting in and out.

Of course one's camp has to be some miles from the beginning of the wretched thing: so you have to walk out of the dashed horse shoe and then off again for four or five miles.

One is becoming distinctly more military though. One takes pot shots over the parapet by day quite genially now. This trench is by now well placarded with names. Most bays have a special name 'Whizz Bang Corner,' 'Hell's Gate' or more homely 'The Commercial Hotel,' 'Holly Bush Tavern' and so on. Then one strolls along and sees helpful notices, such as 'Please keep down here, dangerous.'

Of course we've renamed Belgium and put the new names on maps. For instance we have 'Clapham Junction' here, another place is Hell Fire Corner and so on. I hope when things end—always provided that I haven't ended before—that I shall be able to bring back a trench map or two. Most interesting things, I tell you.

Cheer Ho! They started shelling, I must trip out and see that all is well.

Wednesday 1 p.m. Had a thoroughly strenuous night We were again warned to be very much on the qui vive, as there was the chance of an attack. However it didn't eventuate. When it got dark I teed off with about twenty men to dig (as usual!) We had to make another trench behind our present lines, about one hundred yards

behind I suppose it is. It had only just been begun in fact the traverses were only spitted out, of course our old pal the moon was very much in evidence and there was a lot of flare firing and suspicion around. However we weren't spotted; got a good few bullets about us, but those only chance shots, I fancy. Anyway we dug (Butterworth included) for four hours. I slipped off for half an hour in the middle to put out some wire in front, that was also accomplished without disaster, we 'stood to' with our customary zeal from two fifteen to three forty-five. I then handed over to my sergeant, had a snack, turned in and slept like a bird.

Was on duty again at 8. We've got a good deal of work in hand and I've been superintending that of course inter alia and très diversa. The Commanding Officer rocked in about 10.30. At present minute, our company is very much in his good books. I'll tell you about that later: He said that authorities (Brigade I suppose) didn't seem to know where the trench I was digging last night ran out. So I had to perform my well known crawling act. I had only been through as far as we had dug and from there on it was crisp stomach work to avoid the genial sniper. As a matter of fact it came out in the most obvious way possible and I think the Brigade came up with red hats to look at a place: they begin to do so and probably a whizz bang or two comes over and they find they've got very important business elsewhere. That of course is only the mere trench dweller's view. As a matter of fact they do their job jolly well, and after all it isn't necessary that they should be shot more than necessary, only in our muddy dug-outs we rather jeer at the red hats safe behind with beds and plates and chairs and things.

We know our sector very well now. By jove, it makes a difference. The result is we can run it about ten times

better than we could at first. I think if the Germans had rushed us when we first came in, they'd have eaten us. It was a wild place to send a new regiment to; only all regiments are new now-a-days. Now the men have got down to the position, their sentry work is excellent and our sniping is quite fair, they work splendidly. We work them very hard, but no digging or wiring party ever goes without an officer, that is the way to get the men along. If one takes out a party of men somewhere they don't know—in the open probably—to dig, they'll go like lambs as long as they've got an officer with them. The curious thing is that in civilian life they've probably cursed us as plutocrats, out here they fairly look to us. The other night some time ago, I had some men and had to get somewhere I'd never been to before in——as a matter of fact it wasn't difficult and we had ample directions, so before we started I was told to send the men with a sergeant. Said the sergeant to me 'I wish you were coming, sir, I don't know the way' I said 'my dear man, nor do I.' To which he made this astounding reply 'Very likely not, sir, but the men will think you do and they know I don't'! He got there all right. My own sergeant is different from most of ours. He's a tip top A1 regular, and we work in wondrous harmony: Whenever I forget things—as I often do strangely enough—he always remembers and gets them done without rushing to me for orders. He has an uncanny knack of knowing all the stores, etc., one has in the trench. One has to keep a log and so on and you have to know to a round what ammunition you've got and every other dashed thing.

Probably at two I get a message to report at 1.30 (usually a message comes after the time at which you have to report) how much S.A.A. and so on I have. I dart up to Sergeant Dyer, who consults his note-book and gives me the thing cut and dried correct to the nearest round. We also are probably the two most successful thieves in the

trenches. And he has taught me this splendid habit—if wild messages arrive inquiring whether this or that is done and why the deuce isn't it, we always report it is done and do it instanter. In fact we're a thoroughly immoral pair, but I believe we're knocking out a pretty useful platoon.

My instructions in case of attack are simple, my trench must be held at all costs, and I must say it is a very important position; if they got into it they could bomb up and down to the adjoining trenches. It's difficult to explain, depends on contours and slopes and things a good deal. Anyway them's my orders. Cheer Ho! I think I'll turn over and have a nap. This is always the quietest part of the day.

Thursday mid-day. A much less pleasant time, we had a very strenuous evening to begin with. The General came up in the afternoon—as I before stated I think—forget if I did or not—anyway he observed the bit of triangle where my line runs to, saw we were constructing a base to it. He ordered that the base trench, we call it Charing Cross—should be finished during the night. The result was pure hell. After standing down, the whole company had to be turned on in some way or other leaving only one sentry per bay. We thought it fairly criminal as we couldn't possibly have stopped a rush. I thought that anyway I'd do the best I could and get the rest of the front wired as fast as we could. So I collected all available wire and also my company wirer—splendid chap, ex-sailor and very handy—and we spent about one and a half hours in front. It wasn't a bit nice. We are very near the Germans, there was an absolutely full moon and their snipers were horrid active. One could hardly avoid being spotted from time to time, but they kindly didn't turn a machine gun on. The sport with me had two very close calls, bullets hitting the ground just by him. I had

nothing more to talk about than the dear old Zepp. round one's head. I turned in at four and out at 7.30—having apparently slept through some very nasty heavy trench mortar stuff they sent at us. I fancy they spotted a machine gun emplacement in our trench, we've now moved the gun. However we had a bad time during my four hours from eight to twelve—a steady bombardment all the time. Whizz bangs at first killing one and wounding two. And then they lengthened out a bit with shrapnel and high explosives. They have now come back to the old trench mortars, which are shaking the earth around me. It's a noisome weapon—throws a fifty pound shell and you can see it coming. I believe the German trench mortar has a range up to one thousand yards. It and the whizz bangs are easy first for nastiness. On the whole we two companies up in the fire trench have lost a good few men, C company a good many more than us. Let's hope they'll give us a quiet afternoon.

Friday 1 a.m. What an hour! However I 'came off' at twelve and have got nothing particular on till two, so having had a neat meal of bread, potted meat and honey, I may as well scribble to keep myself awake.

Well, yesterday went on being pretty nasty. Shelling was very continuous. Our company was lucky. An officer who joined us three days ago was knocked out. He's not dead, but bad concussion, I expect he'll get all right. Since dark, it's been pretty quiet. Every now and then they send over one of their infernal trench mortars. They are the most grisly things. They come very very slowly and you can see them, also, they make the noise of three motor buses, and when they hit mother earth, they kick up the most awful explosion and smell in a particularly revolting manner. They really are the limit. Much more cheery news has arrived for us to-day. We were to be going back to those beastly dug outs we were in before.

But now we are going to Ypres ramparts, which are fairly safe and distinctly comfortable—a vast improvement.

We're performing prodigies of valour in the digging line up here. New trenches are springing up in all directions, communications chiefly. Between the writing of 'directions' and 'communications' in previous line, two trench mortars went off. It isn't right at this hour of the morning (another!) What a life! However we're all expiating our many and various sins, I hope. Perhaps we're banking up a stock of expiation on the credit side—and we shall need it when we get home I fancy!

Cheer Ho! Au revoir! I shall go out to the fire trench and see if the sentries are awake and watching.

Friday 4 a.m. Battle still proceeding. I'm taking short rest, have had one hour in last 36. But can't manage to sleep much. It's fair to middling hell.

Saturday (I think) 2.50. We're in the middle of the most terrific battle, simply awful, attack, counter attack, liquid fire, trenches taken and retaken. If ever I live to finish this letter I shall be surprised and lucky. However I thought you'd like Captain Coe's latest and probably last. Cheer Ho! Best love to all.

4.45. Things are now comparatively quiet and I may be able to give a coherent account of what has occurred. The business started Friday morning at 3.20 (always supposing to-day is Saturday.) Suddenly we saw flames about 500 or 600 yards to our right in what is known as 'the crater,' a position we captured by mining a week or so ago. I didn't think of it's being liquid fire at first. But it was. In a second the whole world became a hell. I cannot possibly describe the noise, smoke, smell and all the rest of it. This went on for some time, one and a half hours I daresay. I had kept my men from firing as our trench wasn't

being attacked. Suddenly I got the report that a party of Germans was coming over? I shall never know now whether there were Germans there—a bombing party say—or not. The smoke and so on was terrific. Any way I opened 'Rapid' on what we took to be Germans. Nobody reached us, so we either drove them off or they weren't there. The intensive bombardment lasted three and a half hours and continued off and on to mid-day. Result—Germans captured part of a trench. At two we started the counter attack, three quarters of an hour artillery preparation, then the 41st Brigade—part of ours but not our battalion—went forward. We supported with fire. That lasted all told for four hours. The 41st got in and bombed back most of the trench. Our brigade captured another new bit. Our brigade lost heavily, we lost six officers and I believe two hundred men (a minimum), another battalion lost twelve officers. Night came eventually, all of us fairly done in. My men were so done that I allowed every third man to sleep. If I ever sat down myself, I went straight off. I went off standing two or three times. Suddenly at 2.30 a.m. the Germans came again, liquid fire all over the place and the deuce of a counter attack. It was finally stopped by our 'rapid' gun fire and things were quiet by about 6 or 7 a.m.

Since, the Bosches have been very quiet. Our artillery have been firing all day and they have replied very little. We all expect another attack to-night or to-morrow morning, probably the latter.

I believe forty thousand troops have been massed behind us, in case we let them through. God grant we don't. I will try and describe what it all feels and looks like later, but now I think I'll sleep for an hour. I got four hours this morning and am feeling fit. They are relieving us as soon as they can, but I don't think they'll do it to-night. Somehow they got some rations up to us last night, I know not how.

Wednesday. We've out temporarily but shall probably be back to-morrow night. We had an awful time! I haven't read through the previous pages of this letter so I don't know what I said, anyway the whole show lasted about ninety-six hours and is probably by no means over yet. We may quite easily be shoved into the attack almost at once. When the show is over the whole division will undoubtedly go away somewhere to refit and recover.

Now we are out of trenches and can sort out impressions. I think that there is very little doubt that the liquid fire attack was also attempted on us, but the fire turned to smoke before it reached us. I was otherwise engaged when the blaze broke out, as I had to rush up my trench to persuade the men that that wasn't the exact moment to watch a fire on one's flank. So I've had a curious experience. Everyone in neighbouring trenches wants to know about the liquid fire in my trench and I can't say if I had it or not. Secondly I can't say for certain whether I was attacked by Bosche or not!! No one who hasn't been here could understand, but the noise, dust and general tumult is such that anything might be happening. I wish you could have seen my men during that three or five minutes (or hours, I don't know how long it was) when we were actually "repelling the attack" (if there was one). They all were right over the parapet firing like blazes, my sergeant bucking about persuading them to fire low, my humble self standing half on the parapet and half on the parados with a revolver in one hand and rifle near the other and a cigarette going well, using the most unquotable language. Do you know that really was a good moment, I can't pretend to like bombardments, nor war generally, but that really was a moment when one "touched top" (as opposed to "touching bottom") but you'll feel that it was an interesting moment in one's life.

I felt absolutely as cool as ice during that part, one was so worked up that one felt that one could stick anything out. However when one has spent four sleepless days and nights with all sorts of alarms and bombardments and attacks and counter attacks going on—that was fair Hell. At the end of it, our relief went hopelessly wrong, and we walked out in broad daylight. When we got half way to Ypres, our big guns opened up bombarding. I was too tired to worry much, but I just mentally noted that the whole company must infallibly be wiped out. But our star was there again and we got out and went home in a Willesden bus. This letter fails hopelessly. I can't express what we felt or give you a real idea what Hell looks like. We lost two hundred and fifty men. I left Aldershot fifth officer in the company. I am now second in command of it. I am I think fairly certain of my second star but we haven't time to think about promotion just now. I'll post this and perhaps I'll catch a mail. If we attack to-morrow night, I've got just a one in three chance, I suppose. But there's always the chance of being wounded and getting Home. Any way if it isn't to-morrow, it'll be another day.

Blessings and love to all.

Mont des Cants,

August 8th, 1915.

I am at present in a hospital place for a short time. I got poisoned in some way or other, either the water or tinned food or something I expect. Anyway, when we got out of the trenches I was pretty rotten, sick and so on, and was sent to the field ambulance and from there up here for a few days. I have quite got over the poisoning now and merely want a bit of strengthening. This is a Trappist Monastery standing right up on a hill with a wonderful view of the British line. One can see Dunkirk

and the sea, and away south to Lille. We had a grim time in the trenches this last time. Our division got the liquid fire attack, the first of its sort made on the British. We had been in four days when it began and were to have gone into support that night, but as it was, we had to hang on for another four days. The bombardments were simply terrific, and there was a series of counter-attacks. I can't actually say whether the fire was spurted at my trench or not: certainly if it was, it turned into smoke before it reached us. But the hubbub and rapid firing and artillery and smoke and dust and so on was so terrific that one found it pretty difficult to know what was going on. As a spectacle a German attack must be a wonderful sight—to the angels out of range. They used all sorts of coloured lights (this was just before day break) and it is a wonderful scene. However I had not much spare time to admire the view. Our division was terribly cut about. Our battalion was luckier than most, as although we lost over two hundred men and six officers, all the officers and most of the men got off with wounds. It is almost impossible to describe the four days as they were pretty well confused and one was so much on the go all the time. I feel a bit of a brute, being up here in comfort. The battalion may be still out of the trenches or they may have pushed them back. We can get no news at all up here. I should think when this present racket is over, they would send the division back and get them straight again.

August 17th, 1915.

Life has been very strenuous. We have finished the Hooge fighting anyhow pro tem. It was a grim and grisly business and we were pretty well all through it. We lost heavily, but slew an immense quantity of Huns. I think a lot of lives were needlessly flung away, but I suppose we ought not to criticise. Incidentally I spent five days

in hospital, my inside went astray, water or tinned food or something. Anyhow I am fit and well again now. I forget if I've told you I have now got a company and hope to be gazetted as captain shortly—which will be a double step. Authorities seem to think I have done well, though without false modesty I don't think I have done anything out of the ordinary. The test in the trenches is, will a man's nerves stand the strain? For some reason mine seem to, although the strain is pretty considerable, especially in the firing trench, where I had eight consecutive days during the worst of it. We lost our company commander and the remaining officer, and about half the trench was blown in. The sergeant was killed, second sergeant wounded, and most of the platoon lost. Things were fairly moderate. Now I believe they are going to send us to a quieter place, and I hope we will get some more officers. We have got about ten out of thirty we started with, but of our officer casualties only three have been killed. My company commanding officer is a great loss. He was a fine man and a very efficient soldier. I have got a difficult place to fill. However I feel much more capable of doing it than I did a week ago. It is a most quaint thing but the four company commanders now were all in D company, when we came over. We are all great pals, and I am fully six years older than any of the others. Two of them are absolutely efficient and splendid, and the other is not half so clever, but he is absolutely plucky and very sound in the trenches, so that is our quartette. Add a major aged thirty-two, and a few children as subalterns, and you have the 9th Battalion Rifle Brigade.—I have just been taking my first Orderly Room. There were fourteen prisoners, mostly small offences, such as not getting up in time—but it is rather an ordeal the first time. Unfortunately our company sergeant-major was knocked out last time, so I have got a new man I have never seen before. He talks too

much at present but I'll get him out of that I hope. No doubt you have read all about Hooge in the Daily Mail and so I won't go into harrowing details. I don't think I added to the slaughter personally, though I did a little mild sniping pour encourager les autres. We only talk of two things (1) the war, (2) How we shall spend our leave. The popular idea at present is grouse shooting (except in my case!) plus a sufficiency of champagne.

The Trenches,

August 23rd, 1915.

I fancy I haven't written for a long time, but I've been very busy. While we were in camp I had a bit of work to do running the company, and we were trying to get it into shape after our hammering of the past weeks. We have now been up here for three days, in a slightly different bit of line, but only half a mile or so from the old delectable spot. We have only ten officers up here, in fact, nine, as one was wounded yesterday and so we are very short handed, and so desperately overworked. For instance, an officer has to be in the fire trench all day and all officers must be in at night. Night is now officially from seven-thirty p.m. to four-thirty a.m., nine hours and this leaves fifteen of which we must be in seven and a half, as I have only one subaltern. So one is actually in the trench sixteen and a half hours out of the twenty-four. Add to that—I have an immense amount of work, eight different reports have to go in at various times throughout the day, one has to arrange returns and working parties and so on. Altogether the life of the Company commander in the trenches is not altogether a happy one. I am at very close quarters here, seventy-five yards or less at one place and I hold a pretty important post. It all means a lot of responsibility. However there it is! We shall be relieved to-morrow if all goes well, but "one

never knows." To-day has been so desperately quiet that we are all a bit suspicious. Incidentally the wind which has been behind us for weeks, has shown signs of veering round; and so we have to be very much on the "qui vive" for gas. We all hope they will take the whole division right away soon, as we are very much under-officered and naturally still feel the effects of weeks of almost continual bombardments. Some divisions have all the luck, they go to a soft spot and stay there for months, whereas others strike a rough spot like this, and also stay on for months. However all this is rather a growl, caused I think, because I am tired and have been trying to sleep and can't. We heard to-day of a big German naval loss in the Baltic, in an attempt to land at Riga. Perhaps it's true, but rumours have a way of being incorrect. Here we have quite a pastoral view. In our last trenches we saw nothing but desolation and ruin, but here, looking at the rear, it is rather a pretty view, with a fine red poppy field almost half a mile back. When I become a civilian again (if ever), the sight of a sand-bag will make me scream.

Tuesday, August 24th, 7 a.m. Well, we had a night of absolute calm, a most unnerving thing. You see we veterans don't regard a day as normal unless there is at least six hour's bombardment. Really I almost prayed for a few whizz-bangs last night. The Germans have all sorts of queer night-stunts, which may mean something or may be merely intended to worry the opposition. For instance the following things may occur. I've known them all happen within forty-eight hours, but never all in one night. They'll suddenly shoot up one or two red flares—but as the liquid fire attack was ushered in by red flares, that gets one craning over the parapet. Then they will flick up a green one. Then they will fire a flare from away back in their support trench, within their own

fire trench. They will blow two blasts on a whistle, or will suddenly sound a bugle. All these things are duly reported to me as I take my steady way round.—But the most trying thing happened two nights ago. Suddenly they sent up a shell which burst almost noiselessly and became a great black mass of smoke. It was a perfectly still night and the smoke hung up there for minutes before it dissolved.—Personally, I think it was a wind-test for gas. They did it twice that night. The wind is doing it's best for us. There has barely been a breeze for three days, absolute stillness, but at critical times such as dusk and dawn, the west wind usually manages to get up a few puffs. It is now seven a.m. I have been on duty for over twelve hours continuously and I am distinctly tired. It is at almost dawn, one feels so dead to the world. If I sit down I go to sleep. Rather an interesting duty of a company commander is the working out the directon of the enemy's fire. You see in this warfare each side knows roughly where the other side's batteries are. The whole country swarms with them. They are well concealed of course, but each side has the other batteries roughly registered. So when a gun opens up on us, I leap off to a big scale map and try to find the direction of the fire on it. The map has lots of points numbered on it, and if the gun is annoying us, blowing in our parapets and so on, I ring up and say that a whizz-bang from direction fifty-seven (say) wants dealing with. Whereupon some battery major behind puts down his novel, gets out of his arm chair in his bomb-proof dug-out, and gets his battery to work. The next few minutes are usually fraught with considerable interest and some danger. When our battery opens up, the enemy gun usually puts in some pretty brisk business on us. Perhaps a third party chips in in the game, in the shape of a big Hun gun which fires at our battery. Eventually one imposes it's will on the enemy, and quiet perhaps reigns

again. We have got a very enterprising gunner behind who would fire all day if required to do so. I'm going to knock off now as my subaltern (who is incidentally senior to me) has had his ration of sleep and it's my turn to get down. So, good morning!

Wednesday, 2 p.m. We were relieved last night. Quite a reasonable and early relief. It's wonderful how one feels as soon as one has got one's men out. During relief one sees one's men out and then one lurks about with the new comers and shows them in and around. Finally one slopes off with one's orderly. Personally I dropped in at head quarters of the relieving battalion and had a good drink on their commanding officer—a great ally of mine who used to be our major. I then lit up a good cigarette, disdained communication trenches and rolled down the road. We are now in dug-outs in reserve. We were simply on a perfect wicket as we have two companies here and we can run them as we wish. But we have just had a telephone message from the commanding officer, and he is apparently coming up with Head quarters, which probably means unending trouble. We shall be here four days I suppose, unless trouble arises. If they do, of course we trail up for a counter attack, previously making our wills! But we hope for peace, though personally I suspect the Hun at present. I had a good ration of slumber last night and hope to do likewise to-day.

Saturday. I fancy they are getting awfully "fed up" in England with the papers and official communiques generally, and all the jingoism and ultra-optimism of the last twelve months. Personally, I think the man to whom the nation owes a debt of gratitude is Northcliffe, though I don't suppose that is your view out in New Zealand. But it makes one sick to live in this sulphurous spot and read that blatant tosh in the English papers. They don't seem

to realize that the English Army has made no advance this summer. We have merely won back part of what we lost in April in the first gas attack. Secondly, they are dead locked in Gallipoli, thirdly, the Russians are "strategically" retreating like rabbits! But the old, old, cry is that "the war can only have one ultimate issue." I would take all these writers, and experts, and officials, and put them facing Hooge chateau for one calendar week. I should then open intense bombardment, and see what they reckoned about it all. Later I should erect a suitable number of crosses and bid them a tender farewell. The country round here literally swarms with bodies—most of them buried now. One buries them as best one can, and I expect it does not matter whether they have a burial service or not. My own men I try to bury with some little form, but there isn't time for much. I've seen some grisly sights. I was prospecting for a trench the other day, and I suddenly saw an arm and hand sticking out of the earth. Lots of other sights also, that three months ago would have finished me off. I had nearly forgotten some rather "swanky" news. The two first D.C.M.'s given to Kitchener's Army, are both men in my company!! That is rather a performance, and perhaps shows more than anything that we have passed through thunder and fire. These men on about ten occasions brought back wounded under very heavy fire—the sort of V.C. work in an ordinary war. But this is not an ordinary war. You can be certain that any man who has been at this long, has had to do a good many things of which he is secretly rather proud. And the nerve strain! In one's trench one must be ready for gas and liquid fire, one is probably being mined, the night is one long period of suspense. One has to hide from aeroplanes, one has to suspect everyone one does not know as a potential spy. Add to that the fact that one has to struggle with the infantile minds of riflemen who are the biggest fools in

existence I should think. Mind you, they have got some redeeming features. Perhaps as you study English papers, you imagine us in the trenches with a continual smile on our faces. I assure you that is not always the case. I have seen fear in the faces of almost all a company and I have felt my own inside go wrong, and heard the voice of the Tempter saying "Now Butterworth, old son, that's the spot for you; if you're rushed you will be near the exit door and be able to fall back." At those times, the only thing to do, is to take oneself by the neck and get right into the heart of things, swarm about and cheer up the men, and generally restore your own confidence in yourself. I know exactly what fear feels like at two a.m. in the morning. I had to knock off writing here I forget why. I was out all last night working. I am to-day officer commanding "Detachment," two companies, as the other company commander has left on leave. Lucky fellow! I am rather busy, I must stop. I hope we get relieved to-night.

September 1st, 1915.

There is no news, but you may like to know that I'm still alive. We had a very quiet time in the trenches this tour, the first quiet we have ever had. And we are now resting. All sorts of rumours are afloat. The prevalent idea seems to be that there will be a terrific "go" before the winter. All I hope is that I get my leave first. If not one's chances of ever getting leave again will be only moderate. Our division will no doubt be in it up to the neck. Our battalion is more or less impossible or present. We have six officers doing duty here at present; every other battalion seems to get new officers and we don't get one. It's getting rough on us relics. I ought to get my captaincy next week. No promotions have got through yet, chiefly because our adjutant usually fills in the wrong form, and of course if applications go in on

pink paper instead of green, all the machinery is jammed at once. I think that also accounts for the dearth of officers. The general result is that the commanding officer is in a thoroughly bad temper and we all get well cursed—I seem to dodge a good deal of the cursing. Why, I don't know, as I usually stroll about in my ordinary manner and alter times for parades (contrary to standing orders, paragraph 54c, a22, etc.!) and do the most unutterable things. However when the commanding officer approaches and wants to know why, etc., I seem to mollify him by standing strictly to attention and saying, "Yes, Sir" and "No, Sir," like a good little boy. It's a quaint life.

September 2nd, 3 a.m. A sudden change in life. We are all out on a spy-hunt. A great go! I am in command of a "Road Section" with various posts and patrols under me, and I am at present at my headquarters in an Estaminet or Public House. I have commandeered most of the bar and am at the receipt of custom, with my interpreter, waiting for spies to be brought up in large quantities. I shall probably stay here for about thirty-six hours, smoke a bit, consume a certain amount of execrable "vin rouge" and finally return home. However it is a variety, and one can do worse things in rainy weather than sit in a bar and read! My interpreter is a singularly useful person seeing that he talks no Flemish and the people here talk little else. Now-a-days one thinks nothing of turning in fully dressed for an hour or so, and then rising at two and boning off somewhere. But the men are the slowest things imaginable in the early morning. They were all late this morning and in the murky gloom I used some terrific language. Another man got leave to-day in our battalion. I think if I can survive the next trench-stunt, I ought to hit London. Imagine me dropping in on London after four months of this—— with a good balance

at Cox's. It will make up for a good deal of whizz-banging and trench mortaring won't it? It will be the rottenest luck to get the neck shot in the eleventh hour.

September 2nd, 1915.

I still remain seated in this Public House, terribly bored. I arrested a soi-disant Belgian soldier some time since, but I have not heard what became of him. Picture me therefore in the bar tête-à-tête with an aged and homely landlady, who is knitting stockings. She talks Flemish and French un petit peu. I talk English (more or less) and French un tres petit peu. Our conversation is therefore amusing to the gods but not enlightening to each other. At the present moment she has just taken off her stockings and is trying on the ones she has knitted. I know not whether to be shy or not. She isn't. I can't make out about my photograph, most of them seem to have arrived. I expect yours will fetch up or has fetched up by now. I don't think you will like it particularly. I look too much the sort of advertisement for the British Army. Now I feel that I look more like a warrior with Government Service breeches, Government Service boots, Government Service great coat, trench-worn puttees, tunic with pockets all gouged about by worming along narrow trenches, cap in the most dilapidated condition; and generally the complete soldier! How I should love to get into an old Norfolk coat, a pair of flannel bags, and a pair of old brogues and seize a brassy and have a dunch, or better still don the flannels and take that one off the middle stump for four. I wonder if I shall ever play cricket again. Solemn thought! A pal of mine came along just now and put his head in at the window and said that he leaves for England by the one-thirty to-morrow. I threw all I had at him. I wish this army life did not bore me so desperately. All the routine out of the

trenches simply tires me to death. The trenches would be rather fun if there was not such a good chance of being killed. But I don't think I could stick the army afterwards. I haven't any ideas about the future. But that's not worth worrying about. There is a sort of feeling about again that the war is going to end in the winter. Personally I can't see it. Russia is right in the mud. Gallipoli does not progress. We can't get on here. One wonders what Germany's next move will be. I hope they won't fling Hindenburg, Mackensen, etc., at us. I am rather inclined to think they won't. They seem to have their eyes more on the East. Anyway this will be a nasty enough spot in the winter without jolly old Hindenburg. I imagine the Hun hates it just as much as we do, and wants to get back to his frau and his lager. The Hun is occasionally a sport. We lost an aviator-man in the Hooge straafe and the Hun airmen flying over us a day or two after, dropped a note saying that they had buried this man behind Hooge château "with all honours due to a brave man." In fact, if these Prussians were mopped up, they would be a decent crowd. There is not much quarter given now-a-days. At the end of the Hooge contest we rushed a redoubt (called now the Rifle Brigade redoubt). The Huns had all crawled into dug-outs and the festive Tommy rushed along, lit the fuse of a bomb and then flung the thing clean into the dug-out, shouting —"Souvenir, Fritz." This went on till they were tired more or less. It is rather nasty but really these brutes had been liquid firing, and so on, and deserved all they got. But imagine a bomb being hurled into and exploding in a crowded dug-out. It is very quaint how regiments differ. I went up digging the other night and heard a great straafe going on on the right. I met a subaltern loafing about and asked him the cause of the frightfulness. Apparently some Jocks (Gordons, I fancy) had just taken over and were signifying their disapproval of

the Huns by flinging grenades at a terrific speed. In the same way the Canadians when they take over, always open with fifteen rounds rapid. Of course their reputation is such that if the Huns know the Canadians are opposite, they sit pretty doggo until said Canadians go out. The Canadians have the best repute as scrapsters here and they won it at the second battle of Ypres, the great gas attack. They were simply magnificent I believe. I forget if I told you the yarn of the Canadian who was asked what his officers were like, and who answered, "That they didn't reckon much about them, but he guessed they carried them about as mascots." However they are regarded as "Pucka." You will excuse the campaign slang that creeps into my conversation. But words like straafe, morning hate, frightfulness, have become part of the army vocabulary. An amusing stunt eventuated unpleasantly near me the other evening. I was in support in a dug-out. We brought up a great gun and got to work on one of their observation balloons, known as a Gas-Bag. They got some shrapnel on to it, and it went down very quick, and then they flicked over all they had got at where they reckoned it would land. So far, so good—In a short time the Huns began to search for that gun, and my word, they did search, with every conceivable thing. By some chance the gun was not hit, and they got it out safely at night. But they put some poisonous big stuff on to it. I am a man of peace and I object to seventeen inchers landing in the next field. They are nasty people. They come very, very slowly, sort of slip along, then crash, boom, and there is a hole in the ground. $C = 2\pi r$, $r = 25$ yards! (formula wrong—never mind.) It is on these occasions that I wish that I had the wings of a dove. I told you perhaps that I had no company casualties last tour. Well, when we got to the supports we had three of the best. 1. A new draft man shot himself cleaning his rifle, (for which he gets a Court Martial.)

2. One of my best corporals was hit by a stray bullet, over fifteen hundred yards from the firing line! 3. An excellent sergeant was flung from a waggon and properly messed up.

By the way, the first two D.C.M.'s given to Kitchener's Army came to my company, did I tell you? One of them is still in hospital but the other is magnifique. The salute he throws me makes me feel a Field Marshal. They have not been presented yet, and I suppose a red hat will drop round, and I shall stand properly at ease and do all the jolly old stunts. When Red Hats see me at the head of a company with one star and a delapidated hat I find they regard me with a bit of suspicion! Best wishes to all of you. I am thinking and dreaming of London, I shall be livid if I am hit before leave arrives.

September 6th, 1915,
8.30 p.m.

Just a line writ by the candle-light of my tent. We have had a good instance of brigade chop and changing to-day. We had fixed to go up to-morrow night. We company commanders were to go up to-day to arrange relief. This morning this was all washed out. We were not to go up for an indefinite time, but were to be kept back and dig, much joy! To-night at about six-thirty, they suddenly send round an orderly to say that we go in. So now we have got to dart off to-morrow early to make arrangements. I have not one single officer under me and it is a business to run a trench like mine single-handed. However I suppose I shall carry on, but it does not fall to the lot of many men of less than six months army experience to take into a very tricky trench, a company of one hundred and seventy men, eighty of whom have never seen a trench before. We are being abominably treated in the way of officers, but I suppose

they can't help it. Of course the thing will be ludicrous if two or three of us are scuppered. It is a wonderful thing, but these men are no good without officers, and they know it. I gave my sergeants a good telling-off this morning to keep them up to the knocker. They are good sergeants but will skimp work if they can. I have got a proper new sergeant—a Regular—and he is going right up to the top if I get a chance. I am gradually civilizing my sergeant-major, but what a quaint life for Butterworth!

The relieving feature of it all is the extraordinary good terms all we "relics" are on. We are a "bonhomous" crowd. A quaint medley, three boys of nineteen, two Australians, three youngsters of twenty-three or twenty-four and me!! I am the hoary-headed old sport. One of the stock jokes at my expense is to ask one if they played cricket in top hats in my time. But I assure you I get my own back in the way of subtle jokes. However they are delightful children and we have been through such times together that we know each other pretty well. Also we can trust each other's nerves pretty well. The three youngsters are, I believe, the coolest of the lot. The commanding officer seems to trust us all implicitly. We get it in the neck now and then of course, but he gives us carte blanche in the trenches. His organisation is very good indeed. His fault in the trenches is that he worries too much about us. Now he is in terror that one or more of us will be knocked out. He is a curious character.

September 15th 1915.

As life is about to be somewhat strenuous, I am writing this a week or so before I shall post it, and perhaps I'll add a line before going up. I hear there is going to be a great racket here and I need hardly say that H.M.B.

looks like being up to the neck in it. This letter won't be posted till after it's begun, so there is not much harm in giving full facts. Well, as you know, the Belgians hold a bit of line to the north, where they are well protected by floods. Then come the French down to two or three miles north-east of Ypres, and then we come. There is a division between the French and the 14th——. Then we carry on of course for a long way to the main French line. Well, there is going to be a combined attack. The French, I fancy, are actually going to try to get through. Anyway they hope to get a long way and have lots of men and shells to do it with. The division between us and the French is not moving. Then we are stepping forward from our left to Hill 60, and probably further south, I don't know. Operations start in two or three days from now with a week's artillery bombardment. The French have already bombarded for over a fortnight! We, who are detailed for the charge—and our battalion is for it—go up thirty-six hours before the end of that and get into assembly trenches and so on, about two hours before charging time. The bombardment is concentrated on their first line. At the exact time the country immediately in front of me is blown up, (I believe Hill 60 is going clean up to) the 9th Rifle Brigade step nimbly over the parapet, struggle over the delightful country between ours and the Huns' lines and then take the giddy trench at the point of the bayonet. This performance is carried out amidst shrapnel and high explosive, likewise machine gun fire from everything. Can you see your old pal Butterworth doing this? Of course what I ought to do is to wave a sword in the air, call upon D company, to remember the land of their birth, etc., and foremost fighting fall. What I probably shall do is to mutter a few oaths and put my head down and get over with the greatest precipitation. It will be a great stunt, what our senior captain (aged twenty-three) calls "a proper joy-morning." We

expect to lose about half the battalion and (unless we get a new consignment) practically all the officers. The consolation is we go into it together (and probably out) and it is a real "pucka" show. No one particularly objects to taking the neck shot in a real show, but one does hate being sniped in a trench when you are having lunch or something silly like that. I suppose it will be the biggest thing done this summer. I believe we have got every possible thing, gas, liquid fire, the whole bag of tricks, and I expect worse than anything the Germans ever used, (three cheers for Pecksniff), but I don't know if we shall want them. I hope I slip through; simply to have done it will last me for life. I think the men will come alright, provided a certain number of officers get through the first rush. Isn't it incredible that these fellows will follow an officer anywhere and won't go with an N.C.O.? I had a heart-to-heart chat to my sergeant-major on the point last evening. I said to him "Here am I, I could not possibly drill a company and am pretty vague on arm drill; half of the men have only seen me for a fortnight, why should they come along with me anywhere and refuse to follow some of these sergeants with three or four medals?" He could not give a reason, nor could I. But it gives me a considerable sense of responsibility, and one feels a little proud too. I am not the slightest brave, but I don't for a moment doubt my ability to do the needful in this case. So cheer Ho! I put the betting at about three to one against, but it is all luck, and I've got a sort of knack of scrambling through things. Anyway it is of no importance—as Mr. Toots said; I'll add a few words of valedictory before I gird on my kit.

Later. September 20th I think.

I have been so very busy that I have started odd letters to people and never finished them. I am writing a sort of valedictory to you and may leave it behind, or may

post the thing myself. Things are moving. We find we are a part of a real proper show which we hope is going to mess up the Bosche a whole lot. Also we have been lent five officers and my lad is quite a tiger and I think will step in cheerily. However I have had to take the really bad job myself, partly out of shame, (one can't with decency give it to anyone else) and partly to assist the company's morale, as I think they will come after me if they see one jumping off into the dust and din.

I should not be surprised if there was a naval battle at the same time, but we know nothing really. We were inspected by X + Y Generals, Brigadiers and Corps Commanders this morning, a wonderful collection of red and gold. I can hear the guns hard at it at this moment. I hope they are worrying the Huns somewhat, of course we depend absolutely on the artillery. If they don't knock out the wire and so on it's goodbye to us. However they are pretty good, although ours can't be as good as a regular division's. The wind has gone to the east, I don't think we shall attack until we get a gas wind, as I am certain we shall use it. Our hypocrites at Home will probably deny it. But when you have had gas flicked at you once, as I have, you lose most scruples about it.

Belgium,
September, 1915.

(I am posting this myself just before leaving. Perhaps I shan't be killed!!)

I am leaving this in the hands of the transport officer, and if I get knocked out, he will send it on to you. We are going into a big thing. It will be my pleasant duty to leap lightly over the parapet and lead D company over the delectable confusion of old trenches, crump holes, barbed wire, that lies between us and the Bosche, and take a portion of his front line. Quo facto I shall then

proceed to bomb down various communication trenches and take his second line. In the very unlikely event of my being alive by then I shall dig in like blazes and if God is good, stop the Bosche counter-attack, which will come in an hour or two. If we stop that I shall then in broad daylight have to get out wire in front under machine gun fire and probably stop at least one more counter-attack and a bomb attack from the flank. If all that happens successfully, and I'm still alive, I shall hang on till relief. Well, when one is faced with a programme like that, one touches up one's will, thanks heaven one has led a fairly amusing like, thanks God one is not married, and trusts in Providence. Unless we get more officers before the show, I am practically bound to be outed as I shall have to lead all these things myself. Anyway if I do go out I shall do so amidst such a scene of blood and iron as even this war has rarely witnessed. We are going to bombard for a week, explode a mine and then charge. One does see life doesn't one? Of course there is always a chance of only being wounded and the off-chance of pulling through. Of course one has been facing death pretty intimately for months now, but with this ahead, one must realize that, in the vernacular of New Zealand, one's numbers are probably up. We are not a sentimental crowd at the Collegiate School, Wanganui, but I think in a letter of this sort, one can say how frightfully attached one is to the old brigade. Also I am very, very much attached to the School, and to Selwyn in particular. There are two thousand things I should like to say about what I feel, but they can't be put down, I find. Live long and prosper, all of you. Curiously enough, I don't doubt my power to stick it out, and I think my men will follow me.

Year	Score	GROUND	FOR	AGAINST
1914	311	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui A.
1914	296	Wanganui	School B.	Victoria
1913	253	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui B.
1910	241	Wanganui	Wanganui	Cosmopolitan Club
1912	216	Wanganui	Wanganui	Aramoho
1914	194	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui B.
1914	184	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho
1908	167	Christchurch	Nomads	United Club
1906	156	Oxford	University College	Trinity College
1914	156	Wanganui	Nomads	School
1913	155	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui A.
1910	149	Christchurch	Nomads	A Christchurch XI.
1905	140	Carsham P'k, Eng.	Lord Methuen's XI.	Free Foresters
1914	135	Auckland	Nomads	Eden
1906	131	Trowbridge, Eng.	Wiltshire Wanderers	Wiltshire Regim't
1910	131	Wanganui	Masters	School
1906	130	Oxford	Seniors' Match	
1913	129	Auckland	Nomads	Ponsonby
1904	125	Trowbridge, Eng.	Wiltshire Wanderers	Pembroke Lodge
1904	125	Clevedon, Eng.	Wiltshire Wanderers	Clevedon
1905	122	Swindon, Eng.	Wiltshire	Dorsetshire
1912	122	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho
1913	121	Masterton	Nomads	Wairarapa
1905	120	Oxford	University College	B.N.C.
1904	118	Trowbridge, Eng.	Wiltshire Juniors	Somerset Juniors
1910	117	Wanganui	Wanganui	St. Pauls.
1913	116	Wanganui	School B.	St. Pauls.
1908	113	Wanganui	Wanganui Present	Wanganui Past
1913	110	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho

Year	Score	GROUND	FOR	AGAINST
1905	109	Oxford	University College	Queen's College
1906	108	Basingstoke	"Unicorns"	Basingstoke
1900	107	Marlborough	"A" House	S.O.B.
1905	106	Trowbridge, Eng.	Wiltshire	M.C.C.
1909	106	Wanganui	Wanganui Single	Wanganui Married
1913	104	Wanganui	Nomads	School
1908	103	Wanganui	Wanganui	St. Pauls
1905	102	Oxford	University College	Keble College
1912	102	Geraldine	Nomads	Geraldine
1905	100	E. Grinstead, Eng.	J. L. Birley's XI.	Lancing Old Boys
1900	99	Marlborough	House Match	
1914	98	Wanganui	H. F. Arkwrights XI.	School
1914	94	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui A.
1910	93	Wanganui	Wanganui	School
1904	92	Lynton, Eng.	Lynton Visitors	Lynton Residents
1906	89	Marlborough	Marlborough Blues	Marlborough Col.
1910	88	Wanganui	Wanganui Trial Match	
1913	86	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho
1906	84	Marlborough	Marlborough Blues	Marlborough Col.
1908	83	Wanganui	Wanganui	Aramoho
1906	82	Magdalen Coll'ge	University College	Magdalen College
1913	81	Palmerston, N.	"Teachers' XI."	N.S.W. Teachers
1906	80	Swindon, Eng.	Swindon	M.C.C.
1913	80	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui A.
1907	79	Wanganui	Wanganui	Aramoho
1908	79	Wanganui	Wanganui	School
1908	79	Wanganui	Masters	Clifton Club
1904	78	Marlborough	Marlborough College	School
1904	78	Lords	Marlborough College	Rugby

Year	Score	GROUND	FOR	AGAINST
1904	77	Marlborough	Marlborough College	Free Foresters
1910	76	Christchurch	Nomads	Riccarton
1905	76	Marlborough	Marlborough Blues	Marlborough Col.
1911	76	Wanganui	"Great Unknown"	School
1906	74	Marlow, Eng.	"Unicorns"	Marlow
1909	72	Wanganui	Wanganui	St. Pauls
1914	72	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho
1912	71	Wanganui	School B.	School
1914	71	Wanganui	School B.	Wanganui B.
1910	70	Wanganui	Wanganui	School
1904	70	Marlborough	Big Game	
1900	70	Marlborough	"A" House	Cotton House
1905	68	Oxford	University College	Corpus College
1905	68	Wallingford, Eng.	"University Bees"	Wallingford
1902	66	Marlborough	House Match	
1901	66	Tewkesbury	Tewkesbury	Cirencester
1905	66	Winchester, Eng.	University College	Winchester
1913	65	Hamilton	Wanganui	S. Auckland
1909	65	Wanganui	Wanganui A.	Wanganui B.
1902	65	Marlborough	House Match	
1913	65	Wanganui	Wanganui 1st XI.	Wanganui 2nd XI.
1906	64	Oxford	University College	Hertford College
1906	64	Cheltenham	University College	E. Gloucestershire
1913	63	Napier	Nomads	Hawkes Bay
1910	63	Wanganui	Wanganui	St. Pauls
1906	63	Oxford	University Trial Match	
1904	62	Marlborough	House Match	
1912	63	Wanganui	Nomads	School
1903	61	Bath	Wiltshire Juniors	Somerset Juniors

Year	Score	GROUND	FOR	AGAINST
1905	60	Oxford	University College	Hertford College
1906	60	Bath	Wiltshire	Somerset
1906	60	Maidenhead	"Unicorns"	Maidenhead
1908	60	Wanganui	Masters	School
1908	59	Wanganui	Wanganui	Taranaki
1913	59	Auckland	Nomads	Auckland University
1914	59	Wanganui	School B.	School
1908	58	Wanganui	Wanganui	Taranaki
1906	57	Oxford	University Trial Mat.	
1909	56	Wanganui	Wanganui	Aramoho
1914	56	Wanganui	H. M. Butterworth's XI.	Williamson's Coy.
1903	55	Marlborough	Marlborough College	Warwickshire Regiment
1905	55	Oxford	Old Marlburians	Exeter College
1914	55	Wanganui	H. M. Butterworth's XI.	School
1909	55	Wanganui	Wanganui A.	Wanganui B.
1906	53	Westonbirt, Eng.	Free Foresters	Westonbirt College
1905	53	Marlborough	Marlborough Blues	Marlborough
1906	52	Swindon, Eng.	Wiltshire	Buckinghamshire
1914	52	Wanganui	Masters	School
1907	51	Bletchley, P., Eng.	Wiltshire	Buckinghamshire
1908	51	Waimate	Nomads	Waimate
1913	51	Wanganui	Nomads	School
1909	50	Wanganui	Wanganui	Aramoho
1903	50	Marlborough	Marlborough College	Liverpool
1908	50	Timaru	Nomads	Timaru
1905	50	Shaw Hill	Shaw Hill	Lansdown
1913	50	Wanganui	School B.	Aramoho
1914	50	Wanganui	Wanganui	S. Taranaki

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