

Winter with the "Longfaces." Laddie "Somewhere in France"

By Bonnycastle Dale

I WISH to say to my kind readers in W.H.M., before I give them Laddie's next letter, that the usually cheerful tone of his letters is the general tone of C.F.A. (Canadian Field Artillery) in France, but we should not let ourselves think, because the lads laugh away the "duds" that strike so near and fail to explode, joke about a race for life along a shelled road to the "lines," tell of a swift leap into an abandoned trench or into some nearby shell-hole to escape a coming "whizz-bang" that the danger is not great and ever present. To those who have dear ones at the front I advise the sending of lump sugar, Reindeer Cocoa (milk, sugar and cocoa prepared) and good sensible food, as it is hard to get "full rations" up to the line in these days of strenuous fighting. The artillery boys seem to have about a month with the guns; then a "rest" (so-called) with the "longfaces" (horses and mules) at the horse lines. Don't be afraid to send some "trench comfort" (insect powder) as even a wash is hard to get at times. If your boy uses tobacco send it, a smoke helps to quiet the nerves so strained by continual concussions, a suit of light underwear is much appreciated besides the ever needful socks, and cut out all the comics and cartoons and send them, and write, write, write. I hardly like to give advice on this last sacred duty but I make a habit of writing a page or two daily and mailing about every five days. One package a week keep the lad you send it to in the little luxuries so needful in the trenches.

"Sorry I had to send you a whizz-bang (field postcard) but I have been working like a machine for weeks day and night, now I am back at the horse lines for a rest, it is a pretty lively spot where our guns are now, and my nerves get a bit on edge, everywhere I'd turn a whizz-bang or 5.9 would come, I always seem lucky enough to strike a shell-hole or trench to duck into, the only one that came within ten feet was a "dud". I was on guard and had to travel along a certain road to get rations etc., and it was a bit risky—don't worry its all over for a while now. You and our readers in The Western Home Monthly will have to do without illustrations—there is no scenery left; let alone picturesque spots. The soil of France hereabouts is all carefully packed away in sandbags or blown to dust and buried, the subsoil shows everywhere, villages and towns as big as the "two elevator" ones of the prairies are only to be found if the engineers have struck a name board where they once stood—not a single brick left, we use them all for roadmaking. I hear the railroad men have built as many miles as the C.P.R. has already, and more country roads than there are in Ontario. Oh! how good the sweet stuff is in the packages after a month in that treeless shell-hole-covered country. I got paid the usual 15 Francs and had a feed of eggs and chocolate, the pork cost high, must have been gold-fed, seven dollars and fifty cents for a meal for two of us—but "eggs is eggs", thanks for the parcels it sure does raise a fellow's spirits to get something from home."

"(Two days' later). This is the first moment I have had to myself since I went to sleep writing you the other night.—Reveille at 6.30 yesterday, I was detailed as time orderly—at stable till three—supper, then went up with ammunition, back at two this morning, in a few minutes I must fall in for headquarters as I have to be inoculated again, they say the doctor he is a——. 1.30 p.m. I was going to say the doctor was a rough chap—he is! I've just been over and had several million germs shot into my chest, you would think he was sticking pigs instead of doctoring men."

We did have a lively trip to the guns last night with ammunition—pouring rain—black night—eight hours' trip—some snow—developed into a regular western blizzard. The wagon I was on had rather poor drivers on the horses and we just smashed everything we came to, trees, motor trucks, tractors and wagons, a few times we broke the harness, once the wagon box came off. It was hard to sit on the seat let alone attend to the

brake. I was soaked and then mudcaked most thoroughly.

We had a fine spin to the next village on a motor truck one night, fried eggs and picture show, and caught a motor truck for a ride all the way back to our longfaced friends—beware! of the army horse. The one I attend to launched out and caught me fair in the stomach, luckily there were no bones to be broken in that section; but he knocked me several feet—your teaching about kindness to animals—did it include the artillery horse?

I have just broken off the last hand of my watch, the glass went long ago, so send me a stout Ingersoll, they seem to stand the concussions best—and between one's own battery and the enemies big duds there is lots of concussion here—thanks. I've just been into an Estaminet and had several cups of black coffee—wonder if it will help the inoculation, arm and chest getting pretty stiff, fear I will have to report sick in the morning, first time too, you see we do not get any time off here as we did in Canada and England.

That wonderful leaning figure of the Virgin in Albert still leans out at a precarious angle.

Just think, our present billet has a roof and a floor, and glory be—a stove, then pay-day comes soon again, "œuf pain du beurre et café au lait" poor French I know but I can get the eggs



A Boy's Winter Duck Shooting—Laddie, Jr., Filling Absent "Laddie's" Boots

just the same. We boil rice and eat the "sue" you sent with it—fine I tell you, but the Y.M.C.A. ran out of rolled oats so our breakfasts are partly spoiled.

(Some days later). I have just succeeded, after much hunting in the empty dugouts, in finding a sheet of paper, maybe its German, sorry I can't write, been hopping about like a toad on hot coals, night as well as day, all my kit is ahead in a new position, we nearly got drowned out last night, awoke in a pool of water, I've got rubber blankets up for a roof to-night though. Yesterday was a beautiful one for the planes, do you know a fellow can hardly do his work for watching them, I saw four sent down altogether, I get the awfulest crick-in-the-neck watching these air fights, they seem always to be going on. Fritz has been pretty lively with his shells here lately, but he does not know where we are, as long as he does not find us; we are jake. If the blankets keep the water out of the cocoa we'll finish it in the morning—the worst thing happened last night, that flood went right into the pocket where I kept all our matches and we had to puddle out in the dark.

"Well! It didn't rain last night and the cocoa is where the weather will not hurt it."

"I have a tin roof on the dugout now and the rats are beating time on it so regularly. I wonder what they will do for a living when we beat the Huns? There are literally millions of them and they get bold at times, they're fighting above me now, presumably for the right to steal from me."

"I dare not tell you how long it is since I had a wash or changed this underwear, big times doing, we wonder if there will be any water in the shell holes this summer, as streams are scarce in this part of France."

"Tell me what's happening? We get so little news—if its not night firing its ammunition carrying, or guard, or horse

picket duty, I guess I am too tired to read much anyway, and the fumes from the charges don't keep a fellow any too bright, I think I need something under my unshined buttons, in the way of food, its hard to get the fodder up here when we are real busy. I must get another pill for this pen (ink tablet)—there, that's better, some of our gunners got a bit inquisitive this a.m. and went too near the front, "Fritzy" saw the group and did a pretty bit of shelling, they ran for a dugout like badgers, but the shrapnel whizzbang got one and shocked another before they made good cover, the wounded one has no more than a good Blighty and both of them are getting lots of cats—and his whole working party too for some strange reason. Say! I saw a dandy flock of geese go over last week, also many quail.

"The chap who shares my 'funkhole'—the boys call it so because it's deep, got a package to-night and he decided we would finish it off instead of having several dabs and pecks. Say! but we had a gorgeous feast. It does seem odd to sit here and read my letter in The Western Home Monthly—all the way there and back, what makes me wonder more and more is that none of the parcels or letters have been lost by the sub attack, its a full year since I left and my mail has all arrived."

"The other day an unexploded anti-aircraft shell came down and burst on grass nearer than was comfortable, but we all ducked in time and no one was hit. A 'Fritzy' airman made me mad the other day, he had just been fighting with one of ours and came down low in returning, I was looking out of our dugout, but I



Laddie, Jr., at the Home Camp—Wharf Building

guess he was too excited to see me or he had me sure with his little pop gun—and not a gun did I have of any kind to let fly at him with. I had the old duck-shooting feeling of the bird getting away without a shot. If I had had a rifle I would have peppered his planes for him all right, all right. I saw a Hun plane fall in flames, a very wonderful sight, it didn't last long.

"To-day we have been digging as usual into the frozen ground, suddenly it struck me it was Sunday afternoon and I could see you in the dear old camp so peaceful and happy. Out here we lose track of the days, but the diary you sent helps me to keep some track of the right dates."

"In reading over my printed letter in the old magazine it seems I must have been happy at Shorncliffe; happy all the time in England, I suppose when I get back to Canada I will also find I was happy all the time in good old muddy France too."

"When the call suddenly came this morning of 'stand to' I made a dash out of my warm blankets into a white country, it had snowed all night, this March morning was cold and we fired fast to keep warm and get a good appetite for 'iron rations'—there was quite a bombardment up at the line—that's just over the hill. After breakfast, evidently having made 'Fritzy' change his mind about coming over, we were busy putting the last few bits of France into some sandbags. They make dandy walls and roof, you lay them like bricks and hammer them down with shovels and you can make very neat and strong walls out of them."

So Laddie ends his letter. If you happen to see The Illustrated London News you can see how these C.F.A. boys do their work, of course Laddie will not send anything definite, his letters are so well censored, and, when he uses the "green envelope" issued but scantily, he

is on his honour not to mention anything in the inclosed letter that might be of benefit to the enemy—just "private and family matters". The Illustrated London News however shows them carrying their heavy shells on their shoulders along a snowy road, also watering the "longfaces" at an icy trough, they seem to use 4.5 Howitzers in great numbers, according to the illustrations, as we are reported to be manufacturing 654 of these for every hundred we made in 1914. And 66 times as many shells are now made. These are about 35 pound shells, but the big ones are so great that a huge motor lorry hauls but four, a weight equal to something like as many tons, and double that weight for the seige guns. Taking the shells up to the guns, with three wild teams, a driver on each left side horse, along well known roads, at times in plain view of enemy batteries—"Never for one instant while an attack during the general advance on the Western front is taking place can the field guns in the advanced artillery be allowed to slacken fire"—can you get that? I ask any reader of military age who hesitates whether he should go or not—picture the need for those Canadian drivers, need to get those shells up to drive the Hun back—Yes and to keep the sullen faced alien in our midst, and the traitor too, for we have a few of these animals in Canada—silent and afraid.

Look at the outfit our men must carry to turn aside the devilish work of the enemy and the harsh forces of Nature too. A steel helmet—Laddie's "tin hat", anti-lachrymatory-shell goggles, goatskin coats and rubber boots, as well as the gas masks "dog muzzles" the boys call them, in darkness and thunder, rain and hail, frost and wind, shellhole and sunken road, whizzbang and Arches, mine and crater, sniper and airship, half-rations and delayed packages, holes in the mud for beds, a wet sky for a roof, rats for bunk mates, and yet they all write the same cheerful letters as Laddie does—can you beat it?

Mt. Edith Cavell

By Lydia M. Dunham O'Neil

She lived for England, and she died
Unwavering in loyalty;
Her love for native land so deep
She flinched not from the death decree.
She flinched not from the "mercy shot";
Her faith had strength to face the
flame;
She won her crown of martyrdom,
Enduring love, undying fame.

And far across the ocean foam,
And far across a continent,
Where the great Rockies lift their heights
To greet the starry firmament,
So long as earth in space shall spin,
One mountain shall perpetuate
Her name, who for old England died,
A victim of the German hate.

For God hath reared a monument,
Worthy her life and final days,
And with wild flowers strewn it o'er,
With birds to chant their hymns of
praise.

And many a marble shaft may rise,
Her tale of martyrdom to tell,
But this shall tower above them all.
The mountain named for Nurse Cavell.

As once the wounded soldier turned
To her, for refuge and for aid,
The creatures of the wild shall find
Their refuge in her mountain's glade.
As we in pity sigh for her,
And as for her our teardrops swell,
The pines shall sigh, the rains shall weep
Upon the heights of Mount Cavell.

As she in England's history
Shall shine, a bright and glorious star,
So shall the stars far-flung by God
Shine on her mountain from afar.
As still and deep the silence was
In that dim dawning when she fell,
So still and deep the snows shall fall,
Throughout the years, on Mount Cavell.

She died for England! And her name
Is numbered with earth's bravest, best;
Pure as her heart, the lilies blow
Upon her mountain's lofty crest.
Pure as her life its cloud-crowned
heights;
Deep as her love, each dimpling dell;
God's grand, eternal monument
In memory of Nurse Cavell.