

Even the confidential men employed with the Corps General Staff were equally mystified. Corps Headquarters was at Duisans when early in the morning of July 30 they were ordered to prepare for an immediate move. There was much speculation. Some declared it was to Kemmel, others to Soissons; while one ingenious theory was that the Canadian Corps was to be shipped to Zeebrugge there to fall on the enemy rear in Flanders. The long train of sixty or seventy lorries moved off with no other guide than a transport officer on a motor cycle who declined to talk. That evening Corps Headquarters was established at Molliens-Vidame—better known to the Canadian soldier as “Molly-be-damned”—a dozen miles due west of Amiens.

There followed a week of strenuous preparation. “Red tabs” are not popular in the army but no one who watched the staff officers of the Canadian Corps then and through the over-charged weeks to follow could have anything but admiration and wonder. There is no Sunday in the army; and there are no specified hours, except that a man works until he can see no more, catches a few hours sleep, and goes at it again; fourteen hours a day week in and week out was quite normal; in active operations officers of the General Staff and “A” and “Q” branches would work right through the 24 hours. All had not the wonderful physique of the Corps Commander whom one left studying battle reports at two in the morning and heard at breakfast that he had been in the field at six o’clock.

It was a breathless bustle at “Molly-be-damned,” not least so for the staff of the Canadian Artillery, which had to work out in detail the ranges and the barrage of the great opening show. Then the Intelligence branch had the collection and collation of last-minute information, whether from our air craft or by prisoners. Three clerks of the General Staff worked in a tent by themselves—all were under canvas and it rained a good deal—engaged day and night in copying out operation orders, which in great detail must all be prepared and in the hands of the various commanders. These three