

Laddie Abroad—Crossing the Channel

By Bonnycastle Dale

I went up beside the old Garrison Church—I sent you a picture of it—it stands just above "God's Acre" where many a lonely soldier has been laid to rest. Say! it's a wonderful sight to look from the far-spread canvas city where so many Canadian boys are getting ready for the enemy; across the parade ground; past the white crosses that mark where the boys have laid their all for the Motherland; out across the blue glitter of the Channel, crowded to-day with big puffing freighters; the neutrals with letter; many feet long painted widely along their sides, great hospital ships with a huge Red Cross gleaming in the sun, old time sailing vessels, subs, torpedo boat destroyers—sending up a mighty wave as they surge along, transports and passenger vessels, swift motor boats armed to fight the cowardly Hun, literally hundreds of vessels of many nations speeding peacefully along as if war was an unheard of thing. How is this done with the German fleet within a few hours run, and dozens of enemy subs hunting for prey? First of all say "British Navy!" with its unwritten means of catching the sneaking subs—did you read the old trawler Captain's answer to the reporter: "Oh! we know when we've got a bite, maybe we don't pull the net for two or three days, if we's too busy, but the 'fish' is there all ready for we." I tell you it must be a sight of wonder to see a couple of swooping aeroplanes above, and a drive of swift destroyers on the surface, and the big fish-like body—the sub—gliding along beneath. We must have nearly two hundred of them captured by now—remember this is but a guess—the world knows we had 128 in September, 1916.

I am on draft as I told you in my last, I guess this is my last walk; as we are supposed to be C. B.—we are sleeping in a shed, all ready packed up for the word.

To-day is the regular day for the drafts to leave here. Oh! it's pay day tomorrow, so I'll land stony broke, as the men on draft are not paid until they get to France, we hear we will get fifteen francs when we arrive there. I would rather have it now as, while the cooks feed us well in camp, they have no idea of a hungry boy's travelling appetite. One of the boys who went across last week wrote: "Shoot the cook on sight, too small rations or too long trip." I saw one of the Indian boys we used to shoot with, you remember his black hair—well! it's pure white now.

Just returned from a short route march with the C. F. A. band. It does seem odd to march to music again as we used to in good old Cobourg.

We had another drill with the gas masks on—just to get used to breathing in them; the boys in France go through real gas to try them out—some drill, eh! I know I passed some friends from Canada last night; the streets are so dark that one just gets a glimpse of folks passing—then it's too late to call out. It will seem very odd to get into a lighted city again.

I will stop for a while now: s I have the only available seat—it's the piano stool—canteens closed—and here comes the boys.

Later.—The noisy lot have gone and I am restless, waiting for the word. I had to make out another short will for the Record's Office, it is for the articles that may be found on one in the field—gives you a sort of odd feeling. Please send me a diary for 1917, they are also so handy as a notebook.

My chum, who went across lately writes they had a nasty trip—well! as the wind has been blowing hard for two weeks, and as this October night is bitter cold; I guess I know someone else who will have a nasty trip!

We have another drill in the morning—wit's the dog muzzles on—luckily it will be cold, there's no fun doubling on a hot day with these things on.

Later, 7.30 p.m.—We have just got word that we cross tomorrow. We were up to the doctor at six for final inspection, then we got our paybooks, then out came full kits and blankets and off to the gushed for our last sleep in Old England for some time.

Friday, the thirteenth—wouldn't that jar you for a day and a date to start across "the briny?"—luckily I have still one Canadian chum with me, all the rest are scattered—I will write again as soon as possible.

(Author's note.—Now came a long trying wait. How anxiously we watched for the stageman across those billowy snow waves on the ice-bound lake; the ice was too thick to break our way through it to the mile distant shore, and too weak those early December days to carry our

write. The cars and engines here are large ones, somewhat similar to the Canadian ones; they look so big after the English vans. The country here also resembles Canada—we have just passed through a large town. Some of the men "found" a box of apples. I'm afraid there will not be much of the carload of fruit left, but they are like our hardtack, (some of the boys are going to send one of these as postcards, I'll bet they would travel to Timbuctoo without losing a crumb). The apples have turned out sour; so all the people who happen to be within throwing distance are getting bombarded. Imagine hundreds of apples shooting out from the sides of the slowly

every thousand has suffered from mine or weather—what a record—some fishermen! these Jack Tars when the fishing is really good for subs. I'll bet if we were shut up in Kiel Canal and Wilhelmshaven, we'd come out and clean up the whole shooting match—what blooming water cowards these Germans are!

I looked in vain for chums who came across lately, all gone to the front at once upon arrival. France seems so odd after clean prim England. Dirty children, garbed in frocks, bothered us all along our five-mile walk this morning, they wanted pennies or sous, or whatever you call the small change here. The boys, about six years old, seemed to enjoy their cigarettes very much; none of the people look very healthy, due to such things I suppose. We saw quite a few German prisoners working at different things on the way up. They stared at us as if we were strange animals as we passed, not very pleased looks either, they were all big strong looking chaps.

No mail for us until we get right up to the "line." The French people are worse than the British for soaking us poor Canadians—fifteen centimes for the Daily Mail—a franc for a bar of chocolate! The zepps cannot bother this countryside at all, as everything was brilliantly lighted last night when we passed along. So "Ariel Picquet" and "Physical Jerks" are now things of the dim past, (perhaps I'm wrong, as some of our boys are back in England within two weeks of landing here).

Some hours later (if the censor reads this he will give me a good mark). We are in camp in France. Just near enough to hear the guns at times. The camp is slippery—mud everywhere—we are living on "iron rations." Luckily I have been able to buy a few good things along the road. Odd! how small the world is, there is a chap in this little bunch that you and I took out in the launch on Rice Lake last Dominion Day. It's tea time now—I'll try and post this somewhere.

Bukowina

Although geography is in the melting pot, most of us have been learning a good deal of it since the war began, says a contributor to the London Times. Many have had this year their first introduction to the Bukowina.

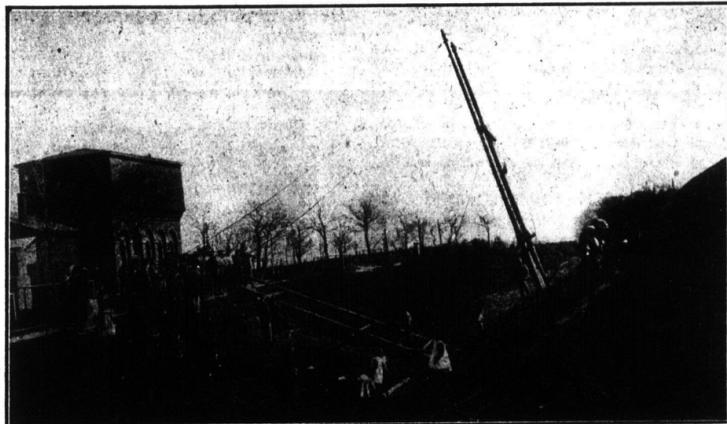
It is a duchy and crownland of Austria, sandwiched between the province of Galicia and the northwestern frontier of Roumania. Bukowina means the country of the beech trees, and a great portion of it is forest clad, for it lies among the southern spurs of the wooded Carpathians. Czernowitz, its capital, has about 90,000 inhabitants, and the population of the duchy is some three-quarters of a million. Of these, about 40 per cent are Ruthenians, and nearly another 40 per cent are Roumanians, and the balance is made up of the usual Balko-Hungarian mixture—Magyars, Germans, Poles, Jews, and Gypsies. The Ruthenians and the Roumanians belong to the Orthodox Church, and therefore the great majority of the inhabitants hold with Roumania and with Russia in the matter of religion.

The Roumanian peoples in the Bukowina and in Transylvania are not settlers who have overflowed across the Roumanian frontier. They have their roots deep in history. Roumania herself is a geographical anomaly, and it is very curious to find a Latin people in Eastern Europe surrounded on all sides by Slavs and Hungarians—for not only do Roumanians speak a Latin tongue closely resembling Italian, but in spite of all admixture with Slavs, Turks, and Constantinople Greeks, they retain to this day strong signs of their Italian blood.

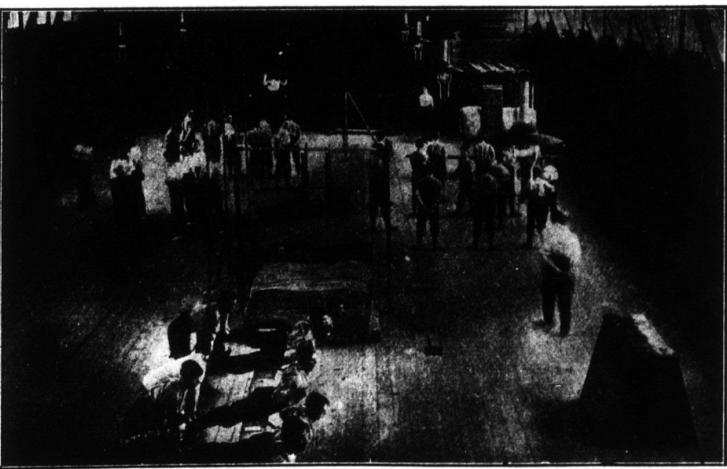
Roumania is the modern descendant of Trajan's Roman colony in Dacia, and the explanation of the Roumanians in the Bukowina and Transylvania lies in the fact that Trajan's province included both these districts, and was much larger in extent than the modern kingdom of Roumania. When Catherine II. was at war with Turkey the Russians occupied the Bukowina in 1769, but they restored it to the Turks when peace was made in 1774. Austria had been much perturbed by this occupation, and made great show of her anxiety for its restitution to Turkey. But this friendliness was by no means disinterested, for she promptly set up an intrigue to secure it for herself, and in 1777 the Porte ceded it to her. Since then it has remained in Austrian hands.



Garrison Church, Shorncliffe



Royal Engineers Bridge Building, Shorncliffe Camp



The Gymnasium, Shorncliffe Camp

sleigh and canoe. At last! we got across—what a feverish hunt among the piles of mail—yes, there's one from Laddie!

On Train—France

Have been travelling all night—left the base about nine, after a five-mile walk arrived above a big town three hundred steps down to the sea level. It was a fine sight looking down over the city—all the lights burning as in peace time. We are nearly all in box cars—six of us just managed to grab a second-class carriage, supposed to hold ten, so we are comfortable. Twenty-five francs each before leaving yesterday and we have heaps of food about us now—our fast express is a very long train and many of the men are walking alongside for exercise. No, I'm not fooling, I can see them as I

moving cars, the men on nearby trucks surely had to duck.

Great weather for our trip to the line—last night the moon shone brightly and to-day is a perfect one.

About our Channel trip—it was rough but we enjoyed it. You see these letters are censored now so I must write carefully—I can say that we kept dark and so did most other dim shapes that passed us, only neutrals and hospital and Belgian relief ships are lighted to show their names or nationalities, but we were evidently in a navy guarded lane, as records show over twenty thousand bottoms have passed backwards and forwards across this stormy score of miles and not a soldier, a gun, or a ship has been lost conveying three million men over or back of the freight and supply service one bottom in