

mander, who told us that we had been picked out to hold a certain part of front, and although we were fresh troops, he felt sure that he could trust us with the responsibility of doing our duty without the aid of any older battalions to teach us the art of trench warfare. We packed up that night and marched away, very pleased with the faith he had in us. Before marching away into action our ever-energetic Divisional Chaplain again reminded us of our duty, and *why* we were here. It was a very silent bunch that marched away that evening, no smoking or talking being allowed. We were left with our thoughts, and who can blame us if we all thought of our loved ones and home? Luck was against us, however, as when we arrived at —, on the — road, we were told by our Colonel that our Battalion could not go in the trenches that night, but the other half of the brigade would (I suppose our Colonel lost the toss). I cannot really say whether we were pleased or not, as we were all wet through to the skin, and the bad roads had tired us considerably. Here there are huts to sleep in, so we were "told off" and made ourselves as comfortable as possible, but sorry for the fact that we couldn't "bomb" the Huns that night. We all felt very mad with those gentlemen by this time.

Stayed here several days, so had plenty of time to get about. We were in a fair-sized village that had escaped the shell fire, and there is a nice church here. The bells do not chime though on account of complaints from the hospital, but I do not know what "complaint" they have.

The time arrived at last when we were ordered to the trenches. One cannot tell the feeling that is in you when you are going to the unknown. We had read so much of the shot and (s)hell that it made us all the more eager, yet in a measure nervous, to go through it ourselves. We were happy bombers that night. We could have burst into song, but that was not permitted. At last we reached our communication trenches. We went into K— (all trenches have familiar names), and soon got into the wet and mud. Some parts of the trench were so narrow that we got stuck, owing to our packs being too wide, and had to be pushed through by the man behind. Finally, after it seemed like hours of twisting and turning, we arrived in the front line, where the mosquitoes (bullets) were coming thick and fast. We involuntarily "ducked," but, of course, too late, and were pleased to see that the parapet was substantial.

There is a man in our section who has a remarkable red nose. He was on duty in the front line, with his bombs around him. A sentry in one of the platoons (a Scotchman) saw him coming round a traverse, or rather his nose, which sure does glow (anyhow, he does not use an illuminated wrist watch), and asked him if he had any empty bottles. The remainder of the boys laughed, but our bomber evidently didn't "catch on" and asked, "What for?" "Oh,

just to smash them up to see glass go (Glasgow) once again before I die."

When our time in the front line was over we went to —, in reserve, and had a church service. All the H.Q. details were there, including the transport. The question of confirmation came up, and quite a few were eager to be confirmed, except one driver on the transport. I asked him if he had any reason for declining, and he told me he was quite willing if the transport officer would get someone else to drive his team of mules. "Nuff sed."

Just to speak about the spirit of the boys, I would relate a little incident that happened last month. We were all in reserve at the time, when the order came, "Stand to arms." We all wondered, and vaguely hoped we were going to attack. Our officer explained to us that a mine had been exploded by the Germans on the —th Battalion. The rifle and machine-gun fire was terrific, but Mr. O'Donnel, our bandmaster, got his band together and was playing some lively airs to make us more cheerful, until stopped by the Colonel. No emergency call came, however, and we were dismissed.

When in rest at — I was struck by a notice, "Hair-cutting and Shaving." I needed a shave, and opened the door leading to a room in an ordinary house, and the "barber's" chair was just an ordinary chair. A boy lathered my beard while the soldier who had been lathered was being shaved. I could hear his groans, and wondered if I could stick it, and, like the artilleryman, had grim-set teeth. Presently the one being shaved gave a yell. The Belgian "barber" looked surprised, and asked, "Does ze razor hurt?" I could not get the inaudible reply, but the "barber" explained by gestures that he could get the beard off all right if the handle of the razor didn't break. By this time I was nervous. I jumped up, paid the 2 centimes (1 penny), the price of a whole "shave," and beat it.

We are all used to trench life by now, but cannot get used to the wet and cold. No coke is supplied to us Headquarter bombers at present, but I hope we soon shall be, as it is very cold at times in the trenches. Some parts of the trenches are so deep with water that I think the Navy are taking them over with a squadron of monitors.

Think I have dwelt long enough on a few experiences, so shall quit, wishing all Winnipeg a Merry Christmas and a Bright, Prosperous New Year.

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