

FROM A CHAPLAIN AT THE FRONT

(Continued from page 5.)
Company of Royal Engineers, with
ton rafts, ferried the fighting troops
the river, and at night long the
nan guns searched the valley, striving
to prevent the work, but when day
red the whole fighting force of the
Division had crossed the Aisne,
h the coming of day the firing was
muted, and still the ceaseless pour-
rain, and we were told that the ene-
my had fallen back upon a range of
hills, where they were strongly entrench-
ed in a position which had been rendered
nigh impregnable by weeks of cease-
preparation. This our infantry were
to attack. Later in the day I paid
to our advance dressing-station,
arrived to find Major Fawcett and
or Richards just starting out with
r bearers. We got as far as the pon-
raft, by which we had hoped to
the river, but we were stopped.
ere are plenty of wounded and dead,"
said, "but they can only be reached
crossing an open plain, over which
thing can pass alive; you must wait
I said. Later we got into touch
some of the infantry, and the
dded began to trickle in, then the
ness and for the stretcher bearers
us work began. They had to carry
wounded a distance of over two
s across ploughed fields, sodden with
in darkness black as the grave and
s sunset till dawn they kept at their
c with never a word of complaint.
ly there are no braver or more self-
sisting men in this army than the
ries and stretcher-bearers of the
al Army Medical Corps. Meanwhile,
he advanced dressing station, and in
the doctors were hard at work. I
r saw better arrangements, or, in-
t, arrangements half as good, as
hich Colonel Crawford and his
ers made at Juncy. Many an officer
man, during this and the following
y who owe their lives to the surgical
of Captain Lindsay and Lieutenants
ker and Clark, could not possibly
Ben saved but for the careful pre-
tion beforehand, and the almost
operating-theatre into which the
n that little farmhouse had been
erted. All through the night they
red at the operating tables "lopping
limb to save the limb," and it was not
d dawn, when for a time the incom-
stream of casualties was stayed, that
were able to snatch a brief sleep.
g the night over 150 men had pas-
through their hands.
ul the carrying of the wounded out
ction, the dressing of their wounds,
when absolutely necessary, opera-
s, by no means all that has to be
e by a field ambulance. For some
operating-room the wounded were
ed to barns strewn with clean
s, where nursing orderlies watched
them and refreshed them with hot
tea, etc., and it is here that the
tain has one of his best opportuni-
ties of service. Later, when rested and
shed, the injured men were again
e placed in the ambulance wagons,
e-eyed to "refilling point" (the point
e motor lorries which bring sup-
plies to the fighting force, transfer their
s to the regimental supply wagons),
there be transferred to the empty
es returning to the rear. This has
e done every night, for the field am-
bulance accompanies the fighting force,
stantly on the move, and cannot
umbered with sick, as its ambulance
us may be required for fresh cas-
es at any moment. Sometimes it is
ossible to reach the motor lorries in
e, and the order to march comes be-
we have "evacuated" our sick; then
use is converted into a temporary
ital, a medical officer and nursing
s are left behind in charge, with
rs to rejoin the columns as best they
when they have sent their sick down
the base—which often means that
are separated from us for days.

side for Life.
through Tuesday the fight still
on, though now our men had been
ied to entrench themselves, and
slices were not so heavy. Hearing
at a farm on the other side of the
near the village of St. Marguerite
there were dead waiting burial, and
t fifty wounded. I rode in that di-
on, crossing the pontoon bridge
h had been erected by the Royal
neers. When I reached the open
of which we had been told the
ous day, I paused. And seeing an
ery officer in command of some
ambulance wagons, which were sheltering
little plantation, I asked, "Is it safe
oes?" He grinned, "Well, Padre, no-
e on this side of the river can exact-
called safe, but they have not aban-
hese particular fields for over two
s, and the stretcher-bearers crossed
now without drawing fire."

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stood with heads uncovered and reverently bowed. And when the service was ended some constructed a rude cross to mark their comrades' resting-places, whilst others, with flowers picked in a farm garden, hid the mound of brown earth with a covert of red and blue and gold and white. Then gathering round me, man after man of the East Surrey Regiment asked, "How are they all at the Home in Eccleston street, sir?" "Yes, I know the Duke of Connaught's Home, sir. Why, last time I was home on furlough from India I spent Christmas with you there. Remember us to Miss Morpew and Mr. Sanford."

that there was no shortage of rations. Sometimes a shell would get into a battery, and there would be four or five men killed and wounded; sometimes the sniper's bullet would find its billet, and there would be a man to be carried by the stretcher-bearers across what was often still the fire-swept plain. Other parts of the fighting line it was only possible to reach after dark, as, for instance, that

part of our line near Misy-sur-Aisne, and at one time Bucy-le-Long and Sermaise. A Happy Sunday Behind the Lines. I will not weary my readers with describing in detail the happenings of this period. One day was much as another, and it was full of glorious opportunities for doing the work we were sent here to do. Lately it has been possible for one brigade at a time to be relieved from the trenches, and come back to the shelter of Juncy for a few days' rest; and to make room for them the field ambulance moved back to the little town of Serches. This was the opportunity Mr. Winniffrith (Church of England chaplain) and myself had long desired, for it gave us the chance of holding services amongst the men, many of whom had not attended public worship since they left England. Our first full Sunday is a day that will long live in our memories—the early Communion, kneeling on the straw of a dimly-lit barn; the address. The congregation was composed of officers belonging to the staff, regiments, batteries, and ambulance and equally mixed assembly of men. Other services will remain a vivid memory—a week-night service in a cart-shed, lit by two hurricane-lamps, at

which both Church of England and Wesleyan chaplains took part, and the address was given by that efficient Methodist local preacher, Lieutenant Grenfell, R. A. M. C.; another week night service, in a deep cutting where the men, sheltered from shell fire, overhead the boom of guns but clear above that dreadful noise the music of the hymn "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Two local preachers (Lieutenant Grenfell and Sergeant-Major Moore, K. O. Y. L. I.), as well as myself, united in leading the worship of their comrades. Then there were the long heart to heart talks sometimes in the "dig out" in rear of a battery, at others with the men of the resting brigade; yet again with those who were in charge of the transport which brought our supplies, or with a young fellow from Oxford or Cambridge who, with his motor-cycle, is acting as despatch-rider to one of the generals; and on rare occasions, when it was possible to get at the men in the trenches in day-light, talks with those who hourly carried their lives in their hands.

In pursuit of these opportunities many miles have been covered, and sometimes a whole day has been spent in the saddle. Interesting things we have seen and heard, and ever more deeply there has been seared upon our hearts the wickedness, the devastation, and the horror of war. If I could picture for you the little village of Sermaise, with its wrecked and ruined homes, and its old Norman church, reduced to a scrap heap by the German guns, or bring you to see the weeping women and children of Bucy-le-Long searching the blackened ruins of their homes for what was left of their few poor possessions; or, again, show you the city of Soissons as I saw it, streets blocked with the debris of fallen houses, a corner of the cathedral carried away, the glorious stained glass windows utterly ruined, and the magnificent west front of the Church of St. Jean hopelessly disfigured, you would come to know what was really is. Still more, if I could write of other things that I have seen and heard—things too dreadful to be put in black and white—and which, if only half true, would be a disgrace to civilization, and a terrible commentary on our Christianity. But of these things I must not and I cannot write. God will call to account those who are responsible and we who daily see the fruits of their wickedness cannot but cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" OWEN S. WATKINS.

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