

A FLYING OFFICER

200 feet to the ground and there was not enough of it left to think of repairing it. Every bit was smashed to atoms, and yet Wood was practically unhurt. He had a black eye, a scratch on his head and a tooth knocked out, and nothing else. I went to see him in the hospital yesterday, and he expects to be flying again in almost no time. Only one bad smash in about 3000 flights, since I have been here, and that one only slightly shaken up, looks pretty safe, does it not?

This afternoon I spent playing singles on our lovely tennis courts. You never would think there was a war going on to look at U—— this afternoon. Motor parties leaving and arriving at the mess, tennis players in white flannels, golfing enthusiasts, male and female, dotted all over the links which stretch away in front of the mess, and an occasional aeroplane humming and whining overhead. Sunday afternoon flying is voluntary, and not many machines are about. If you had strolled through the camp on the opposite side from the mess, the sight of a barbed wire enclosure, guarded by sentries, would have disillusioned you. These chaps are kept here to be employed on heavy manual labour, such as digging septic tanks, making roads, etc. They are a contented lot and seem to work pretty well.

I would like to have a heavy muffler for flying with. Have plenty of socks at present, thanks.

The Camp, 9th September, 1917. Since I last wrote I have made my first solo flight at the Central Flying School. I managed it all right, making several good landings, and was complimented by my instructor. It was made in a B.E. 2b, an almost pre-war type of machine, which is hard to fly, especially in bumps. I have now done six hours on this machine and in a few days will go on to Avros which are steadier and easier to fly.

A couple of days last week I was not quite up to the mark, and was not allowed to fly at all. That is one of the things they watch carefully in the Central Flying School. No one is allowed to take a machine in the air unless in the pink of condition. All I had was a slight cold which gave me a stiff neck for a day or two.