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"Blown up twice; sat on Dead Hun for 24 hours; plenty of shrapnel;-still Carrying On!"

A GOOD PICTURE OF LIFE AT THE FRONT

Bramshott, Hants.,
21/11/17.

Dear X—

Compliments of the season to you and yours.

You will have realized by now that I am a very excellent correspondent. I rarely bother anybody with letters,—it is a commendable quality which undoubtedly you fully appreciate. After all, dear old X—, there is so little to write about to you folks at home,—the incidents (personal) of a year in Flanders and France can be summed up in a few brief notes. My diary proves useful at this point. Here are the outstanding items:

Sept. 10th, 1916. Nearly went West. A Fritz sniped me with bullet through right ear and base of skull and out through top of shrapnel helmet, gave me seven week's rest at Bolougne hospital. I needed it. Had not been to bed for five days and nights, too busy wiring at night and building parapets, sort of endless occupation, building up for Fritz to knock down! This was in the Ypres salient, right at Dickiebush—Messines sector.

Nov. 1916 (no date, happened too often). Regina trench, right at Pys. Blown up twice this trip; seven bullet holes in tunic, sleeves and shoulders, one in helmet and four dents from shrapnel, quite exciting. Sat on dead Hun for twenty four hours, thought he constituted fire step but he began to prove his identity at end of second day. He smelt aloud! Rather dis-

gusting! Tried to give him decent burial. Went to get a shovel; returned to find his friends had wafted him away with shell. Trench here full of dead Huns,—frequently three deep.

Nov. 1916. Same place. Went out tonight into "No Man's Land" alone, wanted to find German wire. Imagined I had found a lone German on patrol. Saw dim figure of man at edge of shell hole, quite still. Figured if I crept up quite close on my stomach and then jumped for him I could get him with bayonet. I did and got almighty close and then took flying leap right on top of him driving bayonet clean home. He didn't utter a sound. He was dead. I felt horribly sold; had keyed myself up for a devil of a fight if I didn't stick him before he saw me. Found Fritz wire by walking into it. Beat a hasty and undignified retreat.

Nov. 1916. Second trip in. Same old story. Blown up again—stretcher party and two walking cases, nine men in all. One killed. Six wounded. Got help and all wounded out. Everybody gets blown up here at some time or other, but it is rather hard to get used to. Don't think I ever will! Feel rather sick and generally shaky, head rather queer this trip. Tired, I guess.

Christmas 1916. Vimy Ridge. In reserves here doing working parties. Fritz is great on celebrating. Gave us a warm hour just at midnight last night. Opened his whole box of tricks. It is his idea of humour. Think he has his "wind up" for he keeps the fire works going all night. Interesting sector.

Lens to our north, Arras south and west; usual quota of ruined villages. And so it runs on, all bringing back to me as I read it a thousand thoughts and crowded emotions. The notes themselves carry no interest to others, but to me they are the finger posts of an experience full of intense thought, of pathos and humour, of terrible tragedy, sacrifice, of love and inspiring memories of brave men's deeds, lives and companionship; but to you or any other far away from the scene of conflict what can such items have of interest.

I knew that you and many a man like you are in heart whole sympathy with us, would be with us long ago if you could, that you like to know what we are doing, and what we experience and think; but what we experience you find every day in the papers even more clearly than we would ever be allowed to write it. The horror, the filth, the tragedy and weariness of it all has become an accepted routine with us, the adventure and thrills have not altogether lost their charm but they are daily tasks, the nerves are a little more evident, the glory? well, there is no glamour about war!

But glory there is in the deeds of utter, unselfish valour and comradeship that animates the rank and file to "carry on" bravely, patiently, nobly, for their motherland. What does one think as he lives it all? More than I can ever tell you, but there have been times when I have watched our men, that I have felt and loved them beyond everything else in Creation, and felt a clearer conception of the

meaning of God and hope than I could ever have found in the humdrum life at home!

They never fail in noble deeds, they never fail in the time of need, they lay down their lives to save wounded comrades with smiles on their faces. They curse and grumble and growl at the little things of life but in the things that count they never fail. It is not what men say that counts, it is what they do, and these men by their acts have preached greater sermons in the beauty of honour, love, fidelity, and true virtue, than all the greatest preachers since the Church was.—"Nuf Sed."

England! yes I have been here some time; it is a beautiful country. Its homes breathe homeliness and comfort, its beautiful landscape is full of charm and ever seems to call to one to linger here. Its people are very fine, a charming, rather exclusive folk, not so much from coldness as courtesy; a solid respect for individual privacy. They are solidly conservative yet far from insular, indeed they are very well informed as a rule on all things and points of interest connected with the outer world. Rather more so than on points affecting their own country and social life. I love England, but I am a Canadian; give me Canada first, last and all the time!

There, old comrade, is a bit of gossip. Now I must shut up, rather an inelegant way of putting it, yet expressive.

Again, a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year to you and yours.

Sincerely, your friend,

(Sgd.) Y—