

20 FROM BAPAUME TO PASSCHENDAELE

battalions, I wondered sometimes whether the sufferings of these men were not so pitiful as I had thought. Their vitality helps them through many hardships. Their interest in life is so great that until death comes close it does not touch them—not many of them—with its coldness. In their comradeship they find a compensation for discomfort, and their keenness to win the rewards of skill and pluck is so high that they take great risks sometimes as a kind of sport, as Arctic explorers or big game hunters will face danger and endure great bodily suffering for their own sake. Those men are natural soldiers, though all our men are not like that. There are some even who like war, though very few. But most of them would jeer at any kind of pity for them, because they do not pity themselves, except in most dreadful moments which they put away from their minds if they escape. They scorn pity, yet they hate worse still, with a most deadly hatred, all the talk about "our cheerful men." For they know that however cheerful they may be it is not because of a jolly life or lack of fear. They loathe shell-fire and machine-gun fire. They know what it is "to have the wind up." They have seen what a battlefield looks like before it has been cleared of its dead. It is not for non-combatants to call them "cheerful." Because non-combatants do not understand and never will, not from now until the ending of the world. "Not so much of your cheerfulness," they say, and "Cut it out about the brave boys in the trenches." So it is difficult to describe them, or to give any idea of what goes on in their minds, for they belong to another world than the world of peace that we knew, and there is no code which can decipher their secret, nor any means of self-expression on their lips.

In this book the messages which I wrote from day to day are reprinted with only one alteration—though some are left out. For reasons of space (there is a limit to the length of a book) I have not included any narrative of the Cambrai battles, and thought it best to end this book with the gain of Passchendaele. The alteration is one which makes me very glad. I have been allowed to give the names of the battalions, which I could not do during the progress of the fighting because the enemy wanted to know our Order of Battle. For the first time, therefore, the world will know the regiments who fought without fame in the dismal anonymity of this war, with such