



CHAPTER III.

By Side-door Pullman to Belgium—Our Baptism of Blood— Flirtations With Gas—Trench Routine— The Army Idea of Rest.

DISEMBARKATION at Le Havre took place at 7.00 a.m. on August 12th, and we were immediately marched up a precipitous road to Rest Camp No. 1, where we were to remain during the day. The day was excessively hot and everyone was glad of the opportunity afforded in the afternoon of bathing off the beach. Orders were received for the unit to entrain at midnight and at that hour we were all assembled at the station, where we waited for a considerable time before our train was ready. Then we had our first shock and learned what travel in Flanders means for the enlisted man. It was pitch dark when we boarded the train and nobody was supplied with candles; it is easy, therefore, to imagine the confusion which reigned in a cattle-car packed with 40 men, each carrying full equipment. In later days these cars rarely carried more than 32 men, so we had the advantage of seeing travel at its worst on our first journey; moreover, at that stage in the war no effort was made to clean the cars after they had been used for cattle before they were turned over for the accommodation of troops. The next day and the following night were spent on the train and at 10 a.m. on August 14 we arrived at our destination, a station in Belgium with the imposing name of Godewaersvelde. Here we detrained and marched about five miles to our halting place, a tented camp about half-a-mile N.E. of Abiele. This camp boasts in its vicinity one of the many barn doors which are shown to new-comers as being in each case the identical one on which the Canadian sergeant was found crucified. At this point we were informally visited by the Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O.

We were now in the neighbourhood of St. Eloi trenches, Ypres Salient, a portion of the line which was used at that time for the training under fire of newly arrived battalions. The routine of trench life had to be learned under actual service conditions and to obtain