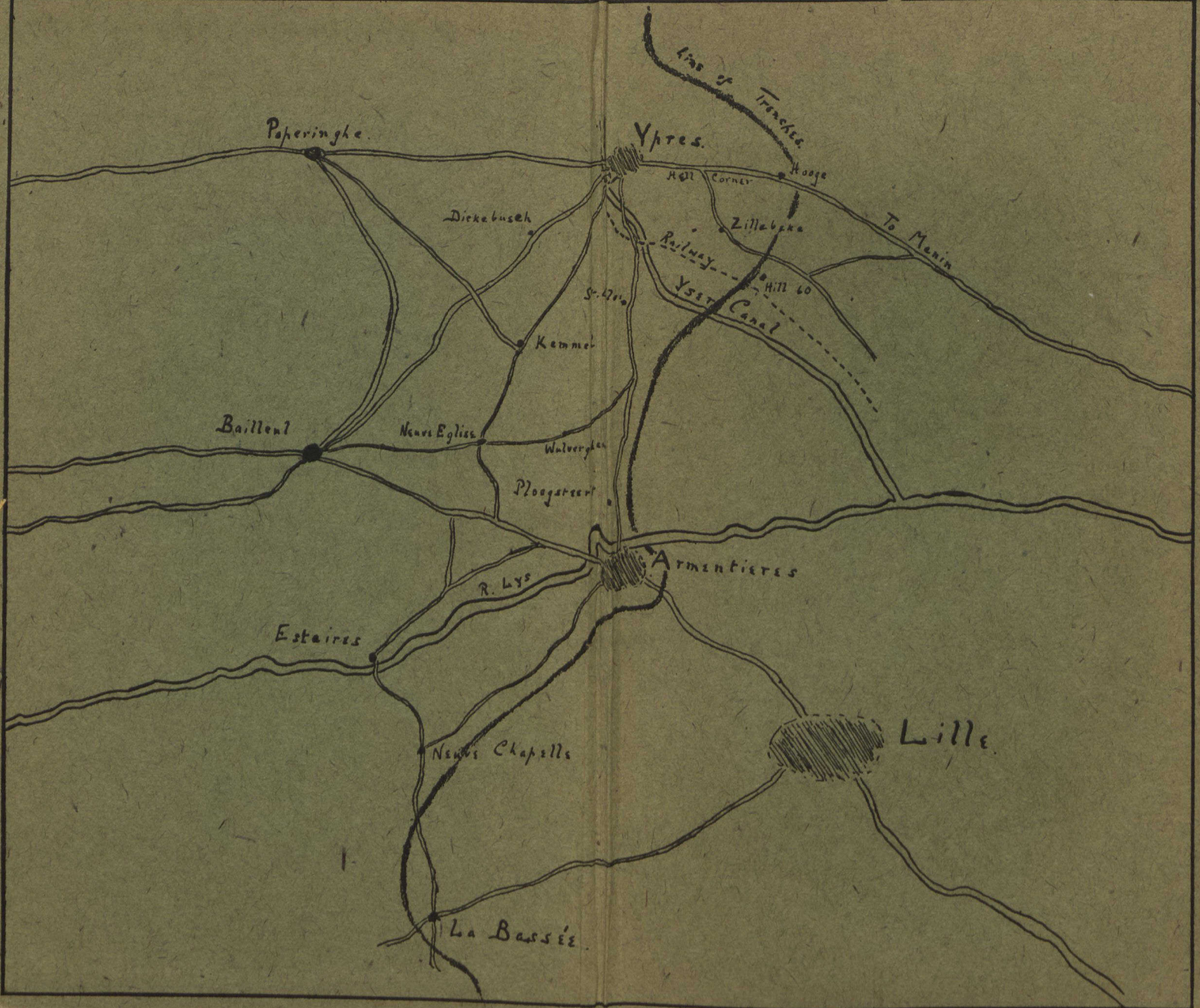
WITH A FIELD AMBULANCE AT YPRES

WILLIAM BOYD


Line of Trenches
Poperinghe
Ypres
Hooge
Hill Corner
To Menin
Dickebusch
Railway
Zillebeke
Hill 60
St. Yvon
Ypres Canal
Kemmel
Bailleul
Neuve Eglise
Wulvergem
Ploegsteert
Armentieres
R. Lys
Estaires
Lille
Neuve Chapelle
La Bassée

WITH A FIELD AMBULANCE AT YPRES

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BEING LETTERS WRITTEN
MARCH 7—AUGUST 15, 1915

BY

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ILLUSTRATED

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
THE DEAR MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

The present volume does not pretend to be a book. It is a diary, written in the kitchens of French farmhouses, in muddy dug-outs, and other unromantic places, and sent home to friends from time to time. In most cases the account was written within twenty-four hours of the events described.

Its sole justification is that it is a record of facts, experiences, and emotions, before the facts had become tinged with fiction, the experiences had lost their original sharpness, and the emotions had been erased by the moving finger of time.

WILLIAM BOYD.

WINNIPEG,
August, 1916.

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WITH A FIELD AMBULANCE AT YPRES

"And every mound of Flemish earth
Shall witness [illegible] as men go by,
That greater things than Life and Death
Are Truth and Right, which cannot die."

WITH A FIELD AMBULANCE AT YPRES

I

UP TO THE FIRING LINE

March 7, 1915.

At 8.30 last night the transport which carried our Field Ambulance cast off its moorings and slowly swung away from the land. It was an impressive sight. The sides of the ship were lined by men gazing in silence at the land that many of them were never to see again, the boats were swung out ready to be lowered at a moment's notice, sentries with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets kept guard over the bridge, the poop, and the stern where the life belts were stored, and on the deck stood great rafts with twenty handles on each side which would float off if the ship were torpedoed. Gradually we gathered way and soon the tugs were cast off, and we glided out into the darkness of the

night. For about half an hour we proceeded thus. Then suddenly from my post on the lower bridge I became aware of a long, lean, dark, venomous-looking shape on the starboard bow, and a commanding voice hailed us through a megaphone: "There is a light showing at one of your ports—put it out, and don't let your speed drop below fourteen knots." It was our escort. A light twinkled at the masthead of the dark shape, which was at once answered by a corresponding light on our port side, and the two destroyers swung round and began to slide through the water, one on either side of us.

Soon we became aware of a great beam of light stretching right across the channel, a beam through which every boat had to pass. And now searchlight after searchlight came into view, sweeping to and fro on the face of the waters, and lighting up the whole channel like a vast ballroom. Suddenly one of the beams fastened on to us, the whole ship became a blaze of light, and we could see our low-lying, sinister-looking escort on either side. We signalled to the fort and were allowed to proceed on our way.

For long I watched that wonderful dis-

play of illumination and when at last I turned round I found that we had left land behind, and were in the open Channel. Looking over the side, one could not help wondering if the unseen enemy was lurking in those dark depths, but all went well, until all at once a dim form loomed up right in front of us, and a hurried hail, "What ship is that, and where the hell are you going?" came from a collier which we had nearly run down. Of course we were travelling with all lights out. Just as the grey dawn was beginning to break over the grey sea, our two destroyers suddenly swung round as if operated by a single lever and disappeared in the sea fog, and as the light brightened we found that we had reached our destination, for in front of us lay the Coast of France.

March 9. 1915.

Two days ago we arrived at our base, and spent the whole day getting the ship unloaded. The unloading was not finished till 7.30 P.M., at which hour we got an order to march the men to a certain railway shed, where they were to spend the night. After some delay we got all the men together in the dark, and with a

guide at the head of the party started off for the shed. We marched through endless docks, and at last arrived at the longed-for shed, which we found to be filled with about a thousand artillery horses. There was nothing for it but to look about for some other shelter. We found a tiny shed, into which we just managed to squeeze all the men; and as they had straw, a blanket each, and their furry coats they were able to make themselves fairly comfortable. The officers, however, had to be content with the cobbles outside; and a somewhat hard and chilly bed they made in the biting north wind which blew strongly from the sea.

Early next morning we entrained. Our train was the biggest thing in trains I have ever sat eyes on, and must have been nearly a quarter of a mile in length. The horses and men travelled in trucks, eight horses and thirty men to a truck; and very funny the men looked, clad in their furry coats, peering over the sides of the trucks like some newly discovered species of wild animal. The officers travelled in comfort in first- and second-class carriages, and slept in a truck the floor of which was covered with straw.

The last arrangements were completed, and the long train steamed slowly out of the station. Much of the country we passed through was very charming and pastoral, with primrose-covered banks and larch buds already beginning to open, children waving their hands to us, and the bells ringing for church—it was Sunday morning—but when you put your head out of the window you could not help remembering that the line which wound away into the distance stretched right up to Railhead, and at Railhead there awaited work for us to do. All that day we travelled at a rate of from ten to twenty miles an hour, with an occasional halt for a few minutes at a station to coal up or take in water. As we got nearer to the front we jogged over country as flat as Holland, intersected with canals, and studded with windmills, the real Low Country of French Flanders.

We detrained at the little town of Cassel, and proceeded to march along a ridge on the other side of which the country was as flat as a pancake as far as the eye could reach, and over which was blowing an icy north-east blast, which must

have come straight from the Steppes of Russia. It was a journey full of fascination for newcomers, for Ypres was only twenty miles, and the firing line fifteen miles away, and somewhere in that low-lying land were the German trenches. Every now and then we could hear a great "boom" coming from that mysterious tract of country, and soon we espied an aeroplane away up in the grey sky coming to have a look at us. One feature of the country is the little sentry-boxes at the cross-roads, each covered with straw so as to be invisible to aircraft and containing a French soldier and perhaps a black-robed curé. All day long the sound of guns was in our ears, and now and then an aeroplane would drone by overhead. More and more houses showed gaping shell holes in the roof and crumbling walls; here and there were little wayside graves bearing the names of English officers, and one tavern bore the strange legend: "Aux années terribles 1914-1915." Darkness came on and still we marched along. At length, shortly after ten o'clock, we reached a couple of farm houses which had been assigned

us as billets, and very glad we were to stretch our wearied limbs on the straw, for the *pavé* roads of Northern France are hardly ideal for marching.

II

BEHIND NEUVE CHAPELLE

March 12, 1915.

A WONDERFULLY interesting day. We are billeted at a farm about three miles from Neuve Chapelle, where very heavy fighting is in progress, and this morning I had to ride into the little town which is at present the Divisional Headquarters of the Canadians. I found the streets blocked with every variety of vehicle, the most numerous being the A. S. C. wagons of the Canadians. In the centre of the town is a cross-roads, at which were stationed two of the military police, and they certainly had their hands full. It was like a bit of Piccadilly or the Strand. There were ammunition wagons, A. S. C. wagons, guns drawn by mules, motor ambulances, staff officers in big cars, orderlies on motor bicycles, and all the rag-tag and bobtail on horses of all sizes and colours.

From there I rode on to the little town of Estaires, where I found several great gaps in the church roof, as the Germans had been shelling it during the night. No sooner had I entered the place than I saw that something was afoot, for every one was running towards the market place. When I arrived there I was just in time to see a great spectacle. The square was lined with French soldiers in their picturesque blue tunics and red breeches, with fixed bayonets; here and there were British staff officers; on the balconies and at the windows there was a sea of faces; while over everything there hung a general air of expectation. Suddenly, away in the distance, could be heard the sound of marching feet, and as the sound grew nearer a great hush fell upon the waiting multitude, till round the corner of the square came a column of men, bedraggled, covered with mud from head to foot, many of them wounded with heads swathed in bloody bandages and arms suspended in slings; some dejected, others apathetic, but all utterly weary with the weariness of defeat. It was a column of four hundred German prisoners, captured that morning at Neuve Chapelle. On each side marched

the British escort, also mudstained and weary, but plainly the conquerors. It was a sight to stir the imagination. But the populace behaved splendidly. Not a murmur or groan was to be heard from those French people, who had cause to hate the name of German more bitterly than anything else on earth. The moment the prisoners had passed a magnificent procession of British lancers clattered up the street on their way to Neuve Chapelle. There were six or seven hundred of them, with maxims in the rear, and the contrast to the jaded Germans was dramatic in the extreme. I rode in the rear of the lancers, and soon we met horse-ambulances filled with wounded Indians, then a small body of Highlanders, then some French cavalry, then a battery of Canadian field artillery. Truly life is not dull at present.

March 13, 1915.

The lancers and artillery riding out to the firing line is one side of war. To-day I have seen the other side, for I have spent the greater part of the day at a dressing-station attending to the wounded who were being brought in straight from the trenches. The fighting at Neuve Cha-

pelle has, of course, been desperate in the extreme, and during the last three days an incessant stream of wounded has been pouring through this dressing-station. Several of our officers have, therefore, been detailed to assist the ambulance people who were ready to drop in their places from utter exhaustion, and we started on our duties this morning.

The whole training of a medical man tends to inure him to unpleasant sights and smells, but I must confess that we needed all our training this morning. The dressing-station was formerly a school, and every room was so packed with wounded, lying on stretchers on the floor, that it was with the greatest difficulty that we could move about. It was literally almost impossible to put your foot down without treading on a wounded man. The condition of the wounds was indescribable, for many of them were two days old, and during that time the wounded men had simply lain out on the battlefield, the furious fighting rendering the evacuation of casualties an impossibility. In this country of heavily-manured soil every wound becomes septic at once, and unless treated thoroughly it soon swarms with the mi-

crobes of putrefaction. You may imagine what the condition of these great gaping cavities was at the end of forty-eight hours. There were all sorts and conditions of wounded, from a Colonel of the Guards, who died shortly after admission, to English, Scotch, Indian, and even German privates. One poor Scotch laddie, whose bowels were hanging outside his abdomen, told me that he came from Fife. It was quite like a message from home to hear the broad, kindly Scot's tongue again. "I've an awfu' sair belly, doctor," was the only complaint the poor boy made. The general behaviour of the men was superb; not a cry and hardly a groan was to be heard, while lumps of shrapnel and and jagged pieces of shell were being extracted from deep down in the muscles. In some instances the men appeared to be partly anæsthetised by the extreme fatigue from which they suffered—a merciful dispensation. The head injuries were the most frightful, for in some cases the greater part of the face was smashed in by shrapnel, while in others the nose, eye, and greater part of the cheek had been torn away, leaving a great, red, bleeding cavity.

But enough of horrors. As I rode back to our billet, I noticed that the blackthorn twigs are already beginning to show white —the first touch of spring is in this bleak land.

March 14, 1915.

A lovely, peaceful Sunday morning, mild, balmy, brilliant sunshine, larks singing, spring in the air, but always the boom of the big guns. I have been basking in the sun in front of our farm reading "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," very delightful, style perfect. On one page there is a tirade against conscription, and indeed military service of all kinds, describing the drill as degrading and debasing—rather amusing reading just now when we have had such abundant proof that the opposite is the case. The only book of my own which I carry is a copy of selections from Browning; it is like having an old friend with me. We had church parade this morning to the accompaniment of the noise of guns and the drone of aeroplanes. No doubt we shall get accustomed to these contrasts when we have been here some time, but at first they strike one very vividly.

March 17, 1915.

Yesterday the brigade moved to a new area, and we with them. We are now quite close to the Belgian Frontier, and I hope we shall cross it one of these days. I share a tent with H——. It is curious to lie in the quiet of the night, and suddenly to hear the rattle of machine guns or volley upon volley of rifle firing; on looking out of the door you see star-lights lighting up the sky, and shells bursting on the plain below, for our camp is pitched on a slight slope which counts as a mountain in this country of dead flatness.

Yesterday's march was quite a strenuous one. An army on the march is the queerest sight in the world. You imagine great rows of men in neat uniforms swinging along to the sound of the band. Nothing could be further from the truth! As you see the column winding away in front of you (and you may see it for a couple of miles in this flat land), it looks like an immense tinkers' encampment on the move, for the greater part of the column consists of wagons—baggage wagons—ammunition limbers, horse ambulances, motor ambulances, water carts, camp cookers busy

preparing a meal for the men at the end of the march, mules laden with entrenching tools, etc., etc. The men also are hung around with haversacks, mess tins, water bottles, ground sheets, etc., till they look like veritable bagmen. An officer's rig-out consists of a Sam-Browne belt, one or two haversacks, water bottle, field glasses, compass, map case, revolver, cartridge pouch, and anything else he likes to stick on. When the whole procession is on the move it is really a great sight.

March 21, 1915.

Yesterday we marched to Armentières for a few days of instruction in field work. We followed one of the Routes Nationales, a great highway stretching in an almost straight line for miles, with tall poplars on either side all the way, and not even a hillock on which to rest the eye. It is in Tristram Shandy, I think, that we are told that "the army in Flanders swore horribly." If the roads then were anything like what they are now I think that the profanity ought to be pardoned, for the *pavé* certainly is abominable stuff to march on, and at the end

of the day your feet are very sore and wearied indeed.

To-day a party of us visited the Divisional Clearing Station, where the men of the —th Division are bathed, have their clothes thoroughly washed and disinfected, and are given a completely fresh outfit—tunic, trousers, shirt, vest, pants, and socks. The building is an old bleaching station, but has been largely refitted. A regular army of women are employed in the laundry, one of the most important parts of which is the ironing room, which proves the cemetery of most of the eggs of the lice. These bathing places have had a wonderful effect on the health of the troops. You need to be really dirty for a few weeks before you can understand anything of the delight of being clean.

III

INITIATION

March 23, 1915.

LAST night I had to take out a party of stretcher bearers to collect the wounded from a certain regimental aid-post, a very interesting experience. The exposed part of the road is not long, but while we were on it bullets kept singing past in the dark, producing a curious sinking sensation in my epigastric region, and an intense longing to become like the mathematical point, which, as Euclid assures us, has position but no magnitude. When for the first time you hear a bullet with its long-drawn "wh-e-e-w" crossing the road on which you are walking you experience a remarkable disinclination to move forward rapidly, and a great and affectionate yearning for the ditch at the side of the road. I believe, however, that you soon get over these preliminary feelings of discomfort, and you forget all about bullets when shells begin to fly around.

On our return journey we passed a row of houses, most of which had been reduced to ruins by shell fire. At the end of the row there stood a church, which had been shelled three or four times a week for the last four months, and the tower of which had been blown to pieces three days ago. The church was little more than a heap of ruins. The Germans have a machine gun trained on the corner where the church stands, and now and then they open fire in the hope of getting somebody. And yet the curé has lived in his house all through the winter, although that house is only fifteen yards from the church, and every window in it had been broken. At any hour of the day you may see the priest going about visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, burying the dead, and cheering the survivors. That is what Kipling would call "a proper sort of padre." *

This afternoon I actually went to a variety entertainment given by some of the —th Division, who call themselves "the Follies." The performance took place in a little building adjoining the technical school, which must have been built

* A month later the curé was killed at his post of duty.

as a theatre or concert hall, for there was a stage, footlights, curtain and scenery. The party was got up just like the Follies, the stage was decorated with Chinese lanterns, and everything went with a swing and without a hitch of any kind, for there was plenty of talent in the company. The hall was crowded from floor to ceiling—brigadier-generals, colonels, subalterns and Tommies. And suddenly you realised what it all meant. These men in their grotesque costumes singing humorous or sentimental songs, these crowds of officers and men in an audience which seemed to contain representatives from almost every regiment in the army, had, many of them, come from the trenches and would return there in a few hours, or from the guns, or from aeroplanes. And this delightfully amusing show was being held only a couple of miles behind the firing line, and well within range of the German artillery. If a Prussian officer had walked into that hall I think he would have been considerably astonished. To me it was a very wonderful experience.

To-morrow we leave Armentières, as our course of instruction is finished. This is a very quiet part of the line, and that

no doubt is the reason why we were sent here, but we have at least learned what it feels like to have a bullet singing past one's ear. So far I have said nothing about the place itself. It is a large manufacturing town, which shows very little evidence of war in the way of ruined buildings, and quite a large proportion of the population has remained. There has been hardly any serious shelling of the town—very different from what one hears of Ypres. I forgot to say that last night the news came in of the fall of Przemysl, and when it reached our men in the trenches you could hear round upon round of cheering. When the Germans heard of the loss of our ships in the Dardanelles they gave vent to similar expressions of joy.

April 2, 1915.

We are having a spell of delightful weather after the bitter east winds that have prevailed ever since we landed; it is balmy, sunny, and genial, and at last it seems that "the hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces." The early morning to-day was just perfect, and it is a blessing that we have to get up so early. Physical drill at seven o'clock on an April morn-

ing with the sun already blazing down from a cloudless heaven is worth getting up for. Such a day as this makes one long to be in some of the good places of the earth instead of this billiard-table land of endless ploughed fields. Imagine such a morning as this in the jaws of Borrowdale with Derwentwater gleaming through the birches, or on the cliffs between the Logan Rock and Land's End, or on that winding road along Loch Long which will soon be a mass of violets and primroses, or amongst the pines of Lake Louise, or on the snows of Mount Sir Donald. But I suppose that we did not come out here for scenic effects, and if you choose to fight in the Low Countries you must not look for Alpine grandeur.

A couple of days ago, however, I did have a wonderful view. A few miles away there is a certain small hill, which rises like a cone from the surrounding flatness, and on top of which there is a Trappist monastery, now converted into a hospital. Thither I rode on a lovely morning, and as my horse climbed the hill a marvellous view gradually unfolded itself. In every direction to the furthest horizon stretched the great Flanders plain, as flat

as the palm of a man's hand, save where here and there a little knoll broke the dead level. Half of Belgium seemed to lie spread out in front of me. It is little wonder that the Germans chose this flat land for the great steam-roller of their advance, instead of the wooded, hilly, and highly fortified line of the Franco-German frontier.

April 3, 1915.

I had a really great time last night, and I now feel that I have passed out of the novitiate stage. Our division is to hold part of the line running in front of Neuve Eglise, a little place just over the Belgian frontier, and M—— and I came over last night to see how the evacuation of wounded was worked before the rest of the unit should arrive. We reached our future headquarters, a farm about a mile on our side of the village, at nine o'clock, and made the acquaintance of the ambulance whom we were to relieve on the morrow. After a short time spent in their mess-room we started out with one of their officers and the chaplain who were to act as guides. I need hardly say that it is not advisable to start out on a pitch dark night in an unknown country and

find your way to a house just behind the firing line without a guide. You are apt to get into situations such as you did not reckon on.

Soon we entered the village of Neuve Eglise, which we found in a very battered condition. One of the first buildings we came to had been used as a dressing-station by our predecessors until three weeks ago, when a couple of shells crashed through the roof and converted the place into a shambles. One of the next buildings was a nunnery, roofless and with crumbling walls, and many of the other houses were in a similar condition. A few of the inhabitants still live on in the cellars, outside which are great piles of sandbags, for the Germans put about a dozen shells into the place every day. In the road there are great gaping holes made by recent shells, which constitute a very real danger to the horses and men in the darkness, for of course we were unable to show a light of any kind. Our party consisted of a dozen stretcher bearers and two horse ambulance wagons.

Leaving the village behind we tramped along the dark road for a couple of miles. It was raining steadily, but even under

those conditions it was a fascinating walk, with the unending rows of poplars towering mysteriously above our heads; in the branches the wind moaned drearily, and overhead the dark clouds scudded by. Every now and then the whole sky would be lit up by the flares on the firing line, and once we saw a bright red glow which proved to come from a burning farm fired by the German shells. The night, however, was wonderfully quiet. Not a gun and hardly a rifle shot was to be heard. There seemed to be a general truce on both sides.

Now the object of our expedition was to collect the casualties from two regimental aid posts, which lay more than half a mile apart. It is perfectly safe going as far as the first, for the ground rises between the road and the German trenches, but beyond that there is no shelter of any kind, and it is not reckoned a healthy place to linger in. We reached the first of the aid posts, a little, solitary, wayside house, apparently absolutely deserted, and producing a most dismal effect upon the onlooker, especially under the conditions which prevailed that night. Not a ray of light came from the door or win-

dows. On the other side of the road there was a little military cemetery where the dead of the day were buried under cover of darkness. The little wooden crosses could just be made out against the dark sky. The whole scene recalled irresistibly some lines of Emile Caemmaert's, which I came across a few days ago, and of which the following is a translation:

A hundred yards from the trenches,
Close to the battle front,
There stands a little house,
Lonely and desolate.

Not a cry, not a sound, not a life, not a mouse,
Only the stillness of the great graveyards,
Only the crosses, the crooked wooden crosses,
On the wide lonely plain.

A low thatched cottage,
With doors and shutters closed,
The roof torn by a shell,
Standing out of the floods alone.

Not a man, not a cat, not a dog, not a soul,
Only a flight of crows along the railway line,
The sound of our boots on the muddy road,
And, along the Yser, the twinkling fires.

We entered the little house and found it full of wounded. The regimental med-

ical officer lived there—a strange sort of existence. The window was carefully screened, so that no light would be visible to the Bosche, otherwise the place would soon have been made uninhabitable. The room was lit by two guttering candles stuck in empty bottles. The wind howled round the corners of the house and down the chimney in a manner calculated to give any one the blues. The place was almost bare of furniture; and yet the medical officer looked upon it as his home, for he had lived there for the last two months, and often it had served him as a refuge from the storm, "when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." And indeed as we listened we could hear the crackle of rifles beginning, and the vicious rat-tat-tat-tat of a machine gun, and a few bullets flattened themselves against the wall. Evidently the enemy were beginning to wake up. We loaded the wounded on to the ambulances and set off for the next aid-post. No sooner had we got out of the door than half a dozen star-lights went up, showing every detail of the country side, and at the same time a very lively rifle fire began—the enemy were indulging in a spell of "rapid

fire." Bullets began to hum or rather whistle through the air, and strike the road or the mud on each side of the road. I found that my experience at Armentières stood me in good stead; it is the first time you meet a bullet in the dark that it produces its peculiarly disquieting effect; the acuteness of the sensation becomes blunted with repetition, although it is difficult ever to get on really friendly terms with these presents "made in Germany."

When we were within a hundred yards of the hamlet of Wulverghem, through which we had to pass, a gun went off somewhere behind the German lines, followed by the weirdest shriek or screech that I had ever heard, which increased in intensity until it reached its maximum just over our heads, and then with an ear-splitting crack the shrapnel burst. I was reduced to a condition of abject fear, and crouched trembling in the middle of the road, for I thought that my last moment had come. I had been walking with our two guides, but when I assumed a more erect attitude I found myself alone. Soon, however, a couple of dark forms emerged from the ditch at the side of the road, and I learned that when a shell is going to burst just over

your head it is not bad form to take what cover you can. You may be sure that we did not take long to reach the nearest house of the hamlet, and no sooner were we under the shelter of its wall than "bang" went the gun again, again that long-drawn shriek, and this time the shell burst right over the square where we were standing, lighting up the darkness with its angry glare. The effect produced, however, was very different, and the symptoms of terror did not return. Shells kept passing overhead, but the range was gradually increased, and we could hear them bursting on the road to Neuve Eglise. It was evident that the Germans had opened fire on the village in the hope of catching transport in the square, and now they were searching the road between Wulverghem and Neuve Eglise. When things had quieted down a bit we picked up the wounded from the second post and made our way home in the rain and darkness without further incident, except that the whole ambulance was nearly capsized in a huge shell hole. Thus ended a great and memorable night, the night of Good Friday.

IV

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR

April 8, 1915.

To my great sorrow I have had to say good-bye to work in the field, for I have been placed in charge of an infectious disease hospital at Bailleul, a small French town about three miles from Neuve Eglise. The work, however, is full of interest, for we get in a tremendous variety of cases. Thus at the present moment we have examples of the following diseases: measles, German measles, mumps, scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid fever and cerebro-spinal meningitis. In addition to the hospital itself we have a small farm which is used for suspected cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis. There is a regular epidemic of measles raging in this district, and cases are even sent down from the trenches, greatly, as a rule, to the disgust of the patient. The great problem which confronts one each day is how to evacuate

the cases, for the ambulance train running to the base will seldom take more than one type of infectious disease; but with the help of a convoy of motor ambulances the difficulty can usually be overcome.

A certain amount of bacteriological knowledge comes in very handy in this work. For instance, a few days ago the ambulance brought a patient to the door. His face was very inflamed, and on his cheek were a number of pustules. Before admitting the case I pricked one of these blisters, smeared the contents on a slide, and in a few minutes was able to demonstrate under the microscope large numbers of anthrax bacilli. The case was one of anthrax, and was at once sent further down the line for surgical and serum treatment. A fortnight ago I saw another case of anthrax of the cheek, in which the infection had come from the furry coat of the soldier, who had used it as a pillow. It is, however, in typhoid and cerebro-spinal meningitis that a bacteriological examination is of the greatest value.

April 13, 1915.

It is quite an age since I made an entry in this diary, because nothing very star-

tling had happened. Now that something startling has happened I take up my pen again. Life has threatened to become dull after our little midnight expeditions to the firing line, but last night the Germans were good enough to relieve the monotony for us.

I was in bed fast asleep when suddenly there was a tremendous explosion, followed by another, and then another. At first I thought the place was being shelled, so I hurriedly slipped into a few clothes and went out to see what was really happening, for it might be necessary to move the patients into a position of greater safety. The terrific explosions continued, and by this time machine guns had joined in, followed soon by rifle fire. No sooner had I got out than I discovered that a Zeppelin was over the town, and was busily employed bombing the place. It was no mere incendiary shells that were being used, but the largest high-explosive bombs. In the midst of the noise you could hear floating down from above the whirr of the airship's engines. Every now and then came the long whistle of the great bomb as it fell from a height of about three thousand feet, a sound which at first pro-

duced a somewhat unpleasant sensation in one's scalp. By this time shrapnel and bits of anti-aircraft shell were beginning to patter on the roofs around, and things were assuming a general air of liveliness. Presently, however, the terrific explosions ceased, the airship drew off, and quiet reigned once more.

This morning I went to have a look at the damage. The holes were enormous, one being twelve feet deep and sixty feet in circumference. As usual, it was the wretched civilians who were the sufferers. Three were killed, an old woman of seventy, a girl of eighteen, and a baby of three months, and a number were seriously injured. The military escaped altogether, with the exception of one sentry, who got a slight scratch. It was a typical night's work on the part of the Bosche. The apparently selective action of these great engines of destruction is responsible for some remarkable escapes. Two bombs fell close to a house where several of our men are billetted. They blew a kennel to pieces, but the dog inside escaped, although rather badly shaken, and the men in the house were unhurt. A man was sleeping on a wagon close to which a bomb

burst. He was thrown some distance off the floor of the wagon, but was none the worse. I went to have a look at the house where the old woman who was killed used to live. It was represented by a huge hole in the ground filled with a confused pile of shattered tables, chairs and iron bedsteads. The old woman and the baby were found at the bottom of this hole. Can you wonder that the French think hard and bitter things about the Germans, or that the entire people have thrown themselves into the struggle with a wholeheartedness that makes us feel, and I think rightly feel, that so far we have only been playing at war. Good honest beer for the British workmen, good sound trade unionism for the skilled worker, are no doubt very excellent things, but somehow the Frenchman has passed into another and a higher world of thought. It is not that he criticises these things; he simply cannot understand them. They leave him in a state of silent bewilderment.

April 14, 1915.

Last night I was looking at some wonderful photographs of Ypres taken in the middle of November, 1914—the Cloth

Hall in flames, the Cathedral in ruins. I don't know how it is, but ever since I landed in France my one ambition has been to see Ypres. Somehow there is no place that appeals to the imagination to anything like the same extent, for there is no place where, with regard to its former and its present condition, you can say with the same truth: "Look upon this picture, and on *this*." Well, to-day I was privileged to catch my first glimpse of the place. I had to go over to Poperinghe in a car. It was a lovely afternoon, and in the light of the sinking sun the flat countryside took on a beauty it is usually far from having. Suddenly between two clumps of trees, across the great pastures, I caught sight of three towers about five miles away. It was Ypres, that "sweet city of the dreaming spires," Ypres, the city of the dead, where, as Bright would say, you can hear the beating of the wings of the Angel of Death.

April 18, 1915.

I have been to Ypres. At midday yesterday, M—— suddenly turned up in a big Wolsely car, said that he was off to see a case of cerebro-spinal meningitis at Ypres, and told me to jump in if I wanted

to have my often-expressed desire fulfilled. It did not take me many seconds to make up my mind, and, giving my staff-sergeant a few hasty instructions as to how to carry on in my absence, I boarded the car, and off we went.

We found that we had chosen an unfortunate day, for the road was simply choc-a-bloc with troops and their impedimenta as a big move was in progress. We had to pass seventy-eight motor busses carrying the —th Brigade, besides countless guns, limbers, ammunition wagons, etc. The dust was simply awful. As we neared Ypres we could see the shrapnel bursting around an aeroplane—little white puffs against the blue sky. A couple of shells fell near our road, making a bit of a bang, but nothing to make a fuss about.

At last we drove into the town itself. Just at first it did not produce the impression on me that I expected, for much of the town is still inhabited, many of the original twenty thousand inhabitants still live there, shops are open, civilians and soldiers are in the streets, ambulances and forage carts move about, there is a general feeling of life about the place. But when you enter the Grande Place you real-

ise something of what has befallen the town. For it was the Grande Place and the buildings which stood in it, which were the glory of Ypres. The Cloth Hall and the Cathedral were the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey of the old Flemish city. But it is a Westminster Abbey in ruins, and Houses of Parliament without roof or windows or doors or ceiling. It is not a question of a shell hole here and there—the whole place has simply been smashed to pieces and gutted by fire. It is one of the unpardonable things that the Germans have done. There have been good military reasons for much of their destructiveness. In other cases it has been unintentional and incidental. But modern gunnery does not hit a thing like the Cloth Hall of Ypres by mistake. For two months, when there was still a chance of their taking the place, the Cloth Hall was untouched. Then came the great fight at the end of October, culminating in the attack of the Prussian Guard in the second week of November, under the eyes of the Kaiser himself. It failed and the Huns slowly and methodically, *ohne Hast und ohne Rast,* just blew the glorious buildings to bits.

V

A DAY WITH THE GUNNERS

April 22, 1915.

YESTERDAY I had a great day with the artillery. I had to go and visit my friend A——, who is medical officer to the —th artillery brigade, in connection with some work. The headquarters of the brigade is at the little village of Kemmel, behind which rises Kemmel Hill, one of the great artillery observing stations in our line. It was a delightful afternoon, and the ride to Kemmel took me through far and away the most charming bit of country that I have seen since coming out here; up hill and down dale, through woods where the young green of the larch was a constant delight to the eyes, with the birds singing in the branches, and wood anemones, celandines, violets and wild strawberry flowers on every side. There is just one little bit of hilly country like this; beyond in every direction stretches the great plain

of Flanders. Let us be thankful that we hold the hills.

After riding for an hour and a half I crossed a rise, and, looking down into the hollow beyond, I saw the famous little village—it is a mere hamlet—basking in the sun below me. The first thing that struck me was the enormous number of telephone wires that ran in all directions, crossing and recrossing till they formed a regular network, and looking strangely out of place in the midst of such rural surroundings. These were the various wires going from headquarters to the observation stations and the batteries, from the observation stations to the batteries, and from both of these to the fire trenches.

The next thing that impressed me was the deserted appearance of the place. Although I knew that there were all sorts of troops about, hardly a soul was to be seen. The reason for this, as I discovered later, was that no one was allowed out unless on duty. The village is within range of rifle fire. Further, you do not want a scouting Taube to see a crowd of men hanging around the various headquarters, and thus learn the position of these important buildings. Result—a village ap-

A DUG-OUT

parently containing nothing but civilians, with the hot sun baking down from a cloudless sky, and a general air of peace and slumber over everything, save for the remains of half-demolished houses that met the eye in every direction. Nothing but quiet and peace on this hot afternoon, but suddenly there was an explosion so close that my horse leapt into the air and I nearly fell into the ditch. At first I thought that a shell had burst just behind me, but it was only one of our own howitzers, so artfully concealed that I had not noticed it, being fired within a few yards of me.

After a cup of tea at brigade headquarters, A—— and I visited several of the batteries, and I had a chance of admiring the extraordinarily cunning way in which the gun positions were hidden both from the German lines and from the air. The dug-outs where the officers and men on duty sleep are great places. You descend into a hole in the ground, and find yourself in a tiny chamber varying from three to five feet in height, roofed with stout timbers on top of which is a layer of sandbags, with turf sods covering all. In many cases ivy was trained over the roof, cow-

slips and violets were planted at the door, and outside the mansion called "Fern Villa" hung two baskets filled with very charming ferns and moss. One officer, however, outdistanced all competitors by having had a basket of orchids sent over from England, which basket he exhibited to visitors with the most inordinate pride.

There is no doubt about it that the gunners have a much better time of it than the infantry. They certainly live in greater peace and comfort, and their particular method of slaughtering men is full of scientific interest. As we passed one of the batteries we found the men engaged in a game of football. Suddenly the sharp sound of a whistle was heard. In a moment every man was a motionless statue. A hostile aeroplane was overhead, which would at once have detected the gun position if the men had been moving about, whereas motionless they are invisible. We stood thus for a couple of minutes, and then two blasts were sounded on the whistle, and we were free to move on again.

Our first visit was to one of the observation stations on Kemmel Hill. The hill is covered with trees, and amongst the

trees are numbers of dug-outs, all used as observation posts by the various batteries, but quite invisible until you are actually upon them, so cunningly are they concealed. We reached the one for which we were bound, and entered. Inside were a couple of chairs on which we sat in comfort, and by means of a telescope suspended from the roof surveyed through a narrow opening in the wall the network of trenches spread out in the valley at our feet. It was a glorious afternoon, ideal for observing, and there in front of us, spread out before our eyes, was a wonderful panorama.

Immediately opposite at a distance of a couple of miles were the German trenches, and over those lines the shrapnel was bursting in little fleecy clouds. Away to the left lay Ypres, like some dream city in the warm light of the sinking sun, with delicate wisps of mist eddying around its shattered spires. In between was Hill 60, where a furious bombardment was in progress. And yet with it all not a living creature nor moving thing could be seen for miles, and the whole countryside seemed as deserted as the Sahara. But it was a Sahara swarming with moles, moles who

lived in burrows, who spied at one another through peep holes, in whose minds there was but one thought—to slay—and who shouted at each other with deep-toned voices, which carried but one message—death.

At first peace reigned in the dug-out, as the battery for which it observed was not in action. Presently, however, the telephone bell rang. It was an order from headquarters for our battery to open fire on a certain segment of the enemy's trenches. The battery commander turned to the telephone orderly with the command, "Battery prepare for action," which was transmitted to the battery over a mile away. At that moment the gunners were playing football, but in exactly two and a half minutes the message came up along the wire, "All ready, sir." There were a few moments of tense silence while the battery major sat with his eye glued to the telescope; then he muttered, "Number one—fire!" "Number one—fire!" repeated the telephonist. Dead silence, and then the word came up, "Number one fired, sir." Again absolute silence, and suddenly the shell rushed past overhead shouting its song of death, and later still the

report of the gun came floating up from behind.

Every eye was strained on the enemy's trenches, and in a few moments we could see the flash and white smoke of the shell as it burst over the trenches, but it seemed ages before the noise of the explosion reached us. The first shell was short and a little high, so the range was corrected. The next was right for length, but still high; the fusing was altered. The third was just right, exactly above the trenches, and a murmur of satisfaction arose from the little group of watchers. Truly the gunner is a bloodthirsty man, and I must admit that I had certain qualms of pity for the poor beggars in the trenches.

I don't know what it all means, but there must be desperate work going on at Hill 60 and St. Eloi, which is just this side of it. I spent the night at Kemmel, and at ten o'clock every gun for miles around seemed to waken into activity. We watched the show from a small platform on the roof of the château which is used as headquarters. Right along the hillside there was nothing to be seen but wicked red tongues of fire, which seemed to stab into the blackness of the right. The noise

was just like hell let loose. Every kind and description of gun was hard at it—field guns, howitzers, 4.7's, 9.2's, and even the great 15-inch monster, whilst over the trenches there was a storm of bursting shrapnel and high explosive in which it seemed that no man could live. German shells screamed over our heads and burst on the hill behind, and it was interesting and fairly easy to differentiate between the sound of our shells and of the enemy's.

From this scene, full of sound and fury, we turned away, descended the stairs, and entered the sitting-room, which was at the other side of the house. Here was comparative silence, an atmosphere of peace, little of the hubbub penetrating the heavily shuttered windows. But at the table sat a man with a telephone receiver at his ear, and as the messages came in from the forward observing station in the trenches describing the accuracy and extent of our fire, the necessary orders were sent out of that quiet room, down to the gunners at the batteries. Suddenly in the midst of all the turmoil and excitement the telephone bell rang, and a message came in from some one far away, some

one unaware that any battle was in progress: "Please send in a return at once of the number of great coats in your brigade!"

VI

GAS

April 23, 1915.

I HAVE just heard some very bad news. If it is true, then the battle I watched from Kemmel was a really big affair. The divisional staff slept in their clothes last night.

Later.

Have just heard that things have righted themselves. The Germans broke through the French line north of Ypres and pushed it back a couple of miles. Then Canadians came up and drove Germans right back to their original lines. Have just seen a hundred and thirty wounded Canadians come in. All in great spirits, and seem to have given Germans a pretty bad time. Incendiary shells are falling in Ypres, which is on fire in two places. Can hear tremendous bombardment going on. Warned to be ready to rejoin for field work at a moment's notice.

April 24, 1915.

What a time we have been having during the last two days; nothing but rumours of retreat and advance, defeat and victory. Before breakfast I met a Royal Flying Corps officer who told me that the Germans had broken through the French line—the French have a Turco division between us and the Belgians—at a place called Langemarck, and that the French had fallen back four miles.

Soon more news began to filter through. The Canadian division, who were on the right of the French, found themselves in danger of being hung up in the air, so they also had to fall back. All sorts of alarmist rumours came in that the Canadians had been nearly wiped out, and that the fall of Ypres might be expected at any moment. Then the news came that Poperinghe was being shelled, and that Ypres was on fire. Both of these reports turned out to be correct. Poperinghe, which was full of hospitals, and which was regarded as being in every way safe, has been bombarded with twelve-inch shells. All the hospitals have been cleared out, as well as the mobile laboratory stationed there, and almost the whole civilian

population has fled. Those who remain are probably spies. Every hour we hear of new places coming within range of the German guns, and it may be the turn of Bailleul next. Three French army corps are reported as being rushed up, and this morning I met the —th division on its way from Armentières to Ypres.

The Canadians seem to have put up a splendid fight, but lost very heavily. Yesterday evening the wounded began to come in, whole motor convoys of them, but they could only give a very confused account of what was happening. All last night the traffic was incessant through the streets of Bailleul, ammunition carts going up to the firing line, ambulances bringing wounded down to the clearing hospitals. All night long the sound of tremendous cannonading came down the wind, mingled with almost continuous rifle fire.

This morning more news came in with the ambulance convoys. The convoys themselves had had a pretty bad time. Apparently there had been a night of terrific confused fighting in the fields, men simply going for one another with the bayonet or clubbed rifle by the light of the bursting shells, no man knowing where

his fellows were, or where he was himself. It was Canadian versus German, and you can guess which was the better side in a contest of that nature. But when the ambulance convoys arrived on the scene they found no field ambulance, no doctors, nothing but men fighting in dark ploughed fields, the grim scene lit by the light of star-shells, with shrapnel bursting all along the road to prevent reinforcements coming up. The ambulance people had to pick the wounded out of the fields and ditches, and get them into the cars as best they could, but it was pretty hot work. A considerable number of the R. A. M. C. men were shot, and two of the wounded in the cars were killed by shrapnel. And still the wounded keep pouring in, and still the ammunition wagons rumble forth to feed the dogs of war.

April 25, 1915.

The tension does not abate. Indeed, it increases every day. The fighting is desperate in the extreme, and the number of wounded pouring in is frightful. I spent nine hours to-day working in one of the dressing stations. If any one is in the slightest degree responsible for this

war he ought to be made to spend a few hours in a dressing-station where cases come straight in from the firing line, some of whom have been lying out in the fields for several days. Remember that a piece of shrapnel is sometimes bigger than a hen's egg, and jagged at that, and you will realise that when it hits a man in the face it is apt to make a mess. The result of a similar bit which has torn open the abdomen and exposed the bowels is also not a pleasant sight. It is as if some great brute had trampled on the men, in Browning's words, "pashing their life out, with a brute's intents." That is what they are; they are pashed. Under such circumstances all the talk about the glory and glamour of war is rather apt to stick in one's throat.

I am too tired to write any more.

April 28, 1915.

There is only one word in the mouth of every one to-day—gas. Vague rumours of gas have been floating about, but no one really believed them. Now the stage of rumour is past, and we know the worst. And a very bad worst it is.

This morning I had to go to one of the

casualty clearing stations, and there I saw a sight which for sheer ghastliness equals anything to be seen in any dressing station. The hospital is built around a great courtyard, and in that courtyard were two hundred men on stretchers. Some were lying in a state of stupor, the flies buzzing about their faces; some were sitting up gasping for breath, with hands and faces of a deep, dusky hue, evidently in the greatest distress; over the countenance of others the pallid hues of death were beginning to creep, whilst a few had fallen back and with gurglings in the throat were passing away into the undiscovered country. They were the first gas cases from Ypres and Hill 60.

The description of the gas varied to an extraordinary extent. It was described as black, brown, yellow, green and white. Some said that it came from large hose pipes attached to cylinders, others that it was contained in hand grenades, others that it came from shells fired from field guns, and still others that a fluid was sprayed on to the trenches, which was then ignited by fire-shells. There seems to be little doubt that all four methods were em-

ployed. It is also probable that different gases were used at different parts of the line. Most of it was brown like bromine, some yellow or green like chlorine, and the black fumes may have been due to the ignition of some fluid such as benzol. It was quite impossible to see or breathe in this gas, and even when the men got out of it the lungs and heart were so affected that they were quite unable to make any exertion. One and all were agreed that to face this new danger unprotected was impossible.

The principal method seems to have been as follows: The gas was launched from cylinders, and was carried by the easterly breeze right on to our trenches, into which, being very heavy, it rolled. Our men had to clear out of the trenches, whereupon they were met by a withering rifle fire. A couple of hundred yards back there was a swell in the ground which sheltered them from rifle fire, but a storm of shrapnel burst over their heads, for the German gunners had the range to a yard, and had everything in readiness. It was very much the method of sending a ferret down a rabbit hole, and waiting at the other opening with a gun.

CANADIANS SUFFERING FROM GAS POISONING

There is a wounded German officer in hospital who says that four days ago cylinders of gas arrived in the trenches, but the wind was not favourable at the time, so they were dug into position and used when the wind veered round into the east. The German troops in the first line trenches were served out with some form of mask impregnated with a chemical, which they wore over their nose and mouth. Every effort is being made at present to secure one of these, and determine the chemical present, but so far without success. M—— has gone away up north this evening to try to secure one from the German prisoners, and his return is anxiously awaited. Meanwhile I have been very busy investigating the blood of some of the worst cases, examining the serum spectroscopically, in the hope that some indication may be afforded as to the nature of the gas, but up to the present the results have been disappointing.

VII

IN THE FIELD AGAIN

May 1, 1915.

I HAVE returned to work in the field, and I cannot say that I am sorry. Last night I did the old round to Wulverghem with three waggons and a small party of stretcher bearers. There was no more shrapnel, but heaps of bullets were flying about. I know that it is not the general opinion, but I think that I prefer shells to rifle bullets. They frighten you more, but do not make you feel so remarkably uncomfortable. Besides, you can hear a shell coming, and can get out of the way, whereas a bullet is on you before you know where you are, and makes a most vindictive sound when passing in the dark, as if it were extremely annoyed at having missed you. Of course in this comparison I am only referring to mild shrapnel shelling. Really heavy shelling with high explosives beats any rifle fire.

We had to carry the cases some distance to the ambulance, and, as I was walking by the side of one of the stretcher squads, eight bullets whizzed just over our heads in rapid succession, and buried themselves in a couple of trees which we happened to be passing at the moment. I have never seen a party of men assume a recumbent position more speedily, and when we got up we could not help laughing. The only person who did not laugh was the patient, who had been shot an hour before almost on that very spot. The bullet had passed through both cheeks, although strangely enough without touching either jaw (he must have had his mouth open at the time), so, while he might see the humour of the situation, he was hardly in a position to laugh.

We got back at one o'clock, but I had to go out again with fresh bearers at three. It was a perfect morning, hot enough for summer, but with all the freshness of spring, and the country was looking charming. The whole land was covered with luxuriant growth, for there is not a soul at Wulverghem to till the ground. Everywhere was luscious green grass, full of tall buttercups and cuckoo flowers.

Here and there, forming the chief feature of the landscape, were great splashes of vivid gold, due to some tall yellow weed something like our mustard plant. The ditches contained masses of a large white stellaria, that looked singularly beautiful against the lovely green of the grass. The birds were in full song, all nature was smiling; we might have been wandering through English meadows. While the bearers were getting the patient ready I went into the little garden at the back of the aid post. The place had been converted into an English cemetery; there were fifteen or twenty crosses, several of them bearing the names of friends of mine, and five open graves were standing ready waiting for the dead of the day. The contrast was horrible—the lovely summer morning, with the song of the birds in the air, and those open graves waiting to swallow men whom possibly one might know quite well. As I opened the door to leave the house a bullet struck the pavement at my very feet, and, glancing off, wounded in the chest an orderly standing beside me. For a moment my mind reverted to those empty

graves, but such thoughts do not last long on a lovely May morning.

On the way home we had to pass through Neuve Eglise. It has had a very fair battering lately, and I was amused to see a notice chalked up on the door of one of the houses. The house next door had been demolished by a shell, and the house itself had had a nasty knock. The whole affair looked as if a good push would make it collapse, but on the door was written: "Please do not touch; this house is inhabited." It reminded one of the "Please do not touch" on old relics in a museum, which might crumble to pieces if roughly handled.

By the way, I hear that the heroic curé at Armentières, who stuck to his post all through the winter when he was perfectly at liberty to leave, was killed last week.

May 10, 1915.

This afternoon I had again to pay a visit to Kemmel. Every time I go there it becomes more delightful, and to-day it was just wonderful. I started shortly after three, and when I got to Neuve Eglise I found that the Germans were shelling it. The detour necessary to avoid

the village is a long one, so I did not make it, and was soon quietly riding along the main road to Kemmel, which I reached in time to have tea with A——.

After tea we went for a stroll, which naturally took us up the hill. That walk was a thing to be remembered. The sun was sinking in the West, and the light and shade would have lent charm to any landscape. The ditches on either side of the road were one mass of flowers, red, yellow, blue, and white: the red campion, a beautiful large yellow dead nettle which grows everywhere, together with cowslips and the great water ranunculus, blue speedwells, violets and forget-me-nots, and in the hedgerows the first white boughs of hawthorn. The hill itself was blue, literally blue, with wild hyacinths, the "blue hyacinthine haze" of Swinburne. Halfway up we came upon a delightful grassy track running along the hillside between great banks of blue. From this sylvan path we looked down upon Ypres in the plain below. Every now and then a great column of black smoke would shoot up from the tortured town, and drift slowly away towards Poperinghe. The Bosche was apparently still smashing the place

with his 17-inch shells. Gradually these masses of smoke drifted together until they formed one huge cloud, which hung over the town and streamed right away to the horizon. The whole place must have been on fire, although we could make out no flames in the bright light. As the sun sank lower and lower in the west this ominous pall took on the most glorious colours, deep orange and gold, fading away at the margins into darkest purple.

In the meantime an aeroplane had been coming up behind us, and continued to make for the German lines, soon dwindling to a mere black dot against the brilliant blue of the sky. Suddenly, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, a little white ball about the size of your hand appeared against that brilliant blue close to the aeroplane. One moment there was nothing but the immense blue dome, the next, although you heard nothing and saw nothing coming, there was that little fleecy cloud hanging high in mid-air. In my opinion this is one of the most purely spectacular effects in the whole war. When you have been out here for sometime you are apt to grow somewhat blasé, but the sight of an aeroplane being shelled never loses its

fascination. The appearance of the first puff of pure white shrapnel smoke against the deep blue of a cloudless sky is one of the most dramatic things you can imagine. The contrast in colours is perfect. You never get the same dazzling absolute white in a cloud, nor do you get a tiny isolated cloud against the great expanse of blue.

The aeroplane was travelling at a good speed, and soon there was a long string of little white clouds to mark its course. Now and then we lost sight of it, and would fear that it had been hit, but on listening intently we could hear the faint drone of the engine coming down from the great height. Suddenly it made an abrupt right-angled turn, thus indicating the position of the hostile battery it had been observing, and a moment later our big guns began to speak. And all around us were hyacinths and speedwells and forget-me-nots, and the red sun was sinking in a golden splendour in the west. And still the shrapnel burst around the aeroplane, and still those great columns of black smoke rolled up from burning Ypres.

We descended from the hill to one of the batteries, and were just in time for a little piece of excitement. During the day

some of the gunners had employed their time constructing a dummy gun, only partially concealing it with brushwood. They then filled the barrel of a rifle with black gunpowder, and left one man in charge of it beside the dummy. When it was getting dusk, this man pulled the trigger and ran for his life. The gunpowder-filled rifle went off with a mighty roar, and a spout of flame issued from the barrel. The dummy gun was so placed that it could easily be seen from the German lines once attention was attracted towards it, and almost at once several batteries began to pour their fire upon it. In addition to highly delighting our men, this little ruse gave us some valuable information of the enemy's batteries. A battery seldom fires in the dusk unless greatly provoked (as in the present instance), for, although it may be perfectly concealed by day, the tell-tale flash in the darkness betrays its position, and next morning it will probably receive unwelcome attention from the opposing guns.

I stayed for dinner at Kemmel, and rode home in the dark afterwards. It was quite an interesting ride, with star-shells

going up every minute right along the line, the continuous roll of rifle fire, and now and then the vicious rattle of a machine gun, or the sullen b-o-o-m of some great howitzer away up at Ypres. There are drawbacks to riding alone at night, which, however, serve to heighten the interest. You may ride into a telephone wire which crosses the road just on a level with your chin, in which case your horse will probably finish the journey alone, or your horse may put his foot into a recent shell hole in the road, or, worst of all, a spy may shoot you in the back with an air gun, a nasty practice which is becoming almost a habit in these parts.

None of these things happened, but as I rode into the square of Neuve Eglise I thought I saw a light moving in the churchyard. Now it is strictly forbidden to show a light in the village, and as the square is visible from the German lines it seemed quite possible that some one was trying to signal to friend Bosche. I therefore dismounted as quietly as possible, tied up my horse, and crept silently into the graveyard, taking cover behind the tombstones. But the place was absolutely de-

serted, and although I peered into every shell hole, my hopes of capturing a spy single-handed were doomed to disappointment.

VIII

THE BURNING OF YPRES

May 13, 1915.

YESTERDAY I came to Kemmel for four days' work. I arrived in the afternoon. Ypres cannot be seen from the village, but its position was still marked by the great cloud which hung over it, and which stretched away for miles like some enormous streamer. About ten o'clock the adjutant suggested to me that we should go out to see if any glow from Ypres was visible. It was a perfect night, brilliantly clear, starry, and absolutely still, what Stevenson would call a wonderful clear night of stars. Against the cloudless sky we could make out a great dark patch, the under surface of which glowed rosy red. We at once determined to climb the hill.

That was a strange ascent. For the greater part of the way it lay through the wood, and we were continually falling over

tree trunks, tumbling into shell holes, running into telephone wires, and extricating ourselves from barbed wire. Not a sound was to be heard save the croaking of the frogs. Suddenly we emerged from the tangled undergrowth on to the bare summit of the hill, and sat down at the foot of the ruined tower. The scene that met our eyes was so solemn, so awe-inspiring that all conversation between us ceased. For at our feet lay Ypres, burning furiously. The great cloud that hung above it was now glowing as if some vast furnace was burning in its midst, but the cloud itself appeared to be absolutely motionless. Now and then great tongues of flame would leap up from the doomed town, but apart from these the whole impression was one of rest, immobility. We felt that we were looking at some painted scene, or watching a vast stage where some lurid Mephistophelian drama was being enacted. Here and there along the line a star-shell would go up, and, bursting, light the landscape with a garish flare. Overhead were the quiet stars. Nothing broke the great silence, save now and then the deep, rich, solemn boom of a big gun far away up north,

with, perhaps, an occasional crackle of rifles near at hand. But, as we sat, the stillness of the night was broken by the song of a bird, faint and hesitating at first, but gradually gathering volume, till the whole air was throbbing with the melody. It was a nightingale singing in the wood below. We sat on, and on, and on. The whole town was glowing like the mouth of hell. Now and again some roof would apparently fall in, and the great hungry tongues of fire would lick the sky, but at our distance no sound broke the awesome stillness—only the song of the nightingale and the booming of guns.

May 14, 1915.

We had a little bit of excitement (still at Kemmel) about an hour ago. We were enjoying a smoke after dinner, when suddenly a tremendous hubbub commenced. All the guns in the district seemed to have opened fire at once, and when we went out on the balcony the air was full of the rattle of maxims, the continuous roar of rifle fire, and the scream and bursting of shells. Of all awe-inspiring sounds that of "rapid fire" from thousands of rifles is perhaps the most impressive; it is like

the roar of the Atlantic on some pebbly beach. In a few moments a message came in from the trenches that the enemy was preparing to attack, and at once the order went out to our three batteries, "Rapid battery fire." Within a minute and a half you could hear our guns hard at work. Not far from us there was a battery of Royal Horse Artillery, which made the weirdest noise, just as if a tin tray had been banged five times in rapid succession with a big stick. The uproar lasted for twenty minutes and then died away. The attack had been beaten off, and perfect quiet reigned in the valley.

IX

A CITY OF THE DEAD

May 20, 1915.

I HAVE just paid a second visit to Ypres and the result is that I find it difficult to be articulate. At my first visit about a month ago the damage had been largely confined to the buildings in the Grande Place, and those immediately surrounding it. The streets were full of people, shops were open in which I had been able to buy post-cards, ammunition carts and motor cars passed to and fro; everywhere there was a general feeling of liveliness and stir.

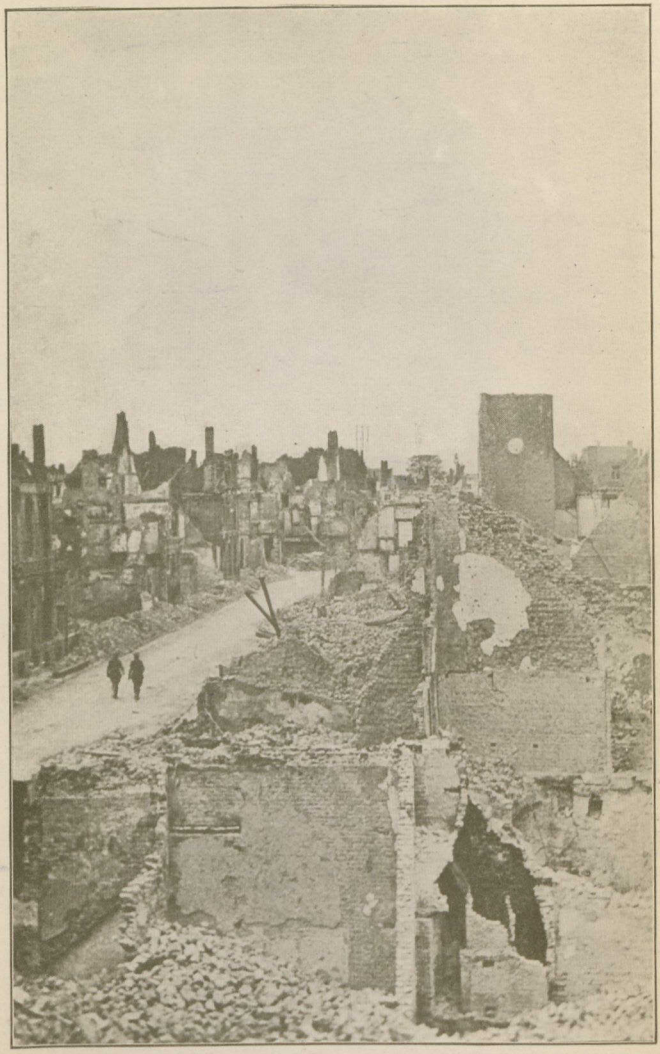
But when I returned this afternoon it was like entering some city of the dead, some ancient Egyptian or Assyrian town which for centuries has lain under the sand, a place so full of the splendour of the past, but so forlorn and forsaken in the present, that an overwhelming sadness descends on all who enter its portals.

It was indeed a City of the Dead. I passed along many of those ghastly streets before meeting a single soul, and then it was only a small patrol of military police. It was as if some mighty earthquake had shaken the town in its grasp till it fell into nothingness, or as if rows of card houses had been built, and some relentless hand had swept away the bottom stories, so that the entire superstructure had crumbled to the ground. In many places it was not a question of bare, shattered walls, but simply of confused piles of bricks and rubbish. Not a sound of any kind or description was to be heard. In that city of desolation there was not a footfall on the pavement, not the rumble of a wheel on the road, not the sound of a voice, or the bark of a dog, or the bang of a door, nothing but the silence of death. "The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and the raven shall inhabit it, for he hath stretched out upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness."

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sound, the wh-o-o-umph of big high explosive. Apparently the process of destruction was not yet completed. I pushed on

rapidly until I came to Grande Place, and here the contrast was simply overpowering. A few weeks before the square was full of bustle and life, civilians, officers on horseback, transport wagons. Now it was absolutely empty and deserted, and I seemed to be alone in the city. Of the busy shops not a trace was left. Looking up one of the principal streets that runs out of the squares I could see nothing but crumbling, blackened walls, without roofs or chimneys or doors or windows. In one corner of the square was a smouldering heap of dead horses. Over everything there hung the smell of mortar and of death. I once said that in Ypres you could almost "hear the beating of the wings of the Angel of Death." Standing in that great, empty, silent square you felt that the Angel of Death had passed over, leaving nothing but that dreadful stillness.

The towers of the Cloth Hall and Cathedral were still standing, but so shattered that it looked as if the next shell would cause them to crumble into dust. I walked into the Cloth Hall, picking my way amongst the piled masses of tumbled masonry, and through it on to the



THE CITY OF THE DEAD

Cathedral. Almost the whole roof of the Cathedral was gone, and pigeons were flying round the ruins of the organ. Every now and then some piece of masonry, balanced some fifty feet up, would fall with a crash which awoke strange echoes in that intense stillness. The sacristry, of which the roof and walls still remained, was a scene of the wildest confusion. Strewn in all directions were priests' vestments, choir books, censors, and crucifixes, whilst over everything lay a thick covering of the bright yellow dust of high explosives. By this time the square was becoming rather unhealthy, so I reluctantly retraced my steps along the silent, echoing streets, past the old fortified walls, over the moat bright with water-lilies, and took one last backward look at the desolate city, around whose shattered spires the German shells continued to burst.

June 10, 1915.

This afternoon I had to visit the headquarters of a certain division close to Ypres. The headquarters are in a delightful seventeenth century château, which looked a picture of perfect peace. A long shaded drive led up to the house,

which stood in the midst of a lovely old-world garden. All round ran a moat in which floated yellow water-lilies, and as I slowly crossed the bridge and the perfume of the roses was wafted towards me, the willows drooping gracefully into the water brought the Backs at Cambridge before my eyes. Everywhere there was the hum of bees, and here and there a gilded butterfly hovered over a flower.

And yet it was not all peace. About fifty yards away there was a huge shell hole, which had been made two days ago. A tree close to the house had been struck down the previous night. A sentry with fixed bayonet stood upon the bridge. In a flower-bed just in front of the main door were a number of dug-outs, round which the roses bloomed, whilst through the trees gleamed those wonderful shattered spires of Ypres, with the afternoon sun streaming full upon them.

My return journey took me within half a mile of Ypres, and I could not resist the temptation of paying another visit to the Grande Place. Ypres is a place that one never tires of, and that, like some irresistible magnet, draws one back again and again. Hosts of tourists and globe-trot-

ters will come to see it in future years, but it will never mean the same to them as to those who have seen it in its utter ruin, and have listened to its awful silence and to the shells bursting in its midst. And they, and only they, can ever only truly know Ypres the beautiful, Ypres the desolate.

June 18, 1915.

One of the famous places on this part of the front is Ploegstreet, commonly called Plugstreet, Wood, and to-day I had a chance for the first time of visiting it. The classic wood, which is about two miles long and a mile wide, is a perfect human bee-hive. It runs along the side of a steep slope, and all the way up the slope are little huts built of logs cut from the wood, and covered with moss and creepers. These tiny huts have all sorts of magnificent names, and Holland House, Warwick House, Somerset House, and the Carlton are all represented. One of the features of the place is the network of "corduroy" paths which run in every direction. These paths are floored with bundles of twigs and wattles, and make very pleasant walking. Without them the whole place would become a morass after

each rain-storm. The principal thoroughfares bear such names as the Strand, Piccadilly, Regent Street, and the Old Kent Road, whilst in the centre of the wood you come upon Hyde Park Corner. The wood itself, where there was such desperate fighting last winter, is a charming spot, nested in by nightingales, and altogether as delightful a piece of sylvan scenery as you could wish to set eyes on. Anything more unlike war it would be difficult to imagine, and yet the trenches run along the edge of the wood, now and then a bullet snaps off a branch, and if you seriously annoyed the Bosche he would search the place systematically with shrapnel or high explosive.

In the evening I visited an aerodrome near Bailleul. It is wonderfully interesting to take your stand near the hangars about six o'clock, and watch the birds come flying home to roost. Away on the horizon you see a tiny speck, then another, and another. Rapidly they increase in size, and soon you can hear the drone of the engines. Now they are above the aerodrome, sweeping round in great circles, ever lower and lower, till with a final swoop they alight on the ground and

THE CHANCEL, YPRES CATHEDRAL

run over to the hangars. The pilot and observer step out, and mechanics swarm on to the machine, for before it goes up again every nut and bolt and stay have to be tested with the greatest care. And now the mechanics are busy putting little patches over sundry rents and tears in the wings of one of the machines. These rents were made by shrapnel bullets less than an hour ago. I noticed that the wings of some of the machines were covered with little white patches, which told their tale more eloquently than any words.

X

WARM NIGHTS ROUND HELL CORNER

June 26, 1915.

WE have moved at last, and are now at work on the Ypres salient. It was a perfect evening when we left Neuve Eglise. The shades of night were just beginning to fall; thin wisps of mist crept down the slopes into the valley; the smoke from the chimneys rose in great tall columns; not a breath of air stirred the thick foliage of the trees; the occasional notes of a late blackbird alone disturbed the quiet of the evening. The men were all drawn up in a field, with the long line of wagons trailing out behind; and as we moved off to the sound of one of the great marching songs we knew that we were entering on a new phase of our military life, for we were exchanging the comparative quiet of the line at Neuve Eglise for that perilous salient, the very name of which was enough to make the heart beat faster.

As the night darkened the mist grew denser, and soon everything took on a most mysterious appearance. We passed little bivouacs in fields, and copses with fires burning brightly in front of them; camps consisting of rows of huts guarded by motionless figures, who would suddenly step into the middle of the road and give a sharp challenge; and wagons of ammunition drawn by mules passing from the ammunition column far in the rear up to the batteries a couple of miles behind the firing line—all dim and mysterious in the uncertain light. It was after one when we reached the grass field which was our destination, and, laying ourselves down on the ground, we were soon wrapt in slumber.

Last night work on the salient began. Our camp is some miles behind Ypres, so the plan is to take the stretcher bearers up in motor ambulances to a point on the other side of the town, and from there to start the work of collecting. Another officer and I were in charge of the party on the first night, and as I took my seat beside the driver of the first car, with the long column of twelve cars stringing out

behind, I felt that we were probably in for an interesting evening.

We soon struck the great road running from Poperinghe through Vlamertinghe to Ypres, a road which is at present one of the most fascinating in the world. I know of no highway which touches the imagination to anything like the same extent. For along that road must pass every person and every vehicle, all the infantry, the guns, the ammunition, the ration carts, the motor ambulances, the stretcher bearers, bound for that famous but perilous salient which bends forwards like some great bow in front of Ypres. In the gathering gloom we passed small bodies of infantry moving up, guns with ammunition limbers, supply wagons, and one queer little vehicle like a farmer's trap drawn by a mule, and piled up with a varied assortment of articles which I could not recognize in the uncertain light, but which I suspect was furniture for officers' dug-outs. And always you had the feeling that ahead of you lay Ypres, and beyond was that terrible salient which was going to absorb all this humanity, but which would never give it all up again.

Presently we reached the outskirts of

Ypres, and drove slowly through the streets with fifty yards between each car, so that we should not lose them all if a shell landed in the middle of the convoy. As we passed through the Square the towers of the Cathedral and Cloth Hall loomed mysteriously through the mist, like the twisted and fantastic pinnacles of some mountain peak which had been blasted by fire and riven by ice before man and his wars ever appeared on the globe.

Our route lay along the Menin road, which runs through Hooge, the apex of the salient. Now the Menin road leaves the town at the Menin Gate. At this point the road narrows, and crosses the moat by a bridge, which is so sand-bagged that only one vehicle can pass at a time. This is a very nasty little bit, for the Germans know that all the traffic leaving Ypres has to cross this bridge, and they have the range to a yard. By day it is quiet enough, but at night it is no place for lingering. As ill luck would have it, when we reached the bridge we found that a gun was stuck half-way across, and it was impossible to pass. For ten minutes we had to stay in that delightful spot without cover of any kind, but it seemed a long,

long time. The type of shell used by the Bosche for this little bit of work is the "Whizz-bang," which travels at a very high speed with a flat trajectory, and almost before you have heard the shell approaching it has burst—whizz-bang! Whizz-bangs were going off all round, lighting up the darkness in a highly theatrical manner, but one did not fully appreciate the fine dramatic effect till afterwards. Just before the bridge was cleared there came a specially heavy shower of these fireworks, and when at length the way was open it was a fine sight to see the wagons storming madly past in a wild gallop to the comparative quiet of the road beyond.

Some distance along the road we left the ambulances in the shelter of some ruined houses, and visited a certain house, whose position need not be specified, which was used as advanced headquarters by several brigades. The object of our calling there was to find out the number of casualties reported from the trenches, and also to ascertain the state of a certain pleasant place some distance ahead, which rejoiced in the name of Hell Fire Corner, or Hell Corner for short.

The various headquarters were situated in the extensive cellars of the house, which presented a remarkable sight. The corridors were filled with men lying on the floor fast asleep, many of them engineers responsible for repairing the telephone wires between headquarters and the trenches. The numerous cellars were converted into comfortable rooms, some used as offices, with clerks, typewriters and telephones all complete, others fitted up as living rooms for the brigadiers and brigade staffs. You could hear the shells screaming and banging overhead, and the shelter of the cellars seemed so acceptable that one was loth to leave them.

Hell Corner was reported to be quiet that night, and when we got there we found that the report was accurate, so we proceeded along the main road to Zillebeke for some distance, till we reached the footpath which runs up to the trenches. One is very apt to miss this path on a dark night, but fortunately just at the point where it commences a dead horse lies in the ditch. Judging from the physical signs, it must have lain there for many months, and, however dark the night, I

have never heard of any one who has missed that landmark.

We were now entering the region of bullets which come sweeping across from the two sides of the salient, as well as from the line immediately in front. It is this cross fire which is accountable for the large number of casualties occurring in parties trying to reach the comparative shelter of the trenches, for the road is without cover of any kind. When we reached the ruin known as Sniper's Farm a furious burst of rapid fire commenced on our left, and in a moment the air was literally humming. It was the warmest five minutes we have had yet, but suddenly the firing died away, and thereafter we only encountered the regulation amount of lead.

We were bound for a place called the Dump, where the wounded are collected. It lies on the edge of a wood close behind the trenches. The Dump is not a very cheerful spot on a dark night. If you have not much to do you listen to the bullets whistling through the trees, snapping off branches, and burying themselves in the trunks, and the shells passing overhead on their way to Hell Corner, and the Menin

Gate. There was one big German gun which went off every three or four minutes, and sent an enormous shell roaring through the air with very much the noise that a train makes going through a tunnel. It seemed to go a tremendous distance, for the noise of the explosion came back a long time afterwards as a very faint sound indeed. We felt sorry for the people at the place where the shell burst.

We left the Dump at midnight, and had a pleasant journey back past Sniper's Farm and the dead horse, round Hell Corner, through the Menin Gate and Ypres to our camp, which we reached at 2.30, just as dawn was beginning to break, and the first lark was commencing his morning song of praise.

This is a lovely, quiet, sunny morning, and when I look back upon last night—the darkness, the fireworks display at the Menin Gate, the pandemonium around brigade headquarters, the hail of bullets at Sniper's Farm—it all seems unreal, impossible, unimaginable.

June 27, 1915.

Last night we had an even more interesting time than on the previous night, and our experiences were delightfully varied.

X—— was in charge of the party, whilst I acted as his subaltern. There was a full moon, and as we passed through Ypres, the shattered city looked strangely mournful and impressive. Perfect quiet reigned at the Menin Gate, and we began to think that we were in for an uneventful evening. We were mistaken.

As we approached brigade headquarters things began to liven up, and no sooner had we entered than a shell dropped in the courtyard and wounded three men. We made our way along the subterranean passages and entered the brigadier's room. We had not been there a couple of minutes when suddenly there was a tremendous explosion outside the skylight, a paper which X—— was reading was torn from his hand, the lamp was blown out, and the whole place plunged in darkness. While the lamp was being relit another shell struck the building somewhere in the upper story. As the officers' servants were quartered there, one of the offiecrs mounted the stairs to see what had happened. He returned in a state of great agitation, saying that, although none of the men were hurt, most of the bottles of wine which were stored

there had been broken. As we retreated our steps along the passages we found them filled with the smoke of shells, and when we emerged into the open things had become very lively indeed. The Germans had apparently discovered that the place was being used as headquarters, and were evidently determined that it should never be used as such again. Even as we watched, an incendiary shell fell on our end of the building, and a great burst of flame showed that it had accomplished its mission.

We had not proceeded far along the Menin road when a shell burst on the road a little way in front of us. When we reached the spot I noticed something lying in the ditch, and on stooping down found it was the form of a man. Placing my hand on his head, I found that it was covered with a hot, sticky fluid—evidently blood. There was a fair-sized hole in the back of the head where a bit of his skull had been blown away. His heart still beat, so we put on his first field dressing and bandaged him up as best we could, although of course we did not dare to show a light of any description. The Bosche often sends four shells on to one

spot before altering his range, and one could not help wondering when number two was going to arrive. The sense of expectation became positively painful.

When we got as far as Hell Corner we found things comparatively quiet, for all the shells were passing over our heads, and the rest of the journey going to the Dump was carried out in great comfort. From the Dump we could see a great, red glare on the Menin road, indicating the fate that had overtaken our headquarters. Our adventures for the night, however, were not over. While the bearers were getting the wounded together, X—— and I had to proceed a little farther on. Now X—— looks more like a German than any Englishman I know; in a pickel haube he would be a perfect Prussian. Result—we find ourselves arrested as spies, and marched off at the point of the bayonet. Explanation is apt to be difficult and a trifle confused in a dark wood at the top of the Ypres salient, but eventually we managed to clear our characters, and departed on our way rejoicing.

XI

A DINNER IN GOGGLES

July 3, 1915.

YESTERDAY evening I rode over to the artillery position for a dinner party which A—— gave in his dug-out. We were a party of six, and just managed to squeeze into the place. We had reached the third course when a shell exploded in our field, followed by another and another. In a few moments we experienced the most intense irritation of the eyes, and the tears coursed down our cheeks to such an extent that it was impossible to see what we were eating. This was an evening "straaf" with gas shells, a form of attack which the Bosche is rather fond of using against our artillery. At first it appeared that the dinner party was going to be seriously interfered with, but our host speedily furnished each guest with a pair of rubber-rimmed goggles, and the meal was continued in comfort, for the action of

this form of gas is largely confined to the eyes. The chemical used is probably xylyl bromide. Soon, however, one of our heavy guns close by began to reply to the German battery, and each time the gun fired, the acetylene lamp, by which alone our dining-room was lighted, went out. One of the guests was forthwith stationed under the lamp with a box of matches, and after that all went merry as a marriage bell. I have seldom been present at a more enjoyable dinner party, although the begoggled appearance of the guests might have appeared a little unusual to a stranger suddenly introduced.

The variety of shells which one encounters in this district is extraordinary. Each bears the particular name with which it has been christened by that master of nomenclature, Thomas Atkins, and when he gives a name to a person or thing you may as well save yourself the trouble of trying to find anything more suitable. The great H.E. (high explosive) shells, fired as a rule from howitzers, used to be called "Black Marias" or "coal boxes," but nowadays they are almost universally known as "crumps." In order to appreciate the descriptive accuracy of this name

you should be near (but not too near) one when it goes off. The sound is a long-drawn kr-r-r-r-ump, or sometimes who-o-o-umph. The "whizz-bang" whizzes and bangs, and the "pip-squeak," a little harmless fellow more or less of the nature of a squib, makes a little squeak which merely arouses mirth if you do not happen to be on the spot where the squeak takes place. The "woolly bear" produces a very pretty effect when bursting in the air. But the queerest shell of all is known as "Silent Sue" or "rubber heels." The great howitzer shell gives you such ample warning that you have almost time to go home, should you wish to get out of the way; in the case of the whizz-bang you can fall on your face before the burst takes place; but silent Sue gives no warning of her approach. She merely arrives, and that is the end of the matter. The nature of that end depends entirely on whether or not you happen to be on the spot to receive her.

XII

LAST DAYS AT THE FRONT

July 16, 1915.

AT last our work at Ypres is ended, and we have moved a couple of miles south, only, however, to find ourselves at Hill 60—out of the frying pan into the fire. We live in a line of dug-outs in a certain embankment, and bring the wounded down the railway cutting which runs right up to the famous hill. As the Germans hold the hill, and have a battery of whizz-bangs which fire right down the entire length of the cutting, the conditions of work are apt at times to be unpleasant, and we have had a number of men hit.

In front of my dug-out there is a narrow field, and exactly opposite is a little red-roofed farm, which is used as brigade headquarters. The Bosche must have discovered this fact, and this afternoon about five o'clock we had quite a pretty piece of shelling. Fortunately I was at home, and

was able to sit in my doorway and watch the show. The first shell dropped on the far side of the farm, but the range was shortened at once, and the next one landed in the middle of the field, wounding one of our men who was sitting at the door of his dug-out. Soon shells began to pour in, and for five or ten minutes things were pretty lively. Presently they began to hit the farm, and great clouds of red brick-dust went up, but no serious damage was done. The brigade staff retired into cellars and dug-outs, and only two men were wounded. The shooting was not up to the usual Bosche standard, for the farm was only hit three times, but for all that the field was no place for a promenade for some time. The worst of it was that this little performance came on just as we were beginning to prepare tea, and as our cooking-place is on the far side of the field, we had to put off our meal for half an hour.

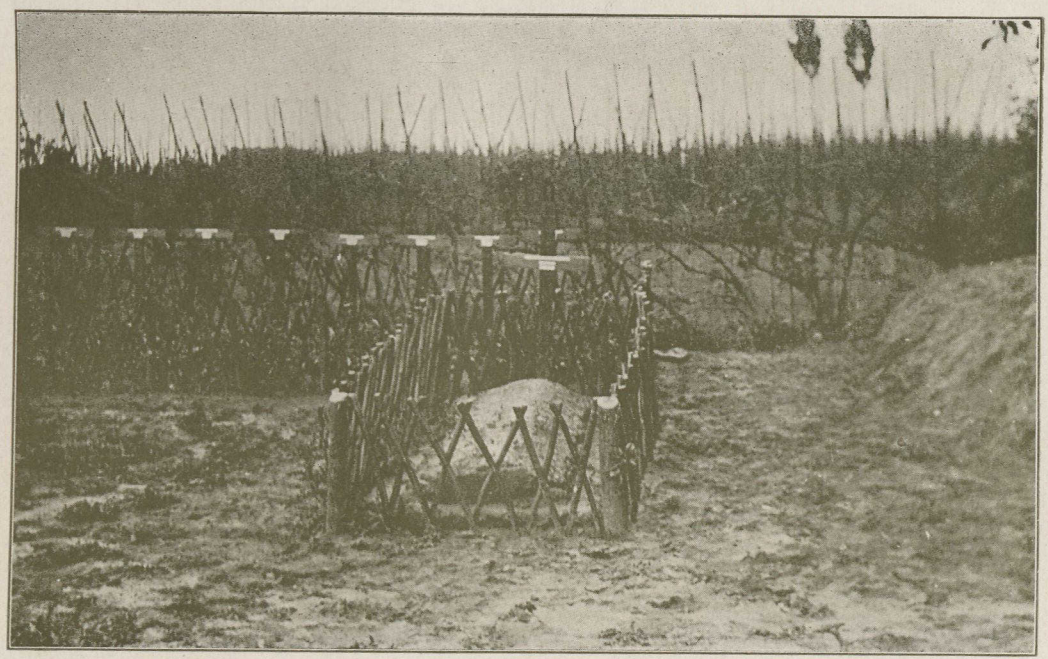
A few nights ago H—— distinguished himself. He found the narrow path completely blocked by a wagon which had come to grief, and which was toppling on the extreme edge of a steep bank. H—— was unable to get his ambulance past, so

he ordered his men to push the offending wagon right over the bank. Needless to say there was no officer in charge of the wagon. When this had been successfully accomplished, he enquired what was in the wagon, and was told that it was full of bombs! Truly, as old Blougram said, we live upon "the dangerous edge of things."

July 20, 1915.

For weeks and months we have lived surrounded by death, seeing it every day, and yet you never truly realise what it means till it comes home to you in a really personal way. A few yards from my dug-out lived one who was very dear to me, a fellow of most singular charm, an athlete of international reputation, one of those men who make sunshine in the world. Yesterday he was standing with several men by the water-cart, when a shell burst close to the group and killed my friend instantaneously. And so that is the end of it all. I can only think of some lines I came across a short time ago:

O'er countless mounds on the wide grey plain
The crosses stand against the sky;
For requiem, the sullen roar
Of cannon, as the wind sweeps by.



A SOLDIER'S CEMETERY

And *he* lies there; why do we weep?
God giveth our beloved—sleep.

What did we hope for him we loved?
Life full and fair, success, renown?
Nay, greater fame can no man win
Than a life laid nobly down
For England's needs; a soldier's death;
God giveth him—the Victor's wreath!

What matters Time, if he fulfilled
God's promise in the day of need?
Outweighs a hundred empty years
One glorious hour, one noble deed.
We asked full life, O God, of Thee,
And Thou didst give—Eternity!

August 9, 1915.

To-day a desperate fight is raging at Hooge, the apex of the salient. Or rather it was raging, for by now we have captured the positions which were our objective, and have beaten off the German counter-attacks. The attack was timed to start at 4 A.M. and at 2.15 the artillery preparation commenced. And what a commencement that was! It was as if we listened to the opening bars of some sublime symphony blared out upon the trumpets with accompanying crash of drums and cymbals, as in the opening of Beethoven's C minor symphony. About a dozen

9.2's opened the ball with one stupendous roar, followed by a hush in which no sound could be heard but the shriek and whine of the shells as they hurtled through the air; and then with a crash the full orchestra joined in, with a running accompaniment on the fiddles that rose and fell, but never ceased, for the men working the field guns had unlimited food for those hungry mouths. And over all came the diapason of the great organ as the heaviest guns in the army volleyed and thundered upon those trenches that had to be taken at all costs. The whole air was filled with the whine and sough of the great shells, as the whole sky was lit by the fearful light of those great tongues of flame. Along the horizon there was nothing but the glare of bursting shells, spouts of flame from the guns, and endless star-lights going up along the whole line. At four o'clock the bombardment slackened for a moment, as our men swept forward to the attack; but at once the guns started off again, this time with lengthened range, so as to catch the supports that were certain to be hurried up.

As dawn gradually brightened in the east our aeroplanes began to arrive upon

the scene in order to guide the guns in the work of destruction. The incessant cannonade lasted till 7.30, and then gradually died away.

August 15, 1915.

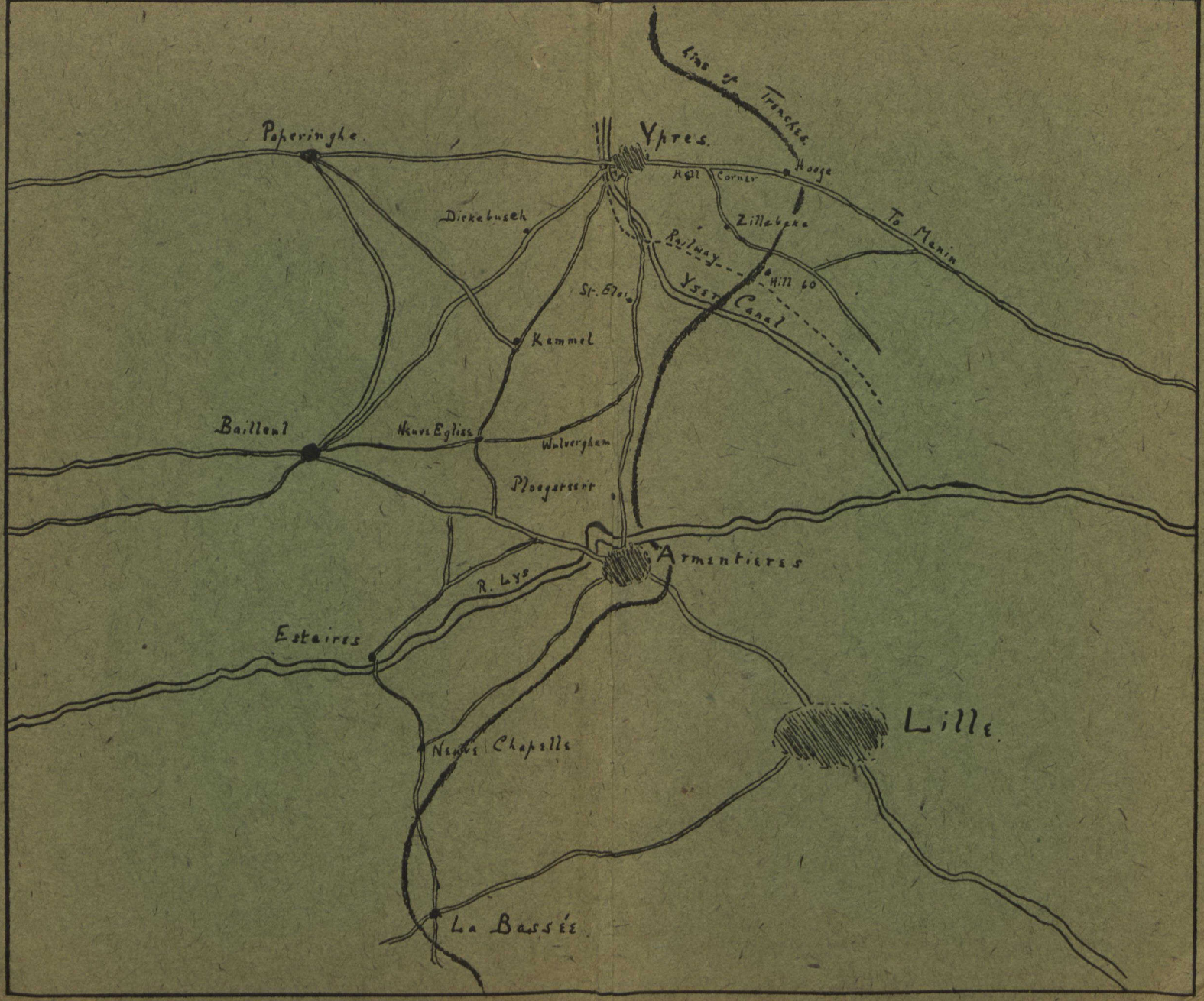
To-morrow I leave France. I have just come in from a walk along the Ypres road. It is a dark, still night. The roads are deserted; not a light is to be seen in any of the cottages; in the next field you can hear the restless movements of the horses of an ammunition column. A quiet, silent countryside. But, afar off, the star-shells are shooting up like great white rockets; the rattle of a machine-gun sounds faint and thin; and every now and then the deep-toned b-o-o-m of a great gun floats through the stillness of the night like the solemn knell of the passing bell. The fascination of these sounds of war is great, how great you only realise when you are about to leave them.

It is strange, almost incomprehensible, but to-night I must admit that I am filled with melancholy. Often and often you wish that you had never set foot in this stricken land, where death stalks beside you by day, and takes you by the arm as you walk the roads at night, and yet the

life has a peculiar fascination of its own. All pleasure depends on contrast, and the contrast between the discomfort of a bullet-swept road and the shelter of a dug-out, between Hell Corner at night and the quiet safety of the camp next morning, provides an intensity of pleasure which only those who have experienced it can realise.

If, as Aristotle says, tragedy purifies the mind through terror and pity, much more does war thoroughly purge it of all dross. For war is the great tester; it brings out the best that is in a man, even as also it brings out the worst that is in him. "The beauty and the terror of the world" have never held so much meaning for me as during these past months. And to-morrow I am going to leave it behind, perhaps for ever. Farewell, O Ypres, farewell, Menin Gate, Hell Corner, the Dump, and Kemmel Hill, a long farewell!

THE END


Line of Trenches
Poperinghe
Ypres.
Hooge
Hill Corner
To Menin
Dickebusch
Zillebeke
Railway
Hill 60
St. Eloi
Ysser Canal
Kemmel
Bailleul
Neuve Eglise
Wulverghem
Ploegsteert
Armentieres
R. Lys
Estaires
Lille
Neuve Chapelle
La Bassée