

Typed transcript of memoirs of George Swindell, a merchant seaman who joined the RAMC on the outbreak of the First World War, telling of his day-to-day business with the 77th Field Ambulance on the Western Front

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This book is the story of a stretch~~bearer~~ bearer in the R.A.M.C. in the First War. I have I think only twice before read such a detailed account of ~~his~~ life and death on the Western Front: Max Plowman's book and Old Soldiers Never Die. This book is particularly valuable in that it comes from a little-known aspect of the Front, or at any rate one that has been little written-up. Unfortunately large chunks of the book as it stands are virtually unreadable, and it suffers to a great extent from ^{the failing of} so many ~~ISS~~ of this type - a vast mass of fairly irrelevant detail lovingly remembered but of little general interest.

The book starts unpromisingly. We join Swindell as he tries to get into the Navy or Army on the outbreak of war. Owing to his height (variously given) he is unable to do so until he finds that the R.A.M.C. will take him~~x~~ (by giving him the benefit of an inch or two). There follows a very long section dealing with the author's first year in the Army - all training in England. Aldershot, Tidworth, Budleigh Salterton of all places, Bulford, Winchester . . . route marches, beer, proficiency exams, Red Caps etc. All remembered with quite remarkable ^{liveliness} vividness and often in trying detail for the reader. "Off we set, away through the villages of East Budleigh, Otterton, Colaton, Raleigh, Newton Poppleford, Sidmouth, and then cut inland to . . . etc. etc." After seventy-two pages we finally leave for France. And very soon~~x~~ the author is writing of the trenches - an account of day-to-day life that continues for almost all the remainder of the book (he had only two periods of leave in thirty months!) It is nearly always told in the form of

little anecdotes: Then the officer said to me, and I said to him etc. One always feels that one is dealing with memories that were treasured by the author, but sometimes it is pretty dull - on other occasions it does leave the page: the shell shock case who thinks he is the Prince of Wales; the test to see whether a man who could not speak was genuinely dumb or not (pp. ~~224/5~~^{126/7} - an example of Swindell at his best); the case of P.W.U. (Permanent Wind Up - pp 217/8); snatches of song; mud, No Man's Land etc. (p. 223); Chaplin film show behind the lines (pp 334/5); an air raid while on home leave (p. 338 - he found it more alarming than the familiar front). The end of the book is easily the best part. The author arrives back in France after leave in 1918 in time for the Retreat. Here some attempt at narrative is made, and we do get a feel of the Division reeling back and of what it was like to be there (for so much of the rest of the book, one has little if any idea as to where one is or what is going on - no doubt just as it was at the time but difficult for the reader). Here too there is some description, seldom attempted elsewhere - and the endless stories about people, incidents and conversations take on some form. Not long after the Second Battle of the Somme the author is captured, and this too is interesting. The book finishes at the end of an anecdote, virtually in mid-air (surely this isn't the end of the book?).

The book is formless, rambling, and clearly needs much editing (and it is not just a matter of punctuation). There is hardly a touch of bitterness in it; indeed the thing that comes through most strongly is not the war or the author's work but the exceedingly pleasant, kindly, and gentle disposition of the ^{man himself} author. This book is the meticulously recalled account of what he later came to believe were the best days of his life. A torrent of ~~many~~ memories, and a Labour of Love.



George Swindell (on the right)
with one of his brothers

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GEORGE HENRY SWINDELL

The old soldiers of the Kaiser's war are now "fading away" in increasing numbers and many of them leave behind vast quantities of Christmas cards, menus, concert programmes, newspapers, diaries etc. which relatives and executors find difficult to place. They often solve the problem by sending the whole dossier to the RAMC Museum and we are, indeed, very glad to have them though with a few very notable exceptions their interest is sentimental rather than historic.

Last January we received three small black note-books which constituted the memoirs of George Henry Swindell, height 5ft 2½in, who left the merchant navy with his friend Jimmy Forrester, height 5ft 11½in. Jimmy was accepted at once but George wandered disconsolately round the country until he found a medical officer who promised to look at his head rather than his heels as he stood on the measuring stand.

For anyone who spent even a short time on the Western Front in 1915 there is no doubt that this presents the most complete picture of field ambulance work during the war, far nearer to the truth than anything written by high ranking officers, trained journalists, left wing intellectuals from Oxford or Cambridge who try to create a so-called army atmosphere by peppering their pages with obscene words, or even than the younger men nowadays writing pontifically about events which took place before they were born.

Swindell, with no particular literary pretensions, brings the whole thing vividly to life and we see his sunny disposition shining through all his experiences in barrack rooms, officers' messes, billets, sergeants's messes, on the football field and running track, and, above all with his friends as a stretcher bearer in the front line. The whole story ends on a tragic note. After the indescribable horrors of the Somme he is taken prisoner and has to listen to the shrieks of unhappy women ravished by the oncoming German hordes.

In Arduus Fidelus

Being the story of $4\frac{1}{2}$ years in the
Royal Army Medical Corps.

Served,
By the writer.

Foreword.

I have chosen as the title of this book, the Motto of the Corps to which I had the honour to belong, and the meaning is "In Danger Faithful". we are in a somewhat different character, to the rest of the Army, in that in time of war, we are not engaged in either killing, or maining men, but in saving life, the Royal Army Medical Corps, in the last War, can be split up into roughly four sections, first the Field Ambulance, that clears the wounded, from the trenches and hands them over to the, second, Casualty Clearing Station, who in turn send them on to the, third, Base, where they are either detained, or drafted to fourth, the Hospitals in England, the most of my service was seen in the First and the following story, would, but for an accident have been longer and more certain, but as I lost my Diaries, the story is taken from Notes, War Records and Items from the 25th Divisional Book.

Jimmy Forrester and I, walked down the gangway of the Merion, the war had been on some weeks, and we had decided to join the Navy and being used to ship life, we felt that the sea was our calling, next morning we met in Hamilton Square, and walked into the Naval Recruiting Depot, I was five feet two and one eighth inches, Jimmy was five feet, eleven and half inches, the recruiting officer, grabbed Jimmy by the arm, come along you are just the size we want, but looking at me with a look of pity and scorn, in a rather loud tone remarked we want men here, go away and grow, I tried hard to persuade him to pass Jimmy and I together, but he was not at all impressed, so Jimmy thereupon said, very well if you wont take him, you don't get me, so out we walked together, we were rather upset as we had been so sure, that being seafarers we had only to present ourselves, to be accepted, we decided we would make one more effort to join the Navy, so we went to the Royal Naval Volunteer Depot, we knew one of the Officers who was recruiting, so we asked to speak to him, he came, and we explained we wanted to stop together, he then told us that they had orders to only recruit men over five feet nine, so he could only pass Jimmy, so once again we found ourselves facing the problem that they would take Jimmy, but not me, so we decided to let it drop for the day and then talk it over in the morning, we met on the morrow, and decided to go to Liverpool and see if we could squeeze through their, but not having any luck, to keep together we decided to join the Army, everywhere one went, placards asking for more men to join the Colours, met our gaze, but to our dismay, everywhere we went, the same vexed question met us, Jimmy yes, but I was too small and not being made of elastic, I could not stretch the four inches to pass, as the height had only been five feet the day before we docked, it seemed as if fate had decided that the Country Needs You, placard did not apply to me, Jimmy and I talked it over and

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we decided we would let Sunday go by, and then have one more try and if we were unsuccessful, he would join up alone, Monday came and we tried several places, both in Liverpool and Birkenhead, the answer was the same everywhere, and at midday I went with Jimmy and sat on the wooden form, to see him pass his tests, my feelings were hurt to think Jimmy aged 18 years was needed and myself 20 years of age, was of no use, I went on board in the afternoon, as not being able to join up, I decided to sign on, I then went to Lime Street Station to see Jimmy off, for within six hours of his enlistment, he was packed off to the Crystal Palace, he was in a batch of seventy and although nearly six feet tall, he was the smallest, I never realised, how many tall men there were, but understood why I was not required, we had been shipmates, for three years and so we parted Jimmy to the Navy and I back to the Merchant Service, I went that evening to see my Landlady's Nephew, Will he had joined the Cheshires, they were turning men away from his battalion on account of height, he was very sorry for me but not half as sorry as I was for myself, so I went to my lodgings a very sad, and miserable being, dawn came and with it the determination to have another attempt, so to the Haymarket Recruiting Office, Liverpool, I journeyed, once again to be told by the Sergeant, nobody under five feet six inches, I gave up hope, and was just leaving the Office, when the Sergeant came and called me back, the Officer has just had an order from the War Office, 20,000 men required at once for the Royal Army Medical Corps, height not less than five feet, three inches, so in I went, in the seventh heaven of delight, and the first thing off with your boots, and on to the measure, to my disgust it registered, five feet, two and one eighth inches, when he looked me in the eyes, instead of looking at my feet, and said are your heels touching the ground, I immediately raised them, and said yes, so off I was bundled with another man named Moss,

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to the next room, after going through a series of exercises, and was landed one glorious punch in the chest, and as I drew back, a hearty smack on the back, the Doctor said, physically undeveloped, what, was I to be stopped now, after keeping me in suspense a few moments, which seemed like hours, he turned to the Sergeant take these men, and have them sworn in, proud as a peacock I stood in front of the Magistrate, repeated the oath, had two shillings given me, and was one of His Majestys Soldier, I left the room on air I had not the slightest idea what kind of work, or what the duties, of the Corps I had joined were, all I thought about was, I have got in, the Sergeant met me coming out, come here my lad, shake hands, you have joined one of the finest Corps in the British Army, composed, of Gentlemen's Sons, and Medical Students and they will make use of you in the Hospital, not exactly what I wanted, but I soon dismissed his last words from my mind, and left the Office with a Railway Warrant, in my pocket and orders to report to Aldershot in two days, over to Seacombe I rushed into the house, shouting to the Landlady, I am in, I am in, I asked her to pack my clothes and rushed off to the Post Office, in Brighton Road, and wrote out a telegram for my Mother, telling her I would be Home that night, as I had enlisted, I handed in the telegram, and a sweet young damsel took it and read it, then leaned across the counter and before I was aware of it, had her lips on my cheek, had I been older no doubt I would have asked for more, but I was tongue tied, and left the office, feeling that the first day as a soldier had started well, I made my way to Canada Dock, and boarded the "Merion", she was due to sail the next day and asked for my Board of Trade book, I then went around to say goodbye to some old shipmates, the Boss (Chief Steward), wish me the best of luck, the Chief Engineer, told me what a Blankety Blank fool I was, as they had turned me down,

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the Skipper rated me for not joining the Navy, and I left the Ship with the best wishes of all aboard, that night I journeyed Home to Richmond and stayed two nights, I was not quite so jubilant at the prospects of Army Life, after reaching home, and seeing my Mother and Sister again, but the 24th Sept. arrived and I was due at the Barracks at Aldershot, by the 1 o'clock train from Waterloo, I left home feeling that as the war, would be over by Christmas, no doubt I would not go abroad and with those feelings and expressions hoped to allay the fears of my Mother, Sister and Aunt, on arrival at Waterloo, I soon found the train it was loaded, but I squeezed in, and away we went, arriving at Aldershot, I was somewhat taken aback, for leaning over the railings, hundreds of men were advising us to keep in the train, and go back again, as there was no food, no nothing, a lively start but we were not long left in ignorance of the fact, that the coming to the station was easier than going away, for the train was boarded by a horde, of what we were to learn afterwards were Military Police and the next we heard was, fall in you're in the Army now, and right turn quick march and off we went, the Sergeant was a regular and told us to take no notice of what the other fellows said, they're a proper gang of grouzers, we arrived at Reddown Hill and facing us were scores of tents, but none for us, the occupants of them were old sweats, they had joined up a day or so before us, we were marched or rather like a flock of sheep, we wandered round to Stanhope Lines where the R.A.M.C. Barracks were, the Regt. Sgt. Major, lined us up, and told us what a nice place we had come too, he explained to us, that as a rule, there were, 25,000 troops there, but that week another 175,000 had arrived, and naturally they were not prepared, so he was very sorry for us, as he had no food, no tents, mugs, in fact if you haven't brought any money with you, go and borrow some and try and buy some food in the town, there were some

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caustic remarks used, and a general row ensued, as to why had they sent us here, what about letting us go home again, and send for us when they were ready for us, but a bird in the hand, was worth two in the bush, and so we were told to make the best of things, and we could bed down, some in the school room and the unlucky ones wherever they could, the man next to me, was about my age, and I took a liking to him, so spoke to him, like myself he had the good fortune to have brought a fair amount of money with him, myself I had close on £5. I told him my name and where I came from, he then told me he come from Padiham, Lancs, was married when he was 19 years old, and had a youngster, we made our way to the town and noticing fish and chips for sale, we decided to have some, a small piece of fish and a few potatoes and for that they had the audacity to charge us 1/6 apiece, I should think that the people of Aldershot, who sold food that week, made their fortunes, opportunity had come their way, and they grasped it and proceeded to fleece us, may it give their consciences a prick or two, for their vile action, some of the men with no money proceeded to take whatever they could lay hands on, and small blame to them, at about 11 p m we arrived at the schoolroom and found hundreds around so down we laid, but not for long, the men were coming in by the dozens, and heaven help your legs if you were laying down, a perfect hullubaloo arose, after an hour a Sergeant arrived got us into some semblance of order and listened to a few remarks, the chief of which was, what about some blankets, he turned to the one nearest a door, and shouted open that door, and turning to me, who happened to be next now whistle, and one will come, a great pile were there ready for fumigation, a howl of rage went up, when the men realised the meaning of his remark, so we left the blankets and the company they held, he told us a few things,

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what would happen to us if we didn't make less noise and advised about half, to go outside into van, carts, under them, under the stairs, in the loft, and try and get some sleep, those of us who were left sat down, back to back, and tried to sleep, but there was to be no sleep for anyone in that room, about 2 am, a fresh load came in, they had been on the beer in London missed their train, and arrived, well and truly drunk, they took an almost fiendish delight in explaining all the charts on the wall and across my mind, came the remark of the Sergeant at Liverpool, all of them are Gentlemen's Sons, and Medical Students, this hubbub continued without pause until daybreak, when Tommy Lord, my friend of the evening before said, I ^{him} going out, and I was only too pleased to get clear of that putrid atmosphere, thick with tobacco smoke, and the smell of Beer, one would have thought it was a brewery, outside we were amazed to find men, sleeping in every available space, one could hardly walk, along even the gravel paths outside the schoolroom, for they were covered with still forms, we finally got through them, and made our way to the town and bought ourselves some breakfast, we were by no means the first, and for the bread and butter and tea we bought, we were well and truly robbed, one would have thought by the look of the town, that it had been awake all night, we made our way back to Stanhope Lines, as the Sgt Major was to speak to us again, we were hoping against hope, that he would have some rations, all he told us, go to Redown Hill and put up the Tents you find, and eighteen to a tent, so passed that day, and that night landed back about mid-night, the Guard wanted to arrest us all for being out after lights out, as there were at the time, about 500 of us and more to come, so he gave it up, with mutterings as to what a rag time mob we were, and heaven help the country if it had to depend on us, and with sundry more blessings, we arrived at our tents, but

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things had not stood still, and another hundred tents had been erected whilst we had been away and after some shouting and waking up different tents, we all found somewhere to kip, the tent Tommy and I slept in, had 22 in it, no need for blankets, as we were packed like sardines, morning came and word went round, that some food had turned up for dinner, for which the men lined up at about 8 a.m. and when at last the steaming dixies, whole sheep had been stewed, went by, we loosened our belts in anticipation of the treat in store, the Marquees of which there were four held about a thousand at a time, 3 p.m., arrived, and we approached the tent, for the last lap, and then when within about twenty, the worn and weary servers shouted No more today, four hours had we lined up, and to get so near, we said a few things, and broke up, a Coporal called some of us back, and didn't we run, visions of a lost dixie turning up, filled our souls with joy, and before he knew where he was had a hungry mob round him, but we didn't know much about the Army ways yet, although we were learning rapidly, he wanted us to take four empty greasy dixies back, scour them out with dirt and cold water, the flannel being a tuft of grass, the look on our faces a marquee full of a thousand men eating stewed meat and us with no hope of a bite, to clean their dixies, we just laughed at him and walked off, next we heard was a whistle, and before you could say look out, we were having it dinned into our ears, you are in the Army now, and you'll find yourselves in the guardroom, before you are many hours older, if you don't obey orders, and sad, weary, and hungry we marched back, and picked up our four dixies apiece, but once bitten, twice shy, and it was the only time Tommy and I were caught napping, the next morning we were moved to Stanhope Lines the parade ground of the regulars, was dotted with tent bags, and once again we put up tents they were so close they overlapped each other at the sides, we got up at five next morning, for one of the men in our tent named Kenneth McLeod from Stornaway, had an Uncle there, he was the adjutant, when this Scottish Territorial Battalion doubled out of their barracks they were a picture, they went to France early on, and the adjutant won the V.C. still no food, on

the fifth day, word went round like magic stores being issued out, and we are entraining, Smith and Brown two old soldiers who I have an idea, owned other names, told Tommy and I the ropes, you get up there quick, and make sure of our tents dry rations, proud as punch we looked for the stores, and like many more, were wandering about until we saw a queue, we lined up got to the door, gave our tent No, the N.C.O., looked down the list, turned on us like a tiger, don't come the --- old soldier here, you've had your rations, back we went to the tent to tell the sad news, that some other bounders had got our rations, and lo looking into the tent, we beheld the rations all served out, the old soldiers had sent us round one way, they took a short cut, got there first, and drew our rations, and no doubt hoped we might manage to get another issue, we were fast learning the arts and wangles of army life, five days at Aldershot, and this was the first thing we had received, I must say the rations were more than we needed, but as they gave us no tools we had to use pocket knives, the jam pot, a 2lb one was emptied, and lots drawn as to who should have it, needless to say one of the old soldiers won it, and all rations served out, we were lined up, marched off to the station rumours by the score as to where we were going, and by midday, we found ourselves, 4,500 in number, at a place called Tidworth, we marched about two miles, and at last reached a field where we turned in, the now familiar sight met our gaze and we were stood apart 18 to each bag, and up went our tents, and we were told we were in the 41st Field Ambulance, we had once again got our old soldiers, but lost them the same day to the next tent, although we still had no utensils of any description, the rations were plentiful and that was a change, next morning we were lined up, and put into some sort of order, for we were to be inspected, down the slope came a tall, slim officer in khaki, riding trousers, whip in hand, and a monocle in position, as somebody remarked a window, following him closely, a short stoutish individual, red of face, bushy eye-brows, a huge

moustache, and resplendant in uniform, his buttons, and leather straps gleaming in the sun, the first was the Officer Commanding the second the Sgt Major, the latter stepping to the front called us to attention, he was in that moment as near his end, as ever he would be, his face went purple, his tunic fairly choked him, for we had about as much idea of how to carry out his orders, as one would expect from a crowd of civilians, he inquired where did we think we were, and answered it by telling us we were in the Army, and he would let us know it, at last the C.O. approached, and in a high pitch voice, pleasantly informed us that he would soon have us smarter, or he would know the reason why, the C.O was Captain Sylvester Bradley, and the Regt Sgt Major was named Warner, and we were aware that we had got under two martinets, the first thing that happened, was the order hats off, then the C.O walked behind for hair inspection, some had curly locks, some straight, some bald as he went along he tapped the men on the shoulder, arriving at me, he lightly tapped my shoulder, being on parade I thought it was my duty to remain at attention, the next thing I heard was a bellow, as if an angry bull was at my heels, and a voice seemed to reach my inner conscience, right turn, and around I went, as if by magic haircut he roared, but having only a week or so ago visited the barber, I told him I had just had it cut, turning to a Sgt following he shouted for all and sundry to hear, take this mans name for talking on parade, after the parade was over, I was marched off to the barber, and given a convict crop, the reason for the two old soldiers leaving us, soon dawned upon us, for in their tent was a dude, in aristocratic tones, he asked the old soldiers, I say old chappie, will you do my fatigue, and a pint at the canteen tonight that poor individual was informed by the old soldiers, of all the fatigues that should have been shared by the tent were his, they had found a mug, and they were going to fleece him, he would do nothing, which of course, suited the old soldiers, and for the while he was in their tent, they had plenty of free beer daily but their source of joy was soon ended, as the Honorable Percy, as he was

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called, turned out to be none other than the Earl of C , who had enlisted as a private, but evidently did not like it, for a telegram arrived, and the Sgt Major walked down the lines and with a sarcastic grin on his face, was calling out for Earl C , and so the Hon Percy left, to the dismay of at least two, next morning, for the heinous offence of talking on parade, I attended orderly room, I lined up outside a marquee, presently my name was called, I was placed before two men, my hat snatched off, and flung on the ground, and in we marched, my offence was read out, so many laws had I broken, that I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own ears, not turning smartly, speaking on parade, addressing the Sgt Major, without saying Sir, insolence to his superior officer, and a few others amounting to ten in all, but the C.O. (being the first case to appear before him) was for once lenient, and I was dismissed, with an admonition which is not put on the charge sheet, by now we had about four or five jam jars in the tent, and I had drawn one, my two pound pot had a small black golliwog on it, so I was able to keep my eye on it, but still as there were 16 in a tent, we still had to share them for drinking out of, the owner always had his stew or tea first and then the next one to you had his ration, one or two of us had bought a spoon and they were also passed round, and another use for a pot was shaving, we went on living a life of idleness, eating and drinking, until about a week had gone by, one day we were lined up, and a lot of Officers came on parade with the C.O. as he called them out, so they marched up and down the ranks, and as they tapped a man, on the shoulder so they had to fall out, and stand in parties of about 70, and these were called sections, about a dozen had been round picking their fancy and at last a tall Officer, must have been moved to pity in seeing Tommy and I standing all by ourselves, as he tapped us on the shoulder, and said that completes my section, his name was Leacher, when the whole camp had been split up into small parties, 1500 men were detailed off to go into another field, being amongst them we struck our tents, and as the only thing the army had given us,

was a blanket apiece and some of us a jam pot, we were not overloaded, and soon landed their, Captain Sylvester Bradley, or as we amongst ourselves called him, Sylvia, came with us and he was the C.O. of our Camp, which was seven ambulances strong, arriving their the Officers, twenty one in number, took their sections, to allotted spaces, and before pitching tents were told, this row is the 77th Field Ambulance, and three sections to an ambulance, Lt Alderson had A section, Lt Leacher B section and Lt Bragg had C section, we were then split up into parties of twelve and told to pitch our tents in a certain way, A.B. and C sections behind each other, and each ambulance had a wide space between, to keep them distinct, we were getting quite expert at putting up tents, and soon the camp was up and the C.O. inspected them, and then we were left to ourselves, and of course once again one had to look round at the others in the tent, ten were strangers, to Tommy and I, they were Arnold, the Male Nurse, Addicot, the Pawnbroker, Moulding the Clerk, Lewis the Navvy, Cragg the Cotton worker, Harrison one of the idle rich, Jones the school teacher, Haley the rubber worker from Dunlops, Bolton the tinsmith and Hughes the marine engineer, and so we settled down under the impression that France, would soon be receiving a visit from us, as each day went by so a jam pot was issued to each tent, and all had one apiece, but one of the tragedies of the day was the shortage of money, no pay was given, and I had made great inroads into my lot, and had to husband my resources, the first day after we were made into an Ambulance, was spent in trying to explain to us what we had to do, but the murmers amongst the men, were rising to louder heights than the Officers cared to admit, for apart from food, we might as well have been at Home for all the interest that was shown in our little part of the Country, and as a result in ones and two's, desertions become the order of the day, or rather the night, one man in our section who made off, was named Taylor, he was an airman and within a week of his departure, he

sent us a line, he had joined the Air Force, we were allowed into the Village of Tidworth, but funds were low, so the majority kept to Camp our C.O. of the camp, was a physical culture expert and being like two knitting needles tied together, he was able to do all manner of turns and twists, and he was soon on the war path, the first thing he initiated was gunfire, or at 5-30 am tea and biscuits, then a run a short one the first day, increasing in time to about three miles, then a few physical jerks, and then to camp and breakfast, we had different things each time, but onething was certain, although the cooks were paid 6/- per day, what they knew, or what they thought was good enough for us, would fill a very little space here, after breakfast we had to appear on parade cleaned up, but as we were all in civilian clothes, we did not look very smart especially as we had to sleep in them, more drill during the morning, then dinner, the glorious lumps of fat, floating round the top of the stew, always stew, was guaranteed to turn the stomach of an elephant, until the knawing pangs, told their tale, and we came to the state, what with the open air, and the drill etc., we could have eaten anything, then more drill, as the C.O. said to keep us from thinking, and then tea, and afterwards you were free, lights out at ten, on parade each day, our Officer, with great gusto used to read out Kings Regulations after reading the crime, and they all seemed to be the same sentence, he would say almost as if it was a pleasure, Death, or some less punishment, as in this act mentioned, if a hundredth part of these had been carried out, I reckon there would have been no need for Jerry to do any killing, the drill was conducted in numbers, and saluting was the first thing we were taught, and woe betide anyone who did not salute an Officer, his evening was spent, learning how to salute, we used to sit in our tents singing, telling the tale, and some of them were full of songs, Harrison, I should think knew more songs than all of us put together, and Cragg we found out was just turned fifteen, was full of the sorrows of the lack of money, whenever it was his turn to sing, out came the same old lines, until we gave him

a miss, and let him listen, which I found was the best thing to do also, Lewis the Navvy, knew such songs as T'was in Trafalgar Bay, Where are the Boys of the Old Brigade and it was a treat to hear him, others told yarns, and if there was anything that we all did, was to grouse, and we had good cause too, Bolton he was a funny chap, always writing letters, every day a letter was sent to his little Jewess (Leak Goldman) and if she was not such an ardent scribe as him he had no cause to complain of the length of them, for it must have cost her a fortune for paper, he was often chipped about it, but he was an individual who always had an answer at the tip of his tongue, on parade, I was questioned by the Officer, and told to report sick he examined me, but nothing being wrong, he asked me what I was before enlisting and come to the conclusion, that the cold, after the hot climates, I had been used to, affected me, so I was sent back to the tent, next, we were all in the tent together, and Addicot got on the topic of promotion, at his suggestion we agreed that none of us would accept a stripe, and we all shook hands on it, pledging ourselves as privates together, we would serve throughout the war, that night when routine orders were read out, to our amazement, Pte Addicot is promoted to Lance Corporal, we said a few complimentary things to him, for we found out that whilst shaking hands, and pledging each other eternal comradeship as privates he had been informed that if nobody else applied from the tent, for a stripe he would get it, without us choosing which of the aspirants we would have, as Arnold said, (by the way he was forty two years of age) never trust a pawnbroker, it was one of the meanest actions I met during my time in the Army, but he was aware of his dirty action, and for no apparent reason, he always, to the end of my service, kept off the topic of stripes, for somebody had to have them, and I always took a great delight, in reminding him of the foolish things we used to say at Tidworth, Lt Bragg was a prominent Y.M.C.A. man, and he used his best efforts on the ~~Camps~~ Camps behalf and by the end

of October they had installed a fine Marquee, and it was a great boon, our Pal Bolton, instead of having his dinner, would go down buy some chocolates and biscuits, sit down at a table, and write to his Jewess, he did not once, after the Marquee came, partake of our dinner, on parade one morning the Officer, picked one from each tent, I was the one from our tent, and took us aside, now soon we shall be doing night work, and as you will have to guide yourselves by the stars, I want you to learn about them, having heard the old salts at Sea talking about them, I was quite at home, he said tonight being a starry night, each of you will explain to the others in your tent about the stars, that night at about eight, I said come on outside, and around me they all clustered, and I was explaining at great length how to tell the North Star, and just as I was in the midst of it, the Orderly Coporal hove in sight, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, he rapped out, fall in here, I want you men for fatigue, and as I had kept the other ten in the Camp for the sole purpose of showing them the Stars, I went through it they cursed me, the Stars, the Coporal, the Army, but we learn't a valuable lessen, and for the next six weeks, we were only ever caught once, one of the jobs that the old soldiers kept to themselves was the fetching of rations from Tidworth House, of course it was plain to all, that there was something in it, for all other fatigues, the old soldiers were conspicuous by there absence, one day I was told off to accompany them, arriving at The Stores they showed me where to go with the barrow, and whilst I was keeping the Quarter Master Sergeant engaged, in checking the rations as they were put on the cart, my other two, were away and when we were on the way back to Camp, they agreed I was a decent kid, for not grousing, abouting them shooting off and offered me cigarettes galore, not smoking they offered me some chocolate, which I accepted, next time I was on ration fatigue, I found out that the old soldiers no longer wanted the fatigue, arriving at The Stores, we learnt that while one was drawing the rations, the other one was creeping

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round the back way, and helping him self to cigarettes and chocolates, out of the Canteen Stores, one got drunk, and gave the whole show away, and thus ended the free helpings of the old soldiers, they had had a good run, and £130 worth off goods, had been stolen, so that explained why the old soldiers never went on ration fatigue again, for their was only work to do and no buckshees at the end, Tidworth House was a fine building, and General Buller had once lived there, the walls were cut about a good deal, and judging by some of the remarks on the walls, the soldiers themselves were of opinion, that after the S.A. war he did not have a fair deal, approaching the Town of Tidworth, were a row of very pretty cottages, called the Hampshire Cross, and a little to the right was the station, and to the left to the Barracks, which were full there was a Garrison Theatre, but shortage of the necessary, kept many of us away, and when we did get some money, being so far away, we always found huge queues lined up, and I was never able to get in, still, there was a very fine place called the Hamilton Home, near the Barracks so if I paid a visit to Tidworth, I always went there, we also had sing-songs at the Y.M.C.A. but the men were not over keen as you were too near the camp, and always liable to be called out for fatigues, why we hated fatigues, I never really understood, I suppose it was the fact of doing extra work, and not getting any extra pay, or that you were invariably on this extra work, whilst the rest of the Camp, were enjoying themselves, one of the first jobs we were put on, was constructing sanitary places, as we were told the R.A.M.C. is responsible for all that on active service, climbing to the top of the hill, one of the Navvies in the Ambulance, was very keen, on showing us the right way to dig, and having had more beer than was good for him, his aim was bad, he brought the pick-axe down, on a mans foot, and pinned it to the earth, which of course ended that poor unfortunates Army career, after being out on a rather long route march, we

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arrived back, hungry and thirsty and when the tea came up, it was something awful, it tasted as if the cook, had upset the sugar bag in it, and also it had a bitter taste, one sip was enough for me, I simply could not get it down, but a lot of the men, drank it, and during the night there was very little sleep in the Camp, the cause of all the trouble was, that the regular cooks had a pass, and leaving instructions that Epsoms Salts were to be put in the tea, the cook read wrong and put about twenty times too much, we had often noticed a bitter taste about the tea, and at last owing to this mistake, we had learned the cause, and needless to say, having found out it was not the water, very few of us were caught again, next day so many men were ill, that we were all off duty, all day, things were getting to a fine pass, we had not received any pay, or any equipment after six weeks, and Harrison in our tent said he was going, one night he was off, and when next we heard from him, he had joined the Royal Marines at Portsmouth, we were sorry to lose him, as he was such good company, many more from different parts of the Camp also deserted, and none of them were ever brought back, on Sundays, we always went to the Polo Ground, and had an open air service, he was a fine Padre, and I used to look forward to it, when we lined up the first Sunday, the R.S.M. Warner, (who by now, was known by several different names) (the only two I dare put in this book are, the Pigfaced Baboon, and Walrus) he called out, fall out on the right the Church of England fall out on the left the Roman Catholics, and all the other, blankety Blank Fancy religions, amongst the latter was a man in our section, named Moss, who was a very strict Wesleyan, he took the R.S.M. remarks to heart, and wrote to the King, the War Office, and the Head of the Wesleyan Church, and complained of the insulting remarks, some days later he was for orderly room, and his crime was writing to the War Office, without the C.Os. permission, he got a severe admonition, and told next time he

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did such a thing he would be court martialled, as he said to us, what chance would there have been of my complaint going through if I had shown it to Bradley first, but a private clerk, told him that a message had been sent from the War Office, to the C.O. telling him to see it did not occur again, so although officially Moss had committed a crime he had to his own satisfaction gained his point, but Warner, the R.S. Major had his own back, the weather still continuing fine, we were able to stick the minor discomforts of the camp, the night manouvres were a great game, a dozen men were detailed off, to fill sacks with leaves, and put them into any corner, or shelter, that they thought a wounded man, might crawl too, and at night we would scour these woods, and fields but not going over the same ground twice, if you missed any sacks, that was a point against, still we were gradually getting into trim, very few had to fall out on the marches, and as some of them were fifteen and twenty miles, the C.O. had good cause to feel satisfied, that his routine was getting us into fine trim, we were soon to have a pleasant surprise, huge packets were beginning to arrive daily at the camp, and speculation was rife as to there contents, whatever they held, it was about time we got something issued out, everybody received, a razor, tooth, shaving and hair brush, knife, fork, spoon, and cleaning kit, not much but it was a start, then at last, when our civvies were looking sick, the magic word went route, uniforms, our chests began to swell, and next day being lined up we were called out, in alphabetical order, and up to the Quarter Master Sergeant you marched, height he would roar, you would give him your height, out of the marquee, would come the tunic, and the trousers, never a word, as to whether you were, thick, thin, or medium, just height, and whatever was flung at you, you signed for, and off you went, it was a sad blow to us, the cloth was beautiful, but the cut, and the make we looked as perfect a specimen of scarecrows, as you

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could wish to find, but as you had to send your own clothes home, or hand them into stores, you had to wear them, then came a little convicts hat, and an overcoat, the boots I had joined up in, when I arrived at Aldershot were new, I had only bought them three days before, were now rather worn, the clothes etc being issued out in Alphabetical order, meant that all the As, Bs, and Cs, were able to have first pick, and when it came to the men whose names began with the Rs, Ss, Ts, etc, you were lucky if they had anything to fit you, up I marched, for my two pairs of boots, and the following took place, Size, fives, What he roared, Fives, we don't stock Boys boots in the Army, here you are two pairs of eights, stuff some paper in the toes, and they will do, and next morning for not having dubbed them, although I had no intention of wearing them, I got two hours fatigues, and told if they were not worn I should be for it, so I had to wear them, and it was a marvel to me, how my feet stood it, and I was walking about with a pair of trousers, tucked in my socks that would have fitted a Guardsman, the weather after four or five weeks fine, began to break, and the more it rained the worse our camp got, we dug trenches round the tents, but we were always sleeping now, on the damp ground, and if it was at all fine, all our blankets would be out drying, the ground being chalky soil, the water laid about, and it was a sight to see, men, who had to attend parade, spick and span, finding the best way of doing things, we used to take it is turns bringing up the breakfast, and water, we would, shave wash, and drink our tea, out of our jam jars, and as the colder mornings came, and no hot water available, we saved a pot of tea, and shaved with that, we were eventually, after suffering misery, with our damp beds issued out with tent boards, and this was the second time, I was caught for fatigues at night, still as I had very little money, the night in camp saved me a few pence, the tent boards at least allowed us to lay on something dry, until the mud outside got like pea soup we were able to keep it fairly clean, but eventually the elements won, and the boards got filthy

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so after our first peons of joy had subsided, which they did very quickly, we had beside the dampness to put up with, we had the additional pleasure of the hard boards, one could at least gradually scoop a hole in the ground to rest your weary bones in, but the boards had no give in them, but one of the first things I learnt in the Army was to be thankful for small mercies, grouse as much as you like amongst yourselves, but old Walrus was down on you like a ton of bricks if you complained, Lewis my next door sleeping partner, like many a Navvy was fond of a pint of beer, the only trouble with Lewis was, he was so disgruntled over the fact, that through being under the influence of beer when he had enlisted, they had put him into a noncombatant corps, when, he used to say I am not a nurse, I wanted to join a fighting mob, so he proceeded to drown his disappointment in Beer, and whilst we were having our clothes issued out, he was doing clinque, or in plain language, prison for 14 days, in the camp though, and beside the drills he had to do, they put him on helping the Sanitary men, and all the other dirty jobs, the day came when he was released, he came into the tent, more fed up with the R.A.M.C. than ever, and off he went to Tidworth. Lights Out blew, and Lewis had not turned up, fortunately the orderly sergeant had forgotten to knock on the tent and ask if all men were in, so we hoped that if he had not deserted, that he would perhaps be able to crawl up the lines, and get in, we must have been sleeping awhile, when we heard the Guard challenge, Who Goes There, next moment a cry of pain, and a scurrying of feet, presently at my head, outside the tent I heard Lewis whispering, open the tent a bit Swin, open the tent Swin, quickly I had a rope slackened and in he crept, he simply reeked of Beer, into his bed he slipped, all his clothes on, and soon he was upsetting the tent with his drunken snores, next morning reveille went, and Lewis was bootless, around came the Sergeant of the Guard, is Private Lewis here, Coporal Addicott, yes Sergeant he replied, fall in Pte's Swindell and Barber, escort

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Pte Lewis to the Guard Tent, I told him he had no boots, he replied that is alright, he will find his in the Guard Tent waiting for him so into clinque under arrest went Pte Lewis, after only 24 hours o freedom, then he told us what had happened, he was crawling up the lines, with his boots off, when he was challenged, springing to his feet, he let drive with one of his boots, dropped them in the scurry and that is how he was detected, he was before the C.O. that morning for various infringements of Military Law, including striking the Guard in the mouth with his boot, he had smashed his top and bottom set of false teeth, and no wonder, for he had always boasted that his boots had nearly 80 hobnails in each one, the hobnails were in the instep as well as the sole, he finished the morning by getting 28 days at Devizes, the Military Prison, and off he went that day, under an armed Infantry Escort, we began to go for different walks and one Sunday afternoon, we had walked some miles and came to a Village called Chedderton, seeing a lot of men coming out of a Hall, we went to see what was on, in we went, signed our names, paid a penny, and were given a cup of tea, piece of bread and butter, piece of cake, some biscuits, an orange, an apple, and a cigarette, the place was run by Stephens Ink people, and they charged a penny, so that nobody, as they told us, would think it was charity, and so not come again, needless to say it was well patronised, and it must have cost them an enormous amount of money, another little village we used to walk to was Shipton, everybody who wished to make an allowance to his Wife or Mother, had to hand in a form signed, and the amount he wished to allow, six weeks went by, and my Mother had not received any, and I with all the others had received no pay, Cragg made an allowance to his Mother, so we both went to see our Section Officer, the procedure was, go to the Orderly Sergeant, tell him you want to see the Officer, he marches you up, tells the Officer what you want, and at his pleasure you wait, until he thinks fit to see you, he came out, asked me my business, and I said I have made an allowance to my Mother, and she has not received any of it, he asked where I lived, he said.

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I will write to the Mayor and ask him to give your Mother some money that rather hurt my feelings, so in a rage I said that I had not joined the Army, for my Mother to be given charity, that did the trick, he gave me a lecture on how to address an Officer and gave me such a dressing down, for insolence to My Superior Officer, that young Cragg was only to pleased to get away, without even saying a word, all I had got for my trouble, was a good telling off, after seven weeks in the Army, the Camp, although it was wet, and miserable, would have given a visitor the impression, we were as happy as sand boys, and they would have been right for that night on routine orders, were the words Pay Parade 2-30p.m. next day we lined up on parade, about 50 yards from the pay table, first they inspected us, and any man not shaved properly or dirty boots, was dismissed parade, and got no pay that week, then they called the men out one by one and you had to march smartly across the parade, stop three paces from the the pay table, the amount you were to receive was called out, you then marched forward three paces, took the money with your left hand, saluted smartly with your right hand, walked three paces backwards, about turned and then march off to a fresh parade ground and woe betide the man who did not march to the Sgt Majors satisfaction, an hours drill that evening was the penalty, my name being called out, I marched with all the experience of seven weeks training behind me, and arriving at the three paces from the table, I waited with pleasureable anticipation for the amount to be called out, it soon came, No Pay, I was thunderstruck, and I did not realise that I was to get nothing, and turned round to march off, the next moment a roar filled the air, about turn roars Walrus, and I was soon told pay, or no pay, I had to salute, I was in a state of frenzy, by the time he had finished bawling at me, and turning round to march off to the ranks, I naturally did not please him, and for the pleasure of saluting the pay table, and getting no pay, I was given an hours drill that evening, there were about a dozen of us, and when we lined up at evening we could have

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groaned, for it was just before dusk, and the R.S.M. had decided to drill us himself, Walrus was simply mad that evening, he marched us this way, that way, a few paces then about turn, and intermixed his orders with a few pleasantries as only an Old Soldier can, such as you might break your Mothers heart, but you won't break mine, about turn, you are like a lot of camels, Your own Mother won't know you by the time, I have finished with you, she will think you have got boards up your back, and so he kept it up, and we never eased up for the whole hour, I felt mad with rage, not only for the punishment, but for his vile loathsome remarks, but one thing we had all learned, you did not have too necessarily cheek him, to be up for insolence, you had only to give a look at him to be had up for dumb insolence, and as he was an individual who would find fault somehow, it was a perfect torture to be in front of him, but if there is one thing more than another, that you learned it was obedience, as the army terms go, it is discipline, and at last we marched off, back to our tents with him barking in the distance, Left, Right, Left, Right pick them up there, poor young cragg his song was more appropriate than ever too him now, it run like this, Money talks thats what people say,

Money talks too someone every day,

I've tried too get on speaking terms,

With M. O. N. E. Y.

But the only thing it ever says to me,

Is Good-bye, Good-bye,

Incidently we were both to be in the Army nine weeks before we received any pay, and then we got two shillings, the food was getting both short and cooked badly, and plenty of complaints began to be made, every day, the Orderly Officer came road, the Sergeant with him would say, any complaints, and they began to take notice at last, and a watch was kept on the Cook house, some days elapsed, and the food had been not only better cooked but more plentiful, but the watch was still being kept, and one

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evening, the cart to take away the swill was stopped, as it was leaving the Camp, and Six whole Sheep were found, next day, Sergeant Zipllett and Copl Ste~~el~~ were up to the Orderly Room, and got two months at Devizes, for selling the Troops food, their pay had been 6/- per day, and we never learned how much they made by selling anyhow they both got what they deserved, after some weeks you begin to take notice of the different peculiaralities of what are to be your comrades, through your army service, Mouldin in our Tent, was known as electrizity, always like a live wire, always on the move, always up before reveille, always the first to be ready, being flush with money, he had brought a suit of Khaki, goodness only knows where, I have spoken of Bolton and his letter, Cragg and his wailing lament about money, and Lewis the Booze Fiend, others in the three sections to impress one pretty quickly, were Tiny Roberts, the nick name given to him by some joker, he stood 6 ft 4 inches and weighed over 15 stone, Norris a happy young cockney always singing through his nose, Tom Kerr, always so spick and span, heavens alone knew how he did it, Old Man Edwards, with a pimple on his forehead, which he pushed, as if it were a bell, whenever he was in distress, the Brothers Richardson, with the fair curly hair, the elder one, had a triangular whitish patch in the front, the North Eastern Group, most of them miners, the Landashire Group, mostly cotton workers and the Brum (Birmingham) Group, and the rest of the Amb, who numbered about forty, came from all parts of the British Isles, it was remarkable how the men all settled down together, in batches, men were coming from Aldershot, to fill the vacancies, and it had under-gone drastic alterations since we left, the newcomers without exception, seemed to look upon our life as jammy, the only man in the camp to remind them of Aldershot was Walrus, and of course the reason for this was whilst we were at Tidworth, the N.C.Os, were trained by the R.S.M, and in time they did all the drill instruction, now these men, although N.C.Os, had joined the Army the same time as us, they had joined with the same Ideal, they had left Civvy life the same

time as us and they therefore looked upon the Army Life as we did whereas at Aldershot, the Regular Army Men, had chosen the Army Life as there career, and the Regular Army discipline was ingrained in their lives, and they proceeded the pre war way, with the New men, we must have been very fortunate, to have got off with only one tyrant, we had the R.A.M.C. manual issued out, and after five weeks of studying we had our first exam, those who passed obtained 2nd class proficiency pay, an extra 4d per day, you had to practice tying up your pal, three cornered bandages were used, and we were lucky in our tent as Arnold was a Male Nurse in Civil Life, and I feel that we all owed it to him coaching that with the exception of Lewis, we all passed, the second exam for most of us, was a washout, as although we passed, and by the usual rule, would have become nursing orderlies, and received another 5d per day, but there were only six nursing orderlies to a section, and our Ambulance, was peculiarly rich with men, who were from Asylums of all kinds, Red Crossmen in Civil Life, and several independant Male Nurses, that it was only natural that they, having chosen Nursing in Civil Life as there career, should be the ones to be chosen in the Amb, we were lined up one day, and we were inspected by Col Sloggett, a big pot, from the War Office, he had a good thousand to inspect, before he reached us, we had for days, being going through it with drill, and the threats breathed at us, if we let the Amb down, were enough to make everybody do his best, the day arrived, and for a change it was not raining, so we were able to clean our boots, and as we had no equipment issued, that was all the cleaning we had to do, even our buttons were bone, we were lined up, and inspected by the C.O. of the Camp, and any little thing that caught his eye, and he could see if your buttons were done up, as he walked down the back of you, we always swore that his Monocle was like a periscope, arriving at young Cragg, his hawk eye noticed a few hairs trying bravely to sprout on his chin,

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when did you shave last, I never have Sir, then after parade make a start, you look like a Bally Nanny Goat, and poor young Cragg, having enlisted as eighteen, when he was only fifteen had to start shaving, all the men being to the C.Os, satisfaction, we were lined up in Review Order, tall men at each end of the ranks, and arranged that the short ones were in the centre a position, I generally found myself, the last instructions including, any man moving in the ranks, will be for Orderly Room, any man wishing to do anything on Parade, must spring to attention take one pace forward, and do what he wanted, and then step smartly back, before many moments had passed, one man stepped smartly forward, bent down and tied up his boot lace, the next man to step forward, with a great flourish, pulled his handkerchief out, blew his nose, after parade these men got the shock of their lives, for they found, that for having to step forward on parade, they would have six hours drill, needless to say I never saw a man step forward again on Parade, the Colonel inspected us, and told us what a fine corps we had joined, that if we improved in the next few months, like we had already, we would soon be in France, which pleased the Officers, but not more than the men, for we were fed up with the conditions, and would have been glad of a move anywhere, one day walking on to the Parade ground, resplendant in Khaki, strode a martial figure, and informed us that he was Sergeant Major of the 77th Field Ambulance, and as long as we tried to do our best, he would not be down on us, but any old soldiers tricks, and you are for it, his name was Hunt, and he was as good as his word, he was a perfect gentleman, and he could get men to do anything, he took an interest in all ranks, the only thing he ever got really excited over, was parades, how ever much we tried to get into a straight line, he would get to the end of the ranks look down, and say it looked like a dogs hind leg, the conditions were gradually getting worse, I had made up my mind to give it another week, desertions were common

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several men died, the rain never seemed to stop, a camp a little way from us called Parkhouse, was the scene of a riot, armed guards were rushed up to quell the trouble, all camps around our locality were seething with discontent, men said they might as well be killed in France, if they were to die, as to lay and rot in the Camps, of comfort in the camps there was nil, and if it had rained when we first came to Camp I am sure there would have been a general exodus, but the short time we had been in the Army, discipline had begun to get hold of us, and we stuck it, then when things were at their worst, I think the War Office must have remembered we were in their Army, and we were told that as soon as they could make arrangements, we should all go into Billets, everybody would be under shelter before Christmas, so we just had to carry on, and so the time dragged on, everywhere was wet, it was impossible to keep any of your blankets dry, we had had three issued out by now, there was a more or less general spirit of dejectedness, our visions of dashing about rescuing wounded, had long since vanished, but about now, when we knew that we should ultimately go to billet, a more settled spirit came over the men, we felt that Lord Kitchener was right, when he asked us to join up for three years of service, or duration, and when at last it was read out on Routine Orders, the Camp will be moved tomorrow, the thought of Billets, beds, decent food, dry clothes, cheered us up, it rained all night, next day we rolled our three blankets, and wore them like a sash over the shoulder, we struck the tents, and in the midst of mud, rain, and confusion we fell in, and marched off to Tidworth Station, it poured, my, it simply drowned us, the further we went, the wetter our clothes and blankets got, and by the time we reached the station they were hanging like a ton weight round our necks, it seemed as if the very Heavens, knew that we were going to dry Billets, and meant to give us a last good drenching, about 10 o'clock in the morning we boarded the train, for where, we knew not for certain, but rumour had been busy with Devonshire, and so we left our Camp, that had seen us transformed from civilians to Soldiers, in spite

..... of the

of the roughing we had undergone, we had had some happy times, things had not progressed as fast as we wanted them too, but we knew that one day we should be sent abroad, so far the only things, by which we were known were our numbers, and Kitcheners Blue, but one thing we all agreed, we should never forget, and that was the good old Tidworth mud.

About six o'clock the evening of Dec. 1st 1914 we stopped at a station, we had travelled fast at times, and stopped for long periods, when we arrived at Exeter we were told, that we were going to be billeted at a Village called Budleigh Salterton, and at last we had arrived, it was a very small station, and after all aboard had disembarked, we lined up outside the Station, there were a few lights about, and some people had turned out to give us a welcome, at least that is what we thought, but all the cheers, if there were any must have frozen their throats, I must admit, that we did not look, at all like the usual Army Man, but we were not at all proud of ourselves, when we had such remarks, as they look like a lot of Convicts, they don't look a very nice lot, I am glad we have not got any billeted on us, we marched off to the main road, and the Officer coming along with S.M. Hunt, just detailed you off, in rotation to Billets, and as we had fallen in at the Station anyhow, and anywhere, many pals were again seperated, some owing to the distance they had to go, were able to arrange changes, but the party of eight of whom I was one, were detailed off with Sergeant Barnett and Cpl Ingram to a Resturant, all we had to do was about turn, and march into it, the two N.C.Os, and two privates went up stairs and the other six of us went to a Bungalow affair at the end of the yard, after dumping our blankets, we had a wash, and into the House we went, we had not seen food like it for weeks, and we made great inroads into what was placed on the table, we voted billets

were A.1. and said that if it was all going to be like this, we will served out time here, the Bugle calling, out we went, routine orders were read out, and Private Swindell was among the Guard for the Railway Station, now Guard was supposed to go in rotation, having only just done Guard, I went to the S. Major, to tell him the tale, he very pleasantly told me, I was not there to point out faults, I was there to obey orders, and if he had any more trouble with me, I would be on the wrong side of the Guard tent, so, as I had no wish to get clink, I left him hurriedly, next morning after a beautiful nights sleep, in dry bedclothes, we, had to fall in, and be inspected by the S. Major, we had no mud on our clothes, but as for looking like Old Soldiers, in our Convict Garb, it was impossible, he told us how we were to give a good impression to the inhabitants, and keep always as smart as possible, I managed to get the first Guard, the Coporol read out the duties, see no man boards the train without a warrant, any man arriving on the incoming trains to show his pass, if he hadn't one, arrest him, speak civilly if spoken too, and a whole list of does and don'ts, it was not an arduous guard, one train about every four hours, the first train came in I stood at the gates to see that no Soldier got through the barrier, either in Civvies or Uniform without a pass, and as there were two passengers, I think I was fortunate, the first was an old sailor, and the second was a dear Old Victorian Lady, she approached me, and after adjusting Her glasses and gazing at me, until I imagined I was a curio, she came up to me and said, are you a Soldier, (I suppose she was as impressed, as the other people had been), I pulled myself together and answered Yes Madam, holding out a good sized parcel, she said here are some presents for you, I gave them to the Cpl, and on opening them, he found a large assortment of Tracts, Anderson, who was on later, also had a bundle of tracts given him for the troops, the Orderly Officer, who called to see if there was anything to report, thought it a capital joke, and took some to give the other Officers, when the Guard was over, having the day off, I was able to have a look round our quarters the Landlady had our Bungalow built, and let it out to parties of

young men in the Summer, it was nicely built, and six beds, one apiece, in it, I had the one behind the door,

The Daughter of the house, Alice Please, waited on us at meals, and the lady of the house, gave us splendid food, and plenty of coal for the fires, our sitting room, was really a tea room, but it had been made very comfortable,

The usual procedure in the morning was, parade at 7 a.m. and march up to the cliff, and at the top was a level piece, and there we went through our physical jerks, as it got colder they did half an hour at drill, and half an hour at doubling, sometimes we went for a swim, it was rather surprising the water was so warm in December, then back to Billets, breakfast, then parade at 9 a.m. drill. or route march, dinner at 1 p.m. parade 2 p.m. and more drill or lecture, or a route march, and if you were not on Picquet, you were free after 5 p.m.

After we had been there about a week, another Daughter turned up, she was a telephone girl at the Exeter Exchange she was rather a Tomboy, not at all like her sedate Sister, and she soon made us know she was about, the local telephone exchange, was in our Dining Room, and of course the bell was going all the time, the first morning she arrived, the bell ringing, she came to answer, putting in the plug she asked for the Number, she looked up at us rather startled, and turning to us said, I say there is some fun here, and this is how it went, for after the speaker, had said something, she would turn to us and repeat it, and ask us what to say next, she was careful to put her hand over the speaking tube, so that the person at the other end could not hear her telling us,

Hullo, you have a very nice voice Miss, will you hold on, after I have delivered my message.

Ethel, after a pause Ye'es,

the message was sent, and then the person spoke,

I say, I do like your voice, you must be a very nice little girl, are you engaged,

Ethel, No, not yet,

Well, I would like to take you out,

..... Ethel,

Ethel, alright, how shall I know you,

Oh, I am a L. Cpl in the Medical Corps, and I am dressed in Khaki,
not in the rotten, convicts clothes,

then we knew who it was, it was Electricity our old friend Moulding,

Ethel, are you married,

Moulding, No,

Ethel, are you engaged,

Moulding, No,

Ethel, well let me have your Photo, and if I like the look of you
I will walk out with you,

Going on Parade, we all took great care to get near Moulding, and Barber started the ball rolling, by saying, I am a L. Cpl in the Medical Corps, and I am dressed in Khaki, the look of rage, and then a rather foolish grin came over Mouldings face, some of the men asked what the joke was, and of course it soon went round the Amb. Poor old Electricity, he first tried to make out it was not him, then he tried to pass it off with a joke, but the baiting got worse he finally threatened to write to the Post Master General, about one of the Staff repeating what was said on the Telephone, we thought it time to pull him up, and we told him that if he reported Ethel, we would all go to Orderly Room, and he realised that carrying on a flirtation on the telephone, while he was on Duty would not sound very nice in the C.Os ears, so he had the good sense, to say nothing, and the whole affair died down,

The daily work was getting a lot more interesting we had stretchers issued out to the Amb, and we were at last to get an idea, of what it would be like to carry wounded, for so many men would lie down, and written on a label attached to their coat, would be what was called imaginary wounds, and we had to dress them, and be inspected by the Officer, to see if it was done correctly, we made a fine job of some and others, well words would not describe our efforts, for the Officers would put down the technical terms (the reason as they told us for this was, so that the patient, if conscious would not know his trouble) and we would have a guess at what it meant,

..... there was

there was a fine large drill hall, so this was commandeered, and we had our lectures there, drilled in it in wet weather, and inspections, the number of the latter, was too painful for words, but as we were gradually being issued out with more kit, they could always find some excuse, the early morn jerks being over one morning, the C. O. inquired if there were any men, who would like to go in for Cross Country Running, several fell out, but not enough for a team, so he came round, he asked Brownhill to have a try, and as I was about Brownies size, I volunteered so every morning, on Physical Jerks parade, the order would be fall out the Cross Country Team, and off we would go, and the first time out, the C.O. who fancied his chance took us an awful route, and when we arrived at our billets, mud up to our waists, and tired of hill climbing at the double, Ernie and I talked about giving it the go by, but as Sgt Barnett, had been a Runner, he talked us round, and we carried on,

After about a fortnight, the food in our Billet began to get on shorter rations, and as the sea air gave us an appetite, we were not satisfied, the Sergeant spoke to the Landlady and she said, I cannot give you such food, and plenty of it, you must have it plainer if you want more, so we had it plainer,

One day Webster, one of the six in the room with me, was sitting next to me at table, and whilst we had cold meat potatoes and bread he had hot joint and potatoes, so I promptly told the Sergeant, that if one member was to have special food, we would all have it, a fine row followed, and I wound up by saying, any one would think you were Boss here, he flushed scarlet, called me a Spy, and left the room, I did not mean to upset him so, and went after him, but he would not listen to me, and when the others came to look for us, we were practising for a fighting match, being seperated I went back to my dinner, but Webster never forgave me, the truth of the whole matter came out, he was secretly engaged to Alice, rather quick work, but that was his business, it seems he had been walking

..... out with

out with her every night, they would meet some distance off, and as Brownhill, Bolton and I had been going for walks, every evening, he thought we had been following him, it was a surprise to us, but we promised we would not say anything to the rest of the Amb, and the result was, that we made it up, and the landlady and the Sergeant, agreed that as he was going to have different food to the rest of us, that it would be better for him to have his meals elsewhere, and for the rest of the time, he dined with the Landlady and her daughter, but his courting days, judging from his looks, were anything but rosy, and we never spoke too his Fiance, unless we had too for the poor devil was as jealous, and showed it that the Sergeant told him off at last, still love plays strange pranks, and it had attacked him badly.

The first cross country race, came, and Ernie and I were in the team, being beginners, we decided we would jog along, and when those in front got tired, we would come along, and beat them, but we learned, that day, that it does not pay to get tired, and we finally finished together about the twenties, the Captain of the Team told us off, and said we finished too fresh to have been trying, and we promised him we would try and do better next time.

We had an artist, only seventeen years of age, in C Section, and he was about as much like a soldier, as a horse, he never once, seemed to realise he was in the Army, discipline was as nothing to him, he didn't salute the Officers, in fact everything he didn't at all like he did not do, and the result was, he was always in hot water, his section Sergeant was named Forman, and he had a large bump on the back of his neck, Glasgow the young artist, told us quite openly, he was fed up with Army Life, and he would plague Sgt Forman until he got his ticket, one day all the Amb, had to go too the drill hall, nailed on the door, was a perfect likeness of Sgt Forman and the Kaiser and underneath the words "Two Gentlemen", suspicion at once fell on Glasgow, and he made no attempt to hide the fact that it was him, and he was brought

..... up by the

up by the Sgt Major, next morning and charged with a list of crimes including, caricaturing an N.C.O., the upshot was, the crime being too serious for our C.O., he had to be Court martialled he was punished but was satisfied, as he got his ticket, Christmas was drawing near, and we heard that all men, were to have Xmas leave, with a free pass, but so that there would always be a good many on parade the leave was spread over six weeks, and we drew lots, for our turn, I drew the 8th January.

On the 24th Dec. we were lined up on the Cliffs, when a man in the ranks, just sank down, the men next to him, at once picked him up, but he was dead, he was an Irishman named Cain, from Belfast, and he had sent to his Wife that he would be over to see her after Xmas, the whole Amb fell in on Boxing day and as we had made up a Band, they led and played his body to the Station, and we followed, at slow march.

Christmas Eve, was to have another surprise for us, Hickenbottom one of the men in our Billet, was made a L. cpl, and to celebrate the occasion they put him on Picquet, on Xmas night, that meant that from five to half past ten, he would be marching up and down the Town with half a dozen privates, We had a splendid spread put before us by the Landlady, she was a very Motherly sort, and seemed to take an interest in all the men billeted on her, we gave her a small present, and she brought out, some home made wine to celebrate the occasion,

That night whilst we were in our Room, a loud knocking came at the door, down two of us went, and the picquet had brought our friend Hickenbottom to us, unconscious, they told us he fell, and struck his head on the curbstone, and he had a gash on his forehead, nearly three inches long, and his face was smothered in blood, the Sergeant ordered me to the Officers billet, to report that the Cpl of the Guard had met with an accident, the C.O. came, and going to his room, examined him, asked for a pin, pricked the bottom of his foot, smelt his breath, and walked out of the room, saying the mans beastly drunk, poor Hickenbottom, was a L. Cpl for thirty six hours,

.....the C.O.

for next morning, he was before the C.O. and when he asked, how it happened, said, the pavement seem to come up, and hit me, and he finished up by losing his stripe, and getting six days C.B.

Our Friend Lewis, had contrived to get a few more days at Devizes, his crime was, that he was seen walking, instead of doubling to the Wash-house, he arrived back at the Ambulance about Xmas, and meeting me, gave me sixpence he had borrowed, and said Swin, whatever you do keep away from Devizes, they would tame Lions there, never mind men, and he was a very different man to what we had last seen, I might almost say broken.

Ethel the Landlady's young daughter came home for holidays at Xmas, and all sortsof tricks and jokes were played on her, nothing could have been more to her fancy, for she soon had us watching out, to see what she was up to, but one morning after playing her up, I entered the Dining room, and all our tea was in cups, in our places, I turned too Ernie Brownhill, and said there is mischief afoot, I have never seen our tea round before we have sat down, so we promptly changed our cups, with the two Sergeants (as Ingram had lately been promoted) we had started our breakfast, when they appeared, and as they sat down, so Ethel came in, she gave one look, made a grab at their cups, and said Oh, your teas must be cold, but we had seen enough, and knew our tea had been doped, we thought out a plan of campaign, Ernie and I would go in, sit down in the shop, and put some mustard in a bun, and while we were doing this Barber would come in, and keep Ethel in the shop, so in Ernie and I went, Ethel came into the Shop to serve us, and we ordered buns, and tea, and as a favour asked her to have the same with us, she brought the tea and buns and then the shop bell rang, away she went, and then into her tea went the Salt, into her bun went the Mustard, and in she strolled with Barber, we ordered tea and buns for him, and then all sat down to eat together, and Ernie shouts,now who can take the

biggest bite, Ethel takes a large one, and spit and splutters, and I go round and hold her up, and say sorry Ethel, it was only a joke, have a good drink of tea, and she did, and we turned tail and fled, she had her own back, but she was a good sport, and however hard we hit back, she always looked round, for a way to get her own back, and she was often too successful, the Mother rather liked us livening the house up, but Alice was the reverse, the longer we stayed there, the more unhappy she became,

A few days later I reported sick, and was ordered into hospital for an operation, it was in a large private house, and run by the V.A.D. and they were very nice to us patients, I was rolling about one night, and one of the Nurses, stroked my head and kept saying Poor Boy, which of course was worth going through the pain for, she was an angel on earth, I heard one man say, If they had nurses like her, at all the Hospitals there would be so much malingering, that the war would end through shortage of men, in the bed on one side of me was Fagin, a young Irishman, who wanted to leave the R.A.M.C. and after various efforts, he learnt of a sure way, he had only to eat current cake, and palpitation set in, so buying some currents, he reported sick, and just before the Doctor came eat them, he was ordered into hospital, and finally got what he wanted, the next thing we heard of him he was in the Royal Field Artillery,

In the bed the other side, was a lad enjoying the name of Dobbs, and besides being mentally deficient, he was somewhat deformed, ears, mouth, and head quite abnormal, he was in spite of his disabilities, quite happy in the Army, and was always to the fore, when anything extra was to be done, and needless to say he was imposed on, but he never jibbed, the Doctor came round to examine him, and said,

Hallo Dobbs, what is the matter with you,

Eh, did you speak, said Dobbs,

the Doctor then examined that ear, and found he had hairs growing on the drum, but if you spoke on the other side he could hear all

you said, then the Doctor began that side,

Well Dobbs, how are you,

Fine, Sir Fine,

What were you before you joined the Army

An Officer in the Boy Scouts, Sir,

I mean, what did you do,

I was a cook Sir,

And what did you cook,

I peeled the potatoes, Sir,

The Doctors and Nurses smiled about it outside, that no one hurt his feelings,

The nurse coming in one day, called out, where are those clean sheets Dobbs, and he replies, in the Bathroom, having a bath Nurse, this answer was in reference to Fagin bathing, and she never let him think otherwise, sidling up to my bed one day he told me of the large house he lived in, and one would have pictured, from his discription, a Mansion run on a very lavish scale, I knew where he lived, it was in a block of tenements flats, but as he was pleased to magnify, what was after all his home, it was not in me to let him think I knew where he lived in Liverpool, he stopped with the Ambulance a few months and one week end went on leave, the next we heard was, he was journeying round the country with a Salvation Army Lass, our C.O., when he heard remarked that, that was the best Army for him, and that he should never have been enlisted, so he gave him his discharge, he wrote asking to come back, but I think our C.O. was right, as he was no more like a Soldier after six months hard training than the day he enlisted,

I was operated on, and was in a bad state, the First of January came, and went, and I received a severe admonition from my Sister, the First of January, had come and gone and I had not even sent my Mother a card, the whole trouble arose out of the fact, that I was told I would be able to go home on the 9th of

January, and I did not want them to know at home, I was ill, but being too bad to write, or remember about it of course the whole affair came out, I left the Hospital on the 8th and went on my Xmas leave the next morning, I had heard many disparaging remarks about our clothes, and was not at all anxious to be met with laughter, but having no other clothes, I had to wear them or forfeit my leave, I put on my Overcoat, and when I was in the train, put my hat in my pocket, and on my arrival home walked about in Civvies, the last time I was at Home, I had just enlisted, and now after 4 months, all I had to show for my service was a Convict outfit, minus the arrows, still it was very nice to be at Home again, and as Mother had saved a Xmas pudding, I had another Xmas, and enjoyed my holiday very much, for I had not spent so many days at Home for over Five Years, still all good times end, and with Flags fluttering merrily, in the breeze from all the windows, I set out once more, and on arrival was surprised to see nearly all the Lads dressed in Khaki,

The following morning, all who had just come back off leave were marched to the Stores, and issued out with Khaki, at last we were to go about looking like Soldiers, it would be no exaggeration to say, that the Morale of the Men, went up 50%, one felt that you could not let the Uniform down, whereas with the convict clothes, we only kept them clean and tidy from self respect, not from pride in wearing them, as per usual I came in for some of the leavings, but fortunately for me, a fresh lot came in, and I was issued out with a tunic that fit, the overcoat was for a 5 feet 10 inches man, and the trousers were big enough to make two pairs for me, the lads were so proud of their uniforms, and wanting to look smart had been to the tailors shop, and had them altered to fit, I, having been on leave had got my name down late, there was a parade, and those who had altered their clothes were fined 7/6, and seeing they had had to pay to have them altered they were well out of pocket, when they had a fresh issue, still

..... still what with

what with shining buttons, cap badge, and giving our boots an extra polish, we found that financially we were out of pocket buying cleaning kit,

We had no sooner got over the pleasure of our Khaki issue, than a rumour went round we are going abroad, and that night on routine orders, notice was giving that all men would be inoculated for overseas, any man who refused, would be kept on Home Service, we laughed at that, for we had not joined up, to be kept in England, what we wanted was to be sent overseas, and the sooner the better, and the next day on parade, we were amazed to see a man step out, his name was Black, and as he declined to be inoculated, he was drafted to a Hospital at Devonport, whether his guardian angel prompted him to refuse, I know not, but as you read you must judge whether he was lucky or otherwise,

They told us that 1,000,000, germs, would be injected, and ten days later another 2,000,000, to keep them company, I was very groggy, and did no parades for several days, although it upset some of us at the time, once we got over it, we did not feel any ill effects,

About this time, owing to several men having left the Amb, we had some new men join the unit, and as we were old soldiers with four months service in, we called them recruits, they were all miners, from the North East, and they soon started a war, about being called recruits, and there was some lively bantering went on, but it all died down, one of them was named Bott, and he was everlastingly drumming it down our throats about he was a Sergeant in the Northumberland Fusiliers, and they were soldiers that many of us myself included, thought he had been in the regular army, we found out later, that it was all moonshine, for one of the others, had known him for, 30 years, and he had never left the Village, so I think he was rather sore, at being called a rookie, and had invented it,

Sergeant Barnett one day said to me, Swindell, I heard in the Orderly Room, that they are asking for men for West Africa, all volunteers must have been to the tropics, I am going to put

my name down, what about you, I said rather anything to get out of England, and gave him all the places I had been to, it was a washout, for the Officer said to the Sergeant Major, I am not training men to have them taken away, send back, we have nobody in the Amb, who has been abroad.

The next thing they wanted men under five feet, three inches for drivers in the Royal Field Artillery, and among others down went my name, when the sixteen names, came out who were to be transferred, only those who had not passed their Exams, were down, and only two of those had volunteered, and the other fourteen had to go, amongst them being our old friend Lewis,

In spite of my efforts to get away, it seemed as if I was to stay in the R.A.M.C. so I decided I would not volunteer any more,

Every other day now we were doing long route marches, between 10 and 20 miles, and at last word went round, we are going on a long route march, one of Kitcheners Tests, the day came, and off we set, away through the villages of East Budleigh, Otterton, Colaton, Raleigh, Newton Poppleford, Sidmouth, and then cut inland to Ottery St Mary, where we had dinner, we finally land back, at a quarter to six, we had left at eight in the morning, we had on the way $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours in halts, and in $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours actual walking, had marched $31\frac{1}{2}$ miles, up hill and down dale, and we passed the test with only one man falling out, he was taken ill, but when we halted the C.O. congratulated us, on our fine march, and then said fall out the Cross Country Runners, you men ought to feel fit, so you can do picquet tonight, so it was Eleven. P.M. before I saw my billet,

The C.O. was very keen on keeping the men fit, what with physical jerks, doubling, marches, swimming and walking over the cobbles on the beach to strengthen our ankles, one would have thought it enough, but he was ever on the look for fresh stunts, and he occasionally, walked us along the beach, and then made us climb the cliff, and being red and rather wet, we would arrive at

the top after some half an hour, in a sorry state, and we always riled against it as it was such a job, cleaning oneself,

And we had several turns at night manourves, Woodbury Common was the selected spot, and we had some stiff times in the dark, what with holes, ditches, and all sorts of other obstacles that one could only see in the daytime, it was a wonder we ever did our work properly, it all seemed rot to us, but I suppose they had a purpose in making us do it,

But during the day when we had our manourves it was very interesting, a section would be told to get to one place, without being seen, and collect wounded, another section would form a temporary hospital, whilst another would lie in reserve, one day whilst we were on the later, we stopped besides a house, and the Owner came out, and spoke to the Officer, we all had a pot of cider given us, also some apples.

Another day, after some hard going, I was detailed off amongst several others to get to a certain spot, without being captured, three of us got through, I being amongst the lucky ones, and we all met outside a Farmhouse, and it was a picture, such a place as poets rave about, we decided after a while to risk it, and enquire if it was the place and going to the door I knocked, and a lady coming to the door, I stated who we were and found we had got the right place, having sometime to wait, she asked us in, and gave us something to eat and drink, then told us that this is the House where Sir Walter Raleigh was born, it was called (Hayes Barton) and she took us all over, and explained to us all the interesting memories attached to it, I took such a fancy to it that I often strolled that way to see it,

One of the tragedies of the war happened whilst we were here, the Battleship (Formidable) was sunk, but it was some distance from our spot, and I think it must have been about the only really cold day we had the mild weather was a surprise to many of us, but the Northerners were amazed,

Hereabouts, we had another test, a forced march this time,

with our water bottles, and haversacks full, for we had at last had these issued, and our coats rolled up, and hung over our left shoulders like a horse's collar, we walked to a certain point, and then halting, Lt Leacher told us we were $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles from home, and we had got to march there as quick as possible, anybody falling out, would be left to follow on, and there would be no halt, away we went, and arrived with Lt Leacher leading, in 80 minutes, and the only man to fall out was a Sergeant Sutton, a regular who had rammed it down our necks, that the regular army would walk us off our feet, he never told us it again,

I got into touch with an old shipmate of mine, who was born in Devon, and he wrote and asked me to call on his Aunt, at a little Village called Newton Poppleford, I wrote and asked when I could call, and receiving an answer anytime, I paid them a visit one evening, and they all made me very welcome, that, before I left I felt I had known them, for as long as I had known my old Shipmate Ernie Rice, I left in time to get back before lights out, after promising I would call at least once weekly, an offer which I gave most readily, for I found the Devonshire Lassies just as fascinating as Ernie had told me they were, always after my first visit, they always had a Devonshire Dumpling, and a pot of Clotted Cream for me, I left there one night in the Company of a Farmers Daughter, and arriving at her home we parted, to my sorrow, for she was such good company, I could have walked to Budleigh Salterton and back again. I then set off at a good pace, it was a dark night, and a country road without lights, after going some distance, I had a feeling come over me that I was being watched, I listened with beating heart, all was silent, I walked on again, the same feeling came over me, each time I stopped all was silent, but no sooner did I set off, than the same weird feeling of being watched came over me, to say that I was nervous, would be to put it mild, all sort of horrible deeds, that have happened, and could happen on dark roads flashed through my brain, presently I heard whispers, and then I knew for certain, & fear lending me wings, away I

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dashed, and running as hard as I could, I was determined that if it was my money they were after, they would have to run for it, at last a light appeared ahead, and I knew it was Colatin Raleigh, and if I could get there, I would look for a policeman if there was one, I had got to a point, just before the Village, feeling very puffed, when I was startled to hear a voice shout, ' Halt, Advance and Be Recognised, Knowing instinctively that here were friends I stopped, up went my hands, and then an Officer approached saw my Cap Badge, Swore, and said all that fuss for nothing,

I saluted and told him of my awful time on the road, he held his sides and roared with laughter, patted me on the shoulder and said it is alright, it was some of my men on Patrol Duty, their is a mimic battle on tonight, and we have heard from them of your movements this last twenty minutes, and thus ended my dream of highwaymen, and with a much lighter heart I set off to Budleigh Salterton, and knowing how I would get chipped if I told anyone, I kept quiet.

There were some very pretty walks round about, and on certain days you were allowed to walk round Lord Clintons estate, once on our rambles, we saw some people picking flowers, on upon investigating we found Violets growing, I picked some, and sent them home,

At last we were all fully equipped and the inspections were enough to drive anyone off their head, one day owing to rain we had the inspection in the Drill Hall, and all our kit, being laid out according to orders, the N.C.Os, saw you had not got it wrong, if you had the slightest thing wrong, fatigues or, Drill was your portion,

I was in the second row, and just before the C.O. entered the Hall, I happened to turn round, and talk to a Pal the next thing was 77th Field Ambulance. Shun, and we all sprang to attention and the C.O. then started his inspection, glancing down to make certain all was correct, I got a shock, my Tooth Brush, and Comb, were missing, it was the usual old soldiers trick, if you are short of anything, borrow (pinch) someone elses, all I could do

was to trust to luck, and hope that his eagle eye would miss looking at mine, he had inspected the front rank, and ordered them to pack up their kit, the man in front of me stooped and fell onto my kit, and disarranged it all, and in the commotion that followed he calmly replaced my Tooth Brush and Comb, I darent speak, or move, and I was so pleased to have them back that after inspection was over I said little about it to him, but made a vow that it would not happen again,

On our marches we used to sing, and were encouraged to do so, Lt Bragg got very upset one day, we were singing to a Hymn Tune Marching, Marching, Marching, always Blank well Marching

He halted us, and said any more and he would make us march to Attention, we had gone on for some distance when it seemed almost by command, the men started singing to the same tune.

Grouching, Grouching, Grouching,
He halted us, told us what he thought of us, and the following week, left us for another Ambulance, I don't know that he benifited by his change, for we heard later from one of them how they played him up,

Lt. Lescher, was sung too, the men would be on the march, when suddenly one would start, and the rest would join in, L.E.S.C.H.E.R. spells Lescher,
We are proud of all the Irish blood that is in him,
For (as you were) thats Him,
the expression (as you were) made the C.O. laugh, and Lt Lescher laughed, when he told him, it was in reference to his habit, when on Parade, he would shout some order, and then say, (as you were) however well a motion was performed, he would always shout (as you were), but he never stopped although we sang it,

Another member of the Ambulance, was Sergeant Forman, and it alluded to his bump on his neck the song we sang and it went, to the tune of John Browns Body.

Old Sergeant Forman has a pimple on his neck
But he still goes marching along,

A new Officer, Lt. Collard, of whom, I will write about later on, was quite an elderly man, and seeing this self same pimple, had designs on it, for one day we heard that he had cut it off, and no sooner was this known, than the lads sung about it, thus, to the Hymn Tune, There is a Happy Land

Where as that pimple gone, Far Far away,

Oh, how that pimple ran,

When it saw old Collard come,

Oh, how that pimple run, Far Far away,

He was furious, at as referring to him in such a disrespectful manner, and we had in future to sing,

When it saw Lt. Collard come,

and needless to say, we put the emphasis on the Lt.

On routine orders, one night the Sergeant Major read out, two Officers, Lts. Collard and Warren, are posted to the 77th F.A, the first time we saw Lt. Collard, was on the 9. a.m, parade, the whole ambulance was on parade, when on the parade ground, with the Sergeant Major, appeared what to us looked for all appearances, like a Crane from the Zoo, trussed up in clothes, the Sergeant Major handing us over to him, he addressed us, in a high pitched, wailing squeaking sort of voice, with his head going backwards and forwards, with his mouth opening and shutting like some automatic doll, and his eyes closed, I for one could not help smiling, and as the Sergeant Major, had his hawk eyes on us, quite a number had the pleasure of an hours extra drill, for smiling on parade, but he was a very nice man, nobody could be more careful, than, he was in looking after the men, in fact he was a real Doctor, and being at least 50 years of age, he must have found it impossible, to acquire the Army Style,

The second Officer, Phillip Warren, as he was known amongst the men, was a young man, just out of his training, and he had not been with us long before we found, he knew nothing about drill, or Army Life or discipline, although all Officers joining us, were supposed to have been through their drills etc,

On parade one day, whilst the C.O, was drilling by whistle,

..... he happened

he happened to be in front of me, and every time the whistle went, he would whisper, what does that one mean, and we would call just loud enough for him to hear, and then he would shout it out,

When on route marches with him, he would take us the quiet way, tell us to fall out, ask us if we were as fed up with all this drill, and marching, because if we were not, he was, and he had only been with us a week or two, he was bitterly upset about an Officer, not being allowed to have a drink in a public house, and used to say fancy, the pubs closed to me, the only Off Licence out of bounds, and billeted in the Hotel with the C.O. so that I cannot have a drink without him knowing, and there are my Pals in London, writing and telling me of the glorious times they are having, and I am stuck in this hole, I am going to get out of it, and he did, for he was transferred, and reached France some months before us,

We paid a visit to Exeter one Saturday, and saw a Football Match between Swindon and Exeter, afterwards we walked round to where Ethel worked, had a look at the Cathedral, and had a game of billiards, loser to pay, I paid,

Whilst out on supposed bandaging one day, the object we found was a drain pipe, about 15 feet long, by 3 feet, the tab on it says the complaint, and when the Officer came, he asked what was the matter with the patient, I could not help it, I said Tuber Colussus, he laughed, but then gave me a dressing down,

On one of our marches, we went Via Sidmouth, Ladrum bay where we had a swim, back by the beach road, and stopped outside of a House named, Sea View Farm, the Owner spoke to the C.O. and we were all invited into the place, and had cider issued out from, 60 large barrels, and always had they same, if we marched that way,

We had been training well, and had a Cross country race, and the whole country side sent teams, 12 of ten each, the first eight home to have a prize, the first team of six, a gold medal spiece, we lined up 120 strong, and away we went, and after being chased by a bull, some men losing shoes, some losing their way, we got near to the winning post, I finished 9th the Section Officer, picked me up, and carried me to the massuers, and I was soon

..... dressed and

dressed and watching the others come home, the 3rd and 8th were from the Ambulance, so we were well in the running for the Gold Medals, the 19th was our 5th only one more to win the medals, men came in, and presently the 6th of our Ambulance, walked in, said he thought six of the Amb. were in front of him, and had walked the last mile, by one point we lost our gold medals, the 9th place did not win me a prize, but the Officer gave me 5/- for doing so well for His Section,

We had a big day of manouvres, and after being in a Farm all day, B, section thought we had escaped any work, except a Hospital, when five minutes before the day was to end, a dispatch rider came with a message, a big battle somewhere, we found it eventually, and at last weary and fed up, we arrived back, at the billets, four hours after the rest of the Ambulance,

A route march was held by all the Ambulances, we were to march to a spot, and from there, every Ambulance was to march 25 miles, at different places, we should be watched, and points award for how we marched, appearance, etc, and we were the winners, much to our C.Os. delight,

We had had plenty of different sports etc, there was boxing, running, both kinds of Football, I could not understand the Rugby and was more interested in the Soccer matches, our ambulance did very good, and we had a good team, the final of the matches, were both to be played at Exmouth, the Rugby in the afternoon, and the Soccer in the morning, but a disappointment was in store for our billet, we had all decided that we would go and see the match, but as things turned out, our Friend Webster had decided to get married, on Easter Monday, at 1 p.m. things for a long time had been very strained in our billet, and for my part reached a climax one evening for on coming into the sitting room, I found Webster and his fiancée, with a small fire, and as it was our room, and we could not see the fire, I lifted the coal scuttle, to put some on, I thought he was going mad, I at last informed him, he was not head their yet, he cried at last, and went out, it was all very distressing, for after

all it could easily have been avoided on his part, but his jealousy was the limit, and he roused and snarled at all and sundry, I asked for a change of billet, but Sergeant Barnett, said we will be away soon, so don't let the business get abroad, or else, I shall have the whole matter up before the C.O, well I then said I would stick it, as long as Webster did not interfere with me, he got more morose, and he did not invite any of us to his Wedding, but the Landlady wanted us all, we refused, and at last, she begged and implored of us to stop at Home, and go to his Wedding for her sake, the Sergeant had us all together, and we had a talk, I at last said, I will stop if all the others do, after a couple of days all agreed and although it meant missing the Match, we would stay for his Wedding, some sports were arranged for the Ambulance, for Easter Monday Afternoon, so I entered the 3 mile race,

Easter Monday came, and I had to report to the orderly room, whilst waiting outside I heard Sergeant Barnett say to the Clerk, make out two passes for Exmouth, for Sgt Ingram and myself, that was enough for me, I knew that all their promises to attend Websters Wedding, were bunkum, I waited till he had his passes given, and went in, and asked for six more, Barber the 7th man had promised to be best man, so we had to leave him, when I got back to the billet and told the lads, they got ready, and when we arrived on the platform, the look on Sergeant Barnetts, and Ingrams faces, made us laugh, and we chipped them a bit, and arriving at Exmouth we saw our Ambulance lose, Gaynon, one of our Half backs had the misfortune to break his leg, and he left us, much to our regret, for he was not only a fine footballer, but a man who was very popular.

We arrived back at the Billet, in time for the Wedding Breakfast, Poor Old Webster, was laying down on the sofa, as miserable a looking bridegroom, as one could imagine, he neither spoke, eat, drank, or took the slightest interest in us,

..... We heard

We heard afterwards that as he was being married, he fainted and after it was all over, he was some overcome, that they had to carry him from the church on a stretcher,

They left that afternoon for their Honeymoon, a week later the C.O. got a letter from his Wife, asking for an extension of leave, as he had spent the whole week in bed, when he did come back, we were on the move, so we did not have any further friction,

I was doing very well in the 3 mile race, I was laying third and on the last lap, a hundred yards, from the winning post, and it was a hilly course, the first man collapsid, the second man fell over him, and kicking out his legs, got them between mine, as I tried to avoid him, I turned over, and over, and finally slid down a bank, they picked me up, and carried me to the drill hall and they found I had a place, on my thigh as big as a saucer, full of dirt, and grass, they cleaned it out, and I was limping for three weeks,

As the time passed many were the remarks about drawing room soldiers, have the War Office forgotten we are here, the war will be over before we are needed, underlying the jokes, and jests, was a feeling of hope, mingled with a feeling of almost despair, that all our training would be of no avail, one could not fathom the motives of the ruling powers, and many men who had enlisted for duration of the war, months afterus, were out in France, but at last the rumour went round, we are being moved, joining our Division, we shall be out in France in no time, as usual, it was stretched more, and more, and one would almost think, we would go straight abroad, but all good things come to an end, and our time of being in billets, was drawing to a close, we had been very lucky, in the village, for after the first shock, of our convict clothes, had worn off, we were taken to the hearts of the inhabitants, and there were many men, who were not at all pleased when the order was read out that we would be leaving on the morrow,

Webster had got married in our Billet, and Will Barber left his heart behind in the keeping of Ethel, and many more were in a like fashion, we felt we had progressed, and the C.O, was pleased, when the time came to move, and thus ended another phase of our Army Life,

We went to Bulford Camp on the Plains, it was a great change after Billets, and the men were anything but happy, and welcomed the announcement that we were here only for a week, and would then join a Brigade.

We arrived at Winchester, and marched from the station to a Camp, when we arrived, we found a large camp, on two sides of a gently sloping valley, and the Brigade we were attached to was one belonging to the 17th Div.

The name given to the Camp, was Flowerdown Camp, and a very appropriate name, it was an ideal spot, and we had to get the whole of our Camp ready, and built all the places ourselves, and for Hospital Stores, and Officers Mess, we erected large Marquees, and for sleeping quarters, tents were erected, the Officers had one a piece, and the men, one between twelve, we had not been here long before we discovered, that we were under a different routine, and we were quite under the impression that we would be going overseas, with the 17th Div, we went out on a 3 days trek the destination was a Village called Medstead, it was beautiful weather when we arrived, and were told we were to sleep where we could in a field, with a little Copse one side of it, some of us went for a walk to the Village, and it was well worth a visit, for it was such a pretty clean place, and the gardens were a picture, we arrived back and we soon noticed a change in the weather, and before long it poured with rain, it was the first time we had actually to bivouac in the rain, and we had a very wretched night,

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and got up early next morning, very wet, cold and miserable, the sun came out, and we were soon on the return journey, we had a bugle band now, and we were able to march to martial and other strains, and when the band stopped we sang, and we always found it a great help to us, to walk to a tune.

One thing we soon noticed different was, that a Battalion of the Notts and Derby had a different Reveille to us, ours went in a very mournful way, and we used the old soldiers words to it,

Get out of Bed, Get out of Bed,

You lazy lubbers,

Get out of Bed, Get out of Bed,

You lazy lubbers,

One more day in which to serve the King,

but theirs was a fine lively tune, and was a cheery call, and went to the words of,

Charlie, Charlie, get up and dress yourself,

Charlie, Charlie, get out of bed.

We were allowed out of camp at nights, and as the evenings were drawing out a bit, we were able to get a few short country walks in, and one Village about a half mile away named Crawley, and we were told that one of the Sassoon family had built it all, it was a very pretty Village, and as I found out later, was held up to be a model place, sometimes, we would go into Winchester.

One thing about Winchester that upset us, was the number of Officers about, you could not walk anywhere, without saluting, one evening after a good spell of it, I decided to look into a shop window, when I saw one coming, and as I was shop gazing, I heard a clatter as a horse came on the pavement, and turned round sharply to see which way to run, it was a Sgt. Major of Police, I sprang to attention as he addressed me, and leaping off his horse, said 8 months in the Army, Well this was what I was taught to do, when an Officer passed me, when I had only been in the Army 5 minutes, and he thereupon saluted some Officers who were passing, he took my name and number, but I never heard anything more about it,

..... and I took

and I took good care, I did not try, and avoid any Officers in the future,

One thing that was very nice about the new routine was, providing you paid 1/3 fare, you could get leave more often, and as I lived in Richmond, and the majority of the lads came from the North of England, I was able to get home more often, on one trip from here I saw my Aunt who had lived with us, and on going back I heard that she was not well, I saw a telegraph boy approaching the Camp, and a feeling came over me, she had died, and it was a telegram to tell me so, I went right over to the Notts and Derby Camp to meet him, and said, have you got a telegram for me, my name is George Swindell, Yes he answered, but I must deliver it to the Orderly Room, and get a receipt, it was as I had felt, and I had two leaves, in successive weeks.

Going home one week, several of us, got into the train together, and after we had started a Dear Old Lady, came along, and handed out strawberries and cream, it seems she did this every day, all she wanted in return, was all to write in her autograph book, the saying I wrote was,

The three quickest ways of communication,

Tele-phone,

Tele-gram, and

Tell a Woman,

I am sorry to say she did not like it and tore it out,

One of our Lancashire Lads, named Ben Omerod, was killed in London, he was rather amazed at the sights, and whilst gazing about him, at the tall shops, stood in the centre of the road, and was knocked down, they made a collection for him.

At the Town Hall in Winchester, a series of concerts were held, and several from our Amb, took part, the Brothers Richardson, took part in some characters out of Dickens, another man named Kerr, sang such songs as "Trumpeter", "Jeanette and Juno", and another one who was a great favourite sang "Will O the Wisp", "Devon", "The Golden Vanities".

Just near the College where the Brook flows by, they had

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boarded off a part, and weekly we were marched down to bathe, and it was very welcome,

Sometimes for Church service, we were marched to the Cathedral, and it is a fine building, we were told that under its foundations is a stream, one Sunday we had just taken our seats, when an Army Padre spoke to us, and said, I hope you fellows have brought some money with you, this choir has to be paid for singing, they don't sing for the benefit of their health, we felt up in arms, at the way he had spoken, and he got 3d from about 100 men,

There are scores of memorials round the walls, and as it is the Garrison Town, for the "Rifle Brigade", there are a great many in Honour of the Men of that Regt.

Coming out of the Main Entrance, and walking along, the first grave stone is one that never fails to draw the people, and it is so quaint, I will give some of the words that are on it, the stone itself has been renewed once or twice, but as always had the same words put on it, and they run.

Here lies the Body of a Hampshire Grenadier,
Who died drinking hot, cold small Beer,
Soldiers beware of his untimely Fall,
And when drinking beer, drink it Cold

Or not at all.

We were marched to Farley Hill, for an inspection, it was very warm, and when we were on parade, the sun simply poured down on us, and several men fainted, including our old Friend Webster, who seems to be able to faint at will.

A Sergeant named Hawksworth was the cause of a courtmartial, he used to gamble and however much he lost, was never short of money, always paid his way, and went on leave and got married, but, his castles were about to fall, for upon examining the books, it was found he had helped himself to our money, thus taking advantage of his position as Pay Clerk, the Sergeants who had played with him, made up the deficit, but he was stripped and left the Ambulance.

One day after a rather strenuous time, we arrived back, ready

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to tackle the flour duff the cooks had made, we had to buy our own flour, and it came, one pudding to a Tent, and upon cutting it open, I do not dare print what was said, they had burnt the top and bottom and the middle was, runny, like syrup, pudding for 250 men, had to be dumped into the swill tub, for the pigs,

Orders were given that during the rainy weather, all guide ropes on the tents must be slackened, and for a joke, some kind chap would pull them all tight if you did not keep a watchful look out, one night we caught, and the joker having tightened the guide ropes, and a storm coming up, the deed was done, the ropes tightened up to there limit and at last the poles, burst through the top, down it came on us, we were floundering about, and at last the Guards, pulled it off of us, and we were fined, 7/6 the cost of repairing the tent, we never found out who did it,

The man next to me was a Scot, he had a real brogue, sometimes when he had partaken of a drop to much, it was impossible to understand him, three weeks before going on leave he gave all his money to me, for he said, every pub I pass it burns a hole in my pocket, he was really a decent sort but had little control over himself, the day came, and Archibald Conn, to give him his name, left for Glasgow, that day, we read of the terrible tragedy a Gramthem, when so many soldiers were killed, and it was the train he was catching, but providence, or beer had taken a hand, for meeting some fellows Scots he had been drinking, and missed the train, and when he came back, I would sometimes, remonstrate with him about getting drunk, he would always reply, don't forget, getting drunk saved my life.

The 17th Division left the locality for service overseas, but it was not long before a brigade out of the 25th Division came to the camp, and we then heard Officially, that this was the Brigade we would go overseas with,

A week went by, and word went round, we are being inspected by a General, and visions of being overseas before June was out, floated before our eyes, the drill was intensified, the Camp was cleaned up three times a day, our kit was examined, the Kitchen,

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and other Offices were made to look new, the inspections were simply maddening, and at last the day came, we were lined up, and dismissed three times, we were inspected to see that all our kit, was spick and span, and by the time the General came we must have looked, like a lot of Tin Soldiers.

On to the Parade Ground strode, General Sir Archibald Murray, there was none of the fleeting glance about this, he examined every man, next to me stood Old Man Edwards, with a ribbon on his breast, reaching him, he said,

How old are you,

Thirty Nine, Sir,

I do not mean Officially, I mean your real age, for I see you have the Medal for the bombardment of Alexandria, do you remember, Admiral, Lord Charles Beresford being there,

Yes, Sir,

Well, I congratulate you, for your pluck in joining up,

And we found out that Old Man Edwards, was 52 years old.

The General having finished his inspection, addressed us, and said we were a credit to the Army, and he would like a Photo of our Camp, as it was Ideal.

I do not know who felt the proudest, our C.O. or us, and we learned afterwards, we were the only unit, out of the whole Division, of 20,000 men, to whom he had addressed words of praise, our chests fairly swelled with pride,

That is one of the natural sequences of the Army Life, once you have settled down you seem to lose the feeling, that you wish to fight against restraint, and you pass almost unconsciously to the time when you respond to discipline, and once that sets in, the Army have succeeded in their aim, that of subjugation to their will, and render you just a cog in the wheel, that will automatically perform duties as a matter of routine, and when you look back on the freedom you have lost, you realise that you are an individual in name only, you have been robbed of the power of thinking, or rather you have for your peace of mind, relegated it to the back of your

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mind, and then to me and I know to many others, came for the first time a pride in the Regiment,

One of the duties we had to take seriously now, was Guard, the flag pole was erected at the entrance to the Camp, and from across piece, hung a Union Jack, and a Red Cross, at night they were hauled down, and a red a white light put up in there place,

One night a figure loomed up in front of me, and I immediately challenged, getting no answer, I repeated the challenge, still no answer, and I then forgot to call the Guard out, but, I could see it was an Officer, who had dined wisely perhaps, but had drunk too much, he told me in a thick voice he would report me, for non attendance to duty, as both lights were out, and off he went, I whistled the Guard, and reported to the Coporal, and next day I was on the mat, I told the C.O. what had occurred, and that the reason for not having the lights, relit was that I must not leave my post, I was surprised to hear him say dismiss, and I never heard any more of it,

Another night being on Guard over the Horses, which had just been sent to us

Two of us, were inspecting the lines to see that the Horses were safely tethered, when my comrade said, look out George, there are some men crawling along there, we crept round, as we had been warned about Gypsies, and getting to the back of them, raised our sticks over there heads, and threatened them with violence if they moved, when a maudlin voice said, don't be balmy, and I recognised one of our regular boozers, they had been out on the Beer, overstayed their time, and were trying to reach their tents without being caught,

We lost several of the Ambulance about this time, as a number were drafted to the depot to form the new ambulances, one of them named Barry, was in his own way a perfect Don Juan, and one day he dropped a letter from one of his conquests, one of the men picked it up, and read it out to the men, and he came in for a good deal of chipping, just then Barry came along, and when he was told, he was furious, we had listened to Saunders reading it, and

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would certainly have thought if Barry had not said it was his letter, that it was Saunders, it nearly came to an Orderly Room Case, but we managed to calm him down, it was not a nice thing to do, and we were not sorry to lose Saunders,

Standing at the entrance to the wash-house, I was petting a dog, when Vic Hunt, a decent chap, welcomed me, hullo George, what have you got there, I was very pleased to see him, he was very reserved, and refined, and I knew from him that he was going to be married when next on leave, he had just come back from his Honeymoon, and after congratulating him, I was twiddling my fingers behind my back, when I let out a yell, the dog I had been petting had taken a fancy to my fingers, and bitten three of them, I let drive with my boot, and rushed off to the dressing room, where the dispenser cauterized them, they swoll up like little sausages, and were a sight, but at last to my delight they began to look a bit more natural.

Our hopes of the journey overseas were once again dashed to the ground, for as the result of General Sir Archibald Murrays, report, the Div. was once again split up, to put in a further period of intensive training, before being brought together as a Division, for the final training prior to going overseas,

Our Ambulance was the only Unit, that passed his test, no blame can be attached to any of the C.Os, for by a stroke of good fortune, our Unit had the luck to have a Regular Army Sergeant Major, in Sgt. Major Hunt, and where the other units had to learn from books, we were trained by one who had made the Army his profession,

One example was the C.O. of the 8th Batt Border Regt. having enlisted at the beginning of the War, and risen to the rank of Lt. Col. more for his enthusiasm, than ability, he played the men up, and mutterings of the men reaching his ears, he lined them up, told them he had heard, that as soon as they got him to France they would put a bullet through him, he told them that he was sorry, they did not like his treatment, but it was for their good, as they were so slack, that ridig dicipline was the only means of

..... making

making them efficient, and as for shooting him, who ever did it would have to shoot him through the back, as they would find, he was determined to lead them in France, the same as in England, and he was as good as his word, about training, for if anything he became stricter than ever, but I know a lot of the men changed in their attitude to him, as the result of his talk.

We had had a very nice time at Flowerdown Camp, and when the news that we were going back to Bulford was put around, a feeling of general depression set in, and whilst we had marched into Camp singing, we were just the opposite when leaving, and were quite prepared for the drubbing we were in for,

Arriving back at Bulford we were welcomed by our old friends Major Sylvester Bradley and Walrus Warner, and almost before you could get to the Hust, a dozen were up for slackness, whilst we had been away, I should think these two had been spending their time, finding out new crimes, but if there is one thing above all others, you learn in the Army, it is to be smart, men were given fatigues, and drills for rusty looking shoelaces, many of us were caught for the most trifling things, and did many a heart-breaking hour, at drilling under the vigilant eye of Walrus, with the prospect of another one the next evening, if he mentioned you, it is one of the enigmas of Army Life that I was never able to solve, how men going on parade to drill, with the knowledge that the C.O. and the Sgt. Major, would be there to find fault, were able to complete evolutions, barked at them by Sergeants, only too anxious, not to get in there superior officers bad books, was little short of marvellous, the petty sniping, and fault finding at this camp were the limit, let a private blow his nose crossing the parade ground, after you had been dismissed for the day, or walk across the Parade Ground, without looking to see if any Officer was outside his hut, and he was for it, we had indeed a pair of martinets,

The first thing we were anxious about was the food, and some large dining rooms had been built, as you went in you took some bread off a pile, the men on the last lap, were unlucky, so they changed that, and put the bread for twelve men on each table,

..... still that

still that didn't help, for as the men walked pass the tables, they borrowed a piece, and took their own rations as well, and it finally ended, by men being detailed off, one to each table, each day, and he was responsible for each man on his table getting his rations,

The first night for tea, amongst about a dozen, I went to the hut, and found no rations and walking away in disgust, the Orderly Sergeant asked what was the matter, we told him, and he marched us to Walrus, and out from his tea he came, no rations, Eh, well you must have been late, for tea parade, you men will peel potatoes this evening, for being late on tea parade, and perhaps that will liven you up, it did me, for I never caught potato peeling again the whole month, we were there,

One of the lads had learnt a popular song with the army just then, and it was soon picked up by the whole of us, and before we had been in the camp 48 hours, we were singing it lustily, and it went to the tune of the Hymn, What a Friend we have in Jesus, and word run something like this,

Roll on when we go on Furlough,
Roll on when we go on Pass,
You can tell the Sgt. Major,
Any blooming thing he likes to ask,
For when we get our Civvy Clothes on,
Oh, how happy we shall be,
For when this blinking War is over,
No more soldiering for me,

The C.O. was very pleased to hear us singing, until he heard the words, then ~~the~~ band played, the Glass Eyed Martinet, let us know he did not like it and gave us 2 hours drill per night for a week,

Walking round the hut, inspecting us one morning, the only fault he could find was when he drew his handkerchief out, and drew it along the top of the door, and it got dirty, but once outside, he had a brain wave, lined us up, and told us, that around our hut was a disgrace to the British Army, and if it did

.....not look

not look smarter by noon, he would know the reason,

Heads were put together, for he found the same fault with all the huts, and it was agreed that while some were levelling the dirt, and clearing the stones some of us, would go up on the downs, and collect flints, it being chalky there, they were plentiful, and we set them neatly about two feet away from the Huts all the way round, and when he inspected we at least expected some word to say it was alright, but he was not that sort, the stones look alright, but the place looks so bare, couldnt you find some plants,

We could almost have laughed, the only things that grew there were grass, and trees, but not for long, for at night it appeared on routine orders, that the C.O. was giving a prize to the hut with the best garden,

Many of us drew 3d per day, and the thoughts of parting with our little bit of money for the sake of gratifying his horticultural whims, was beyond a joke, and whilst some of the huts, wrote, and ordered plants, we strolled up to the top of the hill, raided somebody's wood and borrowed any small trees just beginning to grow, and planted them, needless to say all we got, was a freezing stare, and I doubt if he even considered us in the prize sharing scheme,

There must have been in the locality, about 20,000 troops, and at the village of Bulford, had about a couple of dozen houses in it, it was placed out of bounds,

And one day, strolling, leisurely along the road came a damsel, we had not seen one, since we arrived, and word went round, soon the roads were lined with men gazing on this strange creature, some passed saucy remarks, some passed remarks, that pronounced them experts in this line, and at last, not being able to stand it any longer she stamped her foot, and with a toss of her pretty head, and tears in her eyes said,

I will tell Father of you rude men, for staring, and laughing at me,

Thereupon, she came in for some more nice remarks, such as

..... won't Father

won't Father be pleased, can I be your Father, and at last out of sight we watched her go, the only member of the opposite sex, for all we knew, for miles around,

We had seen the fun, and the time came to pay the price, unfortunately for us she was a Generals Daughter, and for the next week every evening instead of being dismissed we were marched up and down hill, about 400 yards high, for an hour, but she had the good sense not to come for another walk towards the camp,

Being detailed for duty, with some others, at Bulford Hospital we were sitting in our Guard tent, when a shot rang out, and rushing round, it was found to be a Welsh Officer who tired of life, had shot himself, we learned afterwards, he was a rising young Welsh writer, and Mr. Lloyd George, had said of him, that at last a Welsh genius was arising, to tell the world the poetic story of Wales,

Signs that we might be making a move were in evidence, all the wagons to do with an Ambulance, had arrived, three two horse Ambulances, nine two horses, general service wagons, with all the necessary hospital equipment, three water carts, and a few odd carts, and wagons, certain of the men were detailed off to look after them, untill, the detachment of Army Service Corps men, were drafted to us,

Sometimes with Officers mounted, and all the wagons etc, we would go for long route marches,

The Lt. and Quarter Master was an old Army man, and he was as jealous of his stores as a miser of his gold, let any body, go to the stores, to replace lost, stolen or strayed Kit, and he would roar, and mumble mobilization kit, and standing joke among the men, was you must not take a horse for a ride, else old mobilization, will make you buy some new tips, he was a character and I must say a decent chap, for he never let us go short of necessary articles, that would be useful for us to learn about, for overseas service,

One day he managed to get a horse, that would take his portly frame, and not jolt it, the horse was as stout, and placid

..... as he was

as he was on a route march, and once when mounting, he gave such a lurch, when lifting his leg over the horse back, that he just completed the evolution, and landed on his back, underneath the horses stomach,

After a few days leave, I returned, and as usual reported to the Guard Room, and giving my pass in, was told to report at the Sergeants Mess in the morning for duty,

I was up and doing early and went to see the new Sergeant Major, one of the Richardsons, who had joined the Ambulance at Tidworth and told him in a very respectful way, that I had no desire to be a flunkey, I would much prefer to be in the ranks, once again I was lucky, for he said, I will overlook your insolence, report to the Mess Sergeant for duty, you can do it for pay, or as a fatigue, it is immaterial to me, and knowing the law was on his side, I had no desire to do a weeks extra work for nothing, and asked for pay, and at the end of the week, received 5/- and was glad when the mess orderly came back,

To many, that was one of the injustices of army life, if you were picked to work in the Sergeants Mess, Officers Mess, Canteen, or any similiar duty, you had no choice, but to do it, for if you refused to do it for pay, you would have your name read out, on routine orders, that you were on so and so fatigue for a week, which meant the job you refused to do previously for money, you had now to do for nothing, or else go to clinque for disobedience and sundry other crimes,

After being here some weeks, we heard that every man would have, 6 days leave which meant a free pass, or as it was known draft leave, usually the prelude to being sent overseas, we knew once that was posted, that it was considered by the (Ones at the Head), that the whole Division had passed all of its test,

And after the whole Ambulance had had their leave, it was read out, on routine orders, Major H.B. Kelly, is posted to the 77th Field Ambulance, for duty, being the Senior Officer, the post of Commanding Officer was naturally his, it must have been a little bit, upsetting to Captain Alderson, who had been our C.O.

for 10 months, so there was a shuffling of the Sections, the old A Section was the C.O.s. the old C Section was taken over by Captain Alderson and called B Section and the Old B Section, with Captain Lescher became C Section.

Next morning Major Kelly inspected us for the first time, he spoke a few words to us, he was a man of action, as we found out later not given to over much talk, he was to look at, about 50 years of age, in reality, he was only 32 years of age, he was a regular army Officer, and being drafted from India, went to France with the original Expeditionary Force, and being in a Church a few miles from Mons, with a great deal of wounded, he had to stay with them, when Jerry made a push, and was with the wounded, when the Germans surrounded the village, the whole were taken prisoners, in August 1914, and after nine months as a prisoner, he was exchanged, as a Non-Combatant,

The time he had been through had left its mark, he was almost iron grey, and when speaking, had a very peculiar accent, to remind one, of a person standing erect, and at the same time, drawing their chin right back, into their chest, and speaking from his throat,

We learned afterwards that he was a relation of Admiral Beatty, after whom he had been given his second name, he was a man ^{that} inspired confidence, and the men took to him, instinctively feeling that here was a man, who it would be a pleasure to serve under.

The C.O. had not been with us long, when it was published on orders that the 75th. 76th and 77th Field Ambulances, would be leaving Bulford, to join their respective Brigades at Aldershot,

It was happy news for us, at long last we were to see the back of Major Bradley and Walrus, the C.O. ordered each Ambulance in turn to be mustered in the large matquee, and he would give a farewell speech,

We were all in, when the Sgt. Major, orders, 77th F.A. shun, and on the stage walks, Major Sylvester Bradley, monacle in position, swagger stick, and resplendant in a new uniform, ordering us at

..... ease,

ease, he proceeded in his usual manner, to tell us, that we were a credit to the Army, of course this was a compliment to himself, and that we would soon be called upon, to carry out the duties, for which we had been trained, and finally wishing us Good-bye, he said, when I look at you, fine specimens of English manhood, my mind wanders back to Tidworth, when you came to me as Civilians, undisciplined and untrained, I Fed you when you were hungry, and Clothed you when you came to me in RAGS and I made you into Soldiers and Men.

The Sergeant Major then stepped forward, now then altogether, three cheers for the Commanding Officer, there was not a murmur, you could have heard a pin dropped, the C.O. gave us a frigid stare went crimson, and strode off the stage,

It was a wonder Walrus didn't explode, to think after the indignities we had suffered at the C.Os. hands, and finally, in his beastly metallic, sarcastic voice, tell us we came to him in Rags, why their were men in the Ambulance, who were better educated, some stronger in health, others in wealth and although the whole Ambulance, had joined up in 1914, volunteers, one and all, with a thought only, for the Ideal, that had led them onwards, to be treated as if we were a set of ignoramuses, was beyond the pole, no words I can pen, can adequately define, our collective feelings, but deep down, there had the whole time, we had to suffer him, been a feeling of bitter resentment, to have shown it, openly in every day duties, would have been to court heavt punishment, but every thing comes to him who waits, and at long last the oppurtunity of his own making came, and the men took it,

The same evening, we marched out of Camp, we had to march at attention past him, and he stood their, like a statue, I did not envy him, his thoughts, and the general hope amongst us was that, we had seen the last of him,

If he analysed the cause of our slight to him, perhaps those who came under his command may have been treated more like men, and not like us beasts of the field, some attempted to defend his actions, on the ground that we were a tough lot to train, but

..... when all

when all was boiled down, no case could be possibly made out for his, tyranny,

Never once did that time come up in my presence, in the course of conversation, showing that the matter was one that was better forgotten,

We left the Camp, and marched to Bulford Station, and like all movements in the Army, something was wrong, and we had a three hours wait, before the train came in, and it was daylight, when we reached our destination, and we marched to a place on the outskirts of Aldershot, called Bourley Camp,

We arrived, what a Camp, plenty of sand, dirty condition, and it had actually had horse lines, before we came,

The memory of the Canadians, we had heard about, dying like flies on the plains, with Spotted Fever, through being Camped on old horse lines, and we felt anything but happy,

But we had reckoned with out our new C.O. he was as disgusted with the place as we were, and that day the whole camp before tents were pitched, was cleaned, cleared of everything, but the sand, and great quantities of disinfectant scattered broadcast, and all the Officers inspected it piece meal, before that passed it as fit,

Next day, we had another of the examples of Army orders, that could only have been given, by somebody who had not seen the place, we lay in a hollow, on the bank above us, the Army Service Corps, had to pitch there horses lines, and despite our C.Os. protest to H.Q. there they stopped, and if the wind came from there way, we got sand, manure, and smell, in abundance, how an epidemic was avoided, is a marvel,

Complaints of sand etc in food, were made in plenty, but all signs showed that we were nearing the end of our training, the rifle butts, across the road from our camp, were in use, every available minute of daylight, route marches, with kit as issued out, to be carried, inspections daily to see that all

..... our kit

our kit was in order,

The Quarter-master, Lt. Moore, was like a man demented, the time approaching for going over seas, and kit, and equipment that we must have, had not been sent, woe to him, who went and asked for anything, and the men, soon learned to give the Stores, a wide berth, when he was in it,

Many times we marched on Laffins Plain, and we learned that is where Lord Kitchener inspects all his Divisions, before they go overseas, sometimes the King also inspected them,

There we marched, our feet sinking up to our ankles, and blessing the powers that be for sending us to such a spot,

One thing we appreciated was being able to go into the Town, but there again, trouble was to be found, the last time we were here, was as Civilians, now we were to them old soldiers,

Go where ever you might, you would meet a Red Cap. (Military Police), stop to look in a shop window, and not have your swagger cane under the left arm, your legs apart, and hands clasped, as at ease, on parade, and a tap on the shoulder, and an order, name number, and regiment, and next day, you got C.B. for heinous offences, the Red Caps were the bane of our lives, and the only way to surmount it, was too, at all times, and in every way, act as if you were on parade,

One night several of us went to the Theatre, this was the first public place of amusement, I had been too, since joining up, we were lined up outside, and half an hour before the doors, opened, along came our friends the enemy, the Red Caps, every soldier in the queue, was inspected, the slightest thing about, you, that met with disapproval, and down went your name, number, and regiment, and no theatre for you, that night,

Sometimes we were marched down to a stream, and had a bathe, the march back, over the sand, invariably made one as dirty again, as when we started,

Again at other times we went round the Barracks, strangely

..... altered,

altered, since we came as recruits, outside the Officers mess, at the Cavalry Barracks, the Hussars Band played during their dinner, and it was a treat to listen to them, and we paid visits to the Soldiers Homes, the profiteering days of the Aldershot Residents were over, and we could buy things, more or less, in keeping, with our small pay.

Sometimes at night, the men would be a few minutes late, in getting back to the Camp, the ruses that were employed to get into tents, without being caught by the guard, were not only novel but amusing, the limit was reached when several were late, and the Coporal of the Guard, had taken all names of men not in Camp,

Some horses were let loose, on the lines above us, and in the uproar that ensued the absentees not only got into Camp, they took off some of their clothes, and finally came back into Camp, after helping to catch the horses, that many of us had suspicions, they had let loose, so that attention from them, would be withdrawn, no men being taken to the Guard tent, the Coporal had taken his list in vain,

A letter reached me, from my Mother, and the War, was brought home to me, more forcibly, than I had as yet thought of, whilst often looking down the terrible list of casualties, somehow I never had the feeling that my home, would in any way be touched this feeling was hard to analyse, but when I spoke to anyone on the subject, or was spoken too I always, had a deep conviction that whatever happened, I would come back again, others had different feelings, but mine was always the same, and when I read that my Brother Tom, had been very severely injured, it was a great shock to me, I was frantic for a while, and I asked to see the C.O. and showed him the letter, and I asked if I could go on leave, he pointed out to me that my Brother, was not in England, so I could not see him, if I went, but I wanted to see

..... my Mother,

my Mother, who was at Westgate, with my Sister,

He then said, now calm yourself, and he then proceeded to
to me the different terms written down and their meanings,
(Dangerously Wounded), not expected to get over their wounds,
(Seriously Wounded), expected to recover, usually applied to
cases of lost limbs,
(Severely Wounded), bad wound, but not attended with grave results,

When he said the latter, I was a bit more hopeful, but all
the same asked for leave, he kept me waiting some hours, and at
last I was told, I could have 36 hours leave, from Sat. midday,
to Sunday Midnight,
I put the pass into my pocket without looking at it, and left
Camp, got a return ticket to London, and from there to Westgate,
arriving late at night, next day I determined now I was with my
Mother, that I would overstay my leave, and get back Midnight
Monday, well knowing the consequences,

My Brother Tom had been wounded, and that was all my Mother
knew, so the C.O. was quite correct in what he had told me, still
leave was very nice, and the Monday morning I said good bye, with
the knowledge that it would be the last time I should see them
before going overseas, as all leave was now stopped, and only
special leave was granted, and that under very exceptional
circumstances,

Arriving back at Aldershot about 4 p.m. I had almost reached
the Camp when a Red Cap, halted me, rather tremblingly I pulled
out my pass, for if you reached your Camp without being caught,
you usually got C.B. (confined to barracks), and a few days pay
stopped,

But if a Red Cap, nailed you, it was a case of 28 Days detention
to my surprise he gave me my pass back, I thought he was letting
me off, as he must have known we were soon for active service,

I reached the Camp, and handed in my Pass to the Corporal
of the Guard, he read it, and said what is the matter with ee lad,

I said I have overstayed my leave, and giving me my Pass back
again, he pointed to the day I was due back, and it was plainly

..... marked,

marked, by mistake no doubt, Monday Midnight,

If I had only looked at the pass, the pangs of anguish I should have been saved,

We both had a good laugh about it, and so did my pals when I told them,

We at last had all the overseas kit, issued out, and I at last actually had two pairs of Boots issued, that fitted me, for eleven months, I had worn boots, with paper stuffed up in the toes, and several socks, so that I could make them fit me,

The Army Service Corps detachment, now having joined us, the C.O. inspected the whole Ambulance, and equipment, and was so pleased, he suggested having a photo taken, providing sufficient men, would have a copy, all the Ambulance put their names down, many for more than one, and one afternoon they were taken, unfortunately, all the negatives were failures,

The Sgt. Major approached me one day, Swindell, I want you in the Sergeants Mess for a few minutes, I want to have a talk with you, and going there, he told me about the mess up, they were in, all the Sergeants, paid so much in for extras, all their cigarettes, tobacco, etc they bought in their mess, all profits went to the mess, and yet with all this money, and their rations, they were something like £30 in debt, would I go into the mess, and try and find out, the cause of all the trouble, and mend it,

I agreed to on one condition, and that was, that, I should return to the ranks, as soon as we went on Active Service, he agreed and said, there will be dozens, only to anxious to take the job on,

I soon found the cause of all the trouble, the Sergeants Cook, came in, and helped himself to beer and cigarettes, I soon stopped that, then a few of the Sergeants, came the same game, I soon, made them toe the line, for at the week-end on pay day, gave the Sg. Major a list of what the Sergeants owed, so they had to pay up, and look pleasant.

Then going to buy their goods, from, the Navy and Army Canteen, I found although charged the full amount, for what I had ordered,

received considerably less, and soon wanted to know the why and wherefore, the sordid business came out, the amount that was over-charged, was to be shared equally, between myself, the Sergeants cook, and the Canteen man, I told him a few home truths, and left with what I had paid for,

Another source of trouble was the grand game, of some of the Sergeants, they would bring in a few Sergeants from other units, and give them free beer, I soon gave the names to the Sgt Major, and the number of Sergeants they treated, and how much drink, they gave them, so they had to pay for the drinks, they treated their pals too.

At the end of a fortnight, I handed the Sgt. Major, £8. and upon promising too keep it quiet, I told him the whole sordid business, he thanked me, and wrote down all the rules, I had followed, so that he could tell all the Sergeants, how the Mess was to be run in future,

The cook, soon resigned his job, and the Sgt. Major asking me, who I could recommend, I named, a one eyed man named Fischer, and told him, I had had many chats with him, and that being an old tramp steamer cook, he could hardly pick on a better man, and he was soon installed, to the benefit of the Sergeants digestion. and as I had pleased him, the Sgt. Major allowed me to return to the ranks and appointed a Mess man, who was as weak and frail, in health and strength, and he was keen in spirit.

A few days later the Orderly Sergeant told me the Sgt. Major, wanted me in his tent, I went there, and he was not in, so I waited, and very fortunate for me, I did,

Being the Sgt. Major, his tent for convenience was next to the Orderly Room, and whilst waiting, Sergeant Currell, said to a Private Clerk, the Sgt. Major said, any man putting in for a pass before mid-day will have it, us two will not be entitled to one, and as it is now eleven, they, who want leave, have only an hour. if you tell anyone you will be for it.

I immediately filled in a paper, and handed it in. later the Sgt Major came, and told me to give the mess man, an idea of

..... how to

how to run it, and by the way, said he how is it you have put in for a pass, all leave was stopped at Bulford, and you have already had a special leave from here,

I said Walls have Ears,

Asking me what I meant, I told him what I had heard, he laughed, and said if half the Ambulance had put in for leave, the C.O. was going to get it for them.

And Saturday midday, I left Camp for the Station, the only Private to have leave, and many were the mutterings, that went on, for as they rightly said, he has only just had a leave, but knowing that I had not done anything to wangle it, but had only taken advantage of an opportunity, the Gods had sent, I did not care, and at the Station, saw the only other three, out of the Ambulance to get leave, they were the Brothers Richardson, and Sergeant Arnold,

The Sgt Major, asked me for my pass, and he got my ticket, paid my fare, and said, that is for what you did in the Mess for me, so I had a cheap holiday, and arrived home, for what was to be definitely the last leave, and was lucky as I have stated, and arrived back at Camp, in good time,

Percy Harrison, had just arrived back, he had a special pass, to get married, he lived at Guildford, so was almost home, at Aldershot, his bride was the Sister of another man in the Ambulance named, Childs, also of Guildford, personally, I think the marriages on the eve of going overseas were a mistake,

All these months, Ernie Brownhill, Oliver Bolton, and myself had been bosom pals, and had always contrived to get together, on Parade, on Fatigues, Route Marches, Tents, and were nearly always successful, and when one could not leave the Camp the others stayed behind.

Like myself, they were non-drinkers, and as we were all rather careful with our money, which was very small, we were always able to visit the Army Homes, and buy ourselves some food, when we went down town,

Bolton was a little spitfire in his own way, it was a marvel

..... how he kept

how he kept out of the clinque.

At last the order was read out, the whole Ambulance will have a final inspection, we were unfortunate, for it was really to be the Divisional Review, for up to us, Lord Kitchener had always inspected, what was known as his Army, on the Eve of their being drafted overseas, this was on the 24th Sept 1915

So we had not the pleasure of being inspected by the Man, whom we looked upon as being the Symbol, the Shining Light, and the Saviour by his Personality, Integrity, and Ability, of his Country, for in the hour of the European Eruption, he had called, and he called not in vain, for in their Hundreds of Thousands, they leapt to the Colours, and the Man who called them to join his Army, had one stipulation to make, and that was (Three Years or the Duration of the War), and as the History of the War proved, he was the Man, at the Time of trouble, who knew, we were sorry not to see our Chief, but we had his message read out, regretting his unavoidable absence, The 25th Sept. came. my 21st birthday I said to Brownhill and Bolton, this is the day, I become a man, we will have a night out, and at night we crept through the A.S.C. lines, and got into Aldershot, for we heard that no one was to leave the camp after 5 p.m., and it was 6 p.m, we arrived at the Town, and had a small repast at my Expense, for as I said, this is my day, and we walked down Town, and speaking to a Red Cap, who of course heard the news, as a rule before us, that, that would be our last night,

We turned round, and found ourselves outside a photographer, Brownhill said, what about having our photos taken, we never know, what may happen, and in we went and told him, we were going overseas he said alright, pay your money, and you will get them alright overseas, and so we had them taken.

We arrived back in Camp, and on Parade heard the news read out, The 77th Field Ambulance will Parade in Full Marching Order, at 4-30 A.M.

Next morning at 3 a.m. the 26th Sept, the Reveille sounded, like a lot of School boys we were up, and struck tents, rolled and

..... bagged them,

bagged them, and had our ablutions, and breakfast, and as soon, as we could were dressed, anxiously waiting for fall in to go,

At last all being inspected, we set off with our C.O. at the head, at last, the whole Ambulance seemed to say, we are about to take part in what we had enlisted for, we took the road to Farnborough, singing, whenever the Band stop, all the Army Songs, "Its a long way to Tipperary" down to the latest one out, and so arrived at the Station, and entrained,

We arrived at Southampton, and soon had another example of Army tactics, we were kept waiting on the Dock-side, the whole day, and at last as Evening fell, some went onto the boat with the Transport and others, myself amongst them, onto a boat with two Battalions of Infantry, and in the dusk of the 26th of Sept. 1915, we left our native shore, to be escorted throughout the night by our Navy, the Destroyers were nursing us like a Duck does her ducklings, and so to bed we went, some to sleep, some sick, and others to talk,

And what of some of the talk, we had enlisted in Sept and Oct, 1914, for a whole year we had been in training, for a whole year we had wondered if ever we should go overseas, and although we had found the time irksome, and monotonous, we knew that it was not wasted, we could not all go out at once, someone had to go first, and fate had put us into the 25th Division, so we had to wait while the whole of the Divisions from the 9th to the 24th were trained, equipped and sent overseas.

Some talked of the times we had had, others of what was in store for us, others in a jocular vein, spoke about going into action with stretchers at the alert, and with three cornered bandages, and pads of cotton wool, as ammunition

All of the talk of the future, was just so much imagination, I am afraid in the midst of all our training, regular hours, regular food etc, we had not ^{been} initiated into any of the mysteries of active service, probably they may have thought, time enough when it comes.

And what of the future, as we thought to ourselves, I know what my thoughts turned too, whether the other chaps minds, traversed

..... the same

the same road as mine, is not known to me, but I had visions, of men getting wounded, and some of us rushing about bandaging, up, and calmly walking back with our burdens, dreams, daylight dreams, and with this I close the story of our training period, as about to start is the real thing.

FRANCE.

Early morning of the 27th Sept. 1915, and Brownhill, Bolton and myself, are gazing on what I have told them is land, some of the lads said, Blink, can you see any land yet, I told them where it was, but could not convince them, as, for the majority of the men, it was the first time away from England, but I had already been this trip before, so knew it was France, by the time we had taken, and talking to me of the sailors, I heard we were bound for Harve,

We sailed into Harve, and were marched over all the little bridges, that abound in Dockland, and arrived by quiet ways to a Camp where we were not allowed out of,

I was rather disappointed, as I knew my way about, and had been telling Brownhill and Bolton, where I would take them, we hung about the Marquees, some reading, some writing some eating and drinking,

At night we heard one of Lena Ashwells Concert Parties,

It was a very quiet day for us, and so to bed we went, wondering what the morrow, would bring forth.

In the morning we paraded, and were marched through the streets to the Station, and the whole way we were greeted with the cries of the youngsters, the days of adulations of the British Tommy may have been on the decline, which was quite natural, as 12 months of war,

and the effect it must have had on the people, was hardly conducive too joviality, but they thronged the roads, and greeted us, but what the elders lacked in spirit, the youngsters made up for entirely, the appeals, cries, cajolings, pleadings etc, for, An English Bully, traybon, Tommy, and those who had any to spare, handed it over much to the kiddies delight,

At the Station a sight met our eyes, that was to bring us up with a round turn, and make us realise, that out here was a different place to England, two trainloads, trucks except for two carriages had just come in, and the Tommies were leaving, the wagons, and making for the free tea, coffee, and cocoa bars, on the platform,

They were liberally spattered with mud, dried on their khaki, and all of them, had clean white bandages, most of them, had neither washed, or shaved for a week, and they were as happy as sand boys, for they were all for Blighty,

The pangs of hunger appeased, they came to the railings, and some told us of the horrors going on, guns firing point blank at them, wrong turnings some had taken, others too quick, and our own guns shooting them down, to listen to them, many who had not been in France a fortnight, was to realise that we were so far lucky to have escaped this,

The whole story of the Battle of Loos, was known to those at Home, of the awful slaughter that went on, but what we did not know was that, through some hitch, our Division, was delayed, and we had missed it, the sight of these wounded, made us glad we had,

Others chipped us about getting out too late the war will be over, before you get up the line, and sundry other pleasantries about a lot of base wallahs, (in reference to us being, the R.A.M.C.).

And at last the platforms being cleared on we marched, and into the trucks that had brought the wounded down, we went, forty men, and equipment to a truck, and so like a lot of sardines we set out for our journey up towards the front.

We were in there for 22 hours, the big towns we went through were Rouen, Boulogne, Calais and St. Omer, for one night they were

..... our sleeping

our sleeping quarters, and we had not been given any drink, the train was so slow, that at different points, all those who wished, could get out, and walk, and it was an easy matter to keep up with the train, sometimes it went a matter of 12 to 20 miles, an hour, and we were always ordered on board, before the dash was made,

We learned that one of the conditions imposed on the French, by the Germans after the 1870 war, was that the railways were only to be made to their wishes, and well and truly did they know what they were about,

For what would have been done on our English lines, in 10 hours, took 40 and 50 hours here, and the English trains were too heavy, the whole track had got to be relaid, they told us, to allow the heavier type of engines and trains to go at a reasonable speed.

Some talked about the Slow, Easy and Comfortable Railway, and agreed it was an express live compared to this, but at last we arrived somewhere, and were ordered off the train, we all had to help with unloading the transport, and tea was made, and issued out, we then saw that we were at a place called Steenbecque, nobody seemed to know what part of the country, we were in,

We lined up, and marched out of the siding, and the C.O. reading his map, lead the way, it was dusk, and we could not see much of the countryside, and we arrived at Strazeele, after walking through Hazebrook, which was rather a large town, and found that times, and places, and events moved about wherever the British Army moved,

We had come to the wrong place, the C.O. had gone to where he was told, but all that order, had been rescinded, by the powers that be, but our C.O. had not been told, at last he heard where to go, and off we went, singing the same old songs, we sang in England, and arrived at a small village called Outersteene,

It was a quiet sort of place, and we were marched, to the school house, which with the school adjoining, held all ranks comfortably. C. Section were placed in a top room, and we had strict instructions as to allowing lights to be seen, and were told that although, it was late we could go into the village,

Many of the lads, made for the cafes and estaminets, my thoughts were on food, and one Moss, our Religious friend of Tidworth asking, if anyone knew what they called a bakers, and as I knew, he asked me to go, and try and find one,

We soon found one, and entering Moss said to me, how shall I ask, and between us we raked up, a sort of language,

The good lady came, Oui. she said

Both of us speaking together, shouted Hine Paing,

She laughed, my she did laugh, and said in Perfect English, you Tommies, are so funny, you ask me in English, for what you want, and I can give it to you,

We left with two loaves apiece, somewhat subdued, to think we had asked for bread in French, which we did not understand, of someone who could speak perfect English,

The loaves were round and flat, about 16 inches across, and 2 inches thick in the middle, it was not so nice, as our own bread, but it was better to us than the biscuits,

Next day, we were able to survey our surroundings, the plaster on the walls of our room, were simply riddled, we learned from an old Villager, that the British, and French had both defended the school, during the Retreat from Mons, and Jerry had riddled the place, with machine gun bullets,

And there where no windows, we covered them with anything we could find, and slept well,

Our old Frenchie, took us to a field and showed us, some graves, in his half English, half French lingo, he gave us to understand that there were two German Officers, and an old Frenchman buried, the later having seen the Germans maltreat a female relative, went into the house, got his gun, and going up to a window he shot the two German Officers dead.

He was dragged out, and shot on the spot, and the villagers had to there and then dig the graves for the burial.

..... One other shop,

One other shop, was a general shop, and finding we could get coffee, some of us went there, instead of to the Estaminets,

The lady of the house, soon told us the history of the place, what she thought of the Germans, lamented the absence of her husband, who was in the Infantry, and altogether was an agreeable, if talkative hostess, she had an eye on the coin, and was ever on the look-out for increasing her sales, her name was Madame Salome, and if she had the good luck to hold her business, I have no doubt she must have earned a large sum, she was not very popular with a lot of the other Village,

Her husband being a Sergeant, and herself, a well educated woman, was no doubt the cause of the trouble,

All we did here, were a few fatigues, and guards, and many of us were studying in our spare time, the R.A.M.C. manuals, to teach, and refresh our memories, how to carry and bandage wounded, which we believed was the way we should carry on.

Our friend Hickenbottom, was very pleased to be in France, and was for ever telling us, that the time was coming, when we would be real soldiers, not tin soldiers. and then he would see who had got cold feet, and sundry other remarks insinuating to his own evident amusement, that we would soon develop wind up.

Having the misfortune to lose my Manual I was lucky enough to escape clink, as they were all to be handed in, and things being not so severe as regards discipline, my explanation was accepted.

We were disappointed to learn, that our time for the line had not come, we were all very anxious to get busy, but an occurrence arose, that was a surprise,

On routine orders, was read out, the 76th Brigade, of Infantry has been transferred to the 3rd Division, and the 7th Brigade will join the 25th Division.

That meant that as our Brigade went to a Regular Army Division, we were to be the fortunate Ambulance to be attached to a regular Brigade,

But two of the Battalions were, drafted one each, to the other Brigades, too, as the ones above said, too give a stiffening to them when they went in the line,

The 2nd Batt. Royal Irish Rifles and 2nd South Lancashire Regt. were transferred, and to make up the 7th Brigade, of whom the (1st Batt. Wiltshire Regt. and 3rd Batt. Worcester Regt. were the Regulars), they drafted to it the 10th Batt. Cheshire Regt, and the 8th Batt. Border Regt. and the regular Batts. were fine men, and told us with very little trimmings, what to expect, and generally gave us a good insight, into what it was like where we were going, and told us we were really lucky, for it was the quietest part of the line,

The Ambulance had orders to form a Hospital in a Town named Ballieul, and some of us, were sent on fatigues to prepare it, when we marched through the town, we did not see many signs of damage, and learned that Jerry had never stopped in it, but had marched through it, both when he advanced, and when he retired.

There were a great many troops billeted there, and a great many Cafes, and Estaminets, in fact it was nothing but a place which was to be used, as a means, by the people of Flanders, to fleese the Tommies, and well and truly did they succeed,

Arriving at a Building, with great double gates leading to a court yard, we went through, and found, a great house on the left, and stables etc on the right, and the house was to be the Hospital, and the outbuildings to be the stores, cookhouse, and sleeping, and other uses.

We went to Pont De Nieppe for bricks and to Nieppe Forest for saplings, and with these things, had to improvise many things for use, such as tables, incinerators, etc.

As per usual anything on, and I was one of the names down, indeed one could be tolerably certain that, if any men were needed, that the same men always cliqued, and as there was to be a guard, I was not at all surprised at my name being read out.

..... We stood on duty

We stood on duty all day, in turns at the double gates, and told the sick where to go, and at night closed the gates, and walked round the courtyard.

We had asked the cooks, to leave us something to eat, as the stores were well supplied, they did not, and as one of the duties of the guard was to see the fires were kept in, when my turn for guard in the night came, I made for the cook house,

The fires were well banked up, and feeling peckish, I scouted round, and found some bags of potatoes, several dozen loaves and some large dixies full of dripping.

Back I went to the guard room, and told the others of my find, they were soon in the cookhouse and what with, fried bread and fried potatoes, we were thoroughly enjoying ourselves, the nursing orderlies on night duty came over, and had some, and all of a sudden, a terrific ringing of the bell went on.

I sneaked round to the Double gates, and called, in my most Military tone Who goes there,

The answer, open this door at once, I recognised the voice of the Orderly Officer, Lieut. Montgomery, and knowing him for a holy terror, I had to take a chance, and the following went on.

ques. Who goes there,

ans. Open this gate at once,

ques. The Orderly Officer has ordered these gates to be kept shut, come again in the morning,

ans. (In a strangling sort of voice), fetch the Sergeant of the Guard,

Feeling things had gone far enough, I called the Sergeant, and said, there is someone outside here, and he wants to come in, and he his raising cane, because I wont open the doors, what are you going to do,

And I whispered to him, it is the Orderly Officer, the Sergeant opened the door, and in he walked, place that man under arrest for insolence to his superior officer,

The sergeant pointed out, I was only obeying orders,

He was mad with rage, and ordered the Sergeant to bring me before the Company Officer in the morning,

The Sergeant made out the crime sheet, and as I knew it would be the case was dismissed, but the Officer, never forgot I fancy, for we had many more passages at arms,

The next thing we heard, that was a surprise was, we are being shifted, we had been led to understand, that we were to stay in Outersteene, by the powers that be, evidently they did not want us there, and we were moved to a place called La Blanche.

It was a large White Farmhouse, on one side of the road, and a small house on the other, and by the smaller one was a barn with a loft, and into this C. Section was put, and a very nice warm, clean place it was,

At the Farmhouse, they also had got the money making craze, at all times of the day, one could get, Coffee, Beer, and all kinds of wine, and as the fashion was for wine, I amongst others tried the less intoxicating sorts, Grenadine said the Madame, no upset Tommy,

So Grenadine it was, I did not like it, it tasted like water, sweetened, and soon gave it a miss, and went back to coffee, it was a very large room, and as many as 60 would sometimes be in there,

Gambling was beginning to gain a hold of the lads, in England, one would see cards very seldom, but out here, no sooner parade over than out would come the cards, some playing pontoon, others nap, another lot would have a Crown and Anchor board, but gambling was a crime, so although it was always going on, if caught one would get clink, and also pay stopped, but, for some unexplained reason a game called House, was permitted,

The owner of the cards, would hand a card round, to anyone who wished to have a go, on it were squares, some were numbered, others blacked out, you paid so much, for each game, and the winner took all the money paid in except a small amount, which the owner kept each time, for calling out the numbers, of discs he had to take out of his bag one at a time, if you had the number he called out, you

..... would place

would place a piece of wood, or paper on it, and as soon as a line of numbers were filled, the owner called out, and took the pool, many names were given to some of the numbers,

Clickety Click was 66. Kelly's Eye was 1. Sallys Legs 11, and top of the House was 90. I never could understand it being allowed, for it was just as much a gamble, as any other game, but the reason told us, was that the caller out, took so much for calling out, and as he did not lose, or rather never could lose, as he only let you play on condition, he got his money first, that it did not constitute a gamble, but was a legitimate game, where he always charged a price,

Pontoon, or as the French call it Vingt-et-Une, was a game where in 21 was the winning score, an Ace, and a King, Queen, Jack or a Ten, was a pontoon, and could not be beaten, except by the dealer also, having a pontoon.

But if the dealer went bust, and got over twenty one, he paid all who, themselves had not got over twenty, you could have, as low as sixteen, so if you had sixteen, and the dealer had sixteen, he cried pay seventeen, and you were unlucky, but if on his sixteen he turned up at seven, eight, nine, or ten, he got too many, and had to pay you

But the game that called for the greatest test of the gambler, was the Crown and Anchor Board, it consist of a board or a piece of canvas, with six squares on it, and painted on the squares, were the Heart, Diamond, Club, Spade, and the Crown and Anchor, and dice,

Who ever gambled put their money on the square, or squares they fancy, the Banker then shakes the three dice, and throws them, and if all three turn up a Heart, those on hearts win perhaps, 5, 7, or 10 times their deposit, usually three different ones turn up, and all those on the lucky squares, have there doubled,

If the luck is against the Banker, he soon loses, a pile of money, and if he his in luck, soon makes a pile, but as I never gambled, I used to look on, and to me, to hear a good Banker, at the usual patter was as good as a star turn, one or two in the Ambulance were good, and to attract more and more money, the following cries, and

..... many more,

many more, I have forgotten went on,

Now then my lucky lads, what a about a little game on the Old
Firms board,

Now then my lads put it down thick and heavy,

The more you put down, the more you pick up,

I am not hear today, and gone tomorrow I am here today, and
gone today, so if anyone wants a little game now, is the time,

The Crown is very badly backed

You come here in rags, and go away in motor cars,

And this sort of cry, went on the whole game,

Although several of us never had a flutter, we had plenty of
fun looking on.

Having both here, and the Hospital at Ballieul to keep Guard
on, the stretchers bearers, had plenty of Guards,

One night being on duty, a soldier approached, and I challenged
he did not answer, but made towards me, I grasped my stick, my how
I trembled he had pulled out a revolver, and flourishing it, said
in a thick, beery voice, Whats, the Blankety Blank Hello, the matter
with yer,

I said it is all right Chummy, but duty is duty, and I have
to challenge all who pass,

Who you speaking too, I am a Blank Officer, and I am not
having a Non Combatant shouting at me, call the Sergeant,

And out came the N.C.O. of the guard,

The outcome of the whole business, was seen next day, an
Officer of the Wilts, had had a little too much, the matter was
allowed to drop, for if his charge against me had gone through, our
C.O. said he would press a charge of drunkenness, the lads chipped
me about being too conscientious, and I resolved in future to be
looking the other way, when next on duty.

We were having a very quiet time here, and except for fatigues,
and guards, one had to while away the time, and you were allowed
out for the afternoon and evening.

In the garden of the House where we were billeted, was a

British Hussars grave, we never heard from the people, the truth of how, he got to them, but we heard from other sources, that after he died, they had buried him, and his grave was a picture of tidiness, and had been the pride of the Folk ever since he was buried.

We were having particularly good rations at this time, Bread, Sardines, Cheese, Fresh Meat, and Tinned Butter, we had heard such yarns about the rotten rations, that it made it more noticable, the lads were beginning to get fidgety, the other Ambulances had both had a turn in the Line, but all we were doing, was kicking our heels at the Farm.

Then a rumour went round, the 7th Brigade a going up, and sure enough it was read out on orders, and a list of stretcher bearers names, who were to go up, and next morning, we lined up, after handing in our kit, and away we went, we laughed, talked, noticed that Hickenbottom was missing, sang, and chipped each other, in fact everybody was so pleased, that anyone who had been out here sometime, would have known, we were new to it,

We passed through the Village of Nieppe, and on to Pont de Nieppe, turned to the left half way down the Village, and so at last saw a bit of war, a few houses knocked about. Out went our chests, and striding along with a merry swing, we came to a road which ran, to the right, and left, the Red Cap, gave the Officer some instructions and some went to the right, and some to the left,

Those of us who went to the left, passed half a dozen cottages, and just past them a factory Chimney loomed up, when we got to it, we halted, and word went round, this is the Advanced Dressing Station, it was a Brewery, that Jerry had taken a dislike to, and except for the chimney stack, which was intact, he having left that, so we learned afterwards, as a direction finder, for his Artillery, he had tried to level the main building to the ground,

We were standing at ease, chipping each other, when as if by some sinister chance, a terrific series of explosions nearly deafened us, I do not think there was one of us who had the

slightest idea what it was,

We instinctively ducked, and would have run for shelter, but somebody braver than the rest said look, it is our guns, a sigh of relief went up, we had read a lot about what we had got to do, and our noble work, and the brave stretcher bearers, but this was above a joke, and so we were marched into the remnants of the Brewery, and found that the places in use, for sleeping, eating, and hospital were in the vaults, and we thought it fine, we could be very comfortable here, I don't know how we imagined the wounded, and sick were going to reach here, we had a hazy idea, of them carrying themselves in, I suppose, for it was with somewhat of a shock, that we heard that three squads were to fall in, and follow three different guides, we thought they might have been a bit more considerate, and let us get used to it, before sending us any further, well with rations for twenty four hours, good old Bully Beef and Biscuits, some tea and sugar, and plenty of Bandages, and a stretcher we lined up, to follow our guide an infantry man,

I had an uncomfortable feeling come over me, as we marched along the road, it was all so quiet, a few trees knocked about, but otherwise, it might have been a moor, or park, we swung to the right, and as we passed a Farm house, we were amazed to see a girl about 17 driving two cows in front of her,

A feeling of almost shame came over me, fancy, feeling nervous, when here was a girl actually living here, and carrying on the peaceful pursuit of milking cows,

We called too her, and had a chat, and she said we could buy some milk, and eggs,

And telling her we should call in, if we found we could doing any cooking, we went on, reaching the end of the lane, the guide began to show signs of nervousness, and said now we are only half a mile from the line, and we have got to get to that place, over there, which in itself seemed to me half a mile, and then we reach a trench, but we walked along this road, just as calmly and peacefully, as we had marched along our roads at home, it was with a vengeance, a case of Ignorance is Bliss. and the guide suddenly turned off the road

..... and struck

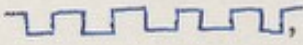
and struck along a footpath, there was a sign post up, and in English too, with the words (Seven Trees) on it, it took its name from the seven trees that over hung this path, and they were on top of a bank, about 7 feet high,

The guide was now in a state of perfect funk, and he was getting on our nerves and making us feel as jumpy as a kitten,

All of a sudden he was laying flat on his stomach, and shouting, down you blank fools, a perfect hail of bullets were whistling over our head, and with one accord we joined our guide, on the lap of Mother Earth, considering the high bank, it was impossible for Jerry to hit us where we were, but an uncomfortable longing to be in perfect safety took hold of me, for our guide was in a state of terror, every day men are getting killed here, he told us, and made our flesh creep with the horrible details, of how they had all been shot through the head.

He was all to pieces, and would soon have had us the same, for every time we rose, he would shout, down, and down we went, at last he said, follow me, and off we went again, there was no sign of anything alive, man or beast, we came to a trench,

We go up here he said, and be careful or you will get sniped, and dropping on all fours, he led the way, it was more difficult, for us, as we were carrying such a lot, but we got down, as low as we could, and followed,

The trench is built in such a way , not necessarily, straight like this, but on this principle, to give you a sporting chance, if he his shelling, for if it was straight the damage, would be appalling,

The bottom was covered by duckboards, like, a long succession of short ladders, with just enough space, between the struts to allow you to walk on them, and the side, was supported by wire, it was about 7 feet high, and to us who had read and heard about the mud, was a great surprise,

We were hopping along like a lot of frogs, when on turning corner, we saw an Officer, walking towards us, he stared at us

..... and laughed,

and laughed,

What the Blankety Blank Hell are you doing, stand up and walk like men,

Our guide had made a fool of us, there was absolutely no need for us, to go along like we had, and we had a row with him he was not very old, and his nerve was gone

The Officer railery had pulled him together, a bit and off we went, much to our delight, for we were fed up with him, and at last he reached a spot, there you are, that is ^{the} Regimental Aid Post. you will find, a Medical Officer somewhere, and away he went,

There were we four, never been up the line before, and left to our own selves,

Scouting round, as we had no wish to carry our load any further, we found a doorway, with a blanket hanging down, it, pulling it aside, we looked in,

Hullo, who are you, shouts a voice, and we told him, out came an Officer, it was the M.O. well that your dug out over there, and going towards it we found a small place dug into the side of the trench, with the bottom part, at the sides left for us to sit on, and over it was a few pieces of corrugated iron, and one layer of sandbags,

I do not know what we expected, but I was bitterly disappointed, for where were we to sleep, I asked the M.O,

Sleep he said, you haven't come up here to sleep, I will have plenty for you to do at nights, so all the sleep you require, you can get sitting in your dug out, when you are off duty,

Calling me, he ordered me to go round the corner, you will see a blanket over the dug out where the stores are, put all the bandages in it, and going to it, I lifted the blanket aside, I let fall the stores, a feeling of sickening horror, made me shiver all over, there laying on a stretcher, was a soldier, dead, all my dreams, and visions of war, were shattered, all the romance, I had woven around the work that was in front of us, was stripped of its veneer, and there before me, lay the toll of war, the price that

..... it demands,

it demands,

He was only a young man, about twenty, and through the forehead, the bullet had done its ghastly work, his name was Bonny

After the first feeling of horror, had left me, I replaced the curtain, and stole away,

I felt dazed, and it came to me, in a wave of fear mingled with a sullen resentment, that the M.O. could at least have warned me, but I tried to pull myself together before I met the lads and it was with a sigh of relief I met them again,

Hullo Blink, said Tommy Barras, seen a ghost,

I told them of what I had seen, and what I thought of the M.O. and the more I thought of it, the wilder grew my feelings, and I at last, went and told him, I had placed the stores there, but you might have told me it was the mortuary

He told me to sit down, and he spoke to me like a Father, well I might have let you know, but I have got so used to them ~~know~~, one somehow expects to see them wherever you go, and cheer up son, it was perhaps better for you to meet it, as you did, it was with mingled feelings, I went back to the lads,

They were contriving to boil some water, in a mess tin, over a charcoal fire, and the charcoal all having gone, (by the way it was a days fuel), and it had not boiled one tin of water, and scouting round we found some odd pieces of wood, and put them on the brazier, and soon had a merry blaze, when an Infantry man, came rushing round, put that blank fire out, you will have Jerry plonking away, as soon as he spots the smoke,

We explained our ignorance, of the ways of the line, so he initiated us into a few of the secrets, no fires that make smoke during the daytime,

And no fires that show a glow at night, unless you are in a deep dugout, what about tea we said, Oh you had better ask you Company Officer, we have ours sent up in Dixes, the stuff is nearly always cold when we get it.

So we had some tea, with the prospects of cold water next time,

.....Dusk came,

Dusk came, and we were settling down for the night, when the M.O. shouts and out I went, and into his dugout, I have some men coming down the line, go and fetch one of the others, and you can take them to the Advance Dressing Station,

Clifford, and I set off, with me leading and him in the rear, and one sick man, and five walking, wounded cases, (all head wounds), the wounded I do not remember by name, but the sick man (Pte Stewart) of the same Lanc Fusilers as Bonny, was one who was a bad swinger, I waited he said, until I was to go out on a wiring party, and then went sick with this neck of mine, so I shall have a rest now, the honesty towards his pals of this manoeuvre, I make no mention of, as I did not see his neck, as it was heavily bandaged, but of his pleasure at getting out of the line for a few days, I could write a page, still when we got to Seven Trees, he said don't you go that way, you go over that ground, and there is a trench leads you to Gunners Farm, I was nothing loathe, as about every two minutes, a machine gun would sweep across our heads, its deadly little missiles, with a regular swish, swish, swish,

We found the trench, and carried on, and presently a voice as of thunder, roared hands up, and up they went, I could feel his bayonet, sticking into the pit of my stomach, but I could not see him,

Come on he said, your ordinary numbers up, you dirty swine, and although I tried to tell him, who I was, I had to go in front of him, presently into a tumble down cottage we went, and down in the cellar, where some Officers heard what I had to say, and called me a few choice names, and told me I had no right in that trench, as orders had been given, that no Soldier was to walk into, or use it,

I explained how we had only come up that day, and some sick, and wounded were still where, I had been pulled up, and I was sent back with him, who had the nice little pig sticker

We had to pick our way carefully, and he then told me that

.....there was

there was a spy somewhere, round about, and they were after him, and we were just going forward when, a Verey light went up, and before I realised, there was the crack of a rifle, and away went my escort, and guide,

I found the Sick and wounded, and we continued our journey, and arrived at the Brewery, and handed over our charges, and we then saw, some of the lads, who had been sent to another Post. to whit (Hyde Park), they gave some very English names to places, that reminded you of Home.

They had been down several times, with stretcher cases, and the tales of the shelling, made Clifford, and I think how lucky we were, in our post, but that was the way, one day one lot busy next day somewhere else,

And we set off once again, and arrived back safely, the other two had had to help to bury Bonny, and as the morning light appeared we settled down for a snooze.

It had certainly been a wonderful, and one might almost say an awe inspiring first day, it was all so new, and all so different to what we had thought, everything seemed to impress itself on my memory, and change me from a romantic dreamer of past Military Glory, to pull me down with a severe bump, and let me see that war, as written on paper, and in ballads, and the real thing were not the same.

We roused ourselves, and went scrounging round to see if we could cook, some breakfast, but we were unlucky, so we feasted off, Bully and Biscuits, and Water to wash it down,

A shrill whistle rent the air, a warning for a Jerry overhead, our anti aircraft guns, were blazing away at him, and with a zipp, a small sharpnel ball fell amongst us, I rushed to pick it up as a souvenier, it was still warm, if it had struck one of us on the head, it would have been a wooden cross next day for him,

During the day the Medical Officer said the Wilts have taken over the line, and there is a new place, for the Regimental Aid Post, and away he went,

..... Presently

Presently a Private in the R.A.M.C. came along, come on you chaps, move all the doings, along there, and round the corner, and so on, but he was a decent sort, and he helped us get the things round.

He was a regular Army man, attached to the 1st Batt. of the Wilts in England, and had been with them ever since, he asked us how long we had been out, and when we told him, and also told him we only came up the line for the first time yesterday, he said alright once things, have settled down, I will have a talk with you, our place of rest, was in a little recess, inside the Aid Post, which itself was only the trench covered over, very strongly with corrugated iron, and sandbags.

So we were always handy for any jobs that were going,

Paddy Stephens to give the R.A.M.C. chap his name came, sat with us and as he had been out all the time, we learned a lot from him,

First and foremost, I want to tell you, the Infantry always refer to us, as (Rob all my comrades) the initials being R.A.M.C. and they kind of look down on us, as base wallahs, of course we should not be here, if that was the case, but somehow or other, we are the butt of them, when they spot us, so of course, what you want to do, when they start chipping, is to tell them a few things, such as wait till you get a scratch, and then you will come to have a fuss made of it, and several other remarks, that appeared at the time rather coarse, sort of jokes, but we soon learned that we had to do it, to have a bit of peace,

I was never able to understand this attitude, it was not done in a nasty way, but in a patronising way, and considering that perhaps the one who perhaps made a joke, in the morning, might be a stretcher case at night, and thanking you, for perhaps carrying him some miles, it was rather hurtful, so we had to resort, to Paddy Stephens remedy, and so made things more even,

A sudden bombardment by Jerry, and a cry, stretcher bearers, out went Paddy, and us after him, it is alright, he has hit somebody, at Gunners Farm, a stretcher case,

We arrived there, and put the man on the stretcher, the M.O.

..... of the

of the Artillery had bandaged him up, I then saw the private who had so kindly, bolted from me, after firing his rifle, he told me when the Verrey Light went up, he saw a man, and fired, it was a Belgian civilian within 200 yards of the line, and he was shot at dawn, one can hardly conceive the mind of a man, who will be so vile to his country, as to help the enemy.

Paddy Stephens, soon helped us out of our difficulties with our food, he had a Primus Stove, for medical purposes, and when we run short of charcoal, he let us use it, for cooking,

He also showed us round the line, we were surprised at the wounded, both stretcher and walking cases, always being brought to the aid post, by Infantry men, and when we spoke to Paddy, he told us, that in these quiet parts, the Regimental Stretcher Bearers, always carry the cases to the Aid Post, and then you take them to the Advance Dressing Station,

It was rather a surprise, as we were all under the impression that the wounded, were our sole care, but after going up to the front line, and watching a few minnies coming over, I for one was not sorry, that for a time, at any rate, we were only beasts of burden,

Sometimes two of us would go, with only walking cases, and if it was dusk we would bring up the rations, water, food, and any medical necessities, one night, coming back, Tommy Barrass, and I thought we would take a quick way back, and we walked along a road, presently a score of Verrey lights went up, and all the surrounding country was lit up,

The next moment, bullets were flying around us, I was on my stomach, as if by magic, I had forgotten, Tommy, rations, and the world, all I was thinking of was my skin, I slid into a ditch, and shouted, where are you Tommy,

A voice from out of the darkness, the other side of the road called are you hurt Blink, I shouted no, have you got the rations,

No, he answered, a Verrey light went up, and we saw them lying in the road, after it had gone down, we both made a dash for them,

..... and into a

and into a trench we went, panting, and very relieved to be safe, no more prancing along that road for a short cut, we were both in a sorry state, covered in mud, and arrived back at the Aid Post, with our rations, and other things nice, and wet,

And so our time of 14 days went by, sometimes time hanging so heavy on our hands we walked about the trenches, other times, as soon as we got back from carrying a case, another one, would be there,

Sometimes Jerry would bang away and you gradually got used to the sounds of the different shells,

One that always half amused me, was one that sounded like a drum of nails, as it landed, the Whizz Bang was the one in most use by him, and its name denotes its sound, the Minniewerfers, were the bane of the Infantry men, and one of them showed me a great peculiarity about them, in that case we could see them, and all the time they came over, they seemed to be going, first one way, and then another, he told me they waited until they guessed where it would drop, and then bolted, sometimes with dire results.

We were rather fed up with not being able to get a decent wash, water was at a premium, all of it had to be carried up, and as our carry would be about, an hours walk we were not flush with water, sometimes we had a drop over, and shaved ourselves, and other times a drop of warm tea would do the trick.

And at last we received notice, that we were to be relieved, and next day another squad from the Brewery came up, we left them, after telling them it was a Home from Home,

We soon made ourselves at Home at the Brewery, as usual I caught guard, and after being warned to go on duty, went for a walk along the road,

A few yards along, and we came to a small field, and it was full of crosses, it was not a proper peace time cemetery, it brought to my mind vividly, what had gone on before we came this way,

I felt curious, and walked in to have a look, the first Cross was marked, Pte W.S. Bird. I wondered if by any chance he was a Brother of the Surrey County Cricket Club, M.C. Bird, he may have

..... been, for he

been, for he had been in the Surreys, funny how in the midst of the war out their, such a thought should come to me,

A little further on, where some roads met, were a few cottages still intact, and they were occupied, by some Flemish people.

I thought at the time it was plucky of them to stop, but as they said, it was there Home, still I certainly think, that our side made a mistake in allowing any citizens to live between our guns, and the trenches, for we had already had experience of one spy,

When we got back, we were told that one of the South Lances had been captured and stripped of his clothes, and that a German Spy would be over in them, no man would be allowed out after dusk, and the guard were to challenge, anybody approaching our Post, and to the fortunate winner, of catching the spy, a sum of money, and leave at once to England, but remember he will be armed,

Night came, and having to go on duty from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. I turned in, and at one o'clock went on guard, with a piece of wood, as my sole means of attack. or defence, and asking if the Spy had gone by, went outside with anything, but a jaunty manner,

Some time later, I heard in the distance footsteps, and at once realised that here was somebody on the road who had either not heard the order, or someone special of course the Spy would very likely, be one who had not heard the order,

I thought I would stand by and keep to orders, but the nearer the person got to me the more timid I felt, and through my mind galloped, the orders, challenge anyone on the road, and he will be desperate, and he his armed, and if you get him, leave and money,

I am afraid that the first thing, I threw over, was the thoughts of leave and money, and with them of course went the orders,

Fancy challenging, a desperate armed men, with a piece of wood, And presently in the gloom, I espied a Soldier striding along, I crept as quietly as I could into the ruins of the Brewery, and all the time thinking, the blighter is armed and is desperate.

With a sigh of relief, I heard his feet crunch on the road outside, and he passed on without a pause,

..... Giving him

Giving him a start, I crept to the opening, and looked round the corner, and saw him just going pass the little cemetery,

I stepped outside, and a voice said hist, why didn't you challenge that man, I saw it was a Police Sergeant, and said because I was told he was armed, and ours being a noncombatant corps, we are not allowed arms, and as I only had a piece of wood, I wasn't having any, he began to mutter about going after him, when a voice rang out, Clear and Distinct,

Halt, Hands up, Advance and be recognised,

Next morning we heard the sequel, it was the Jerry alright, and the man who had challenged him, was one of the Cheshires, and he was on duty, at the Cross-roads, and his Sentry Box was a hollow Tree, he had waited until the man had passed him, so of course Jerry had no option, up went his hands, he was marched off, tried, and shot at dawn,

I thought, in view of my attitude I might be for it, but as the Sergeant said, we are not allowed to go on Guard so they wouldn't touch you, I had decided if brought up, to put in as my defence, that if a Police Sergeant with a loaded revolver in his hands, hadn't had the pluck to challenge him, I surely, with only a piece of wood couldn't be expected to start facing, what they themselves had called, an armed, and a desperate man.

We agreed that although a Spy, he was not lacking in pluck,

Of the six cottages nearby, three were empty, and they had one pump between the six, water was almost as scarce here as it was up the line, and we used to go, and get an extra bucket from the pump,

One day, an Old Flemish Woman, came out, and gabbled away at us, none of us could understand what she was saying, we could see, she was angry about something,

We persuaded her to talk slowly, and we understood, she was objecting to us, drawing the water, by this time we had the whole crowd of civilians, around us, all talking, and gesticulating, at once,

..... We left them

We left them, with anything but friendly feelings towards them, here were our English Tommies, out here giving their lives for these bounders, and they objected to us having a drop of water,

But they crowned it all, by shouting after us, (Anglais Soldat Pas Bon), (English Soldier No Good) (Allemand Soldat) (Tres Bon) (German Soldiers) (Very Good).

There happened to be a few men with us, both, Artillery and Infantry, who could swear, my, they went back, and the row that ensued.

Next morning, the pump was found smashed to pieces, there is no doubt in my mind that it was done, by British Soldiers, but we never found out who did it.

We had a stroll over to the Gun Pits, one day, and asked them why they didn't, send Jerry over, at least as many as he sent us, we are only allowed to fire, four shells, per gun, per day, there is a great shortage, and we always have to keep all these, pointing to about 400 shells, in case of emergency,

This fact I am sure, had a depressing effect on our side, you would get about 50 or 60 of his shells over, and never a reply from our guns, the men talked about it, and of course wanted to know where our Gunners were, we all knew in time, it was not the Gunners fault, they were there alright, but they did not have the shells sent them,

The weather had turned rather wet, and the trenches, were not quite so nice, it was easy carrying wounded on a stretcher, on dry duck-boards, but when the rain had soaked them, and also washed some pieces of mud onto them, it was like trying to walk, the greasey pole,

The strain on us was rather hard, but what about the poor devil, on the stretcher, it was a marvel to me, how they stuck it, I suppose the underlying reason, was one of thankfulness, at getting away from the trenches alive, for although we were told, how quite a jammy part of the line we had got, there were quite enough killed, and wounded to bring home to us, the horror of it.

..... We at last

We at last were relieved, and went back to the Ambulance, one thing about us, was we had not had anyone wounded, or killed, both the 75th and the 76th Field Ambulances, had, had killed and wounded, somebody said, the lucky old (Sevens), and we hoped it kept the same all through, but we were very fortunate, and when we settled down a bit, it seem to recede into the back of ones mind, and you lived for the time you were in. the old hoods they had issued out to us, were gas masks and we had not had to use them, which was indeed a treat, for they were, just a hood made of Army Grey Backs, material, with mica eyes, and a mouth piece, and they were slipped over the head, and tucked down the collar of the tunic, and it was simply suffocating, that was a great sport of the M.C.Os, to have gas drill.

We were allowed to go out for walks, sometimes, we would go to Ballieul, and I used to buy a card with silk letters, and flags on it, to send home, if I had the cash, and we would go in and get some fried chips, and eggs, when flush, Madame Salome had made us laugh, when trying to get her to cook them, she used to cry out, Oh you Engleesch Tormies. always wanting Pomme de terre Tritz (Fried Potatoes), and Deus Al De Boeuf the latter really meant, Two Bulls Eyes, but it was her way of describing what two fried eggs looked like, one day being able to get in early we visited the Church, it was a most beautiful place, the paintings carvings, and statues were a sight worth seeing, one night walking through the street, we passed some soldiers on the path, and a door opened, by it one of them evidently saw me

I felt a hearty smack on the back, and a voice in the gloom, said hullo George fancy meeting you here, I recognised him by his rich irish brogue, it was an old shipmate of mine,

He had enlisted in Ireland, and was also with the R.A.M.C. and he was attached to the Third Casualty Clearing Station, we had a chat about old times, and parted as we had to get back to Billets.

Other nights we walked to Port de Nieppe, over the Canal, and into the town of Aementierres, it was really surprising, that

these places, within Two and a half miles of the line, were almost half full with civilians, although lights, were not allowed to be shown, you could go into shops, cafes, and estaminets the same as Ballieul,

In Armentierres, were plenty of signs to show where, Jerry had dropped his shells.

The food begin to get a bit different day after day, good old Bully and Biscuits Ticklers marmalade, was the limit, one would think they had cooked it in some paraffin oil, most of my money went in buying food, the tale went round, they give you rotten rations, to make you want to go up the line, but that was as usual only a romour, for the food as a rule was no better, often worse and you could not buy any up there,

One thing that pleased us was, we could write as many letters as we liked and no stamp to buy, they went freemans, but all good things have a snag, and in this case all letters had to be handed in, unsealed, for the Officers to censor, for those who wanted to tell their folk at home, where they were, this was unfortunate, why they ever wanted to tell, I could not, make out, for as I said to one chap, (who had devised a code for his wife, by starting each paragraph with a Capital Letter). that if you tell her, you are at so and so, and next day she reads in the paper, a heavy bombardment at, So and So, she will be in a blue funk, until she hears from you again,

The Ambulance during all this time, had, had football matches galore, and as only one Section went in the line, at a time, there were always two Sections too choose from, and with a bit of wangling, by the Sgt Major, the 1st Team men in our Section, were always handy.

Our Colonel was mad on Football, no distance was too far for him to go, to watch his team, no day to cold, or wet for him, every match our Lads played, he would be their, and whether they won, or lost, he was always the same, he only expected that all the players, would play the game, no shirking, no dirty tricks, any who started dirty play, or got lazy, he would have dropped,

..... And

And gradually a fine team was got together, one day, I was able to see one match, and arriving after the game had started, was looking on when, I espied my old Irish Shipmate, he was playing full back, I spoke to him at half-time, and the lads chipped me about it, swore I was putting him up to our lads moves. I went back with him, and had some tea, they lived better in the C.C.S. than we did in the Ambulance,

One night strolling over to the farm, to get a Coffee, I entered the Farm and made for the table, when I stood, and stared, at a Soldier. I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes, for there sat my Brother Tom, I had not seen him for 4 years, I went up, and patted him on the back, and said, Hullo Tom.

He turned round, I had made a mistake, side view he was my Brother, the front view was different altogether, he was a young Irishman, in the R.I.Rs. and said in his quaint brogue,

You be after making a mistake.

I told him then, I had taken him for my Brother sideface, and he laughed, and said, well don't forget to treat me like a Brother, if you see me up the line, and I promised him, I would.

Christmas was approaching, and romours floated round of the wonderful spread, we were going to get, we had good old Biscuits and Butter for Breakfast, and some lovely Mutton floating about in water for dinner, the cooks must have been drunk, and forgot to cook it, there was more food wasted at this place, than was eaten, a piece of Xmas pudding, and a nice tin box of Chocolates, from the people of the West Indies,

We played Football in the morning and in the afternoon, the 1st and 2nd team played each other, I was in the latter, and it was my first chance in the big teams, they took us too cheap, and we were only beaten 2-1.

We wound up the evening, by having a sing-song in our loft, all had to give a song too,

We had lost several men, through illness, and fresh men were drafted in their places, the two that struck the eye most were

one Bertie Few, he could speak about a dozen languages, and had the most educated drawl imaginable, and it was to him a glorious adventure, the other was a regular army man, with the map of Ireland, on his face, still he was a good fellow, to go up the line with,

Time went on, and the whole Division was relieved by the 9th Division, they were the first division, to be formed in the New Army, and were composed entirely of Scottish Regiments, and we went out to rest, to a place named Pradles a few miles from Hazebrook,

Our Section once again got a loft to be billeted in, and some of the others were either in houses, or outhouses, the Officers had pretty good billets.

We had a terrible shock here, for on routine orders that night appeared the words, all ranks will parade in the morning, and be issued out with packs, up to now, all we had carried, were some things in our haversacks, a water bottle, mess tin, and overcoat, and the rest was carried in kit bags, on the wagons, it meant in future we had to carry our own clothes,

There was a discarding of clothes with a vengeance, we all had more than our share, in the kit bags, but when it came, to carrying them on our backs, we found it a horse of a different colour, I date from this order, the gradual alteration, in the Infantrys attitude to us, it seemed, as if they had looked upon us as pampered darlings having our clothes carried.

Another shock was the inspections, we found we had got to keep our kit, out on rest so clean, as in England.

A Divisional Cross Country Race was organised, and our Ambulance, entered for it, a few days before the race, in jumping a ditch, whilst training, I strained my leg, and was unable to run, one of our Ambulance named Burgess, came in Third, and our C.O. was delighted, and gave him a little over his prize money.

..... Bolton had

Bolton had decided that work in the trenches was good for his health, and had wangled, until he got on Officers Servants job, or as they were called Officers Batmen, it meant that after all our 16 months together, Brownhill, Bolton and I, we had come to the parting of the ways,

For Bolton was billeted near his Officer, and of course wangled off all parades, we still remain chums, but the intimacy was lacking,

But when Brownhill, kept keeping out of my company, always had something on, if I wanted a walk, or always some excuse, to not go out with me, I felt rather upset, and at last decided that I must have it out with him,

So I asked him, if I had done anything to hurt him, he was as upset as me, and asked me to go, for a stroll.

He said, George you are living too much like you would at Home, I feel I want to live different, you don't drink, you don't smoke, you don't gamble, and I feel after having been up there that as the next time may be the last, I am going to have a good time, and if I stopped here, and only went for walks etc, I shall go balmy, I must have life, excitement, anything to make life a bit hectic.

I tried to persuade him, but it was of no avail, but it was a blow to me, for I used to wander about, for days by myself, we had been living as close as brothers, I met him one day coming out of an Estaminet with Tommy Barrass, drunk, well, I do not blame him, he was younger than me, and I suppose I should have tried harder to have kept him, from the clutches of the boozers, he was too easily led, and the one great regret about it, was the change in him, from a happy youngster, to a serious, and sometimes bad tempered chap.

But I did tell Tommy Barrass what I thought of him, I reminded him of Ernie's People at Home, that as he had taken him on, as a chum, look after him, and don't let him down, we were always friends afterwards, but it was a deep wound, that hurt, but after all, why be bad friends who knew what would happen, when next we

.... went up the line

went up the line, and so the time wore on, he used to come, and talk as of old, about Home, until at last, he told me the cause of his change,

George, something is going to happen, what it is, I don't know, but if it is only a Blighty, well it don't matter, I am going to drown my thoughts, in any way I can.

Leave to Blighty, we were amazed to hear the news, we were working out how soon we could all get over, and back again, some of us had fanciful dreams, they were soon dispelled, for when the news came out on orders, the Division will start leave next week,

Our C.O. said we should draw lots, and they were drawn, as usual, the Officers and Sergeants, all funnily, came out amongst the first batch, mu the talk that went on, and when the full list went up, there was a rush to find out whether you were lucky or not, being on the short size, I could not see, but heard on of the section say, Poor Old Blink (this name was given to myself by Bolton as I had not attained, army proficiency in swearing), (and prefixed my expressions in moments of stress, by the word Blinking). he his fourth from the end, well six were going a week, and as there were 240 in the ambulance, I should be away in 9 months, I never gave a thought about those who went first, would have to wait just as long for their second leave as my first, I was only thinking of how late my turn came, I was in a proper attack of the Blues, everything was going wrong,

I heard from my Brother Frank, that he had passed, at shooting, was second highest, and he heard he was soon coming over.

One piece of luck out here, was a weekly issue of cigarettes, and tobacco, and as I did not smoke, I always gave my issue away, most of the chaps, had mine, one time, or another, and Mullens, being short I gave, them to him for several weeks, I missed one week, and up he came, and asked me what I had done with them, he was rather a nasty tempered chap, but I had a few words with him, and it was rotten, but it blew over,

.....Him and another

Him and another chap, Charlie Belshaw who had joined up about the same time as I had, had palled on together, they slept next to me in the loft.

One night just before lights out, they had not turned up, so I just laid their beds down, lights out came, and in they staggered drunk as could be,

I told them to bunk into kip, and down they went, clothes, as well, and after a while they got talkative, and restless, and sat up lit a candle, sang, swore, smoked, and drank some liquor, and altogether upset the whole loft, presently up the ladder came somebody, and down we all nestled, with the exception of our two bold heroes.

Into the loft came the Coporal of the Guard

Put the light out there,

Oh, go to Hell,

Once more put that light out,

Oh my, what a tongue our friend Mullins had, he said about a 100 different words, and not one of them in the dictionary

Up to the foot of their bed he came,

Your names.

They had a little talk together, turned round, and said, you needn't worry about our names, for the next time, you go up the line, you will have a bullet through you, and a nice little wooden cross all to yourself,

The next moment, a shaking of my blanket, come on you, none of your swanking, fall in too escort these two men to the guard room,

Knowing what a crime they had committed, I was determined, I should not be a witness, drowsily I turned over, and in the best voice imaginable, made out I had only just woke up, and said,

Whats the matter,

Come on, you heard what has gone on, so up I got, another man was ordered up, and we had to escort our two pals to the Guard room,

..... Next morning

Next morning, I was called into the orderly room, the Sergeant Major said, what do you know about this serious affair last night.

Only that, I was caused to arise, and escort Pte Mullins and Belshaw to the Guard Room.

Didn't you hear what they said, because you are down as a witness,

I said if I am down as a witness I say nothing,

They are charged, and as the Cpl could not prove I was awake, I slipped out of the case.

The Sergeant of our section, guessed I was awake, he took me aside, and told me to be on my guard, for the full penalty for their threat was Death, and if I let it be known I had heard anything, I should be in for a Court Martial myself. I told him, I had not heard anything, he did not believe me, so I decided to go very quietly.

It worried me a good deal, when I heard the result of the charge against Mullins and Belshaw, the C.O. said it was beyond his powers to try them, he must put them in for a General Field Court Martial, and in the meantime, they would be under arrest.

The position as regards myself was, I had stated, I had heard nothing,

They had both admitted they said it, and when the trial came off, if the Court took a serious view of it, and pronounced the Death Penalty, I should then have to go forward and say, in an effort to save them, that I did hear what they had said, and that they were both drunk, and that they were incapable of understanding what they were saying,

And then would come my denial of having heard anything, and I should be for it,

It was with great relief, that whilst on guard one day, I spoke to Mullins, and he said, I pleaded guilty, but drunk, and the C.O. said that pleading drunk, although a crime would help in the trial, and would wash out the crime of its full importance,

and that I should only get clink.

The food at this time was some thing too awful, splendid bacon, meat and vegetables were sent up, but the cooks, were too lazy to cook it properly,

The porridge was like chewing half boiled seeds, the bacon either fried black, or boiled underdone, the meat for all intents, and purposes was cut up, and thrown into water, and dished up as stew, many and many a whole meal has been wasted, the growls of the men became more noisy, and at last I suppose they must have got to the Officers Mess, for at last the Orderly Officer for the day came round and asked for complaints, and who should the first one be, but Lt. Montgomery,

Into the loft came the Orderly Sergeant followed by the Orderly Officer,

C. Section, Shun, any complaints, we had just been saying a few things about our bacon, I stepped forward, mess tin lid in hand, along came the Officer,

What is the matter with it,

Under done Sir, it is raw,

Why it is beautiful,

But, Sir, it is raw,

How old are you.

Twenty One, Sir.

Well you are only a school boy yet, you have a lot to learn about cooking, take his name, and give him some extra fatigues, I felt done, I was mad, I could have shouted at him, but he held the Whip hand,

The others seeing the way, I had got on held their peace,

But he was not destined to get away yet, another old regular army man, in the section named, Charlie Hunt, had taken his down, and had a row with the cooks, he came back, and was not aware of what the Orderly Officer had said,

When the Sergeant for the last time, called any more complaints, forward stepped Charlie,

..... Yes, Sir,

Yes, Sir, my bacon is raw,

I thought the Officer would explode, he marched over, and turning the bacon over said, lovely bacon, lovely piece of bacon,

What is your name,

Pte Charles Hunt,

How long have you been in the Army,

Eight Years,

Well, you ought to know better, than to make such a complaint, turning to the Orderly Sergeant, he said put this man under arrest, and charge him this morning with making a frivolous complaint, and said take the bacon,

But Charlie, was told old a soldier for that,

Excuse me Sir, when a man is placed under arrest, he must be allowed to retain his evidence,

The Officer reluctantly let him keep it,

During the morning he was tried and, I happened to be on guard, and was one of the Escorts,

The Sgt. Major, read out the crime, and the C.O said, well Hunt what have you got to say for yourself,

My food was raw Sir, and here it is for your inspection.

The Colonel looked at it, and said, so it is, is this the frivolous complaint the Prisoner is charged with Sgt Major.

Yes Sir.

The case is dismissed and Hunt I wish you to answer my questions.

What food have you men had issued out to you,

Hunt gave a full list of what we had, had,

Burnt Burgoo, Lumpy Burgoo, or Watery Burgoo, scarcely ever cooked properly, and most it is wasted,

He continued like this, the C.O. taking notes, have the list of rations issued out to the Cook house this week, sent over here at once,

It came, well Hunt, you say you have not had pudding of any kind since Christmas, why every day this week, cereals, and flour

..... have been

have been issued out.

Do you say, you have had no pudding.

Yes, Sir.

Very Well, if you have any more legitimate complaints, bring them to the notice of the Sgt. Major, and I will see you,

Two days later, the Sergeant Cook, named Glover, was stripped, and sent away from the Ambulance to the Base, the C.O. had, had a thorough investigation into the matter, and he found that after the rations were issued, nearly all the Cereals and Flour had been sold to the villagers, and he was pocketing the proceeds, and generally having a fine time at our expence,

Pte Blacker, who in Civil Life, was a cook, at the Junior Army and Navy Club ? Pall Mall, was made Sergeant Cook, and I must say for a time, the food was both, more plentiful and better cooked.

The most of the time of the Ambulance at this Period was occupied, in route marches, to get us used to our carrying packs on the march, and plenty of drill.

When we were dismissed, you could go to Hazebrook, or anywhere else within walking distance, into the estaminets to have Wine, or Coffee, or stay in the billets, and either have a game of cards, or watch the gamblers at play, sometimes you would find a score or more writing home, one thing that was lacking, was a sufficiency of reading matter.

My Mother without fail, always sent me out, The Richmond and Twickenham Times. and it was a boon, after reading it I would pass it on, and very glad the Chaps were,

One day, I had written a letter, to a Friend of mine in the United States, and of course had handed it in unsealed to be censored, that evening by the Officers,

I was called to the mess, and was cross examined by Lt. Montgomery,

Who is this you are writing to in the United States.

Friends of Mine, Sir,

How long have you known them,

About four years Sir,

I see you mention the name Lutz, that is a German name.

Yes, Sir his ancestors were Germans,

Well do you realise you may be helping the enemy, in writing to these people,

No, Sir, for my Friends are English,

Well the best thing you can do, is to find other friends to write to, you can go and here is your letter,

I left with the conviction, that he was just playing me up, there were my friends and I could not write to them,

Next day, I handed the letter in again, and another Officer censoring it, it was signed, and passed without comment, this business of never being able to put your feelings on paper, without having to be censored was galling, and it was with a great sigh of relief, we had green envelopes issued out for the first time.

You could write a letter, and put it in this envelope, and seal it down, so that no Officer, in your Ambulance knew what you had written, but you were put on your honour, not to mention names or places, or events, or anything that would give any information, as to your whereabouts, doings, they were liable to be opened, and censored at the Base, but that was different, as you did not know each other, and I only ever heard of one case, in the Ambulance, when the letter was sent back, and that was deprived of his issue of his green envelope, they were issued out sometimes fortnightly, and sometimes weekly. and I think this was one of the most gracious actions, those in authority that we never saw could do, and I know all the men appreciated it.

Occasionally, there would be air raids, we were never bombed ourselves, one night a Zeppelin went over, and dropped a load on Hazebrouck, and that was the first time any of us had seen one.

..... A lot of us

A lot of us went over next day, and had a look at the damage, he had been after the railhead, he was near, but had no direct hits, but he had demolished several houses,

Some of us went in for Coffee etc, and one garrulous old Flemish Dame, soon came, and started a conversation about it,

She was as bitter as gall about the Jerries, and she pointed out to us, some young children who were handless, or otherwise injured, and assured us that the Germans had done it,

We could hardly believe that he was so vile, that he would maim such innocents, and we told her, what we thought, but she would not be shaken from her statement, and proceeded to give us, the day, time, place, how many Jerries there were, and that they were Cavalry,

It seemed incredible, but we had no evidence to disprove her statements.

Where as she, an Elderly Woman, who would hardly, be likely to imagine, what, perhaps, a younger, and romantic one would, if her statements, (and as I say we could not disprove them) were true, then the only wish I could hope for them, was a torturous death, the remarks of other men who were there, would not come amiss to write, but it is, and was to me such a frightful thing, that I will leave it.

On another visit, some of us went to a cinema, and had a look round St. Eloc. Church, and it was a beautiful place inside, the Square was a fine place, and it was a very nice town to visit, the main bugbear was shortage of the necessary cash.

The snow was on the ground pretty thick, and after a night of shivering, and sleeping up you were called, and taken for a early morning double, it was rather remarkable considering the amount of holes in the building that many more men, were not taken ill, taking it all round, I do not think more than one, or two men caught colds, and during the days plenty of drill and route marches helped to keep us all in trim,

..... One thing

One thing about this place was, we could have plenty of Football, although I had not played for the Ambulance team, I always played for the Section, a Divisional Cup Competition was got up by H.Q. and our Amb. did very well, considering our team, was chosen from 200 men, and the Infantry Batt from nearer 1,000 men. coming back from the match, we had been knocked out of the Cup in, I was overtaken by one of our Section the one who was married at Winchester, Vic Hunt,

Hullo George, and quizzing at me in his way, said what do you think of us now, I said, sorry we lost, but they were a better team,

Yes, much better, and I shall not be in our team much longer, I asked why, but he was silent, I said don't talk bosh, why there is not a better player in the Ambulance than you Vic, why we are as proud as punch of you,

That walk although a short one, was the beginning of a new lease of Army Life to me, for from our little walk, and talk, there arose a friendship that to me was worth living for, and one that through life, the memory of it, I shall remember with pride, I will write more of the pages of this friendship as I go on.

What with our marches and drill, and all the other annoying things, the time was beginning to drag, heavily on our hands, we began to wonder, if we had been forgotten, like we seem to be at Home, that was the way out there, you were just so many units, not men, and you were the Puppets, of the men at Head Quarters, whom you never saw, and who never saw you, for months at a time, and when you did see them they were always so smart, so well dressed, so fat and well, that if they did have some worried times, they looked jolly well on it,

At last the packing of the wagons, (my how Tiny Roberts, our 6 feet 4 inches, Storekeeper could load wagons, he could lift cases, full of surgical instruments that two of us ordinary members found heavy), and the clearing up of our billets etc, warned us of an impending move, and at last it came, and as per

usual in France you marched at night, so that Jerry planes could not see you on the march.

The first night was only a short march to our first billets, in Outerstune, we set off from Pradelles, like Christmas trees, with our new equipment, there was enough stuff left behind at our first stopping place, to fit out, half an ambulance, the people knew us again, and that in spite of troops having been continuously billeted there, and changing all the time,

Next night off again, Officers leading the way on horse back, the rest of us coming up behind, shanks pony, oh those French roads, they were endless, you would march, march, march along these roads, with never a turn to the right, or left, to break the monotony, unless you were fortunate enough to come to a fair sized town,

We arrived weary, worn and sad at a place named Robecq. in the early hours of the morning, and I think the advance billeting party, had been at great pains to find C. Section, the Oldest, Dirtiest, Crumiest, barn they could, and the air holes, I am certain that there was four times as much space for air to come in than there was wall standing, any self respecting Farmer would never have put his cattle in it, but then of course cattle had to be paid for, whereas, they had to pay us,

Next night off we went again, through the town of Lilliers, with all the Cafes, and Estaminets full of Civilians and Tommies, what a row our boots made over the cobble stones, we reached the other end of the town, but the cobble stones did not cease for miles, we marched along a road we could see it like a white ribbon in front of us, stretching away for miles,

The night wore on, and presently the Ambulance Dispatch rider, on his motor cycle drove up, to report, and hand a message to the C.O,

How far Tommy, to this so and so place we are going to,

Oh not far, when you come to a turn in the road, it is about 5 kilometres, and we marched, and marched and never a turn in the road, daylight came, and we were still marching, when presently

topping a hill , we returned sharply, and in another hour we were in the Village of Valhoun, having marched a distance of $28\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres,

We were the first British troops, to be billeted here, our Section was marched, right to the end of the Village, and billeted in a barn, in a large Farm, the troops before us were French, and it had not been cleaned

We soon threw our kit off, thankful to get rid of the load, and nestled down, we had not had time to warm the straw up, when everybody was scratching, of all the chatty places, this was the limit, it was a nightmare of a place, whinin an hour of us landing here every bit of straw, and hay on the earthen floor of the barn, was outside, but the visitors had not left, they had taken apartments, and there they stopped, daily there was a chatting parade, off would come your clothes one garment at a time, and a search for game ensued, for a candle up the seams, to singe them out,

The Farmer was an old Boy, and when we asked him for Oeufs (Eggs) are Ouf Buckoo, (yes plenty), and we could buy as many as we wanted for 1d each, but the Frenchies, are to say the least, good business people, and the law of supply and demand, sent the price up on the third day to $3\frac{1}{2}$ d each which meant, we did not buy so many,

Over our heads in the barn was a large hay loft, and hearing some hens clucking some of us went up to have a look, and found a nice supple of eggs, we borrowed them, and any others we could find, round the farm, for the hens laid anywhere and everywhere, and we would boil them and eat them, but the limit was reached one day the Farmer had made a complaint about us lighting fires, what seem to upset him the most, was the amount of his firewood we borrowed, and we had a warning of clink if any more fires were lit,

But in spite of no fires, there were eggs to be found, and our friend Hickenbottom, who never reminded us about real soldiers now,

found four eggs, not having anywhere to cook them, he march over to the Farmhouse, and asked them to cook the eggs he had stolen from them, and after the good lady had obliged, he asked her for some salt, what she would have said had she known, where the eggs came from, I do not know, but I think, by the amount of money they had from us, they did not mind, a great deal the loss of the eggs, for they never made a fuss, and they must have missed them,

Some fresh mules were sent to the Ambulance, and as the A.S.C. lines were near us, we saw them arriving, one was a lovely grey mule, and he was at once handed over to Charlie, the Officers Mess Cart Orderly, and there after, the Grey Mule was also called Charlie,

At watering time, the transport Officer, Capt McElney, blew his whistle, the order for the Army Service Corps, to mount there steeds, and take them for a drink,

Up went Charlie on the mules back, when over his head he landed,

What is that man dismounting for, shouts the Officer, in a jocular manner, who enjoyed the joke, of seeing Charlie the Orderly, being thrown by Charlie the Mule, as much as we did,

Three times he mounted the beast, and three times he was thrown.

At last the Officer, dismounted, and said I will show you how to mount that animal, and stay on its back.

We all approached, to see the fun, and we were not disappointed, up went the Officer, on to Charlies back, and over his head came the Officer.

Furious at the thought, of not being able to manage the beast, no doubt decided him to have another try, this time, the mule had decided to roll over, and he flung the Officer off sideways, and he then rolled over, and over,

When he had scrambled to his feet, he glanced round at us, we were doubled up with laughing, both at the mules antics, and and the showing up, of the Officer, after his boasting, he glared at us, called the Sgt Major, told him we wanted a little more discipline, and ordered us to be taken for a three hours route march, a sorry finish on our day off, too be sent on a march for

..... laughing,

laughing, it is always the same in the Army, the rank and file might have the first, and even the second laugh, but the Officer, is always the winner, when it comes to a pinch.

Mullins and Belshaw were, Court martialled here, found guilty, and as they told us afterwards, given a severe dressing down by the President of the Court, and that only on the C.Os, pleading for them, which they took into account, the sentence would have been more severe,

You Pte Mullins, being a regular Army Man, will be sentenced to Two Years, No. 1 Field Punishment,

And as we consider that you Pte Belshaw, came under the influence of Pte Mullin, we will deal leniently with you, and you will be sentenced to One Years No. 1 Field Punishment, to be served in your Ambulance, and that on presentation of a good report at the end of Three Months by your C.O. it will be reduced at actual serving time to, One Year and Six months, respectively, and if in the future after having served your full sentence, you are guilty, of any further misdemeanours, the leniency of this court having been ill repaid, this present offence will be brought up against you,

They were both very pleased, that they had to serve their time, in the Amb, Guard tent, for they knew that their Pals would always help them if possible, on the other hand, if they had gone to the Base, or England, they would have had their spirits, if not their hearts broken,

We were not here long, and moved on to a place named Mesnil, and near to the Town of St Pol which was placed out of bounds after we had been able to visit it only the once,

We were billeted in the grounds, of the Chateau Thierry, just outside the Village and whilst we were out in the grounds, the Officers were billeted, in the House, it was a beautiful place.

As we marched in, we saw a Lady looking out of one of the upstairs window, on reaching the drive, along the front of the house, we were halted, we looked around, and looking up, had a

good view of the Lady, who we learned afterwards, was the Comtess De, ———, her husband was at the war, in the French Army,

She had not been blessed, by nature with features to boast about, in fact to put it mildly, she was ugly,

One of the lads from Burnley, named Elwell, noted for his pungent witticisms, both in good taste, and bad, no doubt thought it a favourable chance to show off his prowess, as a punster,

He had made several odious remarks, about her looks, and each succeeding one, was said in a louder voice, which could have been heard, by anyone in the rooms above, never mind the one whom they were about, and she was at the window, and must have heard all he said,

A silvery voice, with a slight Irish accent rang out, Tommies, Tommies, I want you to stop talking, I want to ask a question, it was the Lady of the House speaking,

Poor Elwell, he turned red, then white, and would willingly have sunk into the earth, if only the hole had appeared.

When we had obliged, she said, are there any Boys from Ireland, if so, I would like to see them, when you are dismissed.

We were marched to our Billet, a distance of over a quarter of a mile, from the cookhouse, so we had our own cookhouse, and the food was cooked, better than we had had it since we landed in France, it was a treat, and we spoke to our Section Cook about it, asked him why he could not always dish us up good food, instead of the muck they sent us along, when all the Cooks are together.

One thing we had new here, was biscuits soaked, then dried, and put through a mincing machine, then put through again with onions, and bully beef, and salt and pepper, and it was served out as a kind of paste, one man evidently thought, a little more taste in it would be better, for he contrived to have his finger in the way of the mincer as another man turned it, the top came off, and he was a candidate, for the Dressing room,

We were able to go into St Pol for a bath as a Section,

although it was out of bounds to us, still the treat of getting a decent bath, was well worth the visit, and a clean shirt, which often had to be well searched, before you had it long, we used to, if possible, keep our own shirts and wash them ourselves, but wherever you made your bed, you always seemed to be, settling in a camp of crawlers.

The Ambulance being settled here for a while, a Hospital had to be made in a barn, it was over a foot deep in manure,

The C.O. had all sections cleaning it out, and in three days, sick men were in it, the main thing in the Army was a happy knack of improvising, for if you had always waited, for the Authorities to supply your requirements you would be unlucky.

We were all settling down very comfortably, and could have stuck it, to the end of the war, football, walks, fatigues, were about all our duties, it was too good to last,

One night twenty names were read out, mine being amongst them, that these men, will fall in tomorrow afternoon, and march under Captain Alderson to the 30th Casualty Clearing Station for duty,

We were a happy band who set off next day, Teddy Parrot, Jack Davies, Cragg, Old man Edwards, Brough, and all of us who had been together some two years,

We arrived late at night, and were marched to a hut,

The Sgt Major of the C.C.S, inspected us, told us the tale about we had come there for work, not a holiday, **he** had had about enough of Ambulance men, and that we could go into the Hut, and would find some food there, go to the cook house for tea, and then we could bed down for in the morning, he would find us plenty to do,

Into the hut we went, it was a sight we had not been used to, Beds, real Beds, with mattress, pillows, and blankets. we could scarcely believe the evidence of our own eyes, never since we had left billets over twelve months ago, had we been in beds, except on our leaves.

..... We were in

We were in seventh heaven, and we were soon in kip, and enjoying our new found luxury,

We could not have been down to it long, when the door was banged open, and a voice shouts, come on out of it,

It was our dear friend the Sgt Major, and the Orderly Sergeant.

We were not used to his funny little ways, we thought it was his little joke, and both of them going out again, we took it, he was joking, and turned over,

About ten minutes elapsed, and in he came, pulling the blankets off the first man, who immediately sprang up, he roared take this mans name for disobeying an order, and this mans, and this mans, and so on until he had got the lot,

He raved about what kind of dicipline we had been used to, how he would liven us up, he was like a raving lunatic,

At last one more brave than the rest, bearded him, and said look here Sir, you told us to kip down until the morning, it is now midnight, it is twenty minutes since you called us, and even now, we don't know what we are called for,

It seemed to calm him down, and he mopped his brow, and said you ----- blighters will be the death of me,

Here is an ambulance train due in and one hundred, and fifty wounded to be put on board, and you not out,

When he had finished, we got a hustle on, and were out, and loaded up the Hospital train, so well, that he came back into the Hut, and said, I thought you were another gang of lazy bounders sent to me, and that you were starting to play me up at once, our Sergeant who had come into the Hut with us, told him a few things about us, for he turned, and said, if you chaps, are as good as your Sergeant says, you have a Home here, and I will see you have a good time, he was as good as his word, he never once spoke to us again, excepting of course to give us our orders, and into bed we again tumbled,

Morning came, and we were lined up, now then you men, you two to so and so hut, you two too so and so hut, until he came to the two last, one, old man Edwards, and the other myself, you

..... two men

two men on the incinerator,

Away we all went at our jobs, Old man Edwards, and I, landed at our Engine, to get things going was the first job, you have a look inside, and see what it is like. I will have a look here,

I climbed on to the platform, lifted the lid of the Incinerator, and looked in, there were about a dozen arms, and legs, in different stages of gangrene, the smell was atrocious, calling the old man, I said look here Dad,

Up he came, lumme, what a Butchers Shop weve struck, we soon found out this was only a quiet days work, the first ones to arrived with stuff to be burned, were Jack Davies and Teddy Parrot, both Lancashire lads, Sithee lad, says Teddy, weve caught thell of a place, it is called The Death and Glory ward,

Bye Gummb, lad it ist Chamber Thorrrers,

I was not on the job long, the Sgt Major came round, you old man, must manage the job yourself, you, to me he pointed, report to the Quarter Masters Stores, and away I went,

The Capt and Quarter Master, said I am given to understand, you have some idea of running a Dining Room, well we are in a awful state, at the moment, hundreds of men, and no system, I will give you two days trial,

I was soon on the job, and when he came round, congratulated me, and said good, I didn't though, it was six when I got up, except for breakfast, I had been on the go all the time, I eat my dinner while I worked, also my tea, and supper, and at 1-30 a.m. the last of the men having their food, I crawled away, to the hut, and found all the rest of the lads asleep, but not for long, in came another Hospital train, and out we were loading up,

Next day, I asked for more help, and having less men through our hands, we were finished earlier, the third day, having arranged a system to work by, and coached the Dining Room Orderlies, and writing it down, I reported to the Capt and Quarter Master,

Thank you he said, there you are that is for yourself, and gave me a ten franc note, now what would like in the way of food,

..... as I was

as I was rather well in, I got all I could off of him, and took it round to the hut, to give the lads a treat,

They almost turned up their noses, while I had been thankful to get a mouthful of anything they had been living like fighting cocks, the food we had dished up to us, was wonderful, every day the Sgt Major was telling us, about what good reports, there were being giving about our work,

The Death and Glory ward was well named, we were changed constantly in our duties, so we all got our turn of all the different wards, but this one was the most tragic, the most wonderful, the most beautiful, every feature of life, rushed before one here, the tragedy was the death of Youth, the wonder was that men could face such shocks, and live, the beauty was the Nurses, from bed to bed they would go, one of them in particular, was the very incarnation on earth, of an Angel,

The men she sent on their last journey with a flicker of a smile, on their guant and furrowed faces, lined and aged with pain, and suffering, that Woman must go to her grave with feeling of sweet contentment, that she was able to help so many of her Countryman, in so many different ways, that us men, although willing enough, did not have, like the women, the indefinable gifts of sympathy, and understanding,

We were like blundering bulls, compared to them, but men are made differently,

Sixteen hours a day, in that ward, was enough to break the spirit of war in any man and we had days of it, the one thing that stays in my memory, was the passing of these men, never a cry against their fate, taking it with the rest of their wounds, as one of the prices to be paid for war, the Nurses, Doctors and us Orderlies, worked and slaved like Trojans, it was the least we could do, more by the divine right we were with held from doing, but even into that gate of doom travelled Drama, tense, real, and fierce, none of the Actore on a Stage are given, the powers to produce, (what to us was a terrible sight) an insight such as this,

A Highlander was carried in from the theatre, still and ashen, and unconscious, next was carried in a German, and placed in the next bed, breathing heavily, two more too bad to be moved, Night came, and a scream, we rushed over, there was the Highlander, on the German trying to grip his throat, but nature had won, he fell unconscious, and we put him to bed, later he awoke, move me he begged, and at last humouring him we did,

He told us the reason for his attack on the German, (We put it down to, the sight of the German, and the thoughts of what he was suffering, but we were wrong).

That morning Jerry had raided our lines, and in daylight too, we had heard all about it,

The Highlander said as the Jerry approached us, we got ready, one made a rush at me, as he threw his bomb at mt feet, so I bayoneted him, the bomb exploded, when I awoke, I was in this ward, and looking at me from the next bed, was the German, I had batoneted and the one who had thrown his bomb at me.

I do not think any more need be said of this, for to all who read it, must come an understanding,

Both were buried the next day, and so the time went by in that ward, over three weeks we were there, and only two men who entered the Portals of that tragic ward left it alive, the dead, why sometimes hourly, I feel that I cannot give a realistic account of that ward, but one thing I learned, and that was the way to die,

Another job we all had was grave digging, we, would dig a long trench, and the field was rapidly getting filled up,

Walking on duty at another ward, a patient came out of a hut, and beckoning me I went over, I said hullo what do you want,

A talk, I said hurry up, I must soon go,

Do you know who I am,

No, I said,

Well I am the Prince of Wales,

I changed my tactics at once, and began to humour him and

..... cursing myself

cursing myself, for being such a fool as to go in a hut with him,
I said good, where are you going too, Home,

Oh, no, I am going to the Base, the King my Father, is going
to decorate me with the V.C. tomorrow at Boulogne,

I was very thankful, when he said I must be getting ready,
I took advantage of this, and said I must be going, he made no
attempt to stop me, only asking me to come back,

I rushed round, and told one of the Medical Officers, and he
was soon under the watchful eyes, of the Orderlies,

He had walked in himself, his Battalion was in the line, it
was another case of shell shock, poor chap, he was no trouble,
just a pathetic piece, of human wreckage, always willing to speak
to everyone who would stop, and chat with him, he was somebody
different, a dozen times a day, they kept him to see if he was
malingering, after he had been there a few days, he was sent
down the line.

Another day some French men were brought in, we were taking
over a part of the French line, and so we had a lot of them
through the hospital,

One came in on a stretcher, strapped down, he had suddenly
gone off his head and being a powerfully built man, he was over
six foot, and well proportioned, he had started to run amok to
the danger of the others and when they had laid hands on him, he
had got so violent, they had, had to strapped him to a stretcher.

He worked himself somehow by the aid of the walk, to a standing
position, and I just looked round, as he burst his bonds,

Look out I shouted,

And in a moment we were on him, but he was free, we had a
tremendous struggle to calm him down, and get him at all quiet,
a glimmer must have gone in somewhere, for, he kept repeating,
Bon Anglais,

Poor Chap they took him away, on a French ambulance,

A French areoplane came over our part of the lines, our
searchlights picked it up, and mistaking it for a Jerry, fired

..... at it,

at it, brought it down, the Frenchmen, were buried the next day, they were accorded full Military Honours, it was a distressing affair, as if it wasn't bad enough, Jerry killing our side without our side, killing our own men.

Another time, taking our turn we would be on the surgical ward, day after day men would be brought into the Hospital, garmed up to their eyes, in mud, blood, and bandages,

Capt Charles, and our amb. Officer Capt Alderson, were on this, they were either both wonderful, surgeons, or butchers, the arms and legs, they cut off, there was never any hesitation, in would come a man, off go the bandages, hullo poor devil, gangrene has set in, he must have it off, half way up the thigh, the principal they worked on was if gangrene had set in, they would only be wasting time, just cutting above it, for it would sure to spread upwards, and necessitate another operation, so make pretty certain first time,

The men were kept there until fit to be move, I am thankful to say, although the tragedy, and suffering was great, it was mild compared to the Death and Glory Ward,

We could not be amongst all this, without beginning to talk, the lesser wounded men told us a lot about up this sector,

Some of them had been to the sector on Ploeg Straete, where we had been for the winter, as it was our only place, where we had been in the line, we had got, so they said, an entirely false impression of the line in other parts, if we imagine it was all the same,

One thing you could always hear, when talk of bombardments was the theme, and that was the scarcity of our bombardment, compared to Jerry, there was at that time a distinct feeling of inferiority to Jerry, in everything, except men,

There were never any remarks made, that we heard, that the men were dispirited, and if you got into conversation with an old Soldier, he would paint a picture, of the war for you, and invariably finish up, with some talk, to prove that we were having

a jammy time compared with the Old Contemptibles

Some would hint, at more and larger guns, others, more bombs, others more machine guns, always the same, more of everything, was coming out, but still not enough yet to supply the needs,

It was a point that some of us, used to talk about, but politics, and criticisms of any Superior Officer somehow or other never cropped up, all the talk centered on why it was not there, Jerry had got it, why not us,

Another day Teddy Parrott and I were sent to a sick ward, when we got there, the orderly said, you have got to scrub out,

We jibbed, it didn't seem a brilliant suggestion at all, it was a rotten job, it could not have been done for months, when we found out, the Orderly who had given us the order was only a private, that settled it,

We had a proper argument, and as we had both been in the Army longer than him, we convinced him, against his will of course that he could not give us orders,

Still in spite of all our talk we had to scrub out, we had the Sgt Major round and when we had discreetly told him the tale, the Orderly and both of us were soon put on our benders,

I suppose wards ought to be scrubbed out, and we had done several of the others, but this ward, had such a rotten floor, as soon as you started to scrub, you had to look out for splinters, we finished it, and had to get all the beds ready, for sick,

We had to our disgust made such a good, and quick job, of it, we were given another ward to do, in we went, and a rather officious private started to order us about, we didn't take anything like that from Privates, you had far too much of it, to put up with from the N.C.Os, and Officers,

A few kind words, and Teddy and him were at it, I separated them, and Teddy in his Lancashire dialect, I am a Bolton Lad, I am afraid of nowt, a bit of the line would do thee, the world of good,

The other, wait till I report you, I was laughing at them,

..... it was really

it was really too funny for words, two non-combatants having a fight,

When our tempers were somewhat calmed down, we sat down, and talked it over, and convinced him, that he too had got to help scrub out, it was a good game, if they could get away with it, but we had been put wide to it, and we saw that they did it as well as us,

The Orderly came to me just as we were starting, I know you, your name is Swindell, you used to go to the Rathfern Road School, my name is Wilson, he said I had not changed much, but I could not say the same for him, we had last seen each other about, eight years previously, he fetched a Forest Hill paper, and showed me a column, and looking down, recognised the names of many of my old school chums, and my name in the list,

We got on different after that, but taking it all round, the men at the C.C.S. permanently, used to show off, and try and give the impression, how much more superior to us they were, but we used to play them up, and whatever they said, we would always wind up with the same old things,

When are you going up the line, of course they no more wished to go up, than us who had been there, they had seen quite enough to prove to them it was an unhealthy spot, it was all rather foolish, but there was a reason, for our remarks,

The peppery old Sgt Major, had all the permanent staff groggy, he lined them up while we were there, told them they were all getting slack, the Sisters were complaining, the Colonel had given orders, any more complaints, and up into an ambulance they would all go, the threat had the desired effect, like trojans they redoubled their efforts, and it was here that we came in, we knew we were only here on fatigues, for three weeks, whilst we had no particular desire to go up the line ourselves, we knew we had to, and as is often the case the unseen danger, and unknown danger, is often the cause of fear, and these poor devils had got it badly, whilst we knew it to be, what it was, and not what we imagined it was,

Some of us, were sitting in a Ward, and in came an Officer,

..... he was rather

he was rather a gentle-looking individual, but we knew he was a regular, by the South African ribbons, he spoke, to several of the patients, and on going out called me over, asked me all about the Ambulance, I must have been talking with him, for half an hour, I was very much surprised, when he got up to leave me, for him to pat me on the back, and say, well Young Man, you will allm have a lot more to do, before this ghastly business is over, I wish you the best of luck, and play hard and work hard, like you have, and that is all you can do, but above all, remember the Corps you belong too, let no man deride it, he shook me by the hand, and off I went,

I saw Wilson the next day, and he asked me what I had been talking, to the Officer about, I told him the Ambulance, do you know who he his, he then asked, I said no, Well he his Major Lenke, Double V.C. the only man, in the Britian who has ever, won the V.C. and a Bar. (I would like to state here, that two years later, 1918, Captain Chevasse, also of the R.A.M.C. won a Bar to his V.C.) these being the only men, who have ever won Bars to V.Cs is an Honour of which the R.A.M.C. is justly proud.

The C.O. of this hospital, we were surprised to hear, was the Brother of our C.O. they did not resemble each a bit, the one tall, guant, and somewhat stooping, whilst our C.O. was medium height, a bit stout, and as straight as a ramrod,

We soon made ourselves at Home with the Sisters, they found we did not kick, at any job, and whilst we were there, gave us many treats, the greatest of these, being the opportunity to converse with some of your own country women,

They had their off days, but never with the sick, or wounded, they were a great boon, to the poor chaps, but if they were tired, they would vent their spleen on us, and next day would bring us a box of chocolates, or some other treat,

We played plenty of pranks on them, none in bad taste, or likely to get us into trouble, and although they would let fly with their tongues at the time, they soon come round, some with

..... the remark,

the remark, you are awful boys, I will have to see you have more work, and such like,

One day we had a new job, times being slack, they put us on the gardens and paths round the Nurses Huts, we could not let an occasion like this pass, so we began to serenade them, with any songs we could think of, and any of those who hoped to sleep were unlucky, they came out at last, and we had a good old bit of tongue pie, and a threat that we would get no more dainties, so we got some cotton, and string, and tied it, backwards, and forwards across all the paths, When they eventually came out to go on duty, being late as usual, they had to rush, and as each one, tripped up, so a gallant, would be at hand to save her,

They almost cried with rage and laughter mixed, and the next morning when we turned up to carry on the good work, the Matron herself appeared on the scene, she faced us, with a face of granite, but she unfortunately could not hide her eyes, so after she had told us how naughty we were, we all said how sorry we were, which she said, I would like to believe, she went to her hut, and out came the Sisters, like a lot of Girls, they told us, that if we were good that day we would have some chocolates, but if not, well no chocolates

A little careful tampering with doors and they were prisoners.

All went well, they had their nap, and time for duty came, threats, demands, etc being of no avail, they took to pleading, well we might be able to let you out, but of course, you must buy your freedom,

Knowing the Matron would be waiting they gave way, but the trouble then was to unfix the doors, and while we were at it, who should come on the scene, but the Matron herself, we at last released the Sisters, and a very humble lot of privates, lined up to hear what the Matron had to say,

Instead of a lecture, it went some thing after the style

..... of a gesture

of a gesture of despair,

Oh, you Boys, you will worry me too death, I will have to have you sent back to your units, I don't suppose she meant it, but just as she had finished, one of the Nurses, came up, and pleaded for us, she saved the day, and we had our Chocolates,

They put up with our little pranks, we were more privileged, than the permanent staff, for it was really as an Officer, that the position of a Nurse was held, we never played jokes with them, in front of the Staff, or else we should have been downed at once.

Occasionally there would be some malingering, on the whole it was very scarce, and when a lad of nineteen came in and his ticket was marked, Dumb ?, he was placed in a ward for observation,

Several tests were tried on him, but never a word, always by signs or writing he made us understand, the severest test was the tobacco test, of course in a ward where it had once been held you had to remove the patients, who had witnessed it, and on the other hand you had to be sure the patient was a smoker, it was only used once whilst, we were there, the Sister told us, they generally gave themselves away long before that, if they were acting Dumb.

Round an orderly went to every bed, and asked every man, what kind of Cigarettes or Tobacco, he wished to have, and called out all the popular brands, the Suspect amongst them,

Then the Nurse would take the list, and this day, she chose, the method, of which kind each man wanted, and had us put them in list,

We carried the different kinds into the Ward, and waited, she looked at the list and of course, as each man had picked what he wanted, she would go from one side, to the other, being very careful to mix the turns up, so that she could quite easily miss the Man,

Finished, we were just leaving the Ward, the Sister going in front of us, there was a terrific banging,

We stopped, it was the Man, banging away on his locker, with

a shoe, and wildly waving his arm about, and then pointing to his mouth, and shaking his head,

He had passed the test, which meant, he would go down by the next train,

The Sister, she just turned, and run down the Ward, she reached him, sat on his bed, and cried her heart out, murmuring to him, all the endearing, and pathetic words that only a Woman could, under such circumstances, and kissed and hugged him, as I am sure his own Mother would,

Poor youngster it was indeed a pathetic sight, the Doctors were of the opinion, after a further diagnosis, that something had snapped, and he would never get his speech back again.

There was a stream running alongside the Grounds, and the banks were infested with rats, if we could get a little time off at midday, we would go down, and see one of the rat-catchers, with his dog, it was the most powerful dog for its size, that I have ever seen, it was only as big as a fox terrier, as regards height, its jaws were like a blood-hounds, its head like a bulldog, and its shoulders were almost the same width, as its length, it was as ruffiant, a looking mongrel as any one could imagine, but once on the hunt, he almost laughed, the master would block up most of the holes, all if he could find them, excepting two, one for the ferret to go in, the other for the rats to bolt out, the dog all alert, waited at the later hole, and if one bolted, it never moved its feet, just opened its great mouth, and it seemed as if the rat, had no option, but to go into it, with a snap the jaws would close, just a vigorous shake of the head, then he would fling it backwards over his head, with never a glance, to see where it went, his eyes fixed on the hole for the next one.

Our three weeks went rapidly by, and the day for us to rejoin our unit came, the Col had us lined up, and spoke to us, and told us how sorry he was too lose us, and wished us the best of luck, and away we marched, with the best wishes of the C.O Kelly, Major Leake, and the Sgt Major, nearing the entrance gates,

the Matron, and Sisters were grouped, and they cheered us, until we reached them, then we halted, the Matron gave a little speech, told us what a naughty lot of lads we were, but although we were so tiresome, the Nurses were all sorry to lose us, and gave us Chocolates, Cigarettes, and Tobacco, from the Sisters, and hoped we would all come through safely, and with that out of the grounds we marched, with English Womens voices ringing in our ears, and not a few nurses wiped away a tear.

We had been very lucky, the food we had had, was the best we had given to us the whole time we had been in the Army, and proper beds to sleep on,

Still the Division was going into action, so we had to go to the Amb.

They were still at Villiers Chateau, but we were only in Camp about an hour when the whole Amb set off.

The Stretcher Bearers left the main part of the Amb, who went to a French Hospital to take over,

The stretcher bearers, with Capt Lescher in charge, marched to a place called, Mont St Eloi, as its name denotes it was on top of a hill, there were three roads in it, the main road too Arras, run through it, and to the north running right over the hill was a road, and near the end of the Village on the Arras side of the hill was a road to the South,

We stopped in front of a large house, and there were some civilians still living there, and they stayed the whole six or seven weeks we were there,

A Mother, and her two Daughters,

The Sergeant picked out our outhouse, and said in you go, until orders, as our main food diet now, consisted of Bully, Beef, Biscuits, Butter, Cheese and Jam, the only thing that had to be cooked was tea.

We soon scrounged round, found some wood, and made some, and had a look round the house, and yard as we were not allowed in the Village,

The Sergeant came in, read out some names, and said these

men, go over there, to the House, and hand in your packs,

We knew we were for the line, that evening about nine, out we marched, with all just equipped in Battle order, and every squad had two stretchers, besides petrol tins of water, food, and medical stores.

We were marched in the darkness, along to the Arras end of the Village, and then half a mile further on, we came to a halt, the place was simply alive, troops and mules, light railway trucks, and ammunition of every description,

We then heard shouting, where are the Blank R.A.M.C. give them another five minutes, and then load up and get away,

In the midst of all this mass, we found our way to an Officer, our Sergeant explained that it was our first night, alright, be here on time tomorrow, get a move on, and jump on that wagon, we haven't got a spare one tonight.

The only light was the stars, and we came up to a small railway wagon, Four mules hitched up to the front, a man at each two,

Come on you Blokes, do you think we want to hang about up there till its light, on we dumped our loads, and jumped on ourselves, and away we went, into the darkness, no more idea, of where we were going, except we could see by the Verrey Lights it was the Line,

I turned round to see, what the football, looking things were, on the wagon, we had not seen these things before, and asked the Infantry man, what they were,

Oh, they are those new fangled thing the answer to Jerries minnies, they are Stokes Trench Mortars,

We went sailing along merrily for, a quarter of an hour, how the Mules, kept on the track was simply marvellous,

Presently we came to a halt, word was passed along, he has just blown up the Line in a couple of places,

The Infantry man turned to us, looks as if we are in for a rough night, we were getting a little on the jumpy side,

..... and asked

and asked what he meant, well if Jerry starts again, run for your life, if he drops one near this load, and sets one off, the lot of us will go sky high, we told him, it was our first night up, and he then regaled us with stories of the horrors he had witnessed,

We told him we hadn't just come up, why you are in our Division, and we are only just coming in tonight, I know that, he said but we have had to do this fatigue for nights, we could not contradict him, and it was as well we didn't, for he either had been up as he said, or had been told, for we soon found out, all he said was true,

The word passed along all clear, and keep low at the junction, oh said our friend, that means, he has about half a dozen machine guns, trained on the junction, and all night they will take it turns, to sweep across that place, the going was very tricky, we were in a hollow,

Presently, the wagon was on a mound, our Leader spoke to somebody, and the junction was switched over, the bullets were flying over and around us, seeming some of them, as if they were knives, ripping up linen, others a whiny noise, others zip zip, it was enough to give any one the nightmare, the Mules, keep on, and took no more notice, than if they were in there stables

All clear shouted our friend, and we sat up, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do, to use the Stokes Trench Mortars, as bodyguards, we then asked him what all clear was for, well he said, we are just running down into a valley, and jerry cannot reach us with his machine guns, on account of the ridge, we blessed that ridge,

We run down into the valley, and halted, the place, seemed literally alive with men, and the wagon was cleared in no time,

We hadn't got the haziest idea, what to do, some of our petrol tins of water had gone, like wise some of the food,

We found at last, the Regimental Aid Post, and in we trooped, hurry up you chaps, how is it you are so late, our Sergeant

..... spoke to the

spoke to the M.O, he was up the pole with a vengeance,

Well, Sergeant, here are the dead, and in the next place are the living, we found our way as best we could, to where he had indicated, come on you fellows, hurry up, and load those wagons, they are waiting to get away,

However the British Army did right I do not know, here we were, in a new place, not 400 yards from the front line, and not a soul of us, had an inkling of what we had to do, and nobody to tell us what to do, you had to rush round and find out for yourselves,

We had got to load up the ^{empty} wagons, with both dead, and wounded one stretcher bearer to each wagon, we had to keep an eye, on the drivers, or they would clear back, empty, we loaded all the dead and wounded, and the men to accompany them being detailed off, the rest of us scouted round for the Aid Post,

We were no sooner there than a violent quaking of the earth followed, the next moment, the valley was a mass of blazing shells, if the wagons, had been ten minutes later, they would have all been wiped out,

We had heard a little rumpus up in Floeg Streat, but it was pop guns, compared to this, a proper merry hell was raging, our guns were blazing away, and his were doing ditto, what with the roar of our guns and the explosions of his shells, we could scarcely contain ourselves,

Come on you fellows, thats a mine gone up, and they are fighting for the crater, and I should think it is our bit of the line,

Up you go, that trench on the right and find the wounded, and get them back here, this trench was under Jerrys fire, but of course, that did not mean you were going to get hit, so you get a move on, and we had not gone far when we met the walking cases, some of them bandaged,

Whats it like up there, and a Son of Ireland, replied,
Hell Bhoys,

..... We continued

We continued up, and at last reached the supports, the Irish Rifles were all on the alert, Jerry's shells were raining like a curtain between them, ^{and} the front line, the order had just been given, that they might have to go forward, I was amazed, I had seen nothing like this before, here were men who at the word of command, would just leap up, and go through, or try to go through that Hell, it seemed to us, that it would be impossible, for any thing to get beyond that curtain of death, but they were ready, if need be, I then for the first time, realised what my height had saved me,

I am sure the other men thought the same as myself, what a fortunate lot of individuals we were, none of this business for us,

I can say that the war, as regards its most terrible aspect, started for me that night these thoughts were rushing madly through my brain, how lucky I was, what an awful thing too be standing on the fire step one moment, and the next, feel the earth shaking under your feet, and know that unless providence intervenes, your last moment is nigh, and if you are alive, and have escaped unhurt, you have got to rush madly for that Crater, and try and get it first before Jerry gets there, and when he finds, his work as regards making a breach in your line has failed,

He simply plonks every kind of death dealing stuff imaginable, in an effort to dislodge you, my what we had missed,

We were not left in idleness, very long, come on you bearers, we have got a lot of stretcher cases, and forward we go,

Men lying about, masses of bandages, some waiting to be bandaged, others dead all waiting to be cleaned, and all the time Jerry shelling away like blazes, we picked them up as we came to them, away down to the Aid Post, then back again until all the cases, were cleared, towards morning things were better as not only had the shelling stopped but it was light and we could see,

where to walk,

The wounded, and dead all being down by about 10 a.m. we had been at it since about 1 a.m. we were able to get something to eat, and drink,

We heard from a Sergeant, who had been in the todo, that the Royal Irish Rifles had not been in the Line a couple of hours when up went the mine, there were eighty odd casualties, dead, missing, and wounded, before things had calmed down, we held the crater, but what a price, it was a jolly fine start, at daybreak as they looked over to Jerries Lines, through a periscope they saw a Blackboard with the words in chalk, Welcome 25th Division,

He must have got the information from somewhere, for this was the first unit to take over the Line out of our Division, and none so far as they knew were prisoners, the M.O. was saying how many head wounds,

It was really a most amazing situation, you were in a trench, you were shielded, from rifle fire, but any stray piece of shell, or sharpnel bullet falling, would most likely, hit the most vulnerable part, the Head, for which we had no covering, or protection, except, our cloth service caps,

I was fortunate enough, to be in the same Stretcher Squad, as Vic Hunt, we were able to go about together now, and here one wanted a chum, the Medical Officer had changed over, with one from our Division, during the night, we were all anxious to tell him, how the wounded had been cleared, the night before, although we had only been up a few hours longer than him,

He looked at the wounded, and said if some of these are not taken down before night, and given proper attention, they will go down dead, what are you going to do,

The Sergeant told us, we had better try, and find our way down,

We managed to get somebody to show us the way, by an idea of a trench, and when you get to a road, fifty yards too the right is a Duck Board Track, all you have to do then is to make, for the Church on the hill, that was enough for us, there were

only four of us at this spot, and we could only carry one man, at a time, so the M.O. gave us a message for our Officer and away we went,

Now it was daylight, we could see the sort of place we had been sent too, a peculiar stillness, seemed to be about, here and there in this long valley, we could see where he had dropped his shells,

Our Engineers were relaying the Light Railway, that he had blown up in several places, but they worked so quietly, that we knew what they were expecting, however they, day after day, night after night, repaired that railway, as soon as possible after Jerry had blown it up, it was not to be wondered at, that they worked quietly as possible, any sound Jerry could have heard, would have brought some more mud over, rather fortunately, the only shells, owing to the Ridge he could reach the Valley with, was Howitzers, they were bad enough, and played havoc at times.

We reached the end of the Valley, and saw the Trench we had to enter, there was a sign post here, and it pointed to where the light railway ended, and it said, Railhead Liverpool Dump, we were learning a lot, into the trench, we went, and after a time, we came to a road, under the road was a tunnel, and the other side of the road was the continuation of the trench,

We had been told to go to the right, fifty yards, so I went along, and found the Duckload track, so we marched along this deserted, and battlescared road,

Our Patient was in a bad way, we looked back to where we had come from, and looked forward to the church, and it did not look as if we had come anywhere near half way,

We turned off the road, and followed the track, there were plenty of shell holes, but we were a good mile from the Line, so it was worth risking, no bullets could reach us, but it was as flat from the road to the foot of the hill, as a billiard table, we looked round, and his observation ballons, seemed to be in perfect line, with us, it was an uncanny, and an

uncomfortable feeling, to know that somebody in it, could see you, and might at anytime give notice, and a few shells come over,

We at last reached the end of the track and came to the road, leading up the hill to the Church, it was a gradual slope for some two hundred yards, and then became steeper, we got to the top, and then went down the other side, and came to the Arras Road, turned to the right and there was the House, where we had left the night before, it was now the Advanced Dressing Station, we had been well over an hour getting from the Aid Post, with scarcely a stop, only when we had changed over two, and two about to carry the stretcher, we could not have cleared the wounded in our Aid Post in 48 hours, at this rate,

We carried the man in, and handed the note to Capt Lescher, he was anxious for us, to tell him everything, we could.

Calling the Sergeant, he ordered all the men, up to clear the wounded, these had all had a nights kip, so were fresh, Captain Lescher came out, and said he was coming up to see, for himself,

Away we marched, over the hill, and down the other side, coming with the wounded case we had not taken the trouble to look at the view, from this height, but now we had a good look.

I fancy Capt Lescher had thought we were telling the tale about the long carry, we had had,

He asked us to give him an idea, as to where we were to go back too.

Stretching before us, was an uninterrupted view, right away to Liverpool Dump, we could see the road we were on, as it bore away to the left. the Sign Post, said Souchez. we pointed out where the Duck board track left the road, and carried straight on, to the Road, where we had to branch off, and enter the communication trench, and we showed him, where the communication trench started at the foot of the hill,

.....He said, we will

He said, we will go by the Duckboard track, but we pointed out to him the Notice Board, which said, no party above four allowed together on the Track, so we had to go the trench way,

It took us nearly an hour and a half to get to the wounded the trench way,

He turned to the Medical Officer, My Men, will clear these cases, but they will have to do it, in three journeys,

He was speaking about the hour and a half it took to walk, up the trench etc, in dry weather, what, are the men going to take in wet weather, and that was what we had been thinking,

We carried on, and cleared all the cases it meant four cases for us, and we arrived back at the Aid Post, tired and hungry,

We had to get our sleep the best way we could, and we just lay down as we were, and slept.

Darkness came, and the Sergeant had us up, come on, you have to get all the dead down to the railway, the wagons will soon be up,

We were weary willies, with a vengeance, we were fed up with Vimy Ridge, fed up with the War, fed up with everything, we were to act as human horses night, and day,

We had a set too with our Sergeant, and poor devil he was as fed up as we were, it was a proper dead-lock, it was impossible for us to do all there was to do. while we were chewing the fat with him, the wagons came up, and started to go off again, empty.

Hi, whats the Blankety game, we shouted, and I had to rush after them, and get them back,

Barrack room language, was genteel to what went on, come on, you want to get us killed, dont you, nearly daybreak, and we have over three miles to go, with Jerry watching us from his ballons the whole way.

They had certainly made a good case out, but we had got to clear the Dead, and wounded, to crown it this night, there was only the one squad which meant, we had all four to take

..... a wagon,

a wagon, and go down with it.

After an exciting journey down to the railhead, outside Mont St Eloi. we found all the lads, waiting to put the Wounded into the Motor Ambulances, and we then carried the Dead to the Advance Dressing Station.

By the time we had had, something to drink, the day was breaking, and we set out on our way back, all the journeys down by foot, had so far been, fairly safe, but topping the hill, an unpleasant sight met our view,

Shells were falling all along the Duckboard Track, and all over the place as far as we could see, An A.P.M. told us that one of his planes, had just spotted our guns that morning, and he was banging away at them.

There was nothing for it but the trench, so Vic and I, followed after Teddy Parrott and Bill Jagger, two of our Lancashire Lads, we were getting along pretty well, when a shell dropped behind us, it was far too close to be comfortable,

Presently turning a corner in the trench, Bill and Teddy were waiting for us, by this time we were all gasping for breath, Bill says, dost think its Gas Lad,

We looked at each other rather sickly if its was his Chlorine Gas, we had got enough down our lungs to put paid to us,

The tears were rolling down our faces, Sithee Lad, says Teddy, Thou art scriking same as me. A brain wave came over Vic, I know what it is, its that flopping Tear Gas.

We all felt relieved, on went our gas masks, and we pushed on as fast as we could, more suffocated than ever,

We at last got beyond the range of shelling, and off came our masks, we sat down, it was life giving, to get some fresh air down our lungs,

We arrived back in the Aif Post, and who should be in there, but Toms Double,

Hullo, Brother he called out to me, got any cigarettes, I said not know, but when we take this case down, I will

get you some, as he was on runner duty, for a while, I saw a lot of him, and gave him, as many cigarettes, as I could scrounge both for himself and the others.

Our next journey down to Mont St Eloi was quiet, and when we arrived, there was plenty of excitement,

The lads were all ready to go up, we asked what was on, and heard that another Batt of our Division had taken over on our right and three mines were going up that night,

Mines, why the shimozle that went on when, one went up, what was it to be like when three go up.

We cheered them up, about the doings they were in for, and set off with them,

They branched off, just at the foot of the hill, and turned sharp right,

We arrived back, and awaited, and slept until dusk, up came the wagons, we loaded them, but we did not go down, as a new system was, on, some come up with the wagons and went back,

We were soon back in the Aid Post, at last the Earth gave some quivers, we were awaiting for a repitition of our first night but nothing doing.

Away on our right, both sides, were playing hell, but never a shell on our section of the Line, we were very grateful, it was funny all of us in the same Division, all on the same front, Vimy Ridge, but only where the Mines went up was there shelling,

After a week of this, we were relieved, for which we were unfeignedly thankful, the line troops were too, and they had earned it,

But things had moved, the C.O. said it was too far, to have to come to Mont St Eloi, from the Aid Posts, whenever extra squads were needed, so He and Capt Lescher, had found a dugout under the Road which, was to be used solely as a place for the Stretcher Bearers, to kip in, and be nearer the Line by three quarters of an hour, it was just at the beginning of the Duck-board track.

And about thirty of us including an Officer, and N.C.Os,

..... were put

were put into it,

We had no blankets, so Vic and I use to sleep together, in our clothes, and one of our overcoats underneath, and the other over us,

It had been a dug out used by the French, and it was in one of their old front lines, there were a great many trenches, round about, for there had been some terrible fighting round this spot,

The Road where we were under was called Bethune Road, it run from Bethune to Arras, when we got used to the place, we had a nose round, it was always best to get the lay of the land,

The trees along this road must have been a glorious sight before the war, for they lined the Road both ways, as far as the eye could see, but, shells had played havoc with them, there were not more than a dozen, that had a branch on them, they might have been, just thick logs stuck in the ground, some of them were lopped off, about ten feet from the ground, some less, right down to the ground even, it was a pathetic sight to see these silent sufferers of the war,

One by the size of its trunk, was an object of interest, and we went by it one day, there was, a most wonderful periscope fitted up inside of it, we went down, a lot of the steps into the dug out, and when we got there, there by a table was the bottom of it, it was an old Jerry one still intact, we had a look through the periscope, and there you could see the whole stretch of land, all the way up to the Church,

We thought what a wonderful view he must have had all the time, he used this trench, it seemed extraordinary that this great trunk, should still be left standing, we come to the conclusion, that as it had been steel lined, that is what had saved it, if only the French had known, what that stump contained.

We were never able to go very far, as we never knew, when we would be needed, which was very often, a boom to us at that place, was the Local Paper, my Mother sent me out every week,

as soon as I opened it, and took the letter out, the cries would rise from all sides,

Gives us a sheet Blink, and I would pass a sheet here, and there, it was remarkable how the Chaps read that old Paper, I do not suppose one of them had ever seen Richmond, but they read it, Advts as well, and many of the Titbits did the Chaps get out of it, on one occasion there was a case of a Couple at Barnes,

They had been ordered to Billet, two men, and had refused. although they had a number of rooms unoccupied, the case went to court, and as a result, they had Thirty Two billeted on them,

Another item of great interest, was when, Miss Marie Corelli, was summoned for hoarding hundreds of pounds of Stores, she lived in Church Road, and being caught she was heavily punished,

The remarks about these two cases, were blunt and to the point, it was almost unbelievable that, whilst men were giving their lives, people at Home, wanted to carry on without any discomfort to themselves,

They often asked me about different places, and I was only too pleased of the chance to praise dear old Richmond up.

Almost every night the Mail would come up, which was a blessing, the times the letters from Home were, and it was one of those little things that made life worth living out there, the opportunities for us to write were not so great, as we had little kit, but we were nearly always able to scrounge a few field cards.

Parcels, some of the men poor devils never had any, I was more fortunate, and so was Vic, my Mother invariably contained, about a dozen or more cocoanut crinkles,

Vic simply loved them, I used to cut half of them in half, and give different Chaps a piece, so as to let them see, what a Mother I had,

The rest if we were lucky, Vic and I had, he shared my parcel, and I shared his, he had the most, and we always gave a good bit of it away.

The times of going to the Aid Post, back up to Mont St
Eloi, and then to Bethune Road

Day and Night this would go on, in would come the Sergeant,
I want eight men, two badly wounded to go down, or twelve
men, three to go down,

This happened so often, that we began to take notice, some
of the lads were swinging the lead,

One night after the Irish Rifles had gone in again, more
of the mines went up,

In came the Sergeant, Volunteers for two cases, up eight
of us went, and arrived at the Aid Post,

The M.O. said there your are, take this Officer, he has
both, bad head and feet wounds, we put him on the stretcher,
my, what a size, what a weight,

He was a regular Army Officer, named Captain Hay, he was
six feet seven inches, and well proportioned, and we had got
to carry him, while shelling was going on, for over three miles
as the crow flies, and another two, the way we had to go,

There was Wally King, 5 feet ten inches, Vic Hunt, five feet
eight inches, and Jagger and I, both five feet four inches, in
the ordinary way, the two tall ones would have carried together,
and the two short ones, and each other turn would take the head,
this always being the heaviest, but we had a different case this
time, both head, and feet of this man, were over the end of the
stretcher, and both head and feet were injured, we agreed at last
that the two tall ones should take the Head the whole way, in turns,
as there arms, being longer, they, with the help of the slings,
which were hung on to both handles and fitted on your necks,
could partly hold the stretcher a bit forward,

Wally King and I took first spell, the poor devil, we had
a rotten time, it had been pouring with rain, and we could not
carry it steady, he was a fine chap,

Every time we stopped to change, he would tell to go slower,
or not to get upset if he called out, as he knew we could not

..... help hurting him

help hurting him,

At last after a night mare of a carry we got him down, he was in a bad way, but he asked for us all, and when we came, in his pocket he had cigarettes, take them he said, you have earned them, and asked us all to shake hands with him, and said, if I live, I have you all to thank. we were upset, as he seemed so bad when we left him, he was gone when next we came down, so we hoped he would live, he was a brave man.

On the way back, we started to work things out a bit, and we come to the conclusion, that we would volunteer no more.

So when we reached the Dug Out we spoke to the Sergeant, what about a list, and send the squads in their turns, and we told him about the lead swingers, and we told the lead swingers, what we thought of them, and this was the last time that I ever volunteered, I had no chance afterwards,

A rather curious argument arose over this, and might be roughly summed up,

Married Men, versus Single Men.

We had a proper battle of words, the Married Men, based there argument, on they had most to lose,

They had a Wife and Children, they had a Home, whilst the Single Men had no one, and another thing look at the expense to the state, if they were killed,

We took the view, they were more entitled to get killed, they admitted they had somebody to fight for, whilst we had not,

I never heard that plea put forward or that argument ever used again.

I am glad to say my Pal Vic, although married, did not side with the married men,

He was a very good man, and I can hear him know,

George, it is fear talking, not them, the longer they stop in this dugout, the harder it is to face the going up, but once they go, they will be just the same as the others,

He was right, the dugout we were in, had only got to have

a five point mine on top of it, and it would have smashed it in, but the dug out fever, was the same to all I met, for myself, I was as afraid to go out, if he was shelling, as the others,

Another lot of mines went up, it was a most awful place, it did not seem possible that human nature could stand it, at least twice a week, a mine would go up, and sometimes, three and four times a week, how the Infantry stuck it, I do not know, first Jerry would send one up, next we would,

Always the same fight for the crater, the same hell let loose with the guns, and the same terrible wounded cases, whenever a mine went up, it meant heavy work for us,

Only once did I myself ever get put on the front, on the right of Liverpool Dump, they had some awful fighting, and all the Bearers excepting the one in the Liverpool Dump, were put on, and we were all day clearing them,

This being an entirely new place to some of us, we were a bit surprised when we reached the Aid Post, it was at another Rail Head, this one was called, Leeds. Dump, and on to the next one we went, that was called Birmingham Dump, the names reminded us of Dear Old Blighty, but that was where it ended, still he must have had a homing sort of feeling, who ever named them,

We cleared all the wounded, from these two Dumps, and we had to take a bit different route, almost parallel to the other but half a mile to the south-east,

It was trench part of the way, until you struck Bethune Road, then you walked along a road until you got near the hill, and joined up with the route from Liverpool Dump, it was extraordinary how unfamiliar, you were with the Sector next you either way.

On this route was a most tragic village, Neuville St Vaast. it had I suppose quiet fifty houses and cottages in it, and in peace time must have been a very pretty one, but now, there were not more than a couple of dozen bits of walls left standing.

We had seen houses that had been blown about, but nothing like this, a French Soldier told us that at one time, it lay

..... just between

just between the French and German lines, and both sides, had shelled it, at the slightest warning, that the other was in it, and that was daily,

It was a wierd experience walking through this heap of ruins, the road as clear as if it had been swept, and the piles of bricks, with bits of wood sticking out, along either side.

Leave had not been stopped, for the Div. and it was here that one of those tragic events happened, that made ones heart ache at the time, but which must of necessity be relagated to the back of ones mind, for if you kept such things, before ones eyes, there would be almost a breakdown,

Two Brothers were in one of the Batts of the Cheshire Regt. and one had just had his pass given him for leave to go home to Blighty, one can only guess his feelings, as he went to his younger Brother to tell him the news, and no doubt get messages etc, for those at Home,

Time came for him to leave the trenches, and he no doubt went to bid farewell to his brother, but the was didn't stop for such things as this, his Brother, oh, he has been carried down, he got badlt wounded just now,

The tragedy was being enacted in the dug-out, on a stretcher lay a youngster eighteen years of age, the end was not far off, and the Boy knew it,

The Medical Officer had done, all that he could, to allay the pain, when in came one of his Company Officers, with an attempt to be cheery, he made some remark, about him being home, as soon as his Brother,

The Boy knew better, he turned to his Officer, asked the Officer to shake hands and say Good-bye,

And Sir, looking up at the Officer, he said, I am dying like a Soldier and a Man, Sir, a'rent I, his eyes looking wistful at the Officer all the time,

What could any man, do or say at a time like this,

He shook the Boy, by the hand, said some words to him, and

..... left the dugout

left the dugout, there were tears running down his face,

And as he left, in rushed the Brother, all ready to go Home, they were left to themselves, so the end of that lads life is only known to His Brother,

We carried him down, and the Brother had his leave altered, twenty four hours, so that he could attend the funeral.

Twenty years of age, and having to go on leave, he dreaded facing His Mother, with the news of his eighteen year old Brothers end.

He sat down, and was like one stunned, the only words he could say, were, it will break my Mothers heart, he was her baby, poor chap, we could do nothing, we were better keeping silent.

The continual going up of mines, was nerve racking, one night after being sent to Mont St Eloi, from Bethune Road, for 24 hours duty, I was amongst the party, who went up with the wagons, with the rations etc, and with order to clear all dead and wounded,

We had a rotten journey up, a party going on one wagon, had met with a bad accident,

One of their mules, had found an aerial torpedo, with its hoof, and the next second, mules, and men were flung over and lay dying, dead, and wounded, in one great mass, very few escaped unharmed and it was from them, that we heard the details,

And to crown it all, as the torpedo explode, Jerry no doubt saw it, and promptly sent a few shells over, to see what damage he could do, the rails being repaired, we continued our journey, some hour or two late, getting to Liverpool Dump, we heard that something was happening soon,

The Drivers of the wagons, were windy, and never waited, they were making off again, but we had got cases to take down, we told them, yes that is alright we have orders too, and that is to get back sharp, things, as well as the night were looking black, when Bertie Few, had an inspiration,

He evidently borrowed an Officers Mac. for we were not issued with them. up to the first driver who was making off he ran,

And putting on his most lardi-dar accent, he ordered him too halt, and I will report the whole lot of you, for leaving without the wounded,

The first wagon being halted, the whole lot were at a stand still, hearing this educated voice, ordering them to hurry up and load all the dead, and wounded, they soon got busy, and away we went,

When we got down, we chipped him about it, he said, I was sweating on the top line, I was afraid they would bally well twig, I was only a private,

I dont know what would have happened if they had.

We only came too Mont St. Eloi, for a day or two, and during that time, you had various duties, the chief being the sewing up in blankets, of the dead, we heard the reason why, all bodies were brought down, such a long way, for as a rule they buried the men, near the line, who were killed,

But owing to the awful amount of mining, it was quite probable to bury men, and then have them blown up again the next, or succeeding days,

It is sad to think of, but one can only say, that the least, our Soldiers should have if possible, is a quiet resting place.

Sometimes there would be less than a dozen, but I happened to be on this duty, when a great many had been killed, one day three of us had to sew up thirty six.

I know that in the early part of the war, the price of the blankets was deducted, it was not cheeseparing, it was just one of the rules. but the Army Council altered it, when we were out there.

The bodies were taken down to a large Military Cemetery, at Ecoivres, and the different padres, would read the Service, the Union Jack, was always place over the dead.

One Young Officer, who I sewed up, was a striking figure, new uniform, new brown boots, new everything, he may have only just come out, he had several gold articles, such as watch, pencil, and ring. which I handed in, his name was Noble.

A week or so later, the Richmond and Twickenham Times arrived, one of the men looking through it, said Blink, look here, a Young Officer, from the 10th Cheshires, named Noble was killed at Vimy Ridge, last week, and he comes from Home. do you know him, I said no, but I sewed him up, and I thought it rather a coincidence.

But one death, was a tragic affair, a young Lance Corporal, was in charge of a machine gun squad, in a crater, the men were evidently fed up, one can quite appreciate that, when seeing the place they had to guard.

They evidently had a talk amongst themselves, for the five privates, left their post, and surrendered to the enemy.

The Lance Corporal stuck to his post, an Officer looking through
..... a periscope,

a periscope, saw them disappear,

The Lance Corporal was relieved, placed under arrest, tried by a General Field Court Martial, for allowing men to desert their post, and showing cowardice, in the face of the enemy, by not shooting them down,

The decision of the Court was Death, and the sentence was carried out at dawn,

He was carried into the Mortuary at Mont St. Eloi, we there had the myth exploded, that only one out of a firing squad, had his rifle loaded, with a live cartridge, for he had seven bullets wounds through the heart.

We were all upset, when we heard the facts about the case, the C.O. saw to it himself that the Union Jack, was placed over his body, and he lies buried among his comrades.

Several times this case arose, in the course of conversation, and everybody seemed to agree that Justice would have been amply served if the Death sentence had been passed, and then to have had him gently smuggled away, for although the Court was right, it seemed a terrible thing, that a brave man, should lose his life, for not shooting down his pals.

If he had tried to desert his post, the case would have been different, and as a man who jeopardises his comrades lives, he would have deserved it, it was a sad affair.

But as Vic said to me, what will those five men think, if they ever get back to England, and they are told what happened.

I hope that they did hear, and that they have a try, and make some amends to the relatives, for after all, his life is on there hands, as no man was ignorant, who went into the line, of the duties he must not shirk, and actions he must not forget.

Up to Liverpool Dump Aid Post again, just the same old routine, mines up, shelling the dump, loading dead, and wounded,

One afternoon, one of the Irish Rifles was helped in, he was in a sorry state, two fingers of his right hand blown off,

Suspicious of a self-inflicted wound were uppermost in our minds, but we were wrong, a party in a crater for 48 hours, Jerry

..... bombing,

bombing, minnies, shells, machine guns, all the whole inferno, to dislodge them,

One by one they had been killed, or wounded one almost at the start had his hand injured, it was bound up, and he was the last to bereleived, after spending 48 hours, in what must have been agony, he was helped down, we only had a biscuit, he eat it ravenously, they had had no food, practically for two days.

The Doctor undid the bandages, it was a gruesome sight he cleansed the wounds, and ordered me to see his as far as Bethune Road dug-out,

Arriving there, somebody shouted, parcel for you Blink, and it contained a lovely cake, but the post had been harsh on it, and squashed half of it,

I turned, and saw the Irishman eyeing it, I gave him the broken half, and he eat the lot, I turned to go back again, and he called afterme, he said my name is Dillon, I am a regular, I have nothing I can give you, in thanks for what you have done, I said we don't do our job for that, we do it as our share of this job,

I would like to give you something, he went through his pockets, out came his cap-badge, there you are, all I have got, I have had that since before the war, I at last accepted it, and I still have it, it is a memory reviver, and brings back, one of those brave actions, that had no reward.

Our Colonel, himself an Irishman, saw me with it, and asked where I got it, I beleive he doubted me, until I gave him all particulars, and said the man is in the dug-out.

Another time, a case, wounded in both legs, as per usual, anything out of the usual, and I would be near it, fifteen stone, some odd pounds, in his skin, and all his clothes muddy, and wet,

My he was a weight, turn and turn about we carried him, the further we went in the slithering mud, the heavier he seemed to get,

He was as cheerful, as he was stout, he would tell us a yarn, then wince with pain, say have a rest chums, I am too blinking heavy for you chaps to carry like this.

It would not have been so bad, if it had been dry, we arrived

..... down at last

down at last, he was in a bad way, well thanks mates, the chaps up the line don't half call you some names, I did too, but I didn't know what you had to do, and I withdraw now all I ever said.

These expressions cropping up here, and there hurt a bit, but it was no use letting them see it, after all they did not know our work, until they were hit, whereas we knew theres, and were jolly glad that we were not Infantry, the other Regiments and Corps had bad times, but for the real brunt of the War, the Infantry men stood out by themselves, and only those who saw them, can understand, what they endured, no pen is capable of portraying it, and I suppose seeing no more often, than the others mobs, we came in for the chipping.

Another bad case, was a young man about twenty, a severe abdominal wound, the M.O. said, look here you bearers, that man has got a bare chance of pulling through, but he must be in a Hospital before night, this was about mid-day.

We decided to have a try at it, as the M.O. said, if we let him lay here, I will have to inject morphia, but the rest on the stretcher will keep him alive perhaps 48 hours, if you jolt him going down you will kill him perhaps, but it is his only chance, on no account, must a drop of water pass his lips, just wipe his lips with a wet rag,

The Doctor gave him a stiff injection, and away we went, it was a terrible hot day, the sun, was pouring down on him, as two carried him, one shielded him from the sun, the other wiped his hands and forehead with a damp rag.

After some time, the effects of the drugs began to wear off, he became restive,

Water, he cried, we wetted his lips, poor chap, he was in a bad state,

For half an hour or more, he was crying for water, and cursing us for murderers,

At long last we reached the foot of the hill, we climbed the hill, were just walking pass some houses, we were congratulating ourselves we had got him down alive,

Just then out of a house came some men, the patient was calling out, for water, we had only fifty yards to go, we told him, and then he could see the Officer,

One lot of infantry shouted at us, and even began to threaten us, Give the poor devil some water, I went over, and quickly told them to shut up,

Out came some Artillery men, and before I could stop them, a Sergeant had thrust a water bottle into the wounded mans hands, like one possessed, it was to his mouth, and the water had passed his lips, too late, I had it away,

We said a few words, that we were sure the Sergeant understood, carried on into the dressing station, and handed him over.

The Officer, undid his bandages, what is this you have been doing, you have just given this man water, you have killed him, you know you have no right to give abdominal wounded water,

We told him what had happened, he took particulars of the Sergeant, he was punished later on,

The case we had carried with such care for close on two hours, died within ten minutes of us getting him down, irony, killed by kindness, on our way back we looked up the men who had shouted at us, and told them we knew our work, that was why we were there, and as the result of an individual, who did not understand, that case was lying dead, we told them how his life would probably have been saved, but for the water opening the wound again, and we also asked them to help us in future, not hinder us,

Another time we were going down with a stretcher case, two others happened to be carrying the stretcher at the time, we came to a couple of duck boards over a trench, which we had to walk over, as we crossed, there was a young infantryman, in battle order, and fixed bayonet, and pointing his rifle up, as if he was saluting, called out Halt. who goes there.

I don't know what the others thought, including the man on the stretcher, but I know what my thoughts were, and they were,

What if that rifle is loaded, and he suddenly decides to lower it, and fire,

.....We halted

We halted, we could see what was the matter, I said hullo chum, coming down with us, he looked mystified, and just shook his head, so I risked it, and climbed into the trench, he was as docile as a lamb, he let me take his rifle, then all his equipment, and when I said come along with us, he climbed out, we got down, the
it is
M.O. said, his brain gone, I am afraid,

The Medical Officer, laughed when we told him of our attack of the wind up, and we laughed to, when we found his rifle was unloaded, but that is different, to what we did when we found him.

Two privates of the Royal North Lands, came into the Aid Post, both wounded, we heard later about them, they were in a party, holding a mine crater, Jerry tried to dislodge them, and had succeeded in wounding, all the party, but these two being only slightly wounded, decided to hold the crater until relieved.

Jerry must have known, that there were only two left, anyway he sent a raiding party, but the two bold heroes, held on, and bombed away at them, for it not being dusk the Jerries dare not stand up, our guns dare not fire at them, although they knew they were there, for fear they killed our own men,

As soon as dusk came the relief crawled out, and found the two men, all their bombs gone they were pelting Jerry with stones, Jerry then made his attack, evidently finding out it was stones and not duds coming over, but he was too late, the two were relieved, and were rewarded the D.C.M. which we all agreed they had earned,

Easter Week came, and the Royal Irish Rifles were in the line again, on the Wednesday at daybreak, looking through their periscopes, they saw a blackboard up, with some words on, asking them not to fight for a Government that was murdering their fellow countrymen, (this was in reference to the Easter Riots, 1916 in Dublin), fortunately he had made a bloomer, for they were Loyalists, and that night raided him, to let them see, how much notice they took, of his invitation.

We had the papers from home, and the Government certainly had their hands full, what with the Irish Affair, the practically bringing in of Conscription, and the agitators and Strikers, it was a marvel how our side kept going, I suppose the last were the limit, if ever

the history of the war is written, there will, or ought to be a big place, set apart with full details of the kind spirit, that was shown by the strikers for their fellow men.

They struck, until they got their higher wages, and while they struck, they materials both for offensive, and defensive measures, were held up, men were getting killed, for the want of what these individuals would not produce, until they got their pound of flesh,

There was something radically wrong, when Britons had to be practically bribed, to produce the wherewithal, for the Services to carry on the war, or as someone said, the pistol held at the Governments head was, the lives of the men in the Services.

And while this was going on at Home, deeds like the following were happening at the war,

An Officer named Maybird of the First Wilts, was Bombing Officer, he had been out with Darkie of the Wilts, in No mans land, to get the lay of the land before, a bombing raid, they had returned, and all plans were drawn up, next night the Officer went out on his own, to make certain, before he led the raid, that all was clear, he did not return,

Morning came, and he was seen partly on Jerries wire, both sides kept him covered, so as to prevent the other side getting the body,

The Officer had a lot of information on him, that would be useful to Jerry,

Lt Hughes the Wilts Medical Officer and Paddy Stevens his Orderly, volunteered to try and get him, in, no sooner dusk came, and they were over, with a rope to attach to the body, after what seemed an age they were back, with the body and all the papers, Irony stepped in here, the Officer got the D.S.O. Paddy got made a Coporal, went down the line to celebrate it, got drunk, and was stripped, all in forty eight hours,

He was a brave man, and no more lion-hearted man ever breathed, he had only to hear of wounded, no mans land, or any where else, and he would be off, and being a big man, he often times carried

men in his arms, and he was a great help, and guide to us, and we heard from different wounded men of his exploits, it is a certainty that if ever a R.A.M.C. man earned a V.C. it was Paddy Stevens, but somehow or other, only Officers ever got this coveted decoration in our Corps,

One day curiosity getting the upper hand, I decided to go along the Valley, and have a look at the Village of Souchez, all sorts of rumours were going round, about the jewels etc, that could be picked up as souvenirs,

I was within a hundred yards, when he started to lamp it, it certainly could not be for the purpose of knocking any houses, etc down, for it was almost razed to the ground,

Seeing a couple of Infantry men, I asked them about the place, they told me, Jerry was always banging away at it, you could never be certain when he would start, also they told me it was out of bounds,

I had seen quite enough, to satisfy all the curiosity about Souchez. I had ever felt although I should have liked to see the remains of the Sugar Refinery.

There was a funny Officer in our Div. Artillery, they said he was half mad, he used to go up, for observation purposes, and come back, direct a firing of his battery, and fly over to see the results.

One day whilst in a gun pit, he stopped a bit, the lads who went to take him down, told us he swore at them, and said he was not going down, he was going to have a bit of his own back, so he used as much of his ammunition as he dared, and we stretcher bearers, had the benefit of carrying cases down, while Jerry was trying to find him, we voted him, not only mad, but a blithering nuisance.

A couple of days later he got another packet, and this time he was pretty badly wounded, the M.O. ordered him down, and he gave the lads a lively time who carried him, and when they got him down, he gave them all a tip, the only time I ever knew of anyone ever giving money, or offering it, for it was only doing what we had joined up for.

The Church in Mont St. Eloi, was very badly damaged, the Tower

..... was still

was still standing, and the pigeons still used it, and you could always tell, seconds before any shells arrived, that he was shelling Mont St. Eloi, for the birds would fly out, and circle round and round the village, and the twice I witnessed it, the birds had no sooner left the tower than the shells arrived, it puzzled us a great deal, how birds should know, that the shells, were coming in the Village, for if the shells went over, they kept in the Tower.

One night coming down on the light railway, I happened to be with a wagon piled up with dead, something happened at the Junction, there was an explosion, and the next minute, Jerries machine guns, were rattling away, the bullets whizzed over, and around us, and I in desperation laid down, and used the dead, for a shield, nobody in the column was killed, one or two got flesh wounds, the next time I passed that junction in the daytime, some wag had put a board up, and on it were the words Suicide Corner, it was well named.

All the Stretcher Bearers being ordered up, we knew there was going to be something doing, sure enough, about 10 p.m. up went five mines and sap heads, our guns let fly, and so did Jerry's our Division had captured the ridge, but at what a price, we were all kept pretty much on the go for 48 hours, and it was perfect hell, he lamped away, all over the option, our duck board track, or as it was named the Corderoy Path, the Communication trench, and the country side in general, came in for it, and how we never had any one killed, was simply marvellous.

It seemed as if a providence divine, was guarding the holders of the double seven, for we had been most fortunate.

But strange as it may seem this terrible period was recorded, quite simple, in the C. in C. report, as a little raid on the Vinny Ridge, to straighten out the Line, and enable us from the heights to overlook the Country beyond, we had a few casualties. We Did.

Leave had not been stopped, and the lads were going in their turn, both Vic and I, had got no where near yet.

One day about a week after the big raid, I was amongst a party of eight to be releived, to go to Ambulance H.Q. for forty eight hours,

..... and luck was

and luck was with us.

Arriving there, I at once clicked Guard, and going to the Guard Tent, found our Pals, Mullins and Belshaw, doing their time, and in view of what we had been doing, they were well off, of course they had no pay, and no tobacco or cigarettes issue, but they got a lot of each, for they were put on all manner of fatigues, and the blind eye was cast in their direction as long as they worked hard, which they did,

They were given the option next day of serving up the line, for the rest of the war, and so have their crime, erased from their sheets, and they were only to pleased to take advantage of this offer, for pay, and tobacco issue started at once. and the C.O. was pleased, as it meant two more men to do stretcher bearing,

I was on Guard, outside the tent, and on looking up at a Sausage Ballon, I saw a man getting ready to jump out, but his parachute did not open, like a stone he dropped to the earth, I at once gave the alarm, and some men with a stretcher, and Capt. Lescher, rushed over, I was not allowed to leave the prisoners, but I heard from one who went, that when they arrived, they found him just alive, and all he could say was. Mother. he had made a mark where he struck the earth, and it had jolted his head almost down to his shoulders,

I heard later, from one of the orderlies that he believed he was a Basil Hullam, an Actor before the War. of course that was not his name, only his stage name, but what made them think it was he, was that a few days later, it reported that he was killed in France, having jumped out of a Balloon, and his parachute not opening.

A crowd of new chaps joined us, and were immediately dubbed, the new recruits, to their disgust, and with reason, we learned later, for they one, and all had been out before

One was an old soldier with several years in, and their names all began with a P.

Parkins, a cockney who worked for the L.G.O.C. before the War. Parish in business in Manchester,, Pascin who was a regular comedian,

Pope, from Ashleigh, worked on the railway, and Pecoock the regular army man.

Old man Edwards was having the time of his life here, he had built himself a fune incinerater, and was as happy as a kiddy at the seaside when, his engine as he called it was smoking merrily,

Bert Booner, rather a florid, and stout heavy sort of chap, was on the Sanitary job, he would have been out of place carrying stretchers, but somebody had to do these jobs, and it was only right under the circumstances that these two Old Men should have them,

The second twenty four hours, I was doing fatigues in the Hospital Huts, and saw two cases worth recording, one man had been admitted, with a temperature,

Unfortunately they took his temperature at once, it was normal, the Coporal told him he would have to report it, and he then said he had rolled some little pieces of soap, and some other muck into a ball, and swallowed it, it made him sick, and he thought he had wangled down the line with it, poor devil, once he found the game was up, he volunteered, to go back to his unit, rather than get clink, for malingering, they wangled it, somehow,

The other case was different, two of us had carried him in, his ticket was marked Pyrexia, U.O. (temperature unknown origin,) he was placed in the last bed, his temperature was high, when the M.O. came, it was Capt. Collard.

He felt his pulse etc, and talking to the Coporal in a whisper, in his little office at the end of the ward said, I will be back, in an hour or so. I believe he his malingering.

Some time later he returned, walked straight up to his bed, and said Cpl. Ware take this mans temperature, it was almost normal, the Officer looked at him, and then in his high pitched, squeaking, tired tone, said

You don't come the Old Soldier, with me, and get away with it, out of bed you get my lad, and up the line you go,

He was only a youngster, and on the M.O. saying he would not get him any punishment for malingering, if he told him what he had taken, he said, I chewed some cordite Sir,

This day we had heard a terrific bombardment, and going into my tent for the night, as we were due to go up on the morrow, I noticed, Old Bott. laying there.

I was just kipping down, when he sat up, looked about, and started to ramble on like one demented,

They are cowards all of them, they run away, and left me,

There was leg over there,

And another one there,

An arm here, and one there

He was blown to pieces, and they run away and left me, while I had to stop.

Fancy Vic Hunt, and he named three others.

At the mention of Vics name, I took notice, and asked him what the — he was talking about.

He rambled on, as I said very well you rotten old blighter, I am going to report you, that is my Pal, who you are talking about, he his up there, and might be killed any time, and you are here, running him down,

He tried to detain me, and when I was just leaving started shouting,

Me Minds a Blonk,

Me Minds a Blonk,

Oh is it, but you can jolly well mention names, and went to the Sgt. Major, who said, he has got a touch of Shell Shock, don't take any notice,

None of us got any sleep that night, for we were ordered up the line, and with the new men we left the H.Q. the last words, I heard Bott shouting were,

Me Minds a Blonk,

Me Minds a Blank.

We arrived at Mont St. Elói, and were soon made acquainted with the news,

Early that morning, Jerry had launched an attack, after a two hours bombardment, and had recaptured all the part of the line that our Division had Captured when the five mines went up.

.....I looked

I looked about to see if Vic was amongst those who had just carried some cases in, but he was up the line,

I met him a little while later, with a case at Bethune Road, and immediately told him, about what Bott was saying

His face puckered up, in his quizzical way, and said, the Flopping Fool, don't you take any notice of what he said, he his not all their, not in an unkind tone, just how a teacher would speak, to a boy who perhaps hurt himself,

I was not satisfied, so I said well look here Vic, I had a bust up with him, and then went, and told the Sgt. Major

He just hugged me, Silly old George that is alright, he his down there, and we are up here, that shows how much value can be placed on his words,

I at last got it out of the squad, how this affair, had come about,

They were carrying a man down, and just as they were passing an Infantry man going up the line, he stopped a shell, he was killed on the spot, and this had set Old Bott off, for as the shell landed, they put the stretcher down, and lay alongside of it.

When they got up, Bott had disappeared, and the next part I heard from some of the others, he arrived at the end of the Corderoy Path, leading an Officer, and they were just loading up with stretcher cases, for there had been so many, the bearers had to have help,

Bott ordered the stretcher cases out, and in he jumped with the Officer, and ordered the Driver to drive straight to a Casualty Clearing Station (which was against the rules as he should have gone to the Advanced Dressing Station at Mont St Eloi).

I saw him in the tent just as he came back, he was as much shell shocked as I was, and to crown the scurviness of his action, it was read out on Routine Orders, Lance Cpl. Bott, is awarded the Military Medal, for gallantry under fire, and leading an Officer who was badly wounded to safety.

From the remarks of his fellow comrades, it was easy to conclude that he had some how got round the Officer, for one thing he had only

picked the Officer up about 400 yards from the Amb, secondly, he had no right, even if a man was dying to go to a C.C.S. with him, for there were orderlies on every Ambulance picked for that work

Thirdly as a M.C.O. he had deserted his post, and had actually run away, for no other words can describe his action, and some how or other, it was all glossed over, because the Officer he took down had written in such a good report on his behalf.

Well, the views of his comrades, carry greater weight, than all the flowery reasons written by men at H.Q. for they were the witnesses of his actions, and they were all agreed, that it was a vile action, to give any man a Medal, for what he had done, and Lance Cpl. Bott knew it, although he did not leave the Ambulance for some time, he was like an interloper amongst us, detested by one and all. for his detestable action, in making stretcher cases, be pulled out of the Ambulance, and left at the roadside, in the scorching sun, whilst he pranced off to safety, with a walking case, and a whole skin,

Vic and one or two others told me about the morning, at dawn Jerry started every kind of shell, gas, shizz bangs, five nines the whole galaxy, rained on the ridge, on the trenches, and when he made his attack he had captured the whole of the ridge we had taken from him, a fortnight previously,

The wounded they had been carrying by the score, no one dared to walk along the Corderoy Path, the duck boards were blown about all over the option.

All the wounded had to be carried by the communication trench, that was levelled in most places, the light railway he had simply pulverised, and the wounded not being cleared, that was the reason, we had been sent hurriedly from H.Q. to help, and so we took our turn, and if we had had a hard task sometimes before, it was doubly so now,

Going back once we were walking up the trenches, and a Sergeant of the Ry, Fusiliers told us, that they were supposed to have come up a fortnight ago, but your blinking General said that what His Men had won they could hold, and now we have perishing well got to

..... come up,

come up, not only to help you, to stop him from getting through, but we have got to take over, it was indeed a welcome piece of news, that we were not to stay here much longer,

But it seemed as if something was wrong, for immediately after this rebuff, our Divisional General,

Major General Doran,

Was relieved of his command, and in his place, we had

Major General Bainbridge.

What with shells, of all kinds, and the weather too, our Division were not only badly punished, but feeling of a kind, that can hardly be explained, that all the efforts had been in vain,

We lost a Brigadier about this time and also had our first casualty,

The Brigadier General Gosling, of the 7th Brigade a regular army Officer, was on his way up the line, with some other Officers,

Goodness only knows what they were doing on the Corderoy Path, in broad daylight, for Jerry only allowed us on it, with a stretcher case,

Anyway they had just approached the Bethune Road End, and no doubt of it Jerry from his observation balloon, knew exactly where to tell his Artillery to fire on.

Just at that moment, one of our squad was coming to-wards this party, and as they met, so the shells came, about twenty all round this party,

The first one to get hit was the Brigadier General, and then Hughes, was hit in the abdomen, they said he just sank down, it was all over in a few seconds, seven wounded, and one killed,

This was our first casualty, we felt that the lucky spell, of the Double Sevens had been broken.

Poor Hughes, I had many a chat with him, for before the war, he had been a marine engineer, and he used to like to have a chat with me, as we had both been at sea.

One thing we noticed about the General and his party, and that was, they had a kind of helmet on, made of iron, they did look funny and they also had fixed round their neck, a thing like a school-bag,

we never heard what these were till some time later,

Then one day, so many iron hats, for men who are going up the line, evidently the terrible number of head wounds, had set the authorities hustling round for some sort of protection, but there were too few, I, and many more did not have one, for a couple of months, also the Infantry who were in greater need than we were.

It was remarked about, and it was said, that the supplies were being held up at Home, I am sure, that if the strikers had known, what a feeling of relief and security, they gave to men in the trenches, it might have pricked their consciences, I suppose they got their rise in pay, for we eventually got our tin hats,

We learned that the contents of the satchels, were a new kind of gas mask, they were funny looking affairs, but in time, (once again there was a great scarcity) we all had then issued out. another load to carry, for the old hooded gas masks were fairly light, and now they had given us this new kind, and also the heavy tin hat.

We at last were relieved by the 47th and 2nd Divisions, at the Cemetary at Ecoivres, our Ambulance had buried, 470 men, the whole of these had been brought from distances ranging from one to five kilo metres, the majority had been carried down on the light railway,

And the wounded run into over 2,000. we had been here a little over six weeks, and it was what was called trench work, just a little bit of straightening out, and just under 60 mines, and sapheads, both Jerry's and ours had been blown up,

Several of our Ambulance had had slight wounds, some slightly gassed, and for there excellent work here, several men were awarded Military Medals.

The lads having had a real taste of war, you could hear from one and the other, as to who were the best chaps to get with, who were the windy fellows, and who were the chisers.

The latter always absent, when it was there turn to go up, and always turn up, when the squad had gone,

I myself had worked with a lot of the lads, but I had evidently been jolly lucky for I never clicked a windy squad.

..... Such men as

Such men as Vic Hunt, Wally King, Bill Jagger, Teddy Parrot, Brownhill, Bottomley, Mountfield, (Johnson) Kelly his right name, and several others, out of the other two sections, I always had the same feeling that I would come through alive, but more, and more a feeling was forcing itself on my mind, that something was going to happen,

Whether this was to be accounted for, by the horrors, that I had seen, or the knowledge that one had, of what might be you lot, I could not say,

Speaking to some of us one day, a Padre put the question, of the spirit, and general behaviour of the troops after being wounded,

There were many sides to this, for one thing some of the men, were fortunate, in perhaps not only, having a minor wound, but they would perhaps click a quiet carry down,

Whereas on the other hand, you'd have perhaps a man, not only badly hit, and perhaps raining, and Jerry shelling all the time, one thing I noticed particularly was, that the man on the stretcher was always (if responsible) some of course, it had gone to their heads, were thankful to be getting out of it alive, but to judge of their general conduct was impossible, for the conditions were different from day to day,

I only feel that it is for me to say once again, that I was glad I was not in the Infantry.

Many of our Lads, used to relate their different experiences, and it was funny to hear them, for in spite of the reason for what we were here for, the little every day crop of funny situations, the sayings of the different men, and the jokes, helped to lighten the load.

It is a well known saying, that a laugh is raised, at seeing another meet with a disaster,

Seeing a chap walk along the top of the trench, to avoid the slush, and then perhaps a whizz bang, make him jump into the mud, and smother himself would raise a laugh, from all except the victim, of course we would all have our turn, but it did no harm.

And so at last we left this sector to go back for a rest, and

the Division had indeed earned it, and I am certain that that stretch of land, from Mont. St. Eloi, to the Vimy Ridge, will never fade from those of us who daily went backwards and forwards, on my mind it left the impression of a place, that was apart from all others, a place that you entered with a feeling that here you would meet all sorts of stuff, the sole import of which was your life as its victim, a place where until you entered the earth, you would see no sign of war, guns of all kinds out of sight, men, and everything except the wire in no-mans land out of sight, and yet every where you went, you might meet death, or wounds. I was too young, or somehow could not focus my mind, on to the why, and wherefores of it all, it just seemed to me that we were flung into the melting pot and somehow, or other it would cease, and some would live.

We arrived at Ambulance Head Quarters at Areg to find the rest of the Ambulance already packed up, and waiting for us, and we moved straight on to a place, named Tinquette, where we were billeted in the now familiar Barns.

The following piece of Poetry was written by one of the 25th Division, and gives an idea of the Vimy Ridge, and what it cost to gain it by the French, and what it was like when we were there.

The Valley of the Dead.

Whilst standing at my dug-out door,
A Frenchman passed me by,
To get in conversation,
I thought I'd have a try,
I asked him, what they named this place,
He quickly turned, and said,
In rather broken English,
Its the "Valley of the Dead".

I asked him what the meaning was,
And how they ever came,
To give that quiet valley,
That awful wierd name,
Then he talked of last September,

..... When the

When the Frenchmen, fought and bled,
And they lost Sixteen Thousand,
In the "Valley of the Dead".

Said he, if you don't beleive me,
Just walk fifty yards away,
And you will find, full verification,
For every word, I say,
It was there, in last September,
When the grass with blood was red,
That the Frenchmen, charged the Germans,
In the "Valley of the Dead".

I walked across, the sights I saw,
I never will forget,
Men who had fallen, six months before,
Had not been buried yet,
Some sights we see, but soon forget,
But this one turned my head,
That awful gruesome spectacle,
In the "Valley of the Dead".

Arriving at the Village of Tinquettes, minus my pack etc,
which was being carried by my pals, I had to go sick, so I know nothing
about the Village, at first,

Arriving in front of Capt Collard, he ordered me into hospital,
a barn with a few stretchers laid on the floor, my throat was ulcerated,
and I had not eaten anything for some time,

The Doctor ordered me milk, eggs and chicken, and that did make
me feel a bit happier, but I was unlucky, for the next twenty four
hours, only bully and biscuits were sent in, one of the orderlies
soaked the biscuits, to help me get a bit down,

Next morning several Infantry men were sent in, and on Capt
Collard coming round, there was a proper row, he sent for the Quarter
Master Sergeant Ivens, and told him the tale, we had plenty of fresh

..... milk,

milk, and eggs from the Farms near by, afterwards,

In the bed next to me was a proper Old Soldier, a chap named Walters, out of the 2nd Batt. South Lancs, he had come out with the original Expeditionary Force, he had a touch of French Feet,

He was as happy as a sand boy, as soon as the M.O. inspection was over, he would sit up, and tell yarns, and sing songs he must have been the life, and soul of his company, if he was like it with his unit,

One of the songs, we used to ask him to sing, was the Alphabet Song, and he had a verse, on topical events in France for every letter, two of them were,

E. stands for Enemy,
The man we came to chase,
We started out at Mons,
And we finished down the Base,
Oh, I Oh, I Oh.

As a humorous skit on the intentions of the Army, at the start of the war, and the actual happenings, it is a gem.

Y. stands for Ypres,
The place you have heard about,
We marched in, in Fours,
And we single filed it out.

The inference to the coming out, only a quarter strong, of those who went in, is a true reflex on this ghastly place.

He was talking to me one day, and I began to speak about Vimy Ridge, he told me all sorts of romours, but one that proved eventually to be near the mark, I will put in, although it is in advance of the event,

He said we were trying to get the Ridge, for an attack is coming off, and it will be on the flank, of the attack, and if the Ridge itself, is in our hands, and has not to be captured, on the day of the attack, it will be a good, starting off place,

Well the First Battle of the Somme, was on a front that started about Arras, as the Ridge was not then in our hands, being on the other side of Arras, and in Jerrys hands, I believe he was near the

mark, and the Ridge, in other events, to our losing it, would have been included in the Battle Front,

I was out in a week and had a chance to look round the Village, which had about a dozen houses in it,

Vic had saved me a place, in the ever open barn, so I soon got my kip ready, the place was rather a dismal show, so the Colonel upon the idea, as six aside football matches, the winners, and the runners up, both getting money prizes,

All men not putting their names down, would be put on drill, fatigues, or allowed to go for walks,

The first team, and the reserve men would have their names put on a list, and each one was the Captain of his Team, all of the other names, were put into, a hat, and picked out, as each five were drawn out they were put aside of the Captains, then you played knock out games, the Officers, and the Sergeants both had teams,

The team I was in was knocked out first round, but Vic got his team to the Semi-final, before they were knocked out,

The papers from home were very welcome, a few daily papers being sent up with the rations, and we used to laugh at the Official Communiqués,

Just a little intermittent shelling or a raid or two, with a few casualties, we had had some,

The post came up daily here, and I was very glad to hear from home, also I had an occasional letter, from, Frank, Tom, and Guy, also the weekly local rag, we were also able to do plenty of letter writing our selves, and as the post was free, we all took advantage of it, Old Bolton, still keeping up his daily task by writing to his little Jewess,

I was able to go for walks, with Vic now, sometimes Wally King would come, but being a nursing orderly, he was often on duty,

Two of our lads who had palled on with each other, were both quiet sticks, they would sit about, and enjoy each others company, without ever speaking a word,

One day another chap, Basil Gardener thought he would take a stroll with them, and he made us laugh with his description of it,

..... Off they

Off they went, and never a word was said and after walking for two hours,

Merideth said, Crows up there, in that wood,

Osbourne said, Yes, time we were going back,

Merideth said Yes,

And that was the limit of their talking, Gardener said he would take good care, he never went another walk with them,

These three became bosom pals, and it would, be impossible too praise them to highly, as stretcher bearers, they were among the best.

Osbourne was about 5 feet 6 inches, fair as a girl, and strong as a lion, he seemed never in a hurry over anything, never in trouble, one of those chaps you could always depend on,

Merideth, about same height, dark broad shouldered, outside right at soccer in first team, same as Osbourne never in a hurry, and could always keep going, where others cracked up,

Gardener, about 5 Feet 9 inches, a broad, strongly built runner, a native of the west of England, a regular country man, once was carried in drunk, next day ran 7 miles in a cross country race, and came in 10th, sometimes a bit surly in drink, but a good hearted chap, strong as a lion, seemed absolutely tireless, and never shirked,

A more ideal trio of chums, could hardly be imagined, I worked with them all, and know them for three of the best.

As I began to know Vic better, I began to understand him, and his ways, like myself he never drank, he smoked, he loved his old Pipe, on one of our rambles, we began talking about how the War began, he asked me why I enlisted,

I was a bit surprised, and looking at him saw he was quizzing me, in his funny old way, he said you tell me why you enlisted and I will tell you why I enlisted,

I told him because it was the only honest thing to do, and he just said ditto George, Ditto,

And it dropped at that, but as our time progressed together, I put the different remarks he made together, and knew by them why he enlisted,

He was a well educated man, he had read a lot, was of the opinion that as the Germans had come through Belgium, they had broken the

Treaty, and the British were in Duty bound to go too Belgiums aid,

When talking about the anti party at Home, he would say, in all Wars, they are at the same game, helping the enemy, by indirect, but perhaps unintentional methods, he would just pass it of, History repeats itself, they are always with us, down the ages,

He told me one day, that he was giving up football, and wanted me to get his place in the first team,

I asked him why, he was giving up,

Too old George, Too old, time you young ones had a go,

I pressed him, and then he told me,

Well George, I am a doomed man, I have developed consumption, and it is getting me down, I want to rest when we are out of the line, so that I shall not have to give up, when I am needed up the Line, I have spoken to Lescher, and I could go away tomorrow,

So I am going to coach you, and see if I can help you get into the first team, and he would put me up to all the best ways, to manage the left half backs position,

Our little jaunts were once again interrupted, as I was again sent away for a few days fatigues, and after we got back the Ambulance, started moving southward about the 10th of June.

All marches now were to be done at night, so after hanging about we set off along the old French Roads, our packs used to worry us, having no ammunition on the front part of our equipment, the pack used to pull us down, and the strain on our necks, was rptten, one of the Officers said, we could not do it, unless we were stretcher bearers, for the latter so strengthened our necks, and shoulder muscles, we could manage, the unequal strain.

There was something in what he said, for the Nursing Orderlies, and Clerks, for all their not having the hardships of trench life, suffered a good deal, worse than us, on the march,

Our first stop was a place called Cantileau, as usual our residence was the ever ready barn, or at least the frame, with the roof on, we should have had an uncomfortable night if it had rained, the Gods were kind,

Sergeant Mcleod one of our Dispensers left us here to take up a

Commission in the Infantry, one of his Uncles, won the V.C. at the beginning of the War, and I suppose, he had hopes too,

He was the Youngest Son of the Laird he came from Stornaway,

The Capt and Quarter-master also left and was replaced by a Capt. Beard.

The next night we spent marching to the Village of Tienvilliers, and our section managed to get billeted in a stables, it is simply laughable the places one got put into for rest, it was a nice clean village, but we were too keen on getting a rest, in the day time to worry about, looking round the Village.

Next night we move off, and reach the Village of Pernoio, and were billeted in a half built house,

One of the chaps that joined us at Areg named Pascin, was very clever at getting out of ropes, he was never tied up, but what he got loose,

One thing we liked about this place, was there was plenty of water in a brook that run through the wood, so we were all able to have a bathe.

The next move was too Beaunil, as usual a night trek, and it was one of those places that in the Army take a lot of finding, we had taken some short cuts, through narrow lanes, the transport had to go by the better class roads, and lost the way, and turned up a day late,

As for our short cuts, we got in a hopeless tangle, the going was rotten, and the packs were heavy, and when we got there, the transport, did not turn up, so all we had was water,

The same old home for Billets, a good old barn,

Charlie Belshaw used to make us laugh, with his remarks about our homes, and one of them was,

How to live in a Barn, 1d.

One had to be there to appreciate the humour of this remark,

We soon went visiting the Farm over the road, to see what we could buy, and there was a Dear Old Lady, who had 800 eggs, she sold the Ambulance the lot, and told us to let her know, when we wanted more,

Needless to say, we kept her busy, heavens alone knows, where she

..... got them,

got them,

The Village was rather a large straggling affair, and some of our Brigade were billeted here too,

The 10th Batt. Cheshires, had a bad accident here, they were being given a lot of practice, with Mills Bombs, and one of the Bombs went off in the mids't of a platoon, the one who held it, tried too save the others, but he was too late, whilst he got full benifit of it, and was killed at once, three others also got killed, and six were wounded.

It seemed awful that men, who had just lived through the Hell at Vimy Ridge, should be killed by an accident behind the line.

We had a very enjoyable time at this place, what with only drills, and fatigues in the morning, being the month of June, we had it light, all the afternoon and evening,

Vic Hunt and Brownhill, got a Chess Board, and men, about the size of a pocket book, and used to have a game, I used to watch points, and by watching, and a few tips from both of them, I was gradually able to give them both a game, they invariably gave me a piece or two to start with,

Cricket and Football were in plenty, it was here, we first saw, the stone walling abilities of Bargess, out of A. Section,

When C. Section played, A. Section he went in First, and batted right through the innings for about 10 or 11 runs, he was a proper stone wall Jackson,

Getting our money more regular the gamblers, had the time of their lives,

Vic and I played Whist, and Bridge, but not for money, we used to watch the others, it was a treat to watch the play of men, so different in every day life,

Bill Jagger, when he was losing, used to come and look for me, and say come on Blink, Lucks against me Lad, I wants Thee at thee back of me, to give me luck, sometimes it was bad luck I brought him, and he would turn, and look hard at me, and say in his broadest Lancashire brogue,

Sithee, Lad hast left look at Thome, hast got Thace in hand Lad,

..... he was

he was a merry gambler, with it all,

Leaving here we began to move in towards the line, as usual it was a night march and we finally landed in Toutencourt Wood,

It was a roomy one, and this is where we were to sleep, fortunately for us it was dry during the day, so with the aid of some of the Brushwood, we made little bivoaux, to hold two, three or four,

Jerrys planes came over rather low, and were dropping their loads, and one chap name Scruby dug a hole for himself in the side of a ditch, he was about as safe as we were, as the top caved in, during the night it began to rain,

We were all very pleased when daylight came, and to crown it all the trees were shedding it on us after it had stopped, and we were not allowed, to show ourselves outside the wood, so we had to grin, and bear it, being June it was warm, so it was so bad,

Another lot of men joined the unit, which made us up to full strength amongst them being a lad named Eastall, his brother who was already in the Amb. had asked for him to be sent to us,

The next night move, was to a place called Harponville, where we had to pleasure of being billeted ? in an Orchard, no fruit being old enough, there was no raiding, and after one day we moved on, at night, and landed at a place called Contay, and after the usual rigmarole, we were marched off too Contay Wood,

There was a continual rumbling of a terrific bombardment going on, at any rate we were lucky enough, to be listening too it, at a distance,

We were all issued out with Tin Hats, and the New Gas masks, over the latter we had a proper dose of drill, how to put it on, and don't forget the nose clip, the helmets, were a bit stiff to get used to, the leather being pressed on the head by the iron, was painful, eventually they had rubber pads put in, and that softened the blow, but for a long time, the men carried them,

As per usual, all sorts of rumours were going round, a big attack coming on, and all the programme arranged, in the minds of privates, whose imaginations were running riot

The Lt. and Quarter Master sent for me, and I wondered what

was up, getting there, he said I hear you know a bit about shoe mending Capt. Leschers, boots are holed, can you repair them,

I was to order the Leather, and as all the other materials were in the Wagon, I soon had the chest out, the Dispatch Rider went for the Leather, and I got busy,

I sewed some soles on Capt Leschers boots and put Phillips Rubbers on, he came, and was very pleased, and gave me five francs, seeing this was more than a weeks pay, I was very glad to have a bit more money, but I was to get richer yet, for three other Officers including Col Kelly, the latter paid me ten francs, and the other two five francs each, and considering, I supplied no materials sixteen shillings and eightpence, was Some pay, for one day.

The 28th June it was read out on orders that all the Bearers Squads would parade on the morrow,

Being lined up, all of us were detailed off in our squads of four to a stretcher, Gas Masks, Tin Hats, Iron Rations, and everything appertaining to us was examined,

The rest of the Amb, transport included, were sent to Warlay, to take over a Hospital,

The Bearers being all correct, off we moved, Capt Lescher leading, in our Section we had several of the new chaps, and the last we saw of the Amb. H.Q. for some days was a nice clean camp.

The further we walked the nearer we got to the firing, one Artillery man told us it had been going on incessantly for nine days.

We arrived at dusk, June the 29th at a Village called Bouzincourt, and as we were a little ahead of time we halted, we had no sooner done so, than Jerry started shelling, ~~my~~ there was a scatter for shelter, fortunately nobody was hit, he was just a little short of the road,

We were not sorry at the order to fall in, for the only shelter we could find was a bank of earth,

We turned sharp to the left, being now pitch darkness we could not see where we were going, by the signposts, but as we had a guide, the Officer had no worries

Dawn came and we were passing some of the big howitzers, the men

..... were all busy

were all busy pumping shells over to Jerry, and they all had fancy names on their guns,

We passed through the Village of Avuley, turned to the left across country and plenty of it hereabouts was swampy, no doubt from the River Ancre.

We pulled up at a place, and it will ever remain a marvel to me, the look of it, it was a piece of land between a wood, and our guns, and the other side of the wood was our front line, and yet the place looked just like a nice meadow,

There had been a kind of shelter erected, the top was corrugated iron, and the sides canvas, I suppose it had been used, as a store of some kind, and this is where we kipped down, he evidently had some recollection of this place, for he began to search for it, much to our discomfort, canvas was not much of a protection, and we would all with one accord, kiss the Earth when he sent a Salvo over.

At last we got definite news, a big attack coming on in the morning, the Division, that is in will attack, and the 25th will go through them, and continue the advance, we knew we were in for something this time

One thing that upset us was there was no sign of any rations, we had demolished ours, and the next lot had not arrived,

And so we kipped down.

Dawn came and the guns made more noise than they had all night, and with this increase began the First Battle of the Somme. 1st July 1916.

The moment it was daybreak, we were lined up in our respective parties, as detailed off, and away we went.

The party I was in set off for what the Infantry men called Blighty Wood,

We reached it in five minutes, and a little way the other side, about a mile and a half was the village of Thiepval.

Reaching the Wood, we saw coming through the trees parties of prisoners, they were the first we had seen to any extent, and I must say they looked anything, but unhappy.

Our path lay on a different route, and as we followed a path through the wood, we met some of our wounded, walking cases, they

said don't cross, that blank - bridge,

By this they meant us to go down a small valley, and up the other side in preference to crossing the bridge,

Reaching it, we found that the side facing Jerry, had a canvas curtain about ten feet high, and all the bottom part was cut to ribbons,

We set foot on the bridge, whether Jerry heard us, or whither it was a machine gun he had trained on it, was just fired, I do not know, but the place was alive with bullets, jusy like a swarm of Bees,

The Officer he had got over, but when a chap sees the tatters, as the bullets cut through the canvas, and continues on when, he has an alternative route, well he his asking for a wooden cross, and as I was leading, and had no desire to leave this world at that moment, I turned round, and fell off the bridge as I tripped over my stretcher.

All followed down the valley, and up the other side, and as scared faced, new young Officer, Lt. Ryan first time up the line, welcomed us, and broke into a real Irish brogue, about the dangers etc, he laughed as well as us.

But the fact remained, we had got to continually carry wounded stretcher cases through here, and as it was well high impossible, to go back the way we had come, we had to got go across the bridge.

The edge of the wood this side was the old suppost lines, and of course it was empty, the Infantry had advanced, but it was full round the saps etc, of wounded, by a coincidence, the first case, the squad I was with had to carry, was the old Soldier Walters of the 2nd South Lincs, who sang the Alphabet song at Fienvillens, I recognised him at once, and asked him what he had got, he said have you come over a little wooden bridge,

I told him of our experience, well we were coming over he siad, when in a jiff my leg was riddled, with machine gun bullets, and here I am, I am afraid he would have to lose his right leg, as it was almost shattered,

Away we went, and we meet one of the Division, who had been here for sometime, and he said Jerry only plays on it every now, and the n, so you want to wait until he has fired a few rounds, and then get over,

..... And this was

And this was the procedure we followed all day and night and we were lucky enough not to get a casualty.

The second case down, one of our areoplanes, was brought down, just a few yards in front of us, both the Officers were dead, so we had to leave them, as we had such a lot of wounded to clear,

Everytime we reached the post with our wounded, we asked for our rations, to be met with the same answer, none come up yet, things were beginning to take on a serious aspect, at last the strain of no food, was getting so great a hold, that we were told to scout round, and see if by any chance we could find some,

Being a new locality to all the Division we had no idea, of where the previous troops had there stores, so we commenced a systematic search of all the old dug-outs,

Coming to one, looking rather the worse for wear, we cleared away the debris, and putting my head inside, spotted several boxes.

We worked with redoubled vigour, and were soon inside, we burst open the boxes, Biscuits, Bully, and Two whole Cheeses,

We hah hah orders, no eating if you find stores, the Lads up the Line first, and we soon had the sandbags full, we cleared the whole lot, and up we went, and handed them over, to the place allotted.

They in their turn knowing the whereabouts of the men were able to let all have a little, it was from this place we got ours, the first food, for nearly three days, but what about the lads up the Line, fighting on empty stomachs,

This slackness in delivering the rations, by our Divisional Heads, was all the more noticeable, by the fact that the Guns were not kept hungry, food for them was being brought up night and day, but the men, well I suppose had been forgotten.

We heard that some of the 8th Border Regt. had got into Thiepval, but were not strong enough to hold it,

One of the 8th Division, seeing us, said, you come along with me, and I will show you something,

We followed along the outskirts of the Wood, presently he

..... stopped

stopped, climb up there and have a look one at a time.

I clambered up, and looked onto what to all intents, and purposes, was a grass field, and all over it, were over two hundred men, in every conceivable attitude, dead.

I got down, the others looked, it was a heartbreaking sight, We turned to the man, who had shown us it.

I noticed before, he was not exactly as he should have been, He told us that when the attack started, that a Major who he did not know, had led them out of the Support trenches over the top, to the front line, they had no sooner started, than the machine gun bullets began to mow them down, he said we have never seen that Major again, I believe he was a spy, he has been searched for, and his body is nowhere to be found, so he must have gone over to Jerry,

To us it was not only a terrible sight but, there was something radically wrong in taking men out of a trench, when they could have got up, through the communication trenches, to the front line, for in spite of shelling, they would have had a chance but going up a slight hill, with Jerry looking down from the top, was either, as the man said, the work of a spy, or a case of throwing men's lives away.

Our Infantry had been badly knocked about, but after a few days we had cleared the mass of wounded, and the attack at this part of the Line having failed, it was a case of holding the little our side had won,

Thiepval was the stumbling block, it was practically impregnable, so our Division being what they were pleased to call a Mobile Division, were handed out wholesale, for the use of other Divisions.

The section of us were withdrawn, it had poured with rain, and no where to sleep or rest, it was a relief to get away from it,

The other part of the Ambulance Bearers, had gone to the left of us, to a place called Black Horse Bridge, they had had an awful time, our Friend Hickenbottom had been sent down with shell shock,

Reaching Albert, we were given some hot food, it was indeed welcome, and we were lined up under Sgt. Ingram, and off we went again.

The same old Army Stunt, we went back, almost to our starting place, met a guide who bore to the right, and stopped at a sunken road,

We halted for a while, a notice board here, had painted on it "Crucifix Corner", right on this corner was a Crucifix, (they were very often found in these parts), it was quite intact, some unseen hand seemed to have guarded it, as he had shelled here badly,

Reaching the Communication trench an M.O. met us, we learned that the Amb. on this sector in the 12th Division had been worn out with fatigues, and we had been sent to help them,

Sgt. Ingram receiving his orders off we went,

The journey up that trench was the limit, the sides of it had been knocked in, in many places, the trench was a mass of mud, and water,

The dead were everywhere, he had caught them, no doubt going up.

Three men were protruding from a small shelter, they had evidently sensed the shell, and made an effort to get out, but it was too late, and with the wood, and earth pressing on there backs they lay.

We carried on, and at last found some wounded, some of the squads set off with them, and we gradually thinned out until there was only one squad left including Sgt. Ingram, the others were Moss, Canty and I.

Hereabouts, we were in full view of Jerry, as it was just over the brow of the ridge, and the trenches having been blown about, and then washed in with the rain.

We waded along, and could see no more, so the Sgt, took me with him, and out we scrambled, and at once drew fire, I was as nervous as a kitten, and I didn't trouble to ask Sgt Ingram what he felt like,

..... I put on my

I put on my red cross Crossard, and hoped for the best, the firing stopped and I knew that they had spotted, what I was trying to do, that was shew them we were Red Cross Men, that was the first time that I had personally experienced Jerry respecting the Red Cross, I was not troubling so much about that, as I was my own skin,

I found an Officer, laying badly wounded, and keeping as much cover as I could yelled to Yamme, what we called our Sergeant.

He crept round, and we found he was all bandaged, but scarcely conscious, loss of blood, no food, and no water, with both legs and arms broken, he had been helpless, another night would have killed him,

We revived him, with the only means at our disposal, rum and water, from my water bottle, not drinking my tot, but not knowing what was ahead, I had poured it in my water bottle,

He came round at last, and said there are a lot more over there, see if they are safe, and put them where you can find them shelter,

We thought he might be wandering, but he was so distressed, that Yamme told me to slip back, and fetch the other two with the stretcher, point out where he was with the Officer, and then go off, in the direction the Officer, had indicated,

I crept off with anything but happy feelings, but after half an hour search, I found nobody, I turned round to retrace my steps, and so at Theipval we were looking up hill, at Jerry, and dare not show ourselves, much, so here Jerry was in a like position,

From where I lay, I could see our Lads in the suken road when ever they moved about and could see Jerry lines, but not in them.

I got back, the Sgt, had been scouting round, he came back, come on we will get down,

Canty at the feet, I at the head, for we were the shorter, and could stoop the lowest, and stooping almost to the ground, we got to cover, and had a rest, as we wanted to get our whereabouts,

Up we lifted it again, Moss leading the way, to tell Canty what to avoid, and Sgt Behind to help me,

We no sooner showed ourselves again, that a bullet whizzed over our heads, a few seconds, then another, wind up would be a mild term for my feelings, then another,

It seemed impossible, that a marksmen could possibly have missed us, as it midday, and not raining,

Sgt. Ingram, said get a move on, we did as fast as the horrible going would let us, a minute or two after we had got going, a bombardment commenced, and the place, all round this locality was like a merry hell,

We felt certain then, that the Jerry who fired the bullets, only did it to give us warning, to take cover,

Coming, we had been able, everytime we came upon trouble, to slip over the top and over the sides, but with a badly wounded man, and Jerry shelling, we had no option but to keep to the trench, Canty being three inches shorter, than I, was to carry the feet with me, so that I could keep his head up a bit,

And Sgt Ingram being several inches taller than Moss, also carried the head, and so we continued down, Canty and I, and then Yamme and Moss,

The trench was awful, for yards at a time, we would be above our waists in, this thick muddy stuff, if you trod on anything smooth over you would go, to be saved only by the side of the trench, and trusting to the sling to hold the stretcher, out would go hands,

The Officer on the stretcher, poor devil, he laughed when Canty was disappearing, in the slime, how he stuck it without complaining, I do not know, the rate of progress, was that of a snail,

None of the other Lads, had come back, we wondered what was up.

After nearly five hours we landed down, done to the wide, at the Dressing Station the Officer thanked us all, and said what he thought of our effort,

We handed him over, and asked why the others, had not come back,

They said, on arrival back, they looked into some dug-outs, and pointed to them, and said, they are full of Bearers, some sleeping, some eating, some gambling

The Officer came up,

You men going up again,

..... Nobody answered

Nobody answered,

Up came Yamme, and I turned, and told him, what the to do was over,
That did it,

I am afraid dicipline, vanished the M.O. lost his temper,
and we told him, that we were sent here to help, another Ambulance,
not to do another Ambulances work,

He bawled, and raved about his men had scarcely, had any rest
since the First, and we replied we are ditto,

He took our names, and said he would report us, just then
the Officer we had carried came out, he beckoned me over, and I
explained, what was the matter, he said he would write to our C.O.
to let him know, we had not shirked,

At last Yamme, told the M.O. he was going to take us back to
the Unit, and give a report to our C.O.

Arriving on the outskirts of Albert, we reported, and Yamme
told the C.O. and he was mad at us being treated like it, and there
was never any mention of it, sent in on reports,

We cleaned the slime etc, off our clothes, and were then
detailed off, to go to another spot,

We arrived at a dug-out, in the side of the Albert, Bapume
Road, and for the first time for a week, had a decent sleep.

Daybreak came, there were a crowd of us detailed off, and away
we went, this time to help another lot clear the cases on the right,

We got as far as Tricourt, and were threading our way through the
troops in support, when a wordy battle broke out,

Arriving at the spot, I heard one of our Lads, a Londoner from
Westminster, named Ernie Parkins, telling an Infantry Sergeant
that we had not just come up, that we did not belong to his Division,
and that we were only there to help clear some wounded,

The remarks got warmer, and warmer, and at last we left him,
and he sent his parting shot, it is about time, you Blank blighters,
saw a bit of the Line,

We left the supports, and as there was no communication trench,
we had to take advantage of the natural obstacles, to get forward,
we reached a sunken road, and there, laying about on stretchers,

between the front line, and supports, were scores of wounded, both our own, and Jerry,

After they were dressed, in an old Jerry Aid Post, (the door unfortunately faced Jerry), the German bandages, etc that were there, did not come up to ours in quality, I suppose, they were feeling the blockade even as early as 1916.

Lying in the road, was the remains of a German Red Cross Van, Jerry started shelling around here, he could not have known, that a lot of his own men were there, although he wounded a few men again, none were killed,

Some of the Infantry, brought in some Prisoners, and they were given there own men to carry down, we started back, with our cases, and passing the old Infantry Sgt.

He had changed somewhat, he said I take back all I said, we chipped him, and passed on, and landed at a place called Spanish Farm, and gave our cases in,

To our disgust, we again found men asleep, from this Divisions Amb, when the Officer, told us to go up again, we left him and went, and reported to our Adjt, Capt Lescher, on Bapume Road,

He told us not to go back, and just then, the other Officer coming up, a few straight words, from our Officer, and he went back, without us.

The only reason to account, for this game with us, was I suppose, that every Amb, was not run the same, we had never once, had any help for our Div.

We were soon on the road again, going up, for our own Divisional Cases,

Mounting the crest of the hill, we had a view of the battlefield, that was almost unbelievable, we, who had as a rule, only seen the open country ahead, through glasses could now see, in comfort, and safety ? from the top of the hill over looking, La Boisselle,

We were surprised at this period to see a cinematograph operator, taking films of different incidents, and likewise some camera men, at different places taking photo,

One they took of some of our Lads, who were passing at the time,

..... with stretcher

with stretcher cases, and some time later. a weekly picture paper, coming to the unit. I was lucky enough to get it first, and on opening it found the photo in it, I have still got it in my possession,

Capt. Hughes, with his ever ready assistant Paddy Stevens, had been doing wonderful work, in No mans Land, in front of the Wilts, for they had been out there in broad daylight, taking ad vantage of natural obstacles, and had bandaged both our own and jerry wounded, he later on had the D.S.O. for it, and wee he deserved it,

Getting down with one case, a party of walking wounded Germans, were having their wounds dress, one who was done, had come out of the Dressing Station, and started to speak in a way that asked for it.

He first critised, the bandages, the Doctors, the British troops, and then started to explain to us, (all the time, talking in English), that they had heard Officially that morning that Little Willies, was, in Vendun, that the French were on the run, and that he would not be in our hands long, and if we didn't treat him properly, there would be trouble when the Kaiser won,

He was getting more insulting, in his actions, and words, at last he stopped, and to his surprise, he was marched off under escort, to some Head Quarters, but he had lost his tongue by this time, and instead of boasting, and bragging he proceeded to cringe, and crawl for mercy,

I suppose he was so used, to grovelling at the feet of his own Officers, he imagined he had to do ditto, to ours as well, when he found out, he was being asked questions, he answered their questions readily,

I often wondered what he thought of things afterwards,

A little to our left were some of the Famou s French 75s. I had read about them, but know we had an opportunity of seeing them,

They were in Batteries of seven guns, and whilst we were watching them, they were bombarding a road, they were firing so rapidly, they explained to us, that there were always three in the air at the same time, they were evidently upsetting Jerry, for he started to send over some heavy stuff, and we cleared,

As at Fricourt, so at La Boisells, we had sent a mine up, on the first day, the one at La Boisells, was right at the edge of the road, the Village itself was, non-existent, here and there, was a tree stump, about a foot or two high, but no brick was left standing, at a later date a board was put up, with these significant words on it,

"This is La Boisells"

Our Division was having a rough time, and it did not seem, as is much headway was being made, we had one cheerful bit of news, the 2nd R. I. Rifles, had succeeded in taking the rest of the village of Ovillers, and in doing so had captured 179 Prussian Guards.

It was a great feather in their caps, as the Guards, were among Jerrys crack troops, and all the time the Germans held Ovillers, they were holding up all this sector, but the price had to be paid, and we were kept busy clearing the wounded,

The Division continued making short pushes, here and there in an effort to capture the Village of Poizeres, before it fell into our hands the Australians relieved our Division, and as we had made the final effort at Ovillers, after the other Division had paved the way, so the Aussies captured Poizeres after our Division, had practically taken it,

A relief from this work was very much welcomed, and as moved back into Albert, it was my first time in the town, previously we had only just marched through the outskirts,

The Ambulance H.D.S. was round about the Cathedral, we saw for the first time, the leaning Virgin

Our Engineers had put some supports to hold it, as Jerry often hit the Cathedral but for the struts would have fallen, as it was it was hanging over the road way,

The French people had a saying, that the day it crashed, would mark the start of the Allies final victory,

Plenty of shelling was going on, and one or two dropped by the hospital, but beyond bricks and mortar, no damage was done,

Tommy Barrass, was marching along with the rest of us, when he was hailed by a R.G.A. man, it was his brother who was a regular,

..... he had not seen

he had not seen him since the beginning of the War.

Once again luck came my way, I was no sooner, ready for a kip in the Amb, when I was detailed off, to go on duty and direct the Walking wounded coming down the line, through Albert to the dressing station.

Reaching the corner of the road, where I was to stand, I made a rush for some shelter, the next second three landed,

When I had recovered my breath, I looked round, and just saw the side of a house collapsing, and men rushing out of the ground floor and others falling out of the upper floors as they toppled over,

He had managed to ^{wound} 32 of the South Wales Borderers, they were our Pioneer Batt, and had just gone in there before going out for a rest,

Helping to clear them, was no sinecure there were no trenches, only the houses, and as he was shelling, it seemed worse than it really was,

They had evidently forgotten me, for, I was there hours, and had scrounged some food, and drink round about,

Presently through the streets, came what to us, was a novel sight, we had seen the Cavalrymen, doing fatigues in the line, but here were some, mounted, half were the 6th Dragoon, and the other half an Indian Regt, the 6th Deccan Horse,

The men crowded in doorways, and windows and I must say, they looked fine, also their was the feeling, that our C. in C. had an idea that he could break through,

But the powers that be, were too optimistic, for when they attacked in the morning, Jerry killed or maimed most of the horses, with machine gun fire,

Poor old horses, what they went through they were indeed beasts of burden, although the men used to say, that the authorities showed more concern for the Horses, than they did men,

The first they had to buy, whilst the latter they got for nothing,

And another grouse, that led men to say they only think of us as cannon fodder, was when they saw Jerries dugouts,

..... Some of his

Some of his dug-outs, that we had captured were 20 and 30 feet deep,

The irony of it, there was Jerry, he had these deep dug outs, to keep his men in, when we did shell, and considering the small amount of shelling, we had done up to now, except in this Battle, compared with what he had sent over to us, and yet the shelter supplied to our Lads was of the flimsiest,

It was no wonder, our casualties in the trench warfare, up to now, had been much greater than his,

But there is not the slightest doubt that at last, the British Army was from this time onward, always supplied with shells etc, in at least equal proportions to Jerrys, whereas before, he had always had more,

Another point that Vic pointed out to me was, that Jerry, having got in the enemies country, did not mind so much where he chose to dig in, providing it was the best position for him, and that is certainly, another thing he had in his favour, having picked the ridges to dig in, he was looking down on us,

Naturally the Allies wished to keep as much of France and Belgium out of his clutches as they could, and incidently took up positions, that he forced on us, to keep in touch with him,

Referring to these deep dug outs again they had there good side, and they had there bad side, they were alright for shelter when shelling was on, but when you had to leave them, if he was shelling, that was a horse of a different colour, and they were proper Wind-up producers,

I suppose the main idea of Jerrys, in building them, was his intention to stop there until the end of the war, where as our little dug outs, up to now had certainly only been built as shelters, not as permanent refuges, for all they were, was a recess in the trench, and strengthened on top,

And so our first spell in a Battle came to an end, and we were one and all very pleased to be marching away from the line, the Division had suffered very heavily, the Infantry, as usual bearing

..... the brunt,

the brunt, we had had our casualties, but the poor Infantryman,

Being now back altogether, I was able to get with Vic again, the number of squads I had worked with was amazing, we went up there in squads, but I never worked with the one, I went up with, it was partly my own fault, as I had made up my mind not to volunteer again, some time previously, it seemed as if fate decided otherwise, for the two Sergeants, I worked under, were both in the Billet with me at Budleigh, and if they wanted a man, or some men, my name was always there, so I got moved about.

I had not seen Vic for about a fortnight, although we had both married cases to the same Dressing Station,

Of course we were soon telling each other, about what we had seen,

Vic had been with the lot, who went to the left, on the 1st July, and there the post was called, Black Horse Bridge,

They had been through very much the same, as the rest of us, but the lot he was with had, not been quite so fortunate as us, as they had several casualties, Leibolt 'Hughes) no relation to the one who was killed at Vimy, Green Pritchard, and Currell the latter's Brother was a Sgt. Clerk, we were sorry to lose them, as they were all old boys of the Amb.

Leaving Albert, we marched to a place named Mellincourt, for the night, and so we marched into the Village, an Officer passed us, he was a second Nelson, he had one arm, and one eye, and as wounded strips were now issued out, he had adorned his arm, with his share, that numbered six, (later in the war, he brought the total up to fifteen).

The condition under which a gold wounded stripe was awarded, was that you must have had your name registered, as a casualty, so whereas some would not bother to go to an Ambulance, but still carried on, they would get no stripe, whereas, another would come, in, with a slight wound, and he would eventually be awarded one,

We moved on next day to the Amb. H.Qs. at Warlay, and saw the same Officer again, we learned he was a Lt. Col De Wiart, V.C., D.S.O.,

We were very pleased to get to H.Qs, we got a bath first thing,

..... which was indeed

which was indeed welcome, and we needed it, next we had as much food as we could eat, not only had we been on Biscuits and Bully, all the time, up the line, but there had been a great scarcity,

That old saying, that an Army moves on its stomach, did not carry much weight in our Division, anyway, for we had been, and the Infantry especially, always on the scrounge,

All the iron rations from both dead and wounded, had been taken by the men,

The men, of the Ambulance, who had been left behind here, at Warlay, had evidently been living like fighting cocks, but the thing that tickled us most was the news, they had to tell us, they knew far more than we did about the line, but of course on reflection it was quite understandable, for whereas us bearers, were too busy, getting our cases down, from our little sector, they had men coming through the Hospital from a dozen sectors,

We were lined up for an inspection the C.O. congratulated us, and all the usual flattery, was not forthcoming from him, for he was still a man of a few words,

Our sleeping quarters that night, were in some huts in a camp, just outside the Hospital, there were two for us, and the rest were occupied by Australian troops, that were going up, the next day,

They proceeded to chip us, and one of them in a rather flippant way, asked us if we had got any V.Cs,

Our friend Elwell, always ready for a Battle of Words, soon answered, by telling him, he would find more wooden crosses up there, than Victoria Crosses, that set the ball rooling, but it all went off alright, and when we saw them off next day, we wished them the best of luck, and they needed it, for the Aussies, had a particularly rough spell of it, round Poizeres, and Courcellette,

All the Divisions had, had distinctive Badges, allotted to them, and to the 25th Div, had fallen the Luck of having a Red Horse Shoe, on the coat just under the Collar, and each Brigade had a separate piece of ribbon on the Collar, the 7th Brigade to which the 77th Field Ambulance, belonged had a red piece, the other two Brigades had green, and yellow,

And of course the horse shoe, soon brought about a few remarks, the commonest, used by all, and sundry, was Hullo Matey, what is the matter, did a Mule kick you,

After twenty four hours, at Warlay, which had brought about a great alteration in our appearance, we handed over the Hospital, and marched a little further back, away from the line, and landed at a small Town, Beauvel, it was a very pretty place, clean, and considerably larger, than what we had been billeted in before, the whole Brigade, was in and around it,

It was a nice billet, not so draughty, but the live stock, as usual were soon in evidence, we were dismissed, after being told to clean ourselves up, and those of us who had our letters to write, set too, and as we had had no chance much for a fortnight the Officers had a decent job that night,

Our old friend, Bott, run foul of Capt. Collard, Bolton said, he was censoring the mens letters, when he turned to Bolton, and told him to fetch, L. cpl. Bott,

When Bott got to the Mess, the Capt, turned to him, and said, Lcpl. Bott, you go and write this letter again, you don't come the Old Soldier over me for nothing, I have been up, as long as you,

Poor Old Bott, came back, to re write his letter, to his Wife, wishing to let his Wife know the sector he was in, he had had a brain wave, and had told her, that he had run across, poor old Albert, the other day, and he was badly knocked about,

Of course the thing was too obvious, seeing, we had just been in front of Albert, which was also badly knocked about,

In the days rest we had here, we soon learned about, the deeds of some of the Lads, but I never heard any say they were sorry to be away from it, in fact, we were hoping, we had finished our share of the Battle,

The Division had plenty of reinforcements, and all units were again up to strength, it did not look too rosy, on routine orders, that night, (we were back again in Army Life, tin soldiers for a while, not real soldiers), the Amb. will parade tomorrow, when the Army Commanders, Order will be read to the troops,

..... We lined up,

We lined up, with smiles,

The Army Commanders, wishes to thank all ranks, of the 25th Division, for their great work, and several other pats on the back, and our chests began to swell,

Then came the ominous words, and the Army Commander, looks forward to seeing the Division back in the Line again, in the next few days, and so add further laurels to those gained in the past,

The chests were no longer inflated, we knew, we had only marched out, to receive reinforcements, and be sent up the Line again, we had seen more than sufficient to convince us, that up there lay trouble,

We dismissed from parade, with anything but the pleasure we had assembled, and so all who wanted too, and were off duty amused themselves in their own way, letterwriting, cards, crown and anchor, or in the Estaminets, of which the latter were everywhere one turned, for my part, I was rather groggy,

Next day we fell in, and the Officer coming round said report sick when you get to our destination,

So we set off once more, up towards the Line, Bands were not in favour, on the march now, so we trudged along, cursing the French roads, the War, and everything that didn't suit us,

The Ambulance were bivioaced in a little wood, Authie Wood, the first thing I did after dismissal, was to report sick, the M.O. was Captain Collard,

When my turn came, he had a look at my face, and asked me where I had got it, I opened my mouth as ordered,

You will have to have that tooth out when that swelling goes down, the lads said my face was all red one side, and white the other, it was more uncomfortable, than painful,

Captain Collard, after giving me orders, what to do, turned and in his plaintive sort of tone said,

It is rather bad,

Yes, Sir,

I suppose you would like to stay, down the Line for a while,

Yes, Sir,

So would I, but they want us all up there, so we shall all have to go.

..... The Lads

The Lads round him laughed, and so did I, it came so happily, that one couldn't help but laugh, he was for too kind, and tolerant a man, to be spiteful with any one, but he was fond of a joke,

The H.Q. of the Ambulance after a night trek, was a Village a few miles behind the Line, named Acheux, and it was a very large hospital, the stretcher bearers were sent up to a place named Mesnil, the Division moved into the Line, and took over the next Sector to where we had been on the First of July,

It was to have been all a part of the Battle front, but Thiepral, where we had first gone in, was the stumbling block, and so us failing to advance, we had more or less held up the northern sector of the Line,

It was a fairly quiet sector, Jerry was too busy farther south, to worry a great deal here, unless we tried too advance, so all that went on, was shelling different places, and the usual machine gunfire, there was not a great deal of the latter as the trenches were so far apart,

Our Division had trenches, and new dug outs etc to prepare, for the next attempt,

The first case I helped carry, was my last for a few days, as my right eye was now closed, and the lads said, I looked a sight, so I was sent from, the A.D.S. at Mesnil, to the H.Q. at Acheux.

I reported sick, and was given treatment, to get the swelling down, in time for the Dentist, two days hence, I had nothing to do, so cleared off, all my letters, and read a bit,

I lined up, with the usual crowd of men, who wanted their teeth seen too, the Dentist, and his gang, took up their abode in an empty house,

Those who were unlucky, and I was one, had the pleasure of listening to the different, yells of about 200 men, before we entered the dreaded precincts,

In I went, and on to the chair, open your mouth, said the Dentist, and he grabbed hold of the tooth, nothing doing, except me suffering,

Three Sergeants, one holding arms, one the legs, the other my head,

..... So the Dentist

So the Dentist had another go, I was fed up, at last he stopped, trying to pull my upper jaw out, and bored a hole through, and pierced up with a needle,

Not very satisfactory from, my point of view, but I was glad to get out of his clutches,

It stopped the pain and as there was nothing else wrong with me, up I went again next day,

This time to a decent dug-out, in a bank at the side of the road, pretty safe except when he started shelling the road,

On the corner of the road, just below us was a similiar dug-out, room for eight or nine with bunks, and for all, who entered it, some jovial individual, had chalked up a few nice words,

Beware, All Ye who enter here.

It had been there some time, and although Jerry had shelled this corner it had not been hit,

But some of our Lads, clicked,

Jerry getting busy, one of his gas shells dropped in the door way, and there being no explosions, the lads breathed a sigh of releif, but it was a gas shell, and before all the Lads could get out, it filled the dug-out,

Morriss got it slightly, but, Wilson and Moss got the full benifit of it,

They were rushed down to Acheux, and the Lads there told us, that Capt, Lescher spent hours trying to save them,

Wilson, in the forties, they said, was a bronchial subject, and it played havoc with his chest, the Officer tried, saline injections, oxygen, and everything he could, but after six hours, terrible agony he passed away,

Moss, being about 25, and a strong man, healthy, and a teetotlar, and non smoker, was able to hold his own better, but he was on the edge, when he turned, and said has Wilson gone ?

They knew it was no use hiding it, so they told him, Yes.

He was a very religious fellow, and so it was all the more noticable coming from him it really seemed to give him a new lease of life, for he turned to the orderlies, and said,

Well the Devil's got one, and if he wants another, he's got to fight, and fight hard,

From that moment, they said he took a turn for the better, and although they had to help him in his fight, day and night, he was strong enough after three days, to be taken down the Line,

This gas was a vile thing, the only consolation, we had about it, was that Jerry, having started it, our side, was giving him it bac,. with interest, but it was a ghastly weapon, and some men have been seen, gasping and writhing in agony, and the lookers on, unable to do anything for them, one could only pity them, a bullet or a shell, might kill you painlessly, but this never did, once a man got it, he always suffered terribly, even though he was doomed.

Sergeant Arnold, who was at Tidworth in the same tent as myself, evidently got permission to come up, for he was really the dispensing sergeant,

His ambition was to see sharpnel bursting, and being near a point, that was always having some from Jerry, he was nice, and busy, and Arnold went along, when on looking up, one burst, it could not have been, fifty feet up, we expected him, to get a packet, but like a lot of beginners, he was lucky, and he came back to tell us, exactly what it looked like, after exploding,

Us who had been up, too often to be anxious to go looking for trouble, thought he must be balmy, but there are some things there is no accounting for,

About a fortnight after we took over this part, the Guards had a party of Irish Guards up, to dig a trench out in no-mans-Land, they were getting on with the job, when they were attacked, by a party of Jerries,

The Guards had not much time, to get their arms ready, so on the spur of the moment, they set about Jerry, with their tools.

When the fight was over, very few Jerries got back, plenty of them were casualties, and there terrible wounds, bore ample evidence, of what damage, a pick-axe, and spade can do, when it is used by a man, in defending himself.

..... Shortly after this

Shortly after this we were releived, and went down to Acheux, the whole Division moved out of the Line, this sector being taken over by the Guards Division.

The Ambulance moved back, to the village of Bus, whilst there the King inspected the Guards who had not gone into the Line, poor devils, one would have thought they were on parade in England,

They were certainly, much more stricter on the Guards, than to me seemed at all necessary, dicipline is good for you, and to a great extent essential, but their is a limit to all things, and the dicipline in the Guards, was to me beyond the limit,

The 1st Wilts and 10th Cheshires out of the 7th Brigade, had some sports here, and as we had nothing much to do, unless detailed off for fatigues, we went to see them, it helped to pass away the time, was very nice to see, but above all, it showed that there was still plenty who were ready for sport, even though they had been through the mill,

The Ambulance played football amongst ourselves, and such places as these on rest, were the times to get your letters written, no one was allowed out of the Brigade Area, so we could have no long walks, still we could always pass away the time, watching some of the Lads gambling for we nearly always got paid, as soon as we came out on rest,

The time went by rapidly, and after a few days rest here, and it had been a rest for a change, we moved up again, with a new Officer named Captain Hepper, a regular army men, and some privates, to make up for our losses, through illness, and casualties

Our first stop was at Pushvilliers, and the Division going into the Line, some of us were detailed off to go up next day,

I felt queer, could eat nothing, the place was not one to cheer one up, it was a fair sized place, but the manure pit, was stinking and in amongst all this filthy, the skinniest pigs imaginable were hunting for food,

Vic tried too persuade me to go sick, but I didn't fancy it, for having been detailed off for the Line, I didn't want it thought, I was swinging the lead, and another thing the last time, I was in front of the Medical Officer, we were also going up the Line, and so

..... I stuck it,

195-

I stuck it, for the night,

Next morning, I was worse, and crawled round to the Hospital
marquee.

Freddy Barton, one of the Orderlies on duty said, whats up George,

I don't know, but I feel groggy, and I am for the Line,

He took my temperature,

You lay on that stretcher, the new Officer will be round in a
minute,

In came Captain Hepper,

Fred told him, I was one of the Amb.

Calling me in front of him, he surveyed me, asked me questions,
and what I had dreaded, came,

Are you for the Line today,

Yes Sir,

Well, I don't think there is much the matter with you, keep him
here Orderly and I will come round in an hours time, I felt groggy,
and I felt mad,

I knew what he was coming round in an hour for,

I told Fred, that I was a good mind to go and see Captain Lescher.

He persuaded me to stay,

Captain Hepper came in, but instead of speaking to the Orderly,
came straight over to me,

Come along, there is nothing wrong with you, you can join the
others,

In the Army, orders are orders, so up I rose, and left the
Marquee, I walked down an Avenue of trees, after walking some yards,
I suppose I collapsed,

When I came too, I was not in the Marquee, I was in a little
room in the house,

All the afternoon, evening, and night, I was hourly given a
dose of aspirin, and phenacetin,

I cannot say I took a great interest in anything, but one thing
was noticeable,

Captain Hepper, gave me every dose of medicine, and he was in
and out of the room, all day, and night,

..... Morning came,

Morning came, and I perspired, and that finished the doping,

I heard afterwards, from Fred Barton, that after I had been picked up, he had me carried back to the Marquee, and then went, and saw the Colonel, who had me taken to the House,

From Todd, Captain Lescher's servant I heard, that Fred Barton, told the C.O. what had actually happened, and he sent for Captain Hepper, and had something to say to him, and that was, I suppose the reason he attended me, all day and night,

Once, I had taken a turn, he never so much, as came in to see me, so I had to be satisfied, with the Orderly, I had been the cause of quite enough trouble, without being anxious, to get deeper in the mire.

If the way he had treated me, was an example of what any one else might expect from him, then I think the Ambulance was well rid of him, for I never saw him again,

I must say this for him, when he gave an order on parade, one did it, with an alertness, that brought back to ones mind the old Aldershot days.

The Lads had got well used to the Line by the time, I was about, and the Wilts had made another, of the many attacks on Leipzig Redoubt, and this time our side held on to it.

The Ambulance H.Q. moved to the Village of Louvencourt, and it was on this journey, that an event happened, that I look back on with the deepest of regrets,

Being only convalescent, my pack was carried on the G.S. wagon, and any men on the march, Infantry, or any others, who had fallen out I would be told off to see them into the Ambulance,

As we were going up towards the Line, a Batt of Infantry, from another Division were approaching us, going out for a rest ?

As they neared us, I was detailed off, to see, an Infantry man, was put into the Ambulance, and see what was the matter,

He had badly blistered feet, and while I was tending them, the tramp of feet told me the other lot were passing us,

I heard a lot of the usual banter, that passed between the different units, as they passed each other,

..... Just as they

Just as they had passed, I got down and over taking the Lads, they all shouted, Blink, your Brother is in that mob, the 11th West Kents, and they have been shouting for you,

I felt done, to think, I had missed my Brother, like that, and I just went on,

Why, did I not take my chance, and rush back after them, it would only have been clink at the most, if I had known, that it was the only chance, to be given me of seeing my Brother again, on this earth, I should not have been put off, with anything except force,

But, for whatever reason, I did not go, it is with regrets, that are, I am sad to say, of no avail, that I let that chance, slip by,

He wrote to my, my Poor Old Frank, in his usual cheery way, once again, and once only. he hated the war, but as he said, now I am in it, I do my bit.

Arriving at Louvencourt, the Amb, took over a large hospital, and also a place that was being run, for the benefit of Officers, more like a rest home, for them,

When the list was put up for duties here, my name was among them, and arriving there, I found my job was to be that of waiter, and Lobb, our section cook, was the cook,

Lt. Bissell a Canadian Doctor, was in charge of us, and sending the sick attendants to their jobs, he took Lobb, and I to the Kitchen

In his nasal drawl he told Lobb to get busy in the Kitchen, pointed out the Dining Room to me, and left us, not much to get on with, but that was the usual way, if you did, or did not do a certain thing, you would, have barked at you, why did you do, or why didn't you do it,

The moment you got out I thought,

Back would come the retort, you are not here to think

But you were often left, like I have described, with very scanty orders, and then you just used your wits.

Old Lobbo, was delighted with his domain and well he might, for it was the only time in France, he had the opportunity to use such a Kitchen.

Being only twelve Officers, and all in bed, all I had to do the

first couple of days, was to help in the Kitchen, and not much at that,

Food we had in abundance, both as to quality, and quantity,

Lobb and I, had the pleasure of sleeping, as well as working in the Kitchen, I think, that we must have been in clover, for two days before the rush began, and then there was more than enough work, to do, as usual in the Army, we groused, but not loud enough for the M.O. to hear.

The hospital itself, was a fine country house, or as the chief house hereabouts was named, The Chateau.

The owner was the :-

"Comte de Bertracourt".

We were told by one old retainer that at the beginning of the war, it was for a time, occupied by the Germans,

To all of the Officers, was brought the stocks of wines, etc, in the cellars, but as he said they were unlucky in a way, for they were not in occupation long enough to find the Vaults, which were full.

He gave as a very merry description of how they just managed to escape, and were unable to take even a lot of there own things never mind, the Conte's things.

Being ordered to get the dining room ready, I hunted round for knives etc.

I found plenty of spoons, and forks, but very few knives, after repeated efforts, we scrounged sixteen.

At first there were only a dozen, and that was alright, after breakfast they would be examined by the M.O. and he would then send me in a list of what port, whisky, or other wine, or spirit, I was to give each patient and how much,

In they trooped at eleven, for their ration, and as each one answered his name, so I gave him his drink, and put a mark by his name,

The fun began, when I found that one or two had given wrong names, and then came in, and gave their own, it only happened twice, for, I had a confab with the M.O. and as a result, all patients must be in the Dining by eleven, none allowed in for half an hour any body late must see the M.O.

Next day in bowls a dandy, at half past eleven,

I want a Whisky and Sodar.

You must apply to the M.O. Sir.

Do you know, you are refusing an ordar. I am, Captain Gerrard of the Machine Gun Car, and I ordar a Whiskey and Sodar

I would not have minded giving him a Whisky and Soda, but I had to account for it all, so as he knew I did not drink, the Medical Officer, had left it in my charge daily, rationed out,

And besides, as I told this Officer, his drink was Port, and I was not going to give him Wiskey without orders, from the M.O.

He asked, if I had forgotten I was only a private,

That did it, as far as I was concerned

I told him, as far as we were concerned the inmates, of this hospital were not Officers they were Patients

That did it,

I will report you for insolence,

Which he promptly did,

In came Lt. Bissell, and in his Canadian drawl, said,

Say, Pte. Swindell, an Officer has just reported you for insolence, what was it all about, as I shall have to send you to Orderly Room in the morning,

I felt done, heavens alone knows what he had told the M.O.

So I told him all that had taken place,

Say, is that what the insolence was over,

Yes, Sir.

Well, I guess, if he his well enough to give orders, here, I guess he his well enough to give orders in his own unit, and he was discharged from the hospital, and sent back next day to his unit,

Poor Old Lobb, he couldn't get over it, he would burst out,

I am Capt. Gerrard of the Machine Gun Car, and tried to imitate him, but the Officer was a fool, he could have had another week's rest, if he hadn't tried too run the show,

The troubles in the dining room came when twenty too thirty Officers came in, not only was there not enough room round the table for more than a dozen, but there were only sixteen knives,

At this time the senior Officer in the room was, Col. the Lord Winthorp, C.O. of some Artillery.

With the aid of several tables that were scrounged, I managed to get all seated, I brought the food in, from the kitchen, and they had to help me pass it round, in the midst of this rush, one young Officer, about nineteen or twenty, bellowed out, Waiter.

Thinking, I had got him his wrong food, as many were on diet, I went to him

Yes, Sir,

I want another knife, I cannot do with one,

I told him, I was a dozen short, never mind two each, and I had even given my own knife in for use,

He ranted on, about what he was used to, and what he couldn't do without,

Other Officers were calling for me, when Col. Winthorp rang his bell,

All became silent, and I went to him,

What is the matter,

I told him about the knife business,

He was a sport, he stood up, and told all the Officers, in front of me, that they were jolly lucky, to have a waiter like me, and that they were not in the Hotel Cecil, and that they should help me, as I could not give them what I hadn't got.

I must say I never had any trouble with them afterwards, and the young blood, who had only just come out, was a sport and never tried to play me up, for the telling off he got,

I told the M.O. about how the Col. had put things right for me, and said, I have no glasses, Sir,

Do you know where there are any, I had to confess, that I didn't but I had found a set of cupboards locked up,

The result was, I scrounged around, found a bayonet, and tried to do a little burglarizing, Lobb helping, we gradually got the bayonet in, and were able to force the door open, without leaving a mark,

Glasses, hundreds of them, all kinds, and all cut glass.

.....I reported

I reported to the Officer, that I was mistaken, I had found some glasses after all.

Well, take stock, and if we break any we must replace them,

The first day in use, one of the Officers, succeeded in breaking his glass, fortunately, the name, number, firm, and every thing to do with the glasses, was on a card, so they sent to Paris, and got it replaced.

One dinner time, in rushed the M.O.

Say, the Comtess de Betrancourt, will be here in a moment, and after going to her rooms, (which were kept reserved for the family to pay periodical visits) she wishes to come into the Dining Room, and greet you, all, and all these glasses on the table, have been burgled out of her cupboard,

The Col. got the M.O. to keep the Lady out, until he heard the bell ring, then he would know he could bring her in.

I was having forty fits, whilst Lobb and I were forcing the Cupboard again, the Officers drained their glasses, and wiped them and we soon had them safely stowed away, and the cupboard shut,

The Col rung his bell, and in came the Lady of the House,

She made a nice little speech, told them her Husband, was at the War and hoped that the stay there would do them all good,

The Col. returned thanks, for all the Officers, and then they gave three cheers for the Comte and Comtess.

She evidently noticed the absence of glass, for she told the M.O. about it, and when he, in his innocence told her, none were supplied, she took him to the cupboard, and opened it, and gave him permission to use any glasses, he liked for the hospital.

It was certainly more, than we deserved, seeing what we had done,

The M.O. came to me directly the Officers had finished, and said that the Comtess, and her two Daughters, who would be staying for five days, would have their meals, in the Dining Room, after the Officers, and I was to wait on them,

I got a hustle on, cleared the table, and laying up, for them at one end of the table told the M.O. I was ready, and went into the Kitchen.

..... I found Lobb,

I found Lobb, in the seventh heaven of delight, at being able to show off, his prowess in the cooking line, he was a good cook too and had been well trained, and on enlisting had been for some years, at Cadly Hall,

I was not to wait on them like the Officers, I was to get their order, and take it all in at once on a tray.

In I went with their load, I was rather on the nervous side, and putting the tray down cast a rapid glance at the three Ladies, and asked them to ring if there was anything they required,

And so I gave them tea later on, and then breakfast in the morning.

During the morning before breakfast, I had to clean the floor, etc, and after breakfast help Lobb, and do any little jobs, there were to be done in the Dining Room,

After giving the Officers their morning's tonic, I was studying the different paintings on the walls, and seeing the name in the corner of one, I got a chair to have a look, to see what the name was, and was surprised to see it was a Woman's, as I was busy quizzing it, the Comtess had come in, and was standing at the door looking, I got down, and feeling all a tremble, asked if I could do anything for her.

I carried out her commission, after dinner was over that day, she rang the bell, what is your name ? up to now they had all said thank you, or please, etc.

I told the Comtess, and she asked me when did I have my dinner, etc, I told her whilst she was dining, so she asked me to come in for a while, I went out, and told Lobbo, I should be out later. I went back

She asked, me to sit down, and asked me all about our work, never mentioning anything about the conduct of the war, but about the wounded, and asked me about what I was before the war,

She then said, do you like paintings Georges, (the latter they always called me afterwards).

I said yes, with a guilty conscience, as I knew she was hinting, at the position, she had found me, in the morning.

She turned to one of her Daughters, and said,

.....Georges,

Georges, was admiring your paintings this morning,

I think I had better describe the Daughters,

One, the youngest, was married, a very nice girl, for she was not much more, her husband was at the front,

And the other was a Nun, she always wore her Nuns dress, I can only say of her that she looked the part, but she unbended when, I ^{best} gave her the compliment, I could think of, and said, I am glad you think they are nice,

I had many talks, with them afterwards, and she said, the Comtess come, and see me if ever you come out to France after the War, as I shall write it down, and shall always remember you,

One day she opened, the chief room, and showed me it, it was a beautiful room, and the furniture, was very old fashioned, after the Louis style, I was the only one, whom they spoke too, and also the only one who was shown this room,

One day she told me why,

We decided, it was not right for us to speak with the Officers, as they might say something, about things which we should not hear, so if we never mixed with them, they would never say things of importance, as we just passed by,

It was a good policy on their part, for at times the Spy mania, was a bit hot,

After six days they left, they ranf for me, and in I went, the Mother told me they were going, and gave me fifteen francs, and asked me to give the Cook half,

The Nun wished me good-bye, and offered up a little prayer for me,

The Mother and Young Daughter, wished me good luck, and a safe return to my people after the war,

I was sorry they had gone it meant a lot of extra work, but it was nice, to be able to talk to somebody, who were outside the war, Lobbo was delighted with his seven and half francs.

One thing always stands out in my mind about this Hospital, and that is, I was never once allowed up the stairs, to the sleeping quarters of the Officers, many, and many a time, I would get to the foot of the stairs, on some message or another, but always one of the

..... orderlies,

orderlies who were all N.C.Os, would meet me and take the message, etc, from me, it never troubled me, as I had plenty to do,

(But, I was too learn why both Lobb, and myself were kept away from upstairs, some months later).

Being in a hut, L. cpl Balmer, and Cpl Whitlow, were telling the tale, of the fine time, they had, had at the Hospital, and saying the hundreds of francs, they had given them by the Officers, to share amongst the staff,

There faces took on a different look, when I strolled up, and took part in the story for all I said was.

If what they have said is true, then they are in, Lobb, and my debt to a large sum, as they never gave us any.

They made it all right with Lobb and I, but I never trusted them afterwards.

Whilst we had been having a cushy job at this Officers Hospital, some others had been at a C.C.S, and also of course at the H.Q. at Clairfaye Farm.

But the Bearers up the Line had been having a rough time of it, and from time to time, news trickled through of how they were getting on.

Being the first time, I had missed going up with the Lads, I could not help noticing, how little news of the men in the Line, and their work came down, but we heard that Mongon and Hopkins were both killed, several new chaps, whom I had only seen once or twice badly wounded, besides other casualties.

About the first week in Sept. the Division was relieved, and our Lads from up the Line, and all of us, who had had cushy jobs joined the unit,

The Ambulance moved off and first stop at Beauvil again, I was now back in the rank again, and glad to be amongst the Lads, for some how, or other I never cared to be away from them, I was like a fish out of water,

Vic told me about what they had been through, in his old fashioned way, and told me about poor Old Taffy Hopkins, we all missed him, a quaint sort of chap, one could almost imagine him, in Civvy Life, bending over a bench, a very nice chap, never shirked, and was from

the tremendous number of letters and parcels, he received from Home, the Apple of his Mothers and Sisters eyes,

He was one of those inoffensive chaps who never did anyone harm, Mongons case was a more startling affair, and was of those cases that from time to time cropped up,

The lads were in a dug-out, and orders came, man wounded next squad out, Mongon was amongst the four,

He turned to Percy Harrison, our tailor Perce, I feel I am not coming back, take all my things, and send them to my people,

To Percy's credit, (he was under thirty, but married, Mongon was nineteen, and single) he tried to pacify Mongon, as he was rather jumpy, and offered to go in his stead, to give him a chance to calm down,

To this Mongon absolutely refused, and wishing the Lads, in the dug-out Good-bye, went up, and when next they saw him, an hour later he was dead.

The knowledge of his coming death, was sent to him, never having that feeling myself, I cannot put myself in his place, but, I can only say, that young as he was, he had nerve to go up,

We read in a Yorkshire paper, that he was a promising young teacher and had volunteered under age,

The men who were wounded went down the new ones to the unit, four, had a shell explode near them, we heard later they all died,

It was about this affair, that one of our Officers, Major Lescher, got into the Lads bad books, up to now, although inclined to be somewhat stand offish with the men, he had retained there respect,

From now onwards, he lost it, it seems that rightly, or wrongly, the Lads were of the opinion he was after one of the bigger medals D.S.O. or V.C. he already had the M.C. that didn't worry the Lads,

But what they objected too, was him winning it at their expence, from the remarks of the Lads, he went mad, and tried to do all sorts, of impossible stunts, it was a pity, as he had been with the Ambulance from the beginning,

We had marched to Beauvel in the pouring rain, put up one night, and then moved off in the pouring rain again,

We were billeted at a Farm at a place called Domquer, going in the driver of the horse ambulances, had managed to get it stuck in the mud, in the side of the road,

Wet through, and weary, we had to help get it out,

The Farm was near the top of a small hill, water had to be brought a great distance daily, by the water cart, and plentifully supplied with Chloride of Lime, to purify it, and stupify us.

But at last an arrangement was made, with the Old Farmer, we should draw his water up from the well, and then we could have what we required

There was one thing about the Froggies, they knew how to drive a bargain,

Admitted he had no male helpers, and on that score alone, we would, have helped for many of us, had already helped the mademoiselles,

It was the deepest well, I have ever known, we understood it was 400 feet deep, and seeing we had to draw up enough water, for several cows, horses, pigs, and all the household purposes, we certainly earned what water we drew for ourselves,

But he was a decent old Chap, and we could always buy, eggs, and butter and milk if we wanted it

We had plenty of football here, and a treat came our way, all the lads took the chance, and the picture brought for our benefit was

"The First Battle of the Somme",

As a picture it must be said it was true life, but I do not agree that it should have the above title,

We read in the papers, how great a draw it was in England, but it did so little justice to the men who counted, that the general talk was, it should have been called,

Behind the Lines on the Somme.

Still it was remarkable, I suppose that the picture was taken at all, for some of it was taken in rather dangerous positions, and great credit must be given to the photographer.

The 7th Brigade had a cross country race, I was one of the Picked, playing football a little before, I was crocked, and once again, after training for it, missed the race,

The day of the race, found me well enough to hobble over,
to the starting place, and as it was the finish too it was a good
place,

The Brigadier, and our Colonel, had a little friendly argument,
and the upshot was the Col, and the Brigadier had a bet,

The Col that we should win it,

We had a fine view of the race the whole time, from the top of
the hill, and could see our lads packing well

The last lap, and it was seen that our nearest man was third,
we knew by his run, that it was Burgess, (of the lopped ears) coming
into the straight, and the run up the hill, Burgess just run past
the other two,

They were Officers, one out of the Chesh and one out of the
Worcesters, they both sank down as he passed them, poor chaps, they
had both been through it, in the line, and they had overdone it, in
an endeavour to win the race, for their units,

They both were a long time, before they came too,

When Burgess ran past them, the Brigadier turned, and said those —
R.A.M.C. again,

Our lads also getting the first team of six in, won the money
prize,

The Brigadier paid his lost bet, and the Col, gave the winners,
some of his winnings so they were in luck's way,

This Burgess was a bit of a wonder, he was slight in build, and
never did any training, but always finished a race, as fresh as he
started, and seemed absolutely tireless.

here

This rest did the lads the world of good, we had a proper rest,
not so the poor infantry, they were doing any amount of training, and
we knew by that, that we were going up again.

After three weeks, of a little bit of heaven, we packed up our
troubles once more, and off we set again,

The first stop was at Long Villet, on the way we had passed a
huge arepdrome, at Fienvillers, although we had seen hundreds of
planes, in action, we had not seen them close like this.

Passing along a quiet road, in beautiful countryside, we had,

.....the H.Q.

the H.Q. of General Sir D. Haig pointed out to us, and whilst halted here, we heard the news that the 11th and 18th Divisions had captured Thiepval, it was a bit of a blow to the Division.

Not only had we been in it, for a while, but, I suppose no other Division, had made half the attempts on it we had, every time the 25th Division had advanced, although not getting the village, had taken the line a bit nearer to it, and we had lost several thousand in killed and wounded,

The report of the attack in the English papers, calmed our Lads feelings down, for it had been a murderous fight, and having been in that particular section, we knew what that meant.

But the tragedy from the British point of view, was that Thiepval was to be taken on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, and it was actually taken, on the 25th Sept. X

I suppose one can safely say, that here on this spot, did the Somme Battle fail, for judging by the advances in the other parts of the line, old Jerry would have had a rough house, if he had not held the British up at this spot, whereas things turned out it was us who struck the rough house,

One is always wiser after the event, and I am sure that if our side, had only known of the trouble that was in store, for our Lads at Thiepval, that there would have been a mine under there, as well as at La Boiselle, and Fricourt,

I do not think it an exaggeration to say, that there was no place in his old front Line of the 1st July, that cost so many lives to capture.

Our next move was to Arquevees, and we had the pleasure ? of kipping down in a field, as I suppose the barns were in use, the few that were here.

We of C. section had a game of Football with A, section here, it arose out of the usual thing, an argument, as to which was the better section.

I played at left half back, and was up against, the first team right-winger, I was very pleased after the match was over, when Vic

told me, that (Old Ned) Capt Lescher, was going to buy me a pair of Football Boots, and that if I continued to play like, I had, I should keep my place in the first team.

I am sure Vic was as pleased as I was, I knew very little about the science of the game, until he took me in hand, and now he was hopping about as excited as a kid, that I was to keep his place in the first team regularly,

We were all hanging about, as we were not allowed to go away, when one of the Lads, shouted,

Hi, heres some Lancers.

Out we trooped, to have a look,

There was a hurrying and scurrying for behind these Lancers (with their Lances held in a socket of their saddles and little pennants) could be seen the lone figure of some Big Pot.

The romour went along like wild fire

The G.O.C.,

Sir Douglas Haig himself it was.

We lined the road, still as ramrods and as proud as punch,

Here was the Man,

Britains Hope,

The man whom we trusted,

My first thoughts were,

I wonder what he his like,

He came abreast, he was turning right, and left, as he turned we could see him, words cannot describe his looks,

He passed us, and words flowed,

I wonder if he his happy now he has got Thiepval,

Looks as if, he never had the wind up,

Dosen't look stern, and such like,

There in I suppose, lay the secret of his career, he never wore his heart on his sleeve, success, or failure left him unmoved.

He was the man, whom we had learnt to trust, and so far the only time I saw him, and felt the happier for having seen him.

We next moved on to Heaville, and had a miserable sort of camp on the side of the hill, and were confined to camp.

Had another job with Capt Leschers boots and got paid for it,
The usual Army procedure, we moved out again to Clair-faye Farm,
and on looking round saw a German Prisoners Camp

It was the nearest we had ever seen Jerries to the Line, and
I doubt if he could have reached them, with anything but his longest
ranged guns, and being next to a large hospital, ensured their freedom
during the day from bombing,

We saw the Naval Division (63rd) on the march whilst we were
here, and the first thing the lads remarked about it after they had
gone, was,

What about our papers, printing the other day, that Jerry must
be very short of men, as several Naval units are now in action,

If those deductions were correct, then we must be short also,
for here were our Naval Units,

We stayed twenty four hours, and then up again, this time to
Bousicourt.

We were billeted round about the Village the place we clicked,
out houses, were like muck heaps, in the house coffee was to be had,
we went for some,

The vilest looking old Dame, came in, money was her aim in life,
and her fangs re-minds one of the Witches of old,

I suppose she was really some character, she did not benefit
a great deal from our stay, for she was so repellant, both as regards
dirty looking, filthy old clothes, and leering, grasping, manner,
that we soon gave her a wide berth,

Excitement came in the night, a fellow from some unit rushed in,
Come on R.A.M.C. five of my pals dying, away we went, and came
to a caravan,

Six of them had kipped in it, had a nice coke brazier, shut up
every nook and cranny, the result was the fumes over-came them, our
guide waking up in time had rushed to us for help, in the rush he
had forgotten to prop the door open,

And when we got there it was too late, five suffocated to death,
he was terrible, cut up about it, and so were we, it was bad enough
being killed in the line, but to die this way, was tough luck,

.....More excitement

More excitement was in store, up drove some men, and carried two of the Royal Field Artillery in,

It seems, that on scrounging round, heavens only knows where, they had found, Two Jars of Rum.

When they were found in the morning they had made great inroads, in their jars, they were both unconscious, neither recovered consciousness, and died shortly after admission, and were on two stretchers in a dug-out in the side of the road, at the other door way was the dressing station.

One of our corporals, named Brockbank, himself just having had sufficient to make him merry, entered the dug-out.

In the ordinary everyday life of the Ambulance, he was the correct soldier, as befitted his eighteen years in the Army,

But drink plays queer pranks, and seeing the two cases on the stretcher, he bent down to look at the cause of death, etc, on their tabs. he saw the words, alcholic poisoning,

He raised himself, looked down at them, and then in a beery tone said, ---

What a glorious death.

He was unlucky, for the C.O. being in the dark, at the other end, over-heard his remarks.

He had him at once, and it was only his good-conduct, before this, and after, that he did not spend a period of clink, get reduced to the ranks, finish his time as a private, and lose his good conduct medal (which takes eighteen years to earn) and all the extra pay that went with it, it was a foolish remark, but not meant.

Some new Lads joined us, to make up the units strength, and we shortly after moved off up the line way, it was not a very happy march

Jerry was busy, and we had an Officer, leading who was not over happy when he was dropping them near, and what with his nerves and Jerries shelling, we began to get jumpy,

We eventually moved on at a better pace, and getting through Albert, which had been pretty badly hammered since last we saw it, although there we still a good number of civilians about, who lived

..... in the cellars.

in the cellars.

Up the Bapume Road, down pass the La Boisselle crater, which now looked so old, the board was still up, telling anyone who was interested that the odd brick lying about, were the remains of a village.

It was with surprise, that many of us saw Poizores, for the first time, it must have been terrible, the fighting round here, for there was a large cemetery, most Aussies.

Up a little further, and off we branched to the left across country, along past some guns on a road, and at last reached our destination, Ovilliers, we knew it was Ovilliers, because as at La Boisselle so here, was a board to tell you so,

We had the pleasure of being allotted one of his deep dug-outs, and as the mouth was facing his way, if he aimed straight, he might land one down, amongst us, he was shelling at the time, and there was a dull thud, one of the Lads, tried to beat lightning, in reaching the bottom.

After his breath returned, he said did you hear it, that was a close one,

When things had calmed down, we went, and had a look, and it was right over the entrance, which was about twenty feet thick, with earth, as it was a bank.

No wonder Jerries troops, had not suffered much in dug-outs like this, but we soon got shifted, up the road we went, and told off to a spot, which was to be the advanced dressing station.

I soon clicked, I got a job of going down with an N.C.O. to Bosacourt, to bring up some things, also the new men, the usual Army way, why we couldn't have brought the things up, and the new men as well, when we all came up, I don't know,

Marching back, I was alongside of one rather olived complexion Lad, he was asking me questions, as if he had know me all my life, I felt I was in a dock, being cross-examined, later on I learned he was studying to be a solicitor, so that explained the cross-examination I underwent,

Not that I minded, for it was the usual thing, to show off a bit, proper old soldier style, after I had satisfied his curiosity,

..... he next

he next turned, to how long have you been out, how long have you been in the Army, what were you before you joined up,

When I told him I had been to sea, he said, Oh, I come from Liverpool,

I told him I lodged in Seacombe and he said know any girls there.

I said rather, and was just going to explain my efforts, in the affairs de amour, when fortunately for me he said,

I have a Cousin lives at,

21 Palentine Road, Cissy Edgar, is her name, do you know her,

Know her, I should think, I did, she was walking out with my Landlady's Nephew, and we used to go about a good deal, but I didn't know this chap, I had never seen him, before, so I just remarked, as casually as I could, that I knew her slightly,

His name was Peter Keefe, and he was one of the best, as I was to find out,

Another one of the new Lads, was a rather thick set individual his name was Johnson, and he was as quiet, as Keefe was voluble, but they were bosom Pals.

We did not have anything to do for a few days at Ovillers, and as things quietened down, we went scrounging round, one day, we saw the Royal Garrison Artillery chaps, making for their guns,

So off some of us went to have a look at the firing, the first one nearly deafened us, so we bo back a bit,

They were nine point two's, and they were just on the road side, with some wire camouflouge over them, no protection for either guns, or men if Jerry spotted them,

One of there Sergeants coming up just then, and seeing us interested, told us where they were firing, the size of the guns, lots of other little tit-bits about them, and then said, do you know you can see a shell after it leaves the gun,

You can bet, we laughed, but he said come on, and posting us right behind a gun that was about to fire, he said the moment the report goes, follow direct over the gun up in the air, and you will see it,

And too our surprise we did,

..... He said

He said satisfied, well come along late tonight, and you will be able to see them in the dark,

We went, and you could just see a thin piece, of red hot stuff hurling through space, I never saw it, from the side view, even with larger guns, but several times saw it, behind them,

I will not say, it was possible to see any of the smaller shells, as I never had the opportunity of watching,

We saw several tanks going up, I had seen one before, but only going along the road, here were half a dozen, playing follow my leader, down, and up the banks, shell holes, and trenches, it was amazing to see these juggernauts going along, going round on one caterpillar, and doing all sorts of queer antics.

We were so busy watching them, that we were not aware of trouble, until the bullets started spattering on the road, and we soon dived anywhere for shelter, but memesis was at hand, and soon three British Planes, were fighting Jerries three, they didn't wait for long, for they were off like whirlwinds.

It was a most amazing little fight, for they were all so low, and the manourvering twisting, and turning was worth seeing,

It was from this spot, that we saw, a most extraordinary fight, seven Jerries came over, and seeing the guns, swooped down at them,

Crash, bang went the bombs,

Tat-tat-tat-, went the machine guns, when like a bolt from out the blue, came a British plane,

Without any preliminararies, he was amongst them, Seven to One, down came one, down came another, and another, he was like some hawk among the sparrows, we were so exicted, that we could not take our eyes off, in less than ten minutes, there were three down, and the other four were off, to their own lines at top speed, and him after them,

The R.G.A. men said did you see a big red thing on the boss of his plane,

We said yes,

Do you know who he his,

That is the young chap, Ball,

We had all read about his great feats in the papers, but they were nothing to seeing him busy,

The A.D.S. being made all ready, the wounded, were all brought to it, for redressings, if necessary, the two M.Os were,

Leiut Ryan, and Leiut Bissell, the first a great Irishman, the latter a small Canadian

We had a funny carry from here, over the top of the sunken road, and across a valley, to a Quarry, and further on pass Mouquet Farm, to the aid post, it all depended.

But the Valley itself was the sight, there were no dug-outs, or anything in it, the two sides of the valley, were just earth colour, not a bit of colour for hundreds of yards, the shell holes, linked, and over lapped, the whole length, as one of the Lads said, if rain should fall now, what a time we should have, and to cheer us up it did,

The earth, from the continual explosions, was like bread crumbs, and when it got wet, there being no tracks, except what we made ourselves, it made carrying wounded a rotten job,

Coming down one day, we were just changing over, as I and another one had had a carry, when he took a fit into his head, and had a slam at the Valley,

What for I don't know, as we were the only individuals in it, there was no shelter excepting shell holes, and the man on the stretcher said he would sooner get down to the A.D.S. than lie about,

One whizz bang, came so near, that in the scurry, and excitement the leading man nearly fell in the shell hole, as the shell had landed, and exploded, all the dirt, and shell must have all gone forward, for we were not touched, the lot of us, would no doubt, have gone west if it had been a five point nine,

We hurried on as fast as we could, and getting to the A.D.S. I nearly clicked

Leiut Ryan, noticing me, came, and said, you look rotten how do you feel, I said a bit shaken, well you look bad, I will have you sent down for a rest, thumbs up,

But just then, our old Friend Sgt, Addicot stepped forward,

..... That is alright

That is alright, Sir, I have known Pte. Swindell, since the Ambulance was formed, and I have never seen him looking different, so I was unlucky, and the Officer withdrew his kind offer,? I blessed Old Addicott, but I suppose he was in the right, the Lads chipped me, and away we went again,

At Mouquet Farm, we had the pleasure of looking over a tank, it had been used in an attack, some weeks before, and the Tank was now lying, on top of a Jerry Gun,

We went inside, and had a look round, it didn't appeal to me, as a very comfortable affair, I suppose it was all use,

This Farm had been Brigade H.QS, or some H.Qs, of Jerries, we were not allowed to go down into the dug-out, which some engineers, who came up told us, was 60 feet deep, and a huge Periscope, was fitted up, and in safety, of their deep dug-out, Jerry had just been able to look where ever he loked.

By an underground passage, it was connected, with Thiepval, and in the small dug-outs off the passage, thousands of Jerries must have been billeted, and kept in reserve.

The Division were carrying out small attacking, and defensive operations, one big stunt was the capture of Stuff Redoubt,

The rations came up regularly, also the mail, but as it was very seldom bread, biscuits, bully, and the usual tin goods, rule the fashion, we used to scrounge wood from O villiers, for boiling water with, and things were on the whole fairly quiet,

One day after he had, dug up the sunken road, a Labour Battalion, were sent to repair it, and talking to some of them, found they were the 34th Batt. Royal Fusiliers, they were a motley mob, I should think half of them would have been better at Home,

Some of them coming from round where I lived, I asked if any came from Richmond, one did, he came from over the Gas Works Bridge, and said he came round, at home with a barrow, and had often been to my house, I had not been at home, for some years to live, I did not recognise him, but he was well acquainted with Richmond, by the time Jerry had done lamping, and he left the dug-out, I was chatting with him, like old pals.

This was the first time, I had seen these Labour Battalion men, (for all Divisions had a Pioneer Battalion, ours was the 6th South Wales Borderers, to do their Divisional work), but these came under the Corps, H.Qs. and were nothing to do with Divisions.

There were a great many casualties amongst them at different times,

We carried a man into the A.D.S. one day, his foot swathed in bandages, about as big as his head, he was in a state of terror, one did not take much notice, although it was most unusual, for myself, I had never seen anyone, either wounded, or unwounded, like this,

He was moaning and carrying on, we put the stretcher down, Young Zillwood, had a look, at his label, (we had already seen it,)

Under the heading of complaint, were the letters. P.W.U.

Translated into ordinary words, they mean, Permanent Wind Up.

Zillwood undid the bandages, I must say we were all surprised, he had a little scratch on his big toe, possibly a small splinter of shell, or a spike of barbed wire was the cause,

He laid on the stretcher eyes closed, and in a weak anxious voice said, is it an England one, shall I get Home with it,

England one, why we had never heard the expression before, we never spoke of England, it was always Blighty,

One of the men said, I should think it is a Blighty, Zillwood put all the mass of bandages back, and said how long have you been out chum,

I only came three days ago, and I went up the Line yesterday, Ever been out before,

No.

The other patients, and ours sympathy vanished, pity remained, but not sympathy, he had either never heard it, or had forgotten, the unwritten law ~~law~~ of the trenches,

He had thought of himself,

It was fatal for a man, sentiment as far as yourself, you had to for get, let it all loose on another when he got a packet, but to dwell on yourself, was to unnerve yourself first, and then perhaps upset the others, we all got windy at times, but to let ones-self

go to this pitch meant, that you were in the way, you would as a consequence be sent out of it, and this was the point :-

Somebody else would have to take your place,

He may have got over it later on, and perhaps been as good as the next,

We had some very quiet times, so we had a few strolls round, and admired the remains of the countryside.

Coming back one morning, I was met with a shout,

Come on Blink, your for it,

I reported, and was told to get ready for the Line, special duty, with three others,

Tough Anderson, a Male Nurse in pre-war days, at a M.A.B.

Elwell, a Blacksmith, from Burnley and a very good entertainer,

And Bill Jagger, also a Blacksmith from Lancashire,

The first thing we decided, was that there was some dirty work, and we were soon to have our fears on that point settled,

For we had a decent dinner, they gave us some of the good old Army tack, and were told to report at the dressing room for inspection, as we were to go in light.

Two petrol tins of water apiece, a bag of dressings each, a stretcher each, and a sandbag with rations, and instructions to go along the Valley, towards Courcillette and when we saw a tree, with a board on it saying (Lone Tree) take the first trench past it, and ask for Hessian Trench, which was somewhere up this one,

We arrived, and as Jerry had been upset, we amongst others arrived at Lone Tree. in anything but a happy state,

One thing about the trench we found, (Lancashire Trench) was that it was a deep trench, and we were at last able to get some shelter,

We had gone some way up it, when he swung over from the Valley, and concentrated on the trench,

We were going along steadily, as you were as safe in one spot as another, when we all instinctively, went down, it landed a few feet from us, and after the smother had finished we stood looking at each other, and laughing and joking, when another, one, dropped on the other side, and a nice little piece of sharpnel hit the trench side, about half an inch from Bill Jagers head,

The look on his face, we couldn't help laughing, if it had hit him, he would have been finished, but he slowly turned his head and looking at it in a tragi-comical way, said

Sithee, nearly copped un,

We pushed on, as fast as we could, as the dusk was setting, and we did not know, how far, or where to go,

Reaching a bend in the trench there were several men, around the entrance of a dug-out, getting instructions,

We asked the way, to the Aid Post

What the hell are you doing up here cried a voice,

Not so much, what was said, as the way it was said, rubbed us at once the wrong way, and we gave a bit of sauce, and one Sergeant promptly replied, that it was the first time, he had ever seen a poultice wallah up in the front line,

An Officer in private's uniform, ready to go over in the morning said, it is not before time some of you R.A.M.C. came up,

Now his words riled me, but I could see he was an Officer, as I was leading, but Elwell and Anderson couldn't, or wouldn't, and he came in for a few bits of sauce, such as, you can't have been out here long, and we were out here, when you were joining up, and Anderson crowned it, by saying, you will have a smile on the other side of your face, if you need us in the morning, the Sergeant took our Ambulance particulars and kindly informed us we were for it, for insolence to an Officer,

(Little did we think when we had this dust up, that both the Officer and Sergeant would get a packet that night, it was all so foolish, for after all, they did what they were ordered too, and we did ditto,)

The upshot was, we were directed to where we wanted to go, and off we went, we had a few chats with the Chaps in the trench, and at last reached the Aid Post,

The M.O. spotted us, (he was in a lovely place, why a bullet would almost have gone through the roof),

Come on you chaps, he took charge of all the water, it was marked, specially for wounded, the bandages we shared, and the M.Os, orderly

took us with our stretchers, and rations to the Regt. bearers, up a place we went, and at last halted, now we can have some scam, and a kip, two keeping a look out, for we have got to lay doggo here, until the attack starts,

The first thing we wanted to know was where are we,

Oh, we are about fifty yards in front of the lads, and as long as we keep quiet, even if, Jerry is scouting round he may miss us,

I was filled with feelings of anything but valour, it was not so bad in the front line, because the Infantry were armed, but here were us lot, out in No Mans Land, for about eight hours, and no means of offence, or defence,

I didn't, and couldn't sleep, midnight came, and so did the rain, it came down in torrents, we were soon on our feet, for the sap, only being freshly dug, was soon in a ghastly state, and so we waited, it was cold too, and wet, miserable, and fed up, we were waiting for dawn, Jerry woke up, whether he had any idea of the attack, I don't know,

Dawn came his stuff just as hard as he could rain it, we were more fed up, than ever now, when we heard a voice, come on out of it, my lucky lads, plenty of work for you, he has properly caught us this time,

And away we went, and only too true had he copped our lads, the first bay we came too, he had dropped a shell right in it, and six of the lads were dead, all decapitated, we got to the M.Os at last, we were in a pickle, and heard the attack was off,

So we could take this case down, Bill Jagger, asked him where he came from, and hearing it was Bolton, asked him if he knew any of our Bolton Lads, and soon got pally and sympathetic with him, being from Lancashire,

We set off, and dawn was well past, we had got hearly to the communication trench, when we saw one chap looking through a periscope, and another one, as he called out, he his bobbing up, firing his machine gun,

We asked what was up, and he told us to pick up another periscope, and have a look which we did, and it was a Jerry in a shell hole, and they were keeping him in it, until somebody came along, who could

speak German, (we heard later he gave himself up, but he must have had some nerve, for he was only about ten feet from our front line, and by himself),

We carried on, and we were getting deeper and deeper into the slime, we were in a state, the only consolation was it was not raining,

Presently he stopped shelling, and he tried to push on, as we dare not get out yet for he could have potted us with his rifles or machine guns.

But the mud prevented rapid progress, we knew had to keep the stretcher on top of the slush, as it was now up to our waists, and it was cold, October is not the warmest time of the year,

We got out once, but as he started with whizz-bangs again, we got back into our muddy river, it was a night-mare of a carry, and after four hours, we landed at Lone Tree,

We had no sooner left the trench, and entered the valley, when he dropped a few, and down we went, next moment off the stretcher, jumped our case, and running like a deer, he made for safety,

Words could not describe our feelings, but we said a few complimentary things to Bill Jagger about Lancashire Lads,

Four solid hours, had we carried that youngster, through the worst trench we had encountered, all the time we had been out, and here he was running like a harrier, and wouldn't go to the A.D.S, but made for the Bapune Road, no doubt the way he had come up,

So we made for the A.D.S. and reported, asked is they had anything warm, and had something to drink before we made back again, the going was easier as all we had was the stretcher,

But luck was against us, for we found on our return to the Aid Post, that no water, or rations having come up, the M.O. had given the Infantry, our rations, our water, and the water that was to have been used for wounded, but the attack having been put off, it was handy for the Lads.

Still water was needed, and over we went in turns, and one, or two shells holes with rather cleaner water than others, soon supplied us with our needs,

A drop of chloride powder, and a good boil, made it wet and warm,

if not quite so palatable, as one could wish,

We had a cushy day, no wounded, to carry, but the day dragged out its length, with us cold, wet, miserable, fed up to the eyebrows, and as usual cursing the war, jerry, and everything, and everybody,

Night came, and the Infantry had some rations come up, so as they had eaten ours, they soon gave us some of theirs, it was a night mare of a night, you couldn't sit down there was nothing to sit on, you couldn't stamp your feet, the slosh was too thin, and morning came, at least it was drying, that was welcomed indeed,

But as Jerry began dropping a few, we soon had something to do, seeing we had not slept, for over 48 hours, we were in luck's way, when all the wounded were walking cases,

The MO Detailed, Elwell, and I to take them down, and away we went, and arrived with our cases, at Owillers, and some empty petrol tins for water,

We were soon on the scrounge, and after we had told the tale, we got some drink and food,

We were told that as the attack was coming off on the next day, we were to come down about midnight, and get a rest, as we had no stretchers to carry back, we filled, four petrol cans each with water and slung them, over our shoulders, two in front and two behind, and it was a rotten way too, but the Sergeant cheered us up, for he gave us a good drink of rum each, Elwell rather more than I, and away we went,

All went well until we got too a barren piece of land, a mass of pulverised earth, shell holes, and many of them full of water,

The rum was doing its duty, and for myself I was feeling fine, Elwell began to lag behind, and his remarks, were enough to make a cat laugh,

Presently, I heard a slither, and a splash, and a plaintive voice calling, —

Blink, Blink,

I looked round, and laugh, I did not think I could have laughed so much, there was Elwell, or all I could see of him, he had fallen into a shell hole of water, and there was just his hands and face visible,

.....I soon went

I soon went to his help, and the dip had more or less sobered him, and we made better progress, and landed at the Aid Post, and told the others, we were to go down that night,

We arrived down, safe and sound, it was bitterly cold, but it was dry, so the slush was gradually disappearing, we turned to kip, and learned on being awakened, we were to go up with the Lads,

About midday, the postponed attack, for the capture of Regince, and Stuff trenches began, our Artillery opened, and the Officer just where some of us were, blew a whistle, waved his hand, over the top he went, the lads with him, and on they strolled behind, our new kind of artillery gunfire, called a Rolling Barrage,

What amazed us, was the calm way they went on, for no sooner were they over, than down came jerry's stuff as hard as, he could send it, every now, and then for a short distance we could see, a man fall, a dip hiding them from our view, we awaited for the wounded,

Some of the lads, had taken the place of the four of us, who had been detailed for the original attack, and they brought in some of the wounded,

Soon they came in thick with mud, and many Germans amongst them, we were busy with them, when along came the first batch of German Prisoners, for the attack had been a complete success,

They had the pleasure of carrying there own wounded, I must say that, I did not see any signs of misery, over being captured, on their faces,

It was some journey down, we were carrying our own, and the trench we had to follow, was called:-

Sudbury Trench,

The mud had now dried, to a state when it resembled dough, and it was a perfect pantomime, to watch chaps walking

But it was no joke, for the wounded, and presently, we chanced our arm, and got out on top,

Presently we saw the Jerries put down there stretchers, we thought of some dirty work, but no, some stood their just looking on, but some of the others were laughing, and pointing,

We looked, and beheld a rather small size, in khaki, chasing a

huge Jerry, and shouting, and bawling what he would do if Jerry didn't stop,

For my part when Jerry looked round, and saw the Escort who was chasing him, had his bayonet fixed, I didn't blame him,

The Jerry doubled round to where we were, and the Escort coming up, he spoke a few words to him, in real good old lingo, and turned to us, and said,

What do you think of him, turned and told me he was a Coporal, and was not going to carry a stretcher,

The Jerry gave no more trouble, and took his fair share of the carrying down, and once they got down, they were handed over,

It was impossible for us to clear all the wounded, and as it was cold weather, and the wounded lying about, the M.O. had to get help, and a lot of the pioneer battalion, were told off to help us, six to a stretcher, to our four to a stretcher,

This not being because we were stronger, but because we had been trained, how to carry it the easiest way,

Before evening we had cleared most of them, and we were interested in the remarks of the Infantry about carrying wounded, for Gerry had been giving us a rough time,

Some said they would sooner go over the top any time than do this, others how glad, they were they didn't join the R.A.M.C. and many other such remarks, I don't think any of us, had ever looked, at our side of the question as these chaps did, certainly I had not,

I asked one of them who did not appear to be saying much what he thought of it, I was rather surprised when he replied,

I would no doubt have liked your mob, if I had joined up in it, but after being trained in the Infantry, I would not like to be transferred to the R.A.M.C. I don't like the idea of walking backwards and forwards all day, like you have too,

I mentioned that for every casualty in our lot, there were something between 15 and 20, in a similiar number in the Infantry,

But he was quite definite about it, he would much prefer the Infantry, although so much more dangerous, and take his chance, it was funny to us, but there it was, and as such we had to accept it,

I often thought of this talk afterwards and I could only account for it, by the fact that the Infantry were trained to take life, whereas with us, the animal instinct of self protection had been put in the back ground, and we were trained solely to save life,

The next day the casualties were as numerous as ever, but we were detailed off to another Aid Post, to clear the wounded, the only one who knew the way was a young chap named Whitehead, he was a very powerful built youngster, and I fancy was a number of years, under what he said he was,

He led the way with Lt. Bissell, it was the first time I had been up with him, (The Officer), Jerry was lamping away, so we were keeping in cover as much as possible,

The Officer, he made us laugh, for every time a shell went over, or burst near, he ducked, at last every time he ducked, one of the Lads would shout, its all right Sir, it gone over, or its all right, Sir, it hasn't got your name on,

One more bold than the rest, told him that, you dont want to bother about ducking Sir all those you hear, are going by, the one that hits you, you never hear,

This last individual, drew the following from him,

I donna care, I guess I'm gonna duck, (in broadest American)

He then told us, that as he had signed on for two years, and his time was up in a few weeks, he was going to take care, that he got out with a whole skin,

We asked him, if he would sign on again,

No gorl darn fear, I guess I am going to take the first boat, back to Canada, and stay there,

Presently we in the trench, come across some of the Royal West Surreys, calm as you like, walking across country,

We asked them, in return for their banter, (had we got the wind up), if they knew where they were, and how far the line was away,

No, they said, we are coming up, for the first time,

This had all happened in a very short space of time, and when we pointed out, where his line was, there was a stamped for cover, but too late, for down came old Jerries mud, as hard as he could sling it,

In a very short space, he had hit thirty six, fortunately not one of them was killed, this meant our lads clearing these before going up,

After all cases were allotted, the Officer, Whitehead, and I were left, the Off. said he would go with Whitehead, and find out what there was to do, and I had the job of waiting at these cross trenches until the lads came back again,

Jerry had dropped one here, and that shell hole was my shelter, for he had nearly flattened the trench, the loneliness began to get on my nerves, and as he was still busy lamping away, I began to think to much,

To pull myself together, I took all my photos out of my pocket, and was gazing at them, and waeving all sorts of things round them, and was very pleased, when I was hailed by the Lads coming back,

I had never experienced quite such a time before, we carried on, at last met the Officer coming down to tell us where to go, (incidentally the Officer and Whitehead got the M.C. and the M.M. for this),

I was detailed off with, Elwell, Jagger and Anderson to go, over a small valley to a dug-out in the hill the other side,

We could see it, as soon as we left the trench, and we could also see that we were in for a rough passage,

With short bursts, and a drop into a friendly shell hole, we got there safely, and sound,

We went in, and there was only one case to be cleared, a fractured leg, the Sergeant told us to get away at once, he was a stranger to us, so we told him we didn't work that way in the 77th F.A. we will go when he calms down,

He ordered us, shouted at us, and carried on, in a proper Parade fashion, but as he didn't belong to our mob, we took no notice of him,

He then asked us for our names, so we obliged, he then said, I am a new Sergeant in the 77th F.A. and I shall report you when, I get back to the unit, this put a different complexion on matters, so we went aside, and had a little confab together, the result was Elwell went up to him, and said well Sergeant, are you ready,

The Sergeant said, what do you mean,

What I mean says Elwell is, are you going to lead us down, because if you are not, we are going down now, and we will tell the Adgt, that you are afraid to leave the dug, because Jerry was shelling, but ordered us out with a wounded man,

It had the desired effect, and he said alright, you go when he eases up,

We at last did, and with our case we started to climb the few steps, as we got to the flat, so one of Jerrys dropped, how on earth none of us were either killed or wounded goodness only knows,

I came to my senses on my back, and by the time, the Lads had helped me, I said wheres the case,

Oh, he jumped off the stretcher, and popped back again, considering his leg was in splints, it must have been a severe strain, and we found the Sergeant busily undoing it, to see what further damage had been done,

We got down without much more excitement, and learned the new sergeants name (Keyworth), he had been out here some time, later when he settled down into our Ambulance ways, he was as good as Sgts. Barnett and Ingram to go up the line with.

The Queens West Surrey Chaps, we had seen going up, were part of the Division that was to relieve us, and after a busy spell we were relieved the next day, and moved back out of the line for a few days rest in the Doullens area, so once again all the Amb. met somehow one always felt happy when we were all together again,

One can say definitely that the more or less underhand campaign against the R.A.M.C. had been brought to a head, and exposed as nonsense,

Lord Derby, so delighted at having raised an army of Soldiers who had been dubbed (The Derbies) as we of the earlier time had been called (Kitcheners) although once out here, there was no difference,

Well the noble Lord, as befitted his position at the War Office, told the country that there were able bodied men in the R.A.M.C. and they should be out of it, and in the Infantry, and a few more remarks, that we not only did not like, but we should have been very pleased to take him round and perhaps he would have changed his mind,

..... He may have

He may have been right about men in England, for that I cannot speak, but out here it was a different matter,

When I was in front of the Officers all I got was your name,
Private G.H. Swindell,

A look down the list, First team footballer, and cross country runner,

You are A.1.

What regiment do you wish to join,

So I chose the East Surreys,

But as we were to be bundled out of the R.A.M.C. somebody had to take our place, so they picked an all the base men, valvular disease of the heart, and any, and all who had got two hands and legs, regardless of fitness,

The sixty in our locality came and went, at the end of ten days, there was one left,

I don't know what Lord Derby thought about it, but no doubt being a politician, he glossed it over, anyway there was no more foolish talk by him, or his cronies about this matter, and if anything stronger men, then ever, were recruited, for the R.A.M.C.

We had to laugh at it, but it was plain, that there had been a bloomer somewhere,

The first thing we did when we got back to civilization, was to clean up, write letters, visit the easaminets and generally enjoy one self, to the best of ones ability, for you only lived for the present, and we did not know how long we should be, before we went up again,

The fickle jade romour soon got busy, some of them calculated to take us to the land of our dreams, and others elsewhere,

It was all rather funny, you would hear one say, I overheard two Officers say we are going to Blighty, for a spell others going to the base, others up north again in a quiet sector, and the one we appreciated least that, we were going in for another attack here

But after forty eight hours, we learned that we were bound for, the locality, we had been in, during our first months in France,

The first Official intimation we had, that the Division was

actually leaving this sector, was when some units of the Division were inspected by the C.in C.

And all ranks of the Division had to parade, and the following letter from Commander of the Reserve Army, was read out,

"It is with great regret that the Commander of the Reserve Army bids farewell to Major-Gen Bainbridge and the 25th Div. This Division has the proud distinction of having served longer in the Somme battle than any other in the Army, During the past four months it has been successful in many engagements, has taken many prisoners and has inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy, These successes are due to good leadership, and sound organisation in the higher ranks, and to a spirit of cheerfulness, courage, and resolution in the lower ranks, officers and men, It has every reason to be proud of these achievements and this spirit."

Praise was not the most plentiful thing out here, and naturally we were proud of the praise of our Division, but with it was the knowledge of how it had been won, Medals had been won, for scores of heroic deeds, but they were few, in number, compared to those the Division lost, in killed, wounded, and missing, and even us were leaving behind, several who had made the sacrifice

When we knew for certain that we were leaving this sector of the line, thoughts that were kept to oneself, were allowed to emerge, but as a rule horrors, were not chosen for the topic of conversation,

The subject was more in the chipping line, and everyone seemed to have an anecdote of some one else, in which we joined in the laughter,

But there was one thing that Vic and I, in a talk we had, agreed on, was the debt that was owing to the Infantry,

The Artillery had terrible losses, likewise the Engineers, Royal Air Force, ourselves, and other Corps, but the brunt was carried on the shoulders of the Infantry, mud, rain, trenches, no trenches just shell holes, shelling of all kinds, from gas to heavies, rifle, and machine gun, minnies and flame throwers bombs, and the whole of what human nature could devise for the extermination of the enemy was the lot of the Infantry, at times perhaps a little quiet, only to reopen

again with greater fury, we could only say that we were more fortunate than they, that our path was not so rough,

Of our own lads, we heard of different acts of bravery, and one felt that it was the least we could do, when one saw the wounded, you had a feeling of sorrow, come over you and what ever you did, you were only doing your duty,

Of course the papers had made great song of this battle, it was the first one with Regulars, Kitcheners, and Derbies mixed up together, but we out here knew no distinctions such as this, for everybody was equal, for it was here that self was forgotten, and your pals remembered.

It was the unusual that happened, moving tomorrow yes, but not by shanks pony, the Division actually entrained at Doullens, for Caestre, after walking all over this sector of France it was a welcomed change, and we enjoyed it,

We arrived in the Ballieul sector again and looked forward to a long rest, which did not materialize,

It was about now that I received some bad news, I had not heard from my Brother Frank, for some time, and at last I heard from home, that they were the same,

Not having had any answer to my letters, I feared the worst, and sent a letter to the C.O. of his Battalion,

I soon had a reply, and learned the news (They started forward for an attack on Flers, Your Brother did not return, and no prisoners were taken by the enemy)

I felt very upset, and for a time was not in at all a happy frame of mind, my Pals did there best to cheer me up, but I could not get it off my mind, how I had missed him on the Somme,

I would have given anything to have seen him again, we were both always hoping we should meet, but the chance had come, and I lost it,

I could only hope that he had not suffered,

We soon went in to the Sector, known as Plug Street, and the Ambulance had its H.Q. at a Sch  ol round the back of the Church in Pont-de-Nieppe,

..... We felt quite

We felt quite at home here, it was a sort of a return, to some place we had visited, and of course the first thing was, has it been knocked about,

Well it had, but quite half of the Village was still inhabited by civilians, (how they made money out of the Tommies) so one can judge it was in pretty good condition, as far as Villages go, that were, within a couple of miles of the Line,

One section of the school was used as a hospital, and the other section was used for A. and B. Sections, Stores, and sundry others purposes.

C. Section, had their billets about five minutes walk, round the corner, with the A.S.C. in some wooden huts.

Leave, that glorious spell of freedom was in full swing, and some of the Lads, were soon off, so far my name was well down the list,

But the lads began to talk, when they heard Capt. Lescher had gone on his 2nd leave, and I must say that one, and all were of the same opinion,

Officers, and men, should have been treated, as equals as regards leave, and to let one set of men go twice, before others had been, once, was not very nice thing from many points of view, but from the One point of view it was rotten,

All of us from the C. in C. were Britons, we all had homes, we all had the same feelings, and we were all of us entitled, to the same treatment, and I think that it was one of those actions, that the Authorities should never have allowed, still one could not do anything,

But worse for some of was to follow, several men got special leave, or had their leave advanced, for different reasons, so that put some of us, still further down the list,

Going round to the Orderly Room one day, to see the routine orders on the board, I saw red, for there was Sergeant Keyworths name down, he had only been in the Ambulance a month, and here he was being put in front of us, who had been out here, with the Ambulance, since Sept. 1915.

I said a few things, about Duck-showing, favouritism, and a

..... whole lot

whole lot to help releive my feelings, when the Orderly Room door opened, and the Sgt. Major, ordered me inside.

I was unlucky, for the Colonel was in his Office, and he had over heard me, I came in for a good old dressing down, and as per usual, as I had never been punished, I pleaded first offence, it saved me from clink, but got me a double spell in the Line.

We had some glorious times, in our hut compared to what we had, had on the Somme, across a waste piece of land, from our hut, was the yard of the Brewery, now the Boths, and it was filled up with slack, and after dark we took it in turn, and raided it, and so were able to keep a stove, in the hut well supplied with fuel,

Cards galore, and chess, and draughts for those who liked it, were on the go in the evenings, I was kipping down with Vic, whilst we were down the Line together by doing so, you could keep warmer, than if you slept by yourself,

Parrott, Jagger, Elwell, Barrass, Vic Parkins, Parish, and a whole lot of C. Section were in this hut, and we often had a sing song

Sometimes solo, sometimes altogether, I used to sing Mothers baby boy, it was the only one I knew through, Vic had a favourite with the lads, and they always asked him to sing it, (Songs of Araby), Cragg still carried on with Money talks, Jack Davies rather a tubby young chap, used to tell us about, Rose-bank ting a ling, in reference to the remarks of the tram conductors, up Manchester way.

Jack Mumford, had a comic song, and inserted the name of Canty, the shortest chap in the Ambulance, he was always in for trouble, nothing bad, but always doing the wrong thing, at the worst possible time, I don't believe, he could ever have done, a misdeed without getting caught,

Once we had a treat, in the Local Hall, Lena Ashwells concert party will give a concert, you can be sure we were all for seeing it, fancy seeing English Women, two miles behind the Line giving us a treat, but we were sold on that point, for Two Men were the entertainers, they would not allow the Women up the forward areas, and quite rightly too,

The Men were a treat, one a huge chap, made us laugh till we nearly cried, with the songs he sang, and the jokes he told ,

There was a bit of fun with two of our Lads before the Show started, they were sitting just in front of some of us, when a Youngster, from the 10th Cheshires, turned and stared at them, and then said to his pal, I don't know what they want the Poulitice Wallahs in here for, it says a Concert for Soldiers, not base men,

Pocock, and Mullins had both wine freely before coming in, so a wordy argument ensued, amidst a chorus from the other members of the audience to the affect, that they had better put a sock in it, and other such phrases, it was really funny, and we all spent a very merry evening,

The Church was flanked on two sides, with cottages, and one scrounger on his way round, tumbled on a humble cottage, with a Mother and Two Daughters living in, and he was soon at home, but like a fool, he let it out, and gradually the Lads began to visit it too,

At first all we could get was Coffee, but after some persuasion and help in getting both utensils, and raw materials, we were able to get Chipped Potatoes, and soon eggs were on the scene,

We certainly made the most of this place, and Madame, I should think had all her stockings filled,

The two daughters, were A.1. as regards helping their Mother, of course the usual Don Juan's were about, one, after some weeks of trying, all but captured the heart of Ginger,

She made too much fuss of him, so he transferred his affection for Coffee etc, to the Madame next door, who having had her eyes opened, to the money being made next door, proceeded to do ditto,

But the peace of the neighbourhood was disturbed, for Ginger feelings had been outraged, was she to be done out of her Adonis by a chit of a thing next door, (whom we dubbed Black Diamond, for her eyes and hair were jet black)

No, most decidedly No, so Ginger and Black Diamond settled there differences under the lee of the Church, many of us arrived on the scene, to witness the end of the combat, before we could

seperate them, they had made a bell rope of each others hair, a scratching ground of each others faces, and clothes, there was more hanging off in ribbons than there was left whole, and strange to say, the row they kicked up, when we seperated them, reminded us more cats, than human being, I don't know if they ever resumed the discussion again,

Only about six squads going up the line here, it can be judged was much quieter, up some went, to the Brewery where we had gone too the first time up the Line in 1915.

It was the same, but yet different, the remains of the Brewery were rather the worse for wear, the row of cattages were all untouched, but evidently those up above had learned sense, for they were all unoccupied

The squad I was in, were sent off to the next post, on the right of where we had been before, we found when we were half way there, a few houses and a notice up, labelled it, Motor Car Corner, the first job we got was to sand bag one of the houses, that was more or less hidden from Jerry, and carry the wounded down to here, and the Motor Ambulance that was kept here, in a sand bagged shelter, took the cases to the Ambulance at Pont-de-Nieppe,

It was a dirty corner at times, and as I suppose, he could hear the Ammunition Limbers coming up, he made ua often get a move on, a funny thing about these houses, (there were only a few) none of them were knocked about, it was explained to us, that owing to the position they laid in, they were a spendid direction finder, for his artillery,

Whatever the cause, no one while we were near was wounded, or killed in the houses, although of course there were casualties, from flying splinters out on the road,

They had a Klaxon horn here, and the row it kicked up, when giving the warning that Jerry was sending gas over, was enough to waken the dead, they could hear, on Jerrys side of the line, I should think.

To get to the R. Aid Post you went on about 200 yards, just before Willow Farm enter a trench, and then the first dug out was

the M.Os. it bore the good old English name (Charing Cross), it was a very roomy affair, but as usual not over strong on top,

Our dug out was a small affair, just round the corner, it was only four feet high so it was impossible to stand up in it, a rough table had been fixed in, and on either side was a seat, the earth had been cleared away, just enough that when you sat on it, you could sit upright,

This was our sleeping quarters, and as you sat, if there was nothing doing, so you slept, it was rather thin on top, but we were not allowed to put anything else on, it would never have stopped a whizz bang,

There was one thing about this part, it was not only a quiet place, but as things were, Jerry could not see the road, from his trenches owing to a dip in the ground, but his observations ballon, could, and we used to say, when he peppered it with whizz bangs, that he was sniping with his field guns, once he started, you might as well wait for him to stop, for he always kept it up for several minutes. then a pause, then another spasm, then a rest perhaps an hour perhaps several.

Going down one day with a stretcher case, he was badly wounded in the legs, we were just approaching Willow Farm, to leave the trench, when zipp, a bullet just grazed the head of the chap, at the front of the stretcher,

Jerry could certainly not have seen us, except from his balloon, we suppose it was a fixed rifle, we reported it, and after several casualties here, a sniper on our side located it, so that little bit of trouble was moved,

One bit of hard luck for our Lads was when our Guns dropped a shell short, and as fate would have it, it landed on a dug-out, and three of the 1st Wilts who were inside were killed, these accidents were very distressing, it was bad enough when Jerry hit you.

We were able to scrounge some wood out of the houses that Jerry knocked about, but we never had food that you could cook, still it was very handy for drumming up tea, and that was a blessing, for it was rather on the cold side, we used to have a jaunt down each

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night, to Motor Car Corner with the wounded, or sick, and two would then go to the Brewery for rations,

It was rather comical at times, the way the labels on the Men were marked, such as, (G.O.K.) God only knows, (P.W.U.) permanent wind up, and sundry others, in the place where it said, complaint, wounds etc.

As a rule the men not knowing the meaning of just (G.O.K. or P.W.U.) would proudly display it, but those who knew what it meant, always had accidents with wine etc, which tore the offending letters off,

The journey for the rations, would take over an hour, two went back, to the Aid Post, and if there was nothing doing, would hop into our dug-out, the other two, would go for rations, each two of us took it in turns,

The youngster who was with me for turn and turn about, was Young Whitehead who had won the M.M. on the Somme, he was not 19 years old now, to while away the time, which did at times hang heavily on ones hands, I taught him how to play crib,

The first real game we had, after a few days coaching, he beat me by 121 to 56, a most extraordinary score but as usual, I suppose it was the beginners luck, there was no doubt about this place, being quiet, it was all so different, to the Somme, but the poor old Infantry men went through it alright,

The seemed to be on fatigues the whole night, and every night, hail, rain or blow it was always the same, and Jerry took his nightly toll, I suppose he went through it the same,

The greatest difference between our stay in 1915, and 1916 was, that whereas old Jerry lamped us, as often as he pleased, and got no return from us, is was a case now, of when he lamped, our Artillery returned the compliments

That was a great encouragement, and was undoubtedly due to the great efforts of Mr Lloyd George, and others, who fought so hard, for more shells, guns, etc.

There was one thing very convenient, and that was a pump at a small farm, it was only a few hundred yards behind the Line, but it

..... had so far

had so far escaped shells,

The backwards, and forwards to Motor Car Corner with wounded, and alternate nights to the Brewery for rations, etc. went on day in, day out all weathers, as war does not stop for rain, although it makes it worse than ever, and at the end of a fortnight we were releived,

We landed back at Pont-de-Nieppe same old Billets, and the first thing we were initiated into was the mysteries of the Brewery, that overlooked our hut, and was now a Laundry and Baths, we profited by the experience of those unlucky ones who had gone before,

The procedure was, enter the door give your name, etc, stripped, you gave your shirt etc in, and in return you got another lot, supposed to be washed, and some were, but it seemed as if the place was full of the rottenest clothes casts offs etc.

As I said, we benifited, and by the use of a little palm oil, and by giving to the staff, a portion of your already small pay, one was able to get some decent kit, for if your funds had gone, and you did not brass up, you spent a happy time, big game hunting, it was to me a marvel how these little beasts bred.

But the baths were not so bad, if you were among the early ones, a vat, about three feet of water, with a plenti-ful supply of Condy's, but if you got into this after several relays of twenty had, had a bath it was anything but rosy, for we were all invariably filthy after coming out of the Line, if nothing else, you got the worst of the dirt off,

Fatigues soon commenced, and with a party, went to Ballieul Cemetary, to dig graves, it was easy work, as the Lads were buried in one long trench, it was rather sad to go round, and read the different particulars, one that struck us most, on our look round was, an areoplane propellor, three sides shortened, and the other blade stuck in the ground, and formed a novel Cross, the name on it was, ---

Sergeant Mattershead. V.C.

We later learned that whilst over, the enimies lines, his plane was hit, but although his machine was burning, he pluckily brought

..... his machine

his machine to our side of the Line, they salvaged all the photos, and other information he had got, he was alive, but died shortly afterwards, and the cross was the propeller off his machine,

We were invited down to the Drome and were shown some of the planes, we saw several taking off, and several coming back, one a youngster of nineteen, was pointed out to us, as a second Ball, they showed us his machine, and it had been well peppered, but he had so far escaped, from the talk I heard, I come to the conclusion, that flying was a Young mans game, and by the number of youngsters there, there was no lack of them,

We carried on this digging, until we had dug two long trenches, we left Pont de Niefte in the morning stayed the day, and got back in the evening, which would be free,

There was no doubt about this place, we were having the time of our lives, sometimes Vic and I would go to Ballieul, or Armmeintures, not often the later, or to Gingers for Coffee, and Chips,

I had bought at different times a kind of silk worked postcard, and sent them home, there were many kinds and some of them very pretty,

My Brother Guy was now in the Army, he had Volunteered before he was eighteen, I was rather upset that the youngest of the family should be excepted, and hoped that the war would be over before he was old enough to come out,

I had besides letters, and the local rag, one or two parcels from Mother, I shared a good bit out, but stuck as hard as I could to the Cocoa-nut crinkles, I was greedy over them,

Our stay down was getting jammy when I did another spell up the line the same post, and same work, as the time went by, and when we heard of no relief we expected our ~~our~~ turn would be extended, and that we should spend Xmas in the Line,

We were lucky, as we were relieved a couple of days before Xmas and got down, to find that about a dozen of the Ambulance, had been practising to give a Concert on Xmas night in one of the Schoolrooms,

I had a Xmas Parcel from home and I had sent Mother and Janet, a little pearlie Cross, on a silver chain, it was bought in a small jewellers, he was carrying on business, in Pont-de-Nieppe, and seemed

to do a flourishing trade.

Some of the Lads had bought some very good presents, for their people at home, several had bought, some Lace made by hand, by the Flemish women,

But the best thing, I saw was a Shawl, made by hand, it had cost a private named Fitzjohn, five hundred francs. and was for his Wife.

The day before Xmas, and most of us were on one fatigue, or another, it looked as if we were going to have a proper Xmas, this time, and we had plenty to do, I myself was on cook-house fatigue,

That night on routine orders, my name went down, as fatigue in the Wards and Dressing Room (Several School Rooms) for Christmas Day

That evening was a different Xmas Eve, to the one the Year before, although we were nearer the Line,

Some went down to the Cafes Estaminets, and anywhere else which pleased them best, and some of us had a good old sing song in our huts.

We awake to a nice cold bright winters day, and after breakfast all scattered for their duties, I had a cushy job, there were a lot of sick in the Wards, but most of them were able to look after themselves,

I had to help just tidy up the Dressing Room, and going round the Wards in turn, with the Orderlies, and

We gave the patients there Dinner, Roast Beef, Potatoes, Cabbage, and Xmas Pudding, and Glory of Glories, a Pint of Beer,

Some, but very few, had to have diet,

We had the same, later on, and the rest of the day, the majority of us, were having a cushy time, tea came, and went, and then we got ready for the Party, that several of our Lads were giving,

Sgt Hunter, (Violinist), Fitzjohn (Pianist, and general polisher up, of all the musical turns) Elwell (Ventreloquist and Entertainer) and several Singers, Paul the two Zillwoods, and a few others.

The whole party sang together at first, a very good song, the words went,

Play the Man, and Win in the Fight,

Then Sgt Hunter, who had had his Violin, sent specially from

England, gave us a turn,

The next turn was Elwell, with his Doll, also from England, dressed as a Sailor, I was very pleased, when the Doll chipped me, and he finished by saying, we will now have a little song, in honour of Blink, entitled

For you all know, Jacky Fisher, and brought in a few of my pet sayings.

The Concert up to this, had been well received, and it certainly was very good, and showed that the different turns had worked hard to make a success of it, unfortunately at this point, Jerry must decide to acquaint us, with the fact that the War had not stopped.

The Nursing Orderly on duty, in the Hospital sent over word that several wounded had come in, I was one who had to go,

We arrived in the Dressing Room, some of the 10th Batt Cheshires, had received a Xmas present from Jerry,

The different M.Os, each took a case, the one I helped with, was simply peppered, and as we took his clothes off, more, and more little wounds showed themselves, in all he had over two hundreds small wounds, all in front,

The M.O. was concerned, for the man was almost unconscious, and yet we had not found one serious wound,

He told me to lift his head, whilst he looked to see if there was a wound or some wounds, on his shoulders,

I put my hand under his head to lift, and felt a piece of shell about three inches long, laying amongst the hair,

We soon had him over, and the Medical Officer, cut his hair away, he had to have another one to help him for this nasty jagged piece of shell was embedded right in the skull, and it would not come out, Poor Devil, he had stopped a proper packet, they got the patients off to C.C.S. and I was told I could go to the Concert, I arrived to hear Private Brocklebank sing a song, and it made us roar with laughter, he was a perfect comedian, he had not long been with the unit although, he came out in 1914, but up to lately, he had been at a base hospital, the song was a Parody on Lucky Jim. and the words were,

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Jim and I, were Comrades in the Trenches,
We were wounded, on the self-same day,
Jim, he got a biscuit tin, to sit on
Whilst I, unlucky in the Mud did lay,
Oh, Lucky Jim, etc.

I got a piece of Shrapnel, in my Shoulder,
Deep the Doctor probed, but nothing there,
Jim, he got a Bullet, in his Ankle,
And now, he wears it as a Souvenir
Oh, Lucky Jim, etc.

We were at the Base, Bays Convalescent,
Jim and I, were now allowed to Roam,
Jim, he had a Pretty French Fiancee,
Whilst I, unlucky, had a Wife at Home,
Oh, Lucky Jim, etc.

Vic told me it had been fine, the Lads had kept it up for three hours, I was just hoping to be able to hear the last, when I had to go back to the Dressing Room again, still what I had heard I thoroughly enjoyed,

The contrast between last Xmas, and this, was as the Poles apart,
After most of the Lads had gone to their billets, Jerry Cornish the Private, in the Stores came round, and said, Tiny is waiting for you chaps to have your Rum and Coffee, we had often had Rum issued out, but Coffee this was a treat,

So around we went, Tiny said Hallo Blink, I said not so much Rum, please, he laughed knowing I was not in the habit of drinking my Rum out of the Line, I always went and drew it, and gave it too one of the Lads

Tiny came back with my mess tin sorry Blink, running short of the Coffee, so have given you an extra dose of Rum,

I was not keen, but took it, and went to the hut, and drank the lot, this was at ten o'clock ! midnight, and Sgt Major Ivens, came round, and I was still singing, and had a few words to say to

..... him

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him, but off he went, and my Dear Old Vic at last persuaded me, that as we were both on Cook house fatigue, on the morrow, it was time to get some sleep,

I awoke, or was awakened at Reveille, with a head, not at all to my liking, it was on fire, what men could see, in often imbibing too freely, I couldn't make out, it was alright the drinking, but the after effects,

After Breakfast as we were lined up, the Sgt. Major called out the different fatigues, Parkins, Parish, Pocock, Vic and myself were on cook-house the Sgt. Major called me on one side, and said, in a tender voice,

How's your head feeling this morning,

I had to laugh, Tiny was laughing too,

We were a fine five to be on Cook-house together, whilst not getting out of the work, we took good care, not to do too much, for if there was one section of the Ambulance, who were not in the mens best books, it was the cooks,

(I myself had been before the C.O. for telling the Sgt. Cook, after we had had a few words, that the Lord made the grub, and the Devil made the Cooks). and pleading first offence, once more escaped punishment,

All went well in the cook-house, when Pocock, the old soldier came round, and in a whisper, said,

You ought to see the Sergeants dixey,

So we went on the quiet, and as he said, Dinner for the Gods, in the Sergeants Dixey.

Just before dinner, the Sergeant cook, came round and marked the dixies for the different sections, A.S.C. etc.

It did not take a moment when his back was turned to change the dixies, and alter the lids, while this was going on, I had slipped round to our hut, told them to get first at the Cook-house, rush the dixie round to the hut, serve the doings out, and eat it as quick as possible, and save our lot for us,

..... Up came

Up came the Orderlies, our hut well away, with the Sergeants dixies, one full of stew, the other boiled rice, with Ideal Milk,

We served all the dixies out, told the Sergeant we were going for Dinner and cleared, we had a decent dinner that day,

We were met, by a few remarks from the Cook, after we went back for fatigue, and after words had reached as high a note, as possible

The Old Soldier suggested, that as we had committed a crime, and stole the Sergeants dinner, why not have us all up too Orderly Room, adding in a sarcastic tone,

The C.O. would love to hear why the Sergeants had to have special dixies, when all the Unit was on the same rations, and so it passed off, and I was never to get on that fatigue again,

Things were certainly brightening up, for unbeknown to us, the Divisional Headquarters had decided to form a pierrot troupe, and they began to give shows, at a very reasonable price, the proceeds going towards buying costumes, and anyoner, extras for the Troops, but there were not many extras,

A Cinema was opened in this area, and those who could get in had there money's worth, curiously most of the Lads preferred to stay round about the Billet,

One evening going into an Estaminet I was just in time to see the argument between a Grenadier Guardsmen, and a Kiltie,

The Kiltie had said some slighting remark about the P. of Wales, and the Grenadier said, he had followed him over the top, and if you don't take, what you said back, I will knock it down your throat,

The next thing was a dust up, and the Grenadier not only won, but added insult to injury, by reporting to the Police, what the Scotchman had said, we did not hear the end of it, as they were in other Divisions.

Pocock, managed to get in trouble one night, out after lights out, and suffered the penalty of being caught, it was really marvellous, what you could do in the Army, and get away with it, on the other hand, you might do only a small thing, get caught, and you were for it, unless like myself you could plead first offence, this latter was a funny affair, I myself had been up half a dozen times, the last

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time the C.O. said, yes it might be (First Offence), but it is not your fault,

As long as you had never been punished, you could plead first offence,

George Hiley, one of our B,ham Lads he worked at Dunlops, before the War, had now, since joining up lost both his Father, and his Mother, and there were six children, 5 under school age. he himself was only about twenty now,

They extended his Allotment, so the family, which I think his Sister looked after, were able to draw money as if he was the Father, we were very sorry for him, the Sgt, Major, made him and Officers Servant, which helped to bring him in a little more money,

With his Servants pay he would now gamble at cards, if he lost it I would sometimes lend him some, knowing full well he would pay back at night if he won, and if he lost would pay me at the first opportunity,

I was not in the habit of lending money, as I was more or less a beleiver in the saying, of an Old Shipmate,

Neither borrow or lend,

Always give, or take,

But I liked what George was doing, for if fate had served him a scurvey trick with his Father and Mother, fate was kinder to him at cards, and he was far more often a winner, than a loser, and as soon as he won a good sum, he would send it Home, which meant he couldn't possibly lose that,

The Lads didn't mind, for he was good player, good gambler, and was popular, in his quiet way with all, and even now under the fresh blow, didn't ask to be sent Home, but helped them at Home, whilst doing his bit out here,

There was another Young Chap, who often played, and was lucky with it, and he was Ernie Clough, he was a Yorkshire Lad, but he was one of the finest fellows one could meet, rather loosely built, he was a good footballer, good gambler, and what was of the greatest importance he was a fine Bearer, you couldn't wish to be up with a better man, or rather boy, for he must have enlisted before his

..... eighteenth birthday.

eighteenth birthday.

He was rather a chummy sort of chap, he was a happy, care free, smiler, when things were at there worst, he would never be down cast, I have in my possession a photo of him, and Elwell which was taken at this time, at a house, the opposite side of the Church to Gingers,

As time went on I began to know Ernie Parkins better, or to give him his name the Pope gave him, (Tich), why I do not know as he was about 5 ft 8 inches

We would show our Photo's to each other, as we had them from home, and once he showed me, the photo of his little Boy, he looked a proper nut, I had already seen the one of his Wife, he was a proper Londoner, and lived in Regency Street, round Millbank, Westminster,

He was as witty as all Londoners of his type seemed to be, and was never at a loss for an answer, and at times could let drive with his tongue if anyone upset him, or run the R.A.M.C. down.

Going up the trenches one day, he was leading, when we got a little way along the communication trench, the poineer battalion, were repairing it, as Jerry had been busy,

Coming up to them one Youngster looked up, and said, Look, R.A.M.C. up this far, don't stop them, this was too much for Tich, turning on him he rapped out.

How long you been out,

The Youngster replied two months,

Oh, said Tich, there is some excuse for you, I have more Church Service in, than you have Active Service,

The other including ourselves, had a good laugh, and on we went, we had not gone many yards, when another South Wales Borderer, said, look-out here comes the R.A.M.C. at last, let them pass,

Tich stopped, glared at him, and said, how long, you been out Chum,

Since the Division came out, Why,

Oh said Tich, when you go down tonight, you go round to the Hospital at the back of the Church at Pont de Neippe, and tell them, that a R.A.M.C. man told me to come for some soap, as my eyes want washing,

He took it in good part, and we had a talk with them, and parted

..... on the best

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of the best of terms.

Although Vic, and I were in the same Section, we never seemed to be able to get in the same squad, so when he would be up the Line, I would be down and vice versa, but in between whiles we would be down together, he was getting near his turn to go on leave.

One night lights out had gone some time, and still Bill Jagger and Teddy Parrott had not turned up, I heard they were seen going towards, some old hags, along the Canal, so I decided to go and see if I could find them,

I got to the dirtiest, ramshackled hovel you could wish to find, luck was with me, as it was a Moon light night, and found the two bold heros,

I said come on, and they answered all right Blink, and I at last got them on the way,

It turned out this old Hag, used to buy the Troops rum, from some rotten bounders who pinched the troops issue, and she in turn sold it to the Lads making a splendid profit, I was very glad when I heard, they had rumbled her, and cleared her right away back,

Well, with two Lancashire Lads, one on each side, one wanting to sing, and so give the game away, that we were out after hours, and the other inclined to be a bit aggressive, the road we were on slippery with frozen snow, and the road was the tow path by the Canal, and the pair of them, anything but steady on their feet, it was a nightmare of a walk, but I at last got them safely to the Billet.

Bill Jagger, he decided that sleep was the best thing, and soon kipped down, but not so Teddy Parrott, pleadings threats, cajolings, were of no avail, and half the night he kept us awake, and all the time repeating, the same old remark, over and over again, sometimes in a plaintive tone, next time aggressive, and they were in his Lancashire brogue,

Arm a Bolton Lead Ar am

I doan't let any man say, aram druunk,

At first we laughed, but you can have too much of a good thing, and at last, he got the usual complimentary remarks hurled at him, such as,

..... Put a sock

Put a sock in it, or

Put a boot in it,

He had a lovely head in the morning, I and many others, came to the conclusion, that the old Hag, must have put something in the rum,

About the middle of Feb, several of us bearers were detailed off, to go up, and as the Aid Posts were already staffed we knew there was a stunt on, Jerry had been rather nasty lately, and had been rather free with his Gas,

The heads I suppose decided to retaliate, for the many raids he had made, and our Brigade was chosen to make a daylight raid,

The 1st Wilts, and 10th Cheshires, went over, and there was a proper merry hell on for a while, they did a lot of damage with their raid, and considering it was daylight, our side had remarkably few casualties, so our work was not so heavy as was anticipated.

They lost several prisoners, who were among the killed, for Jerry let go, and friend and foe alike suffered,

The next time up the Line, we went to Charing Cross again, Via Motor Car Corner, things were very quiet, and on the way to the Brewery with a message, the two of us went round past Seven Trees, the first post I had ever been too,

It was rather altered, many dug outs, and new trenches etc, past through Gunners Farm, and there not many hundred yards behind the line, the old Farm was still intact, and it was still occupied.

We learned later that, the Old Man had met his end facing a firing party, as he was caught signaling to the Jerries, we actually were able to get eggs, and milk here, and so that night we had eggs, in the trenches.

After we had nearly finished our spell, some New Zealand men came up, one of them was in the New Zealand R.A.M.C. they took over the Aid Post, or rather run it with ours, they all slept in it,

We got very chummy with them, and I have got a photograph that one of them gave me,

The time came, and so we were releived overnight, we got away early in the morning, there was a thick mist, so we decided it was

safe to risk the short cuts, that is, over the top of the trench, all went well, we had nearly got on to the road, when H.H. Smiths kit all come undone.

A convenient mound of earth was here, so we started to pack it up again, all was nearly done, when, Zip, we were next to each other, but the gap between our heads, was the place where it went, we just saw it hit a flint, and like a couple of acrobats we tumbled into a tumble down cottage,

An Officer and two Infantry men who were just behind us, dived in, they asked us if were hit,

As luck was with us, we all had a laugh, but Jerry had evidently got a couple of machine guns trained on this spot, so we all laid doggo, until he decided to have a rest,

We at last cleared off, it would have been tough luck getting a packet as we were coming out, but as the Officer said, we were ordered to keep to the trench, still, it was a quick way down, and the mist made it rather tempting,

We had the same cushy time at Pont-de-Nieppe, excepting owing to one chap leaving his footsteps in the snow, coal could not now be scrounged from the Brewery (baths),

The Officers had a bit of excitement one had to attend a confinement, and the other had to attend a poor women, who had had all her clothes burned off of her,

The first was a success, both the Mother and Baby got on well, but the second one, was so badly burned that despite great efforts she passed away.

The reason our Officers attended the Civilians, was that all the Local Doctors were taken away, and so ours took on the local work, and so helped our Allies that way.

Talking to one of the Lads, who had releived us at Charing Cross Aid Post, I asked him, how he was getting on with the New Zealanders.

He said, within two hours of you leaving, Jerry hit it with a shell, the R.A.M.C. man was killed, and others wounded, it was funny how these things happened, I myself was telling the one who was killed, when we were up, that it was a safe place.

Our time in the Line here was fast drawing to a close, and the latter part of Feb we were releived, and moved back to the Hazebrouch area,

The Ambulance was billeted in a large house in the Village of Fletre, water was scarce here, and having to get washed, and shaved in a hurry, I used the water out of the pond, nicked my ear, and next day had to have it lanced, I broke out all over my face, and it was some weeks, before I was able to shave

The Lads were billeted in a Tower, and of course the usual yarns about the Ghost that walked etc, grew, and grew, till at night when lights were out, and all was quiet, the wind moaned, and if any one was superstitious, here was the means, to indulge their fancy to the limit,

We had a quiet time here, the food was not the sort we should have liked, but it was good, if plain, and being right out, and regular pay, we were able to buy things from the N.A. and A F Canteen,

Except for some drills, long route marches, and fatigues, our time was our own, the time of the year kept us from roaming to far, so the old Tower, was alive during the evening, with the lads indulging in card games, both gambling, and friendly, the Estaminets did a roaring trade,

An order had evidently been given out, that if a motor car went by you on the road, with a small flag on the Bonnet, you must salute, whether there was an Officer, inside or not,

The presence of a flag, denoted that the Car belonged to an Army or an Army Corps Commander.

Being on guard at the gate one day a Car went by, not knowing the order I did not salute, coming back later, the driver pulled up,

I approached the Officer inside, and saluted smartly, outwardly, I hoped I was calm, that is the odds, to what I was inwardly,

I was asked several questions, and generally put through the hoop, and after a telling off, he asked me why I hadn't saluted, why I hadn't turned out the Guard, and by the time he had finished with me, I was in a state of funk, I got a few fatigues, but otherwise, was not the worse.

Vic had had his leave, and my name was gradually being approached, a few more were to have their leaves brought forward, before my turn

Young Clews applied for leave to get married, about now, and just before he was due to go, he heard from the Damsel of his choice, that Jerry had raided his home town,

He was a rather quiet chap, but this news seemed to upset him, and so he went, and drowned his sorrows in beer, that night he kept us awake, for some time, explaining, how, (the Germans had been over Walsall, with their Zeppilins, and dropped a bomb, on the Church where, I was to be married in).

All good times come to an end, and we moved up towards the Baillieul sector, but only went in Billets, still on rest, it was a great barn, and it had been fitted up with bunks, so every man actually had a wire bed to sleep on,

This Village (Steenje) was not a great distance from La Blanche, ^{we} and other billets had been in round here

About this time, there was a lot of talk about men who were experts, or clever at their trades in civil life, should be sent back to England, as they we badly needed, but we lost but one, on this stunt, Albert Todd, the Section Officers servant,

We were allowed to go into Bailleul, and most times we could, most of us went, for although within about 10 miles of the line, there were still a great many Civilians, and we could get a bit of relaxation.

Letter writing, papers, parcels, cards etc, were the orders of the day, and the Ambulance was playing Football, a good deal, there was always some unit ready, for a game, our C.O. was very proud of his team, and would walk miles to see them play,

I was rather in the back-ground, for the Left half back position, was being taken by Vic occasionally, and a new Chap to the Ambulance, named Smith, still, at every opportunity we had the ball out, so if one section was not playing the other two were,

The weather was rather cold, some snow about, one day the lads had the gloves out, and had a spar, in the passage way, between the bunks,

..... Harry Wright,

Harry Wright, (a nice chap, very fair hair, had been with the Amb. from the beginning, came from good old Birmingham, and was popular with one and all) asked me to have the next spar,

We got busy, and he gave me one or two hefty ones, I returned the compliment, the fur was beginning to fly, when the door opened, and the Orderly Sergeant entered.

Pte. Swindell, you are wanted in the Orderly Room.

That finished my bout, I put on my kit, and first Vic, then another said, whats up Blink, I was in the dark, for a reason, I couldn't remember having done anything wrong just lately, so to the Orderly Room, I was taken,

Sgt Major Ivens, was there, he said Swindell, the Colonel will be seeing you in the morning, you are to be Capt. Lescher's servant.

I was taken aback, by the news, for he already had a servant, Albert Todd.

He guessed what was passing in my mind, for he said, Todd is going back to England, are you not going to thank me,

Thank You Sir,

Why I don't want the job, I have been with the lads all along, and I don't want to leave them now,

We had a few more words, and said the Sgt Major at last, you will have to see the C.O. for he had a list of names, in front of him, and you are the one he picked on,

Back I went to the lads, and the first thing, they said was, Poor Old Blink, how do you like being made Neds servant,

I learned that Todd, had been in, and told them he was going home, and I was to be his successor.

I was naturally upset, for Todd had been in the Mess all the time, he had never seen the Line, and the thoughts of never going up the line, with the Lads again, gave me a feeling, that I was being favoured, let alone the feeling that I preferred the ranks, and wanted to be no mans lackey,

The Lads naturally talked, as to why Todd, who already had a cushy job, was the only man to go home, for as all the Ambulance knew, we had several others who had claims, to go as key men, but

there names were not put forward,

The general opinion was, that as Capt. Leschers and Todd were both Roman Catholics, Todd had been able to get round him, and Capt Lescher had managed it for him, and in view of this, he went down another peg in the Mens estimation, which was one more reason why, I had no wish to be his Servant,

Frankly I respected him as my superior Officer, that is where it ended, I had no time for him, and I was determined to ask the C.O. tomorrow to release me, several of the Lads, told me not to be a fool, it was a cushy job, and you have always done your bit, so take it.

Next morning, I had to attend Orderly Room, and was marched in front of the Colonel and the following took place, the C.O. said Pte Swindell, I have had a list of names and particulars of men in front of me, and I have picked you out, as Servant for Capt Lescher, first I want to ask you a few questions,

Have you a Father,

No, Sir,

How long has your Father been dead,

Since 1899 Sir,

Got any Brothers and Sisters,

Yes Sir,

Where are your Brothers,

One Killed, on the Somme, one badly wounded, back in the Marines and one just eighteen, who has volunteered.

Any more Brothers,

No. Sir,

Well you have a good record for Line work, and you will from tomorrow be Capt Lescher's servant, go to the Officers Mess, and report to Todd.

I made my effort.

Can, I speak Sir,

Yes,

I do not want to be a Servant, I want to be with the Lads,

He gave me a look, some look,

..... And all he said

And all he said was :-

Right turn, dismiss.

In the Army, orders are orders, and much against my will, I went to the mess, to see Todd.

He said, arn't you glad Blink,

I said, no blessed fear, and the sooner he gives me the sack, the better I shall like it. I don't want to be his lacky, nor do I want to work in the Mess, at these last words, Todd, and Cousins the Officers cook gave a grin, I was to learn later the reason for it,

Todd showed me Capt Leschers room, in the Farm-house a proper bed, sheets, blankets etc. told me the work, I had to do, one bit of news pleased me, all his washing you can send out to the people in the village where ever you go, that was a blessing, as I was quite content, and satisfied with my own washing,

Telling me to give the Officer, a cup of tea, give him his water, shaving and washing and clean his boots, spurs, sambrown belt, and sundry other items, the following morning, as he was not leaving the unit until that night, I went back to the Lads, some chipped me, others commiserated with me, and so I became a servant, or as the call them in the Army, Officers Batman.

Morning came, snow on the ground around I went to the Mess, to get Capt Lescher his tea, and into his room I went.

I knocked, no answer, so I knocked again, still no answer in I went,

I was amazed, for when I got up to him, there he was snoring away, and all round his head, on the pillows, was a pile of snow that had drifted in the open window,

I learned later, he had been out to dinner the night before, and judging by what I found, he had dine both too wisely and well,

I found his top boots, plastered up with mud, carefully wrapped up in his vest and pants, his wet mac on top of his shirt, and his tunic and trousers in the corner.

It was a mess, calculated, to fill me, with any but happy feelings, for my new job, I sorted out the remnants, and went outside to clean them,

..... Cousins,

Cousins, a miner in civil life, was Officers cook, he told me, I was not to work in the Mess, my old Pal of Tidworth days, already an Officers servant, was to take Todds place in the mess, I couldn't see Bolton and Cousins hitting it off very well,

I was soon to learn, that all my fears, about not going up the Line, with the Lads again were groundless, for although Todd had been out here with us since September 1915, he had never seen the Line, my lot was not to be his for, before the week was out, he had to go up, and up I had to go with him,

If old Ned was a bit mad, when leading the Lads up, he was doubly so, when I went with him, for he was utterly regardless, of his own safety, or mine, still I was determined, that I would go where he went, and not let him think I was windy,

Being now well set, as his Servant, I was still averse to the job, but I was determined that whilst I was his servant, I would be loyal to him, and that he would not be criticized in my presence in future, without I defended him,

I found it was anything but an easy job, for many of the men used to think I was in agreement with all his actions, and plainly told me I was only a crawler, looking after my own skin.

It hurt, but it had to be endured, so it was up to me to carry on, many, and many a time, I was able to tell him, of some thing the men were not getting, or some treatment they ought not to be having,

He played the game, I told him bluntly, I did not want to act as a spy (not that he asked me too) I would tell him only a serious things, on one condition, and that he would never accept my statement as proof that a thing was happening, or had happened but that he would go, and see for himself, and then act accordingly.

He did so, and never once, of anything that I told him, was there any fuss, but it was rectified, the Lads did not know this side of him, but I did, and I thought better of him for it,

Our time, passed pleasantly here, and at last the orders came for a move, and we had jam on it again, for we marched to Ballieul,

We took over the same Hospital as before, just near was a new addition and that was a large, N. and A. and A. Force Canteen, where

..... with our pay,

with our pay, we could buy any amount of different thing, such as, tinned fruits, potted and tinned meats, sweets, tobacco, biscuits, and several other delicacies and dainties, that helped us on, one thing about the Canteen we liked, as there prices were fixed, and low at that, we could buy more than we could from the Froggies.

Football there was, in plenty here, amongst, one of the new chaps, they found a good full back, named Greasley, who came from Hull, those of us who might be off duty were able to go to the matches, and one was too funny for words, I was glad I was not playing

There were three small gullies right across the field, and the lads, were in a fine mess, long before the game ended, for where they were devoid of water, they were full of mud, still we had a good view, the Colonel as usual was there,

Ned had another good billet, and just a little way from the Hospital, I found, or rather Hiley found it, a decent place to get the Officers washing done,

Todd before going, had written out a list of the things, soap etc, to get for my Officer, explaining, when he pays you at the end of the month, give him the Bill, and he will settle up at the same time,

The end of the month came, and pay day with it, I had made a full list of all I had spent, and what I had spent it on, so when he gave me my wages, 15 francs (considering my pay was about 5 francs a week. this was a big increase) making me something like 40 francs, per month, pay and wages, I was well off, he asked me if I had bought anything for him.

Yes Sir. 30 francs, and gave him the list.

Thirty francs, he almost shouted, that did it, I had borrowed it, on the strength of what Todd, had told me, from another servant, (I disliked borrowing, but was going to get it in future out of my pay, as it was nearly doubled).

I took from his tone, that he did not believe me, and concluded, he imagined I was trying to cheat him,

I said, here is the list Sir, I have spent every farthing of it on you, and I don't like to be doubted, over such a thing, and I will ask you to let me go back to the ranks.

..... That did

That did the trick, I got a proper dressing down, for the way I had spoken (I really did it, to make sure that he would get rid of me), and he wound up by saying, he had not doubted me, but was annoyed, at me with my small pay, spending such a lot on him, without asking for some,

All ended satisfactorily, he gave me the money, also 50 francs to go on with, which was a much better arrangement, and I was told (ordered) to get on with my work,

Vic had a grin when I told him about it, we were often able to go about together here, and I run across my old Irish shipmate again and the Ambulance soon fixed up another game, with his unit, this time they beat us, they had a man at centre-half back, 6 feet, 8 inches, and everywhere the ball went, he would be.

Leave was still going on, my turn was getting, slowly but surely nearer, speaking to Parkins, one day we learned, that he had gone abroad before us, to Salonica, after a while was sent back, with a batch to Aldershot, were there a couple of days, and they had no chance to get leave, and were detailed off, on a draft for France, and when they arrived at Victoria, they had to wait, two hours for the train, he asked permission, to run home, and see his Wife, and baby, for he only lived ten minutes from the Station,

They would not let him go, but a kindly Military Policeman, went round, and told his Wife, and poor Old Tich, there he was, one side of the barrier, and his Wife the other, and all they would do, was to wave to each other, for as soon, as she got there, the train came in, and they were ordered on, and off it went,

I had been eighteen months out here without leave, but it was over twenty since he had leave, and coming to the unit after the lists were out, he was some way behind me, so he was much worse off than many of us.

There were plenty of men in the hospital, and our nursing orderlies were kept on the run, the majority of the cases were illness, wounded were always sent on to the Casualty Clearing Station,

Sometimes I would be on fatigue, in the wards, and one day I Happened to be in a ward when the M.O. (Capt Collard) came in, he

went round to the man in turn, coming to one, who had been very bad,
he said,

How do you feel to-day,

Fine Sir,

Do you feel as if you could eat, something today,

Yes Sir

Would you like a little chicken, and a bottle of stout,

Yes Sir,

And so would I, but we can't have it,

The patient laughed, and so did we, it all came out so droll,

Tuesday was the day for teeth, and there would always be, plenty
of men lined up, we had a Pte. Dunkin in the ranks, who was a Dentist
in Civil Life, and he used to do it,

One day a young snob of an Officer, wanted his teeth attended
too, but he was far too superior, to let a Private do his teeth,

He demanded to see the Officer, and demanded him to take his
tooth out, and by the time Ned had got his tooth out, he had almost
broken his jaw,

The Officer looked a sorry plight, and Capt Lescher put the tin
hat on it by saying,

Yours is the first tooth I have ever pulled it, you should have
let the Private pull it out, he his a professional dentist,

I am sure the Officer was of the opinion, we did not feel sorry
for him, on the contrary the story was passed round, still what he
asked for, he got, and he had only himself to blame.

One Sunday morning as the Civilians were coming home from Church,
Jerry dropped a load on the centre of the Town, he managed to hit
thirty eight civilians, and curiously enough although the troops
were all about, and there were twice as many, as there were civilians,
not one Tommy got hit,

The time of the Officers, was fully occupied to bandage the
Civilians, and they had the pleasure of getting their dinner a
couple of hours late,

We moved back, to the Village of Outersteene (the place we first
came too) but this time, C. section, were billeted over an Estaminet,

..... at the other

at the other end of the Village to the School, where we were before, it was a decent loft, and the whole section were here,

A Padre took too paying us a visit here, and he was a very interesting sort of individual, and always used to start discussions, one that I listened to, but did not take part in, was a very unusual one, it was one of the rare occasions of which politics were discussed, whilst I was in the Army,

I was ignorant of Politics, as regards policies, I had never paid any attention to it, before the war, but many of the Lads were well up in it, and I was very interested

The subject turned on the conduct of the Liberals, before the war, and why in spite of information they had received, they had reduced disarmaments.

Some very interesting statements were made, among which were, We have the finest secret service, in the world, and they must have, given our government the news, of what Germany was doing,

Why had not our Country got guns, machine guns, and shells and bullets, in such number to be equal to Jerry,

And from the remarks, I took the view of one, and all to be, that, we should have been prepared, that through not being prepared, not only were thousands, and tens of thousands of our men killed, but the war would in all probability, not only not gone the way it had, but even may not have taken place at all.

Of course politics were really tabooed in the Army, so the discussion was not allowed to get heated.

One man said, (I do not know his politics) but I suppose he was a conservative that it would go down in history, that in spite of warning, Britain was not prepared, and was not able to do her share, for some time, the brunt being borne by the Allies.

We had the usual letter writing, card playing, house, crown and anchor, crib, chess, in fact it was a fine billet, and we enjoyed ourselves to our hearts content, for we did very few fatigues, few drills, and few duties,

One evening the pontoon school, was going great guns, plenty of money was won, and lost, one to lose all he had, was a tall young

..... fellow,

fellow, rather a quiet sort of chap, in fact I always was amused when I saw him playing,

He was no gambler, if he had a rotten hand, or if he had a good hand his face would always give him away, and he would have been better off financially not to have gambled, I suppose he did it for two fold purpose, to get the thrill, and mostly to try and make out he was a bold, bad dog, when all his words and actions, said otherwise,

Well this night, broke, he went to sleep, about midnight we were awakened by our friend Limscott, sitting up in bed, raving away in his sleep,

Pontoons only, I pay the lot, I pay twenty one, and so on, he eventually dropped down in bed again, and knew nothing about it in the morning,

My Officer was billeted in one of a row of old fashioned cottages, round the back of the Village, he had a large double bed, and the room was very cosy, the occupants of the cottage, were an old Professor, and his two daughters,

Round I went the first morning, and found the youngest daughter, had given my Officer some coffee, (this is one of the things the French could make), I cleaned up his doings, gave him his shaving water, and half filled his little camp bath with cold water, every day it was possible, for of course it was impossible in the line, he had a morning dip in cold water, and went back to the billet for my breakfast, and clean up,

After breakfast we paraded, and the Officers servants went to the Officers billets and made their beds etc, and the rest of the lads got, drills, fatigues etc, us servants, were supposed to be finished, and go and report 10-30 a.m. which we invariably tried to dodge

I got round to my Officers quarters, and found his bed made, the room all cleared up, and the Sisters said we always do this, it was kind of them, and the woman next door did my Officers washing, so I was in for a cushy time,

The first night, I went round, to put things in order in his

room, and they called me into the kitchen, and asked me if I would like a little supper, which I had, the next night the supper was there for me, and they asked me to stop,

Stop, why I could have stopped with two charming damsels like this, for the rest of the war,

They asked me about my home, and how I lived before the war, and I asked them about their lives.

They lived in Lille, and as the Germans advanced, so they moved and when things had calmed down, they moved up to here,

There two brothers were both Officers one had all sorts of decorations, he was in hospital, just recovering from a wound,

The eldest Sister asked me to help her to learn English, and nothing loth, I taught her all I could, I was often chipped by the Lads, but it was a very nice relaxation for me, and for the rest of the three weeks we were here, I spent nevertheless than an hour a night in their company, and they were two of the nicest girls, one could wish to meet,

Their old Dad used to sit in the corner by the fire, he would talk at supper, then retire to his corner, and read, whilst I (thumbs up) sat between the sisters, and taught them English (Heaven wasn't in it), they both called me Georges, but the eldest Sister, I always addressed as Mademoiselle, the younger one asked me to always call her by her name, Madelaine,

I never asked the elder one her name

They picked up more English from me, than I did French from them, we carried on in this village, and as far as things went, enjoyed ourselves,

My Officer going to Paris for a day or two, gave the Sgt Major the chance he always wanted for servants, and I was put on guard,

Next morning, I was talking to a Canadian, when an Officer came by I sprang smartly to attention, and saluted not so my companion, the Officer about turned, and took his name and number, so I suppose he clicked, when he got back to his unit,

Our period of rest ending the Division moved up toward the Line, we marched through Ballieul, but instead of branching off to the right, the Nieppe Road, we went straight on, and along the Ravelsburg Ridge, one those roads that seemed to have no end,

We came to a large cottage on the corner of a road, some French and Belgium Soldiers were standing to attention, we learned that this was the Frontier,

We at last pulled up at a camp, and several huts, a new kind (Nissen huts) were here, we never thought they were for us, and it was a pleasant surprise, when we learned they were our sleeping quarters,

We soon got ready for tea, and then prepared for the evening, cards, letters etc, and the camp had just retired for the night, when with a scream, a shell went over, it was soon followed by more and for several hours he kept up, perhaps sending one over, or a dozen, needless to say, we were very glad when he packed up,

How it happened, I do not know, but nobody was touched in the camp, all the shells, had gone over us, he must have had the wrong range,

For the shells were ten too a hundred yards past the camp, but several hundred yards short of the road,

The Colonel was not at all pleased and the first job next day, the lads got was to draw a large circle about thirty feet across, and with the aid of red stone, and chalk, made a huge red cross, hoping his areoplanes would spot it, they came over often enough, and I suppose must have twigged it, for although plenty of shells dropped near, none actually hit the Camp,

The next thing on the board, was to get three empty huts ready as theatres the C.O. hit upon the idea of having a competition, to see which section could get the best theatre ready,

When we knew three had got to be prepared, and several tables in each one, we knew there was to be an attack, all the lads worked hard on this, and at the end, the C.O. would give no Section the first prize, but divided it, between the three, for he said, they were all winners,

The Lads, or the bearers, who I would have been amongst, were daily told off to go up towards the line, (our Division was in, but except for a few sick, we had nothing to do with them) the Lads, were helping the Engineers, to make a rather large size in dug-outs, or to be exact, several in the side of the bank of a sunken road,

Although I was never put on this fatigue, I had to go up with Ned, and the way was through a Village called Neuve Eglise, which was on a hill.

Our camp was rather lower on the right and was known as West Hock Farm.

We were more or less confined in this locality, and so we made the most of the huts, this place was a good one for cards, and the usual games, a little along the road were a couple of houses, owing to the shelling they got the wind up I suppose, for I can think of no other reason, for why they would cleared off, and left them full of goods,

W When we heard they had gone, we went along to investigate, found the plunder, and borrowed it, there were thousand of tins of french boot polish, we all took plenty of this, hundreds of packets of matches, not much in the food line, but thousands of balls of crochet cotton,

The latter was left alone, but after getting back to the camp, and spreading the news, some more lads decided to go along (heavens only knows what would have happened if we were caught) and I went with them, and collected a few balls of crochet cotton, which I sent home to my Sister Janet, and she received it safely.

But irony, of irony, before the stuff could be cleared, Jerry landed a direct hit, and with the matches blazing merrily, and the oil in the polish helping, the whole issue was soon burned up,

We were attached to the Anzac Corps and we got better food than we had been having lately, we had a proper bean feast one day, Rabbits were issued out with the ration, we learned later they were a present sent to the Anzac Corps, by the people from down under,

We were very pleased to get them, and another thing dished out, that many of us liked was a new brand of Jam, from Australia (X.L.)

..... brand,

brand, the Melon, and Lemon was a real treat, and we would not have minded, if old Tickler, and a few more Cronies, had gone out of business,

Gradually more Medical Officers were coming to the Camp, several Padres amongst them, Ned got another couple of days in Paris, it was the umpteenth time he had been away, and I amongst others had not had a leave yet.

The servants had properly got into the Sgt. Majors bad books by now, and for us playing him up, he would seize the opportunity, and get a bit of his own back, he was not a bad sort of a chap, one thing stood greatly in his favour, he thought the world of his men, and as all those in authority over us, were at one time, or another in our bad books, just because they did their duty, and we did not like it.

The Sgt. Major, being the uncrowned king of the unit, was after us, and me in particular on this occasion, still guard did me no harm, Vic often was up the line, or in the Theatres, so we were only able to get a chat in at night,

Ballieul was within walking distance, but somehow or other, we kept more, or less to camp.

Ned came back, and going in to his quarters, I was amazed to see scattered all over the floor, 10 - 20 - 50 - and 100, franc notes, I immediately called him, and showed him the mess, and asked him how much there ought to be,

For a wonder, he had some idea, for he was the most careless of mortals as regards money,

I collected it up, and there was nearly 5,500 francs, he said that is right, whether it was, or not, I never knew, but as Vic said, it would have been awkward for you if the wind had blown any outside, and it had disappeared.

One job, I had once, and once only was to go, and get some soda water for the Officers, poor dears they must be looked after, so into Ballieul I went with four bottles, and they actually had a machine installed, and worked by one of our lads.

I told Bolton the job was no bon, carrying four soda water

syphons, several kilo-metres. I was jolly pleased to see they got sparklets in future.

The Officers gave a spread one day, there must have been about thirty of them sat down, they ordered me to wait, or rather help, I had a dust up with the Transport Officer, when I asked him, if he wanted any more meat,

It upset me, and I banged the dish down, and went out, Capt Lescher came out and told me off, to crown it all I was ordered back, but put at the C.Os, end of the table.

After they had well fed themselves, yarns began to flow freely, to C.O. had one, and proceeded to tell it,

A Young Officer fresh out met his guide who in a whisper told him, he was to take him to the unit, after numerous remarks, by the Officer, and further whispering by the guide, the Officer said,

How far is it from the Line,

About 2 miles sir,

Then what are you whispering for,

Got a cold, Sir,

They all had a laugh, I was having mine inwardly, when he looked round and said,

Don't you like jokes,

Yes, Sir,

Well, why can't you laugh,

I will, Sir, when I get to the Mess, and tell the others,

He grinned, and asked me later what I had been before the war.

One day orders were given no man must go, on Windmill Hill,

Somebody did go, a Colonel in the R.F.A. and upon being challenged by a Sgt, Major of the Police, told him who he was, the Colonel was unlucky, the Battery he gave was on the Somme, and the Sgt. Majors brother was in it,

He ordered his hands up, and marched him off, we heard he was a spy, from the other side, come over to scout round, and of course there was only one way with him, to be dealt with.

One day Bolton came rushing into me,

Blink your name is in the next lot of names put up for leave,

Sure enough that night, when orders were read out, so a lot of names for leave, and orders to see the dates, on the notice board outside the Orderly Room,

Round I went, June 10th Pte G.H. Swindell, I was as excited as if I was going right away, instead of a fortnight hence,

I wrote a guarded sort of letter home, hinting that if all was well, I would be home soon, I was not going to make definite statements, for I had been put back so many times, that I was now about the last of the original ambulance to get his leave.

One day about the 3rd of June, I was given a message by Ned, to deliver in Ballieul, some shopping to do for Bolton and one, or two commissions for the lads, and off I went,

It was not much of a walk, all the way by myself, but one thing I noticed in particular, and that was a huge dump of shells, there were huge stacks of thousand and thousands, only seperated from each other by a thick wall, made of dirt, in sandbags, and both sides of a railway line, these dumps stretched,

I got to Ballieul, did my little commissions, had a look round the market, for the country people were in, and set off home, I soon came to the shell dump, for it was only a kilo-metre, outside the town, I got into conversation, with one, or two of the lads working on it, to see if I could find out how many shells there were, one said these two trains just coming in, and it will make a couple of million of all kinds,

If he had said a hundred million I should not have been surprised just then a whistle blew,

They both made off at the double, and shouted to me, that is the enemy aircraft signal, I heard them shouting to the engine drivers, to stop the trains as they were almost abreast of the dumps, and to try and stop the smoke,

But it was too late, I next heard some shouting, to clear, I wasn't a cross country runner for nothing, I run, as fast as I could, when I got a couple of hundred yards up the road I stopped, and had a look, and there coming right overhead was a Jerry, our guns blazing away at him,

..... I darted into

I darted into a field, and hid behind a large tree, the next moment there was a terrific explosion, one of Jerries load of bombs had found its mark,

Jerry got away, and the explosions continued until most of the stocks had blown up, I was lucky in a way for the wind, was in the opposite direction, so the gas from the gas shells, blew away from my direction, unfortunately some of it drifted into Ballieul, and gassed some of the Civilians, by a stroke of good luck, but for a few injuries to men who could not get away, as quick as I did, there was only one man killed,

Our side never mentioned it of course but curiously enough, they published a german report, that a Jerry airman, claims to have blown a huge shell dump up, there claim was round the five million mark,

Still it was a terrific loss to our side, and after things had quietened down, so they brought up more shells to replace, those, Jerry had blown up.

A couple of days later, and it came out on orders, the following men will parade in battle order (with out your pack).

I was done again, four days and I should have been going on leave, instead the stunt they had been preparing for, was going to start.

My Pals commiserated with me, still the authorities didn't trouble over trifles like that, I went to see Sgt. Major Ivens, and asked him if my leave had been cancelled, he said perhaps and perhaps not, it all depends, and if you are to go you will hear on Saturday, and it was Wednesday I was talking to him, and as a lot could happen in three days.

Some of the lads were detailed off to go as bearers to individual units, but, the rest of the bearers were to parade at night under Capt Lescher.

For the rest of the day, the majority of us were writing letters, one never knows, what is going to happen,

Parkins asked me to call, at his Home for him, several wanted razors, and before I went into action with the Lads, it seemed to be taken for granted, that I would go on leave,

.....Late at night

Late at night the Bearers fell in, and off we marched, pass the houses, that had been burned down, up through the village of Neuve Eglise, it was all so quiet, in the distance, we could see the Verey lights going up, but otherwise the world seemed deserted but for us,

Roads that as a rule were full of Ammunition Limbers going up, were now deserted, we marched up to the top of Wind-mill Hill, and there we were halted,

It was a bright night, and we just laid about, some dozing, some talking, at about half past two, we were all formed up, just waiting ? for what we did not know, except that an attack was going to start.

About three o'clock, and Capt Lescher walked about a bit nervy, pulling up his sleeve to the time by his watch, when suddenly the stillness of the night was broken, by one of the larger guns, firing a shell,

It was undoubtedly the Signal.

A short lapse, and then from every point on the slope of a hill on our left, we could see the flashes of guns,

It seemed just like hundreds of dragons, coming to the mouths of there caves, and spitting fire,

No sooner did they start, when the order was shouted for us to quick march, and at the same moment, the earth under our feet, gave a series of terrific tremors,

And before our eyes, in the distance we beheld a sight, that those of us who witnessed it, can never forget,

The hills known as Messines Ridge were suddenly lit up, by the light of the flames, as the mines blew up.

And with the guns barking we marched up, we had not gone a great distance when Jerries shells began to drop,

It seemed as if he was dropping a curtain fire, but we had got to go up, but presently, he took a fancy to the stretch of road we were on.

We had the order, take cover, and we did, by the irony of fate, the only shelter we could possible get, was behind small stacks of shells, he did not manage to get us, and we soon made a bolt for it,

..... and formed

and formed up near a battery of guns, he took a dislike to them, and we had to get a move on from there,

We arrived at the Advanced Dressing Station, at Wulverghem, sometime sooner, than we should have if we had marched up according to rules. but his shelling had helped us along wonderfully,

The front line was some way in front here, but it was empty now, as the Infantry had gone forward when the mines went up,

We were not long at the Dressing Station, when Capt Lescher sent for me get bandages etc, and we are going forward,

He first detailed the different bearers sections off, and leading the way we went up, he pulled out his map, and laid it on the ground, once we had cleared our old lines, and showed me the spot we had to go too,

The next thing he did was to go, and bandage some men up one way, I went the other, to see if I could find others,

Jerry was not limping here so much as one would have expected, presently coming along, I saw a young Jerry, he was un armed, and as he got nearer, I could see he was in pain.

He staggered up to me, and then stood looking peteously at me, I had not yet got over my Brother Franks death, but the look of misery, and pain on his face, soon reminded me of his sufferings,

I slit his sleeve up, and his arm was broken in two places, I had no splints and the only thing handy was the half of a shell, padding his arm well, I laid his arm in, the elbow against the base, put three, three corner bandages as slings, the look of thanks in the poor devils eyes,

I pointed the direction to go, and off he went, repeating a word which sounded to me like donker,

I scouted round, did some more jobs, and went back to Ned, as we were on our way, we were passed by Darkie of the Wilts bringing a batch of prisoners down,

Ned told me to take particular note of where we went, as I would be the guide, and we were well on the way, when we came to a disabled tank, which was in a gully, Ned said this will do, you can see this a long way off, go, and collect any walking wounded, and send them to me,

..... I pointed

I pointed out, it was not much of a place, as soon as gerry spotted it with his planes, he would begin to lamp, he pooh-pooh the idea, and away I went, presently he came running for all he was worth, Jerry had found it, and was trying to hit it,

He settled down by a tree stump, and did his bandaging, any bad cases, we attended to in Jerries dug-outs, both his men, and ours, and marked the places for our lads to clear

Clearing all we could we continued up, and bandaging, and guiding them which way to go,

It seemed rather lonely here, I said that is a Jerry potting at us, it seemed as if it was a bullet on its last lap, he said it can't be, so on we went, we had passed one lot of our Infantry cutting a trench, and were making for a hedge, where we expected to find some wounded, when a voice rang out,

Where the B---y H---l do you think you are, get down you'll have us blown to blazes.

We needed no second bidding, and jumped into a trench, we had with out knowing we were so far forward got to the front line,

Ned found an Officer, and was chatting with him, and I got talking to the Infantry, one pointed out to me a German gun, being limbered up, it was a little out of rifle range of our Lads, and so got away,

They told me that as soon as the mines went up, the Infantry had moved forward, they were not in the first wave, but they reckoned they had advanced so rapidly, that if our side had, had some Divisions to rush through them they would have made a big break in his lines,

They said several of our side, had gone too far forward, and got caught by our own gun fire,

We did not stop here long, and moved along to the left, to see where the Division linked up, with the next one, we came upon a lot of the Irish Div. mixed in with ours,

They were the 36th Irish Division and they had attacked on our left, we learned later that the Australian and New Zealand Divisions had advanced on our right, our division were in the centre,

Leaving the line we wended our way back, we caught up with some

wounded, and they were discussing how Major Redmond had been killed, he was the brother to the Irish Parliamentarian

Further on we stopped, and looked at the mine crater, that was blown up in front of the Irish, at Wheycaete, and then on to the A.D.S.

The wounded were now coming in pretty fast, and Ned helped the other Doctors, whilst I was running round as guide, to lead the different squads to where we had left wounded in dug-outs.

There was one dug out, which sheltered about a dozen german stretcher cases, and amongst them was an Officer.

When our Lads got in their, he ordered them to take him down first, as their orders had been, clear the serious cases first, and he was about the least wounded as regards danger, he was passed over,

When they came back again, he was still unlucky, the third time down he went and as he had Parkins in the squad, who were carrying him, he soon got some sauce, when he ordered them about,

I will report you for not obeying an Officer, when I get down, Tich told him to forget he was an Officer, and remember he was a wounded man first, then a prisoner, and lastly an Officer,

He was as good as his word, for as soon as he got down, to the Dressing Station, he reported them, with all the bounce imaginable, but Ned soon gave him to understand, that his men took their orders from their own Officers, and his men had obeyed orders, when they cleared the dangerous cases first,

He didn't like it, but he got no satisfaction out of Ned,

Away on the right of the attack we had seen the Australian Cavalry going into action, we heard later, that they had lost most of their horses, as Jerry mowed them down, with machine gun fire,

One thing most noticable was the small number of casualties, considering the deep advance we had made,

Late in the day, and still Germans, were coming out of dug-outs, some of them were still showing signs of panic, others were in a state of almost madness, a few who could speak english well, told us what they thought of it,

War do you call it, blowing men up like that is murder,

..... It can be readily

It can be readily understood, by this, what a terrible affair this lot of mines going up must have been, for mine warfare is a small way had been going on for two years.

A little way to our right, another Ambulance out of the division came in for some of Jerries mud, we heard that they had saved a lot of men, mostly badly wounded stretcher cases when he shelled them, but of course had suffered in the process.

Night came, and still there was no rest, it was not a case of large numbers of wounded, it was the quick, and deep-advance that had been made, which caused the wounded to be carried, some where near 5 miles,

We were able to get some food, at the A.D.S. next morning after some of us had a sleep, Ned sent for me, and up we went again

Jerry by now, had got more settled, and was beginning to bang away, and do some damage, this was to be expected, he had already made, one, or two small counter attacks,

Ned was in a brave mood, and I, well I was beginning to get a bit windy, some of his shells were dropping uncomfortably close, once we jumped into a dug out for a while,

I suppose I was thinking too much about I ought to be on leave soon, for when we carried on again, Ned turned to me, and said,

What is the matter with you, I have never seen you like this before,

I replied No. Sir, but when we came up my name was down for leave on Sunday, and bad luck as a rule follows, when you least want it,

He was quiet cheerful about it, for he said, there was no mention on the orders, that came up, so I suppose it is cancelled,

Friday went by, running back-wards and forwards, between the A.D.S. and the Aid Posts, helping carry stretchers, bandaging and any other jobs,

Saturday, and I was still rushing about, feeling as miserable as could be, I went up again with Ned, and we hung about at different places, and got back in the evening, I had given up all hope of Leave, the Lads had commiserated with me,

But a joyful surprise was in store for when Ned opened a dispatch from H.Qs. amongst it was an order for me to go on Leave, and to report

at the Amb. that night,

He sent for me gave me a pound, and hoped I would have a good time, the Lads, chipped me about getting out of it, all I was thinking about was getting down, and I went as quick as I could, and got a lift down.

I arrived at Westhook Farm, and soon had a bath, and a change, and heard how the Nursing Orderlies, had got on, they had nearly sixteen hundred cases through the hospital between 3 a.m. and 12 midnight, the first day, the 7th of June, of course they were from all different Divisions.

Surgeon General Potter, had been to the Ambulance, and with him General Plummer, and congratulated our C.O, on the excellent work of his Ambulance,

I was given a days rations, money and a pass, and away I went to entrain for Hazebrouch,

At last after 21 months in France I was going home, I was about (if not) the last, of the original ambulance to get leave, and now it had come, I could say I was indeed lucky, for not only was the Division engaged in a Battle, when one could not expect to get leave, but it meant I was lucky enough to miss the heavy counter attacks, which would be certain to develop.

We, for I had now joined the rest of the Division, who were going on leave, were soon on board the train, I was the only one from the Ambulance, so I kept to myself, arriving at Boulogne, we had to have an inspection, and those in charge made a haul or two,

Some of the men taken aside, and it was whispered, they would lose their leave, for attempting to take things home, they had been told not to take,

How any soldier, of any regiment could risk his leave, I don't know, I opened my kit for inspection, and got told off for not having my iron rations, every one of the Ambulance, I had spoken too had all said, you don't take iron rations, so I could only conclude, somebody had a liver,

We were next allowed to go to a canteen, and get what we liked, and around some of us went

..... They said

They said the individual who spoke to us was a titled lady, she may have been, but she was a snob as well, and when she spoke to me about, I could have what she had, or leave it, I left her,

I reckoned that as I was to pay for what, I was going to get, I had a perfect right to ask what she had got, still it did not upset me a great deal, and the next thing we walked on board of a steamer, and away we went,

We had not gone far when we could see some destroyers hanging around, the usual rumours, that there were submarines about, I got talking to an R.F.A. man out of our Division, and asked him how Kelly and Lewis, two of our lads who were transferred to the Artillery in 1915, were getting on,

He told me a sorry tale of Lewis,

Lewis was in an Estaminet enjoyed a glass, when he was upset, by the remarks, of another chap, without more ado, he picked him up, and heaved him through the window, and got clink, for umpteen crimes.

Kelly and him were otherwise well, it was funny how we missed them for they were still in the same Division

I next asked him where he was bound for, and too my surprise said Richmond, Surrey,

I said, so am I,

He lived in Princes Road, so we were companions right to Richmond.

We had changed all my French money into English, and as soon as the train arrived at Victoria, from Dover, I went to the Underground, many of the men, had got a journey to Scotland and Ireland which took at least two days off their leave,

But one thing in our favour now was we had seven days leave whereas many of those, who went soon after we came out, only had four days,

It seemed all so strange, and I was feeling as if everybody knew, I was from overseas, that I got home as quickly as I could,

And what a homecoming, it was as if I had suddenly emerged from one world, and entered another, My Mother and Sister Jan, in turns fussed about me, anyone would be sure to think they were welcoming an hero

..... Still it was

Still it was very nice to be Home again it was such a change that, I felt all at sea, and had to leave the arrangements all to Mother,

The first thing I did was to write too Guys, Colonel, and explained that I would appreciate his kindness if he would let my Brother home for a day,

I got a curt answer saying No. well with over two days out of my seven, to be spent in travelling, I could not spare time to go down to see him,

It was just one more example of the little acts, those in authority could do, and would not,

Doll came over with her boys and I went once to see them,

I did all my Commissions for the lads,

Went and got my rations for the time, I was home, and was surprised at the rotten food, that Mother and Janet had, the more so as there was never any shortage for us, although of course we did not always get it, but what we did get was of good quality, whereas at home, it did not seem at all good,

I was able to get a joint

It was the largest piece of meat Mother and Jan had seen for months,

I knew the girl at the Grocers Counter at Cappens, so was able to get an extra lot of tea and sugar,

My feelings about this were anything but happy, there were the men folk, out at the war, and knowing that their women folk were not getting enough food,

One day I had gone for a walk through the Park, and got into conversation with a man who was looking at the Soldiers in the South African Hospital,

I notices he did not seem to speak very nicely about them, so I asked him what was up,

I was surprised when he said he was not in the Army, for he was young, strong and able bodied, but I was more surprised, when in answer to his question, said I was on leave from France, for him to say that us chaps on munitions are in as much danger, as

..... them out there

them out there when we are making shells, and we have to buy our own clothes, and food, and we have to work longer hours,

I didn't feel in a mood, to either argue with him, or have a row,

So I just said, look here, you are making shells, and they take every precaution where you work to see they do not explode where you are, but at the same time you take every precaution to see they explode where you are sending them and that is where we are,

You buy your own food and clothes out of several pounds a week, we get if we are lucky seven shillings a week,

You have a proper bed to sleep in, we sleep where we can,

You are in comparative safety over here, wherever we go we meet trouble,

You live like civilised people, we live like rabbits, burrowing anywhere for safety

And you say you are suffering as much as those out there,

Well is that is your view, just go home, and think over what I have told you, remember you are going back to your shell making, and remember I am going to pick up the men, that the likes of you, in Germany have made shells to main, and killed, and if you still think you are giving as much, I shall be surprised,

He laughed, and said I have heard lots of queer yarns from men on leave, and so I left him, glad to get away,

Continuing my walk, I called on, an old Friend, a Miss Froggett, who worked at Sunnyside, Richmond Hill, we were having a good talk, and laughed about different things, and did not hear Miss Davies, one of the Daughters of the house come in,

She asked me all about our work, and as she turned to go said,

I suppose you are looking forward to the end of your Leave, so that you can get on with your work again ?

I said, No,

She was very surprised, and said why George, you are the first Soldier, I have heard say, he was not looking forward to going out again,

So I replied, well I am the first one you have heard speak the truth,

..... for no one,

for no one is anxious to go to a place, where they may get killed directly they get there, you have misunderstood what they meant,

They did not mean they wanted to go where they might be killed but that they did not want to shirk.

I went to the pictures with Mother and Jan, time was fleeting, and my Leave would still end on the appointed day, I crowded in every minute that I could, but all good things come to an end

The night before I was to go back, we stayed up until the small hours, and I had to be off early,

I left home with anything but a light heart, I still felt that I would see them again, but I had missed seeing Guy, and Tom,

Mother made me up a big parcel and what with the things I was taking back for the Lads I was well loaded,

I got to Victoria, and met the young R.F.A. man, and we were soon away to Dover, and so ended, what had been a trip Home to remember,

I had taken a lot of cuttings, out of the Papers, so that the Lads should see them, and the full story of the Battle of Messines.

I arrived back at Westhock Farm before noon, to find all the Lads packed up, and then whole camp ready to move off,

My Chums chipped me, Lucky Old Blink, you worked it alright,

I certainly was lucky not to have to go up the Line directly I got back,

I reported to the Orderly Room then to my Officer, and then I went in the ranks, for the men had lined up, and off we went,

So after the Division had been in the Battle for sixteen days, they were releived, and all units march back for a rest.

One man from the 2nd Batt. the South Lancashire Regiment got the V.C. in our unit several men gained decorations, one thing the Lads could not get over about this affair, was that the names were drawn out of a hat, of course this was no new thing, for at the Landing at Gallipole, the Lancashire Fusiliers, had 6 V.Cs, and the whole six were drawn for,

..... We marched

We marched through Ballieul, and around pass many of the Villages we had been in before, and were getting well away, when Jerries areoplanes spotted troops on the march,

A Division at full strength had about 20,000, men, allowing for casualties, and replacements, I do not suppose there were under the number of 15,000 on the road, all units in different roads of course, but a number like that gave his airmen a chance to do some damage,

We were halted at one place hiding under the trees, when we saw one of Jerries planes, get hit, by the aircraft guns,

The next moment it was seen to be in flames, the rear part fell away and the machine dived towards the earth, the quicker it fell, the more the flames shot out, it landed in some woods, a good distance off, and it would have been impossible for the men in it to be alive, for as well as flames, doing damage, it must have fallen about three miles.

We had so many hold ups, that we were hours behind time, Capt Lescher called me, and said, Capt Cartlett is going in the ambulance car, to see the Billets are alright, tell the cooks, we shall be several hours late, and have a meal prepared for the men, so once more luck was with me, and I was saved a long tramp.

I got in the Motor Ambulance with Capt, Bartlett, and away we went, and at last reached the place we were to billet in, it was a small hamlet, and a canal was just a couple of hundred yards away.

Sgt. Currell had gone round with Capt, Bartlett, and seen to all the Billets, and I had told the cooks what was holding the Lads back, and I suggested to them, that it would be better to have the fire, two rows of bricks, the coal in between, in the shed, for the fire would show up, when it was dark, but they had put it there, and there it was to stop, I went back, to get all the Officers Billets in order,

Presently as dusk was falling, Capt Bartlett, came rushing into where I was, and said, go, and tell them to put that fire out, there were half a dozen planes about, and all around us, they were getting places, as well as troops in line,

..... I set off

I set off down the road as fast as I could possibly run, and got there, and called but no cooks, I heard a roar of a plane, in a panic rush I kick the dixies over to douse the fire, got a shovel to throw dirt on,

When with a roar, of his engines, telling me he was on me, I made a dash for the farm-yard, two bombs dropped, into a stable I went, but pulled up sharp, there were ten bombs dropped in a few seconds all round the farm, and a horse in the stable, frantic with fright was kicking for all he was worth, it was a case of death in the front, and death in the rear,

He circled round twice, and then made off, I went to the Farm-house to see if any one was in, at last found the whole household in a cellar,

The Old Dame rushed up to me, shook her fist in my face, and screamed and raved at me, all I could make out, was that the Anglais Soldat No Bon, (English Soldier no good),

The rest of the household, were rushing round, and moaning, and pointing to all the windows, and well they might, for their was not a pane of glass, left in the frames,

The front garden, and hedge were in a sorry plight, and inside the house, the rooms were littered, with glass,

The upshot was that it was all replaced, the cost to fall on the British Army.

I had reported to Capt. Barlett and he said in his usual way,
Splendid Fellow, Splendid Dellow,

I had not felt over spendid,

He next told me to walk along the road, by the Canal, and see
if the Amb. was coming that way, and let them know they were near.

I saw some dirty work, with stores from barges, the french
people were doing very well, all their carts, etc loaded up with,
hay, coal, food, and other things.

The trouble was they were our stores, and I heard later that
some of them were caught redhanded,

I met the Ambulance, and they had had just as exciting a time,
as the planes had been hanging around all day,

They not only got here about eight hours late, but I was able
to tell them that their would be nothing hot for some time.

Eventually the cooks, had some tea ready about 2 a.m.

We did not stay here but moved further back, to the Bony Area,
not far from St Omer.

We were milleted very comfortably here, C. Section had a nice
barn, I was not able to go their at once, as I had to go to my
Officers Billet,

I got round later on, and Vic, and Tich Parkins had spread
their kit out, so I was between them,

These two men, different, yet the same, I liked more, and more
as time went on, Bolton of course I was always on good terms with,
but I was not in the Mess like him, so really saw very little of him,

The likeness between Vic, and Tich to me was, they were liked
by one and all, they were both men who it was a treat to be with in
the Line, both stretcher bearers, and in almost all their actions,
they more or less showed the same ideal of comradeship,

And in spite of all these similiaralities, there was one big
difference, one was for ever with a joke on his lips, I have been
in Parkins company, when the next moment, might have been the last,
but he joked.

Vic, was serious,

But they were two great Pals to me.

The usual routine started, letter writing, a few fatigues, and drills, which I dodged, as I often helped our shoe-maker, Harry Johnston, from Durham, who had joined us, with Peter Keppe at Bousencourt.

Not far from the Village, in the Valley, was a very nice stream, and we were allowed to swim in it, I had a number of dips, but not being a swimmer I used to watch the others,

There were several very good, but the best of them was Young Jack Davis.

He was a great Pal of Teddy Parrot, and Bill Jagger, he was like a fish in the water, and seemed to be able too swim in all ways, with ease,

He swam one day fifty yards, under water for a bet, some week or two later, one of the Lads, read in his (Athletic News) that was sent him, a paragraph, which ran as follows,

"I have had a letter from the well known and promising young swimmer, Jack Davis, that his unit, the 77th F.A. is at present on rest, and he has been able to have a swim daily".

He was rather on the stout side, and had the usual army nicknames, but he never spoke about himself, or what he could do, and we were surprised when we read who he was.

We had a Padre here named East, and one day I was listening to him, talking about his life, in the Camps in Canada, he was no drawing room Padre,

More than once he was spoken too, because he went into the Estaminets with the Lads, and ordered drinks all round,

He was popular, and when occasion arose, would, have a little swear, or a drink, or a sing-song.

One thing about here, we not only had football, and cricket galore, but we were allowed to go for long walks, Vic and Wally King and myself sometimes walked miles, and I was happy in their company, and enjoyed the talks we had, the war did not enter into our conversations.

Wally King was a male nurse in the M.A.B. and he was allowed so much of his weekly pay, as to make up with his Army pay, what he would receive in his wages, had he remained.

The Secretary advised him, to let him invest it in War Savings Certificates which he did, and he must have had a good number when he left the Service.

He was a fine big chap, but like many other big men, he was rather on the shy side and never once did I know personally, or hear of him taking advantage of it,

He used to tell us about his work in Civil Life, and he had a happy way of telling it, his Brother, Freddy King, was a Sergeant, in the Ambulance.

Vic sometimes could be drawn out, as regards his work, very seldom though, but once about now, (for I sometimes thought he would have to leave us, he was really so ill, but he would admit it to no one but me) I was to hear about his work, he had had a very good education, and was apprenticed, to a Silversmiths in Birmingham,

And he discovered the secret of how to make a frame, when you looked at it appear flat, and yet when the edge was held to your eye, it was in reality oval or rounded,

He was very plain in stating, that it was only in his particular line it was of use, as it only worked out with silver,

It must of a surety been, very useful, for the terms he got from his employer, were not given by them for nothing, and as he explained, it was due to a clause in this agreement, that he married, so that his Wife should benefit.

Our Divisional Concert Party was now getting a very good Party, and when we could get to see them, we took advantage of the opportunity,

Most of us managed to see them once whilst we were on rest,

The songs were A.1. such as,

Major General Worthington,

We used to enjoy the bits

And the greatest Charge, I have ever seen done, was one and nine a bottle, for a Worthington, and

Said the King one day, will you have a V.C. I said not me, I would sonner, have a bottle of Worthington.

There was a good Comedian, also a ventriloquist, another made a good looking girl, when dressed up,

The latter, and the leading man, used to sing a song, sometimes, that was on in London, and it began,

Something goes ting a ling, ling,

Ned one Saturday night, had been out enjoying himself, and next morning he went to Mass, and I am afraid he would have been very surprised, if he had heard the remarks of the Lads.

Time went by, and as usual, the rumours began to go round, they were settled, when we had read out on Orders, the unit will p parade, tomorrow, etc.

We had another surprise in store for us, when we lined up, for we were marched a short distance, and met some Busses, good old Londons own, and into these we packed, for the running of troops up towards the Line, we agreed they were A.1.

We got off, just before we entered Poperinghe, we heard then, the Division was going into the Line in front of Ypres.

This was the first time we had been on this Sector, there had not been any big attacks here, so did not know what to think about it, of course before we came out there had been terrible fighting, with very heavy casualties, if it was to be trench holding, as had been going on for sometime we had heard enough of this place, to know it was Hell, with the lid on as the Lads would say,

We lined up, and marched through Poperinghe, this was a rather large town on the borders of France and Belgium, and through a rather knocked about place named Vlamertinghe, the country beyond this, had that look of desolation, that can only come to a place, that has been once occupied and then left.

We carried on, and presently, turned off the road, and made for a large house, known to us afterwards, as the White Chateau.

Somebody found out, that this house belonged to the German General Hindenburg, if so, that no doubt explained, why the majority of the houses round about, were ruins, and this one was intact.

We had not been here very long, when some of our large guns, not far away from us, began lamping Jerry,

Some of us were billeted in a dug out, or rather a shelter against a wall made with sandbags, most of the Lads were in, and about the Chateau.

During the night Jerry tried to find the guns, and we heard, what we called, his india rubber nosed shells, coming over periously near, that were proper wind up makers, but fortunately none of us were hit.

I didnt have much to do for my Officer, here, the first thing most of us did was to go game hunting in our shirts, and as a nice brook about fifteen feet wide ran through the grounds, we had a dip, and not only got caught polluting water, by an Officer who was coming by, testing it for drinking purposes, but a number of Jerry planes were about, and I suppose, thought it a good chance,

So as soon as his mud, began to land, some jumped back into the water including the Officer, unfortunately for him, he was dressed, we were all in our birthday suit, the others grabbed up their clothes and made a dash for it.

A lot of the Lads went up, some to Lille Gate, some to Canal Bank, and some to the Menin Road.

Now this place Ypres, was known in England as the Gateway to the Channel Ports, that of course was coming away from the Line, going up the Lads had another name for it, the Gateway to Hell.

I never did any stretcher bearing, only messages etc, but I saw enough of the locality, to make me more than satisfied.

Going up for the first time, we had just entered the square, when Jerry had one of his spells of shelling,

Anywhere was good enough for shelter, and then when he eased up, we marched off in little batches, we could see the remains of the Cathedral, and the Cloth Hall,

There must have been millions of shells dropped on this town, known to us as Wipers,

The Infantry men said to us, they would sooner be in the front Line, or as most of them were, in shell holes or saps, than going backwards and forwards, for he was looking down on us, and as the front lines were close together, they were not shelled a great deal,

it was of course no joke being in the front line, far from it, but the inability to have decent trenches, made the going backwards and forwards a much dreaded job, and the casualties were twenty times heavier, than we had experienced in other parts, with trench warfare.

The particular Sector, we were on was astride the Menen Road, and it looked as lonely and desolate a road, as could be imagined,

On either side for miles it seemed as if some huge scythe, had been at work, a few shattered houses, and whole clumps of trees with their beheaded trunks all heights, the whole earth, one endless mass of shell holes, with here, and there a line of duck-boards to help you get over this morass.

The Advance Dressing Station, on the Menin Road, was amongst houses the last after passing through Ypres, and it was here, that Vic, Jock Fraser a forester from Banffshire, Scotland, and Fred Messenger, did a deed, which earned them the Military Medal,

The next houses to the A.D.S. were full of thousands of gallons of Petrol, in their search with five nines he managed to hit, one of the houses and bursting a few petrol tins, the contents caught alight, and these three rushed in, and pulled the blazing tins out, and so not only saved terrible fire, which would have brought down on this locality a bombardment by Jerry, but also saved the lives of many wounded, who were in the next house,

But I always had an idea that the reason the three got the M.M. was that they had saved the petrol, which was very shortly to be used, and would have been impossible to replace, for if he had blown these houses to bits, there would have been nowhere, to hid it, until dugouts were built,

I never heard of this from any of the three, and would never have heard if the M.M. had not been granted, unless it had come up in conversation, for deeds were the rule out here, not words.

The canal banks, and just behind were honeycombed with gun pits, and many of them with new guns.

We could see by the great preparations that an attack was to be carried out here, the Artillery had a terrible job here, and the number of casualties, were getting more day after day,

The number of gun limbers, many of them loaded with ammunition, that he got direct hits on, was amazing, I do not know, if he suffered likewise on his side, but even if we had not been in this sector before, we were going through the mill, enough now, to make the Division wish, they had never seen it,

The Artillery ammunition went up after dark if possible, but there is not a great deal of darkness on July nights, and so you could see them up there, before dusk at times.

I never took particular notice of other Divisions Artillery, but ours had two White and one Indian Driver to a team the Indian in the centre.

And on several occasions, I saw these limbers going up, sometimes they would be at the gallop, for he had spotted them, and was shelling, othertimes the road would be in such a condition, that they were going only at a trot.

And never once did, I witness any sign of wind up, on the part of these Indians, however much he was shelling these men would be as calm as if on parade.

There are times when a shell lands a few feet away, that the bravest might wince, but not these Indians, as one of the Artillery white drivers said, they look upon it as glory, and honour, to get killed in War, and that immortality is the lot of him who is killed in Battle, no wonder they loved to be with our Lads out there, although the cold must have been terrible for them.

Cutting across the Canal, which was dry, was a wide wooden road, made of railway sleepers, it ran south of Ypres and was mainly laid down for the use of the Artillery, and it was a sight to see the wagons going along it, it was known as the

"Warrington Track"

and the journeys up, and down were such as the moved one driver to write some verses about it, although not a poet his verses give a glimpse of what this road was like.

The Wooden Track

There's a place not far from Ypres, Sir
To the eastward on the map,
The place is the Warrington Road, Sir

..... Better known

Better known as the Wooden Track.

And when they get the order,
 "Be ready sharp, at nine",
 You'll see the Drivers mounted,
 And Ready for the Line.

For the Guns are always calling,
 For shells, both night, and day,
 And as they near the place of Fate,
 They think of Home, and Pray.

They pray to God, in Heaven,
 To bring them safely back,
 And give them strength, and courage,
 To get over the Wooden Track.

For tis then, they need the courage,
 As they gallop up the Track,
 Though shells fall around like hailstones,
 There is no turning back.

Though tragic in its splendour,
 To the scene that melts the eye,
 The bravest, and the best, Sir,
 Have gone there, oft too die.

This is the place for heroes, Sir,
 May the story be ever new,
 Of the 25th Division,
 Who wear the Red Horse Shoe.

Driver D.L. Mullen, R.F.A.

During a spell down at the White Chateau, I was sleeping in the
 dug-out, I had been in, when we came here first,

L cpl Collinge, a rather older man, than the majority of the Lads, and a nursing orderly, was sleeping furthest from the entrance, I was next, and then others, to the number of a dozen.

One night, I was awakened, by Collinge treading on my chest, I thought he would break it, and I gasped out some remark, when somebody said, shut up Blink, he was walking in his sleep.

I was too hurt to argue about that, when I came to my senses, after he had used me as a door mat, I noticed he was talking as well,

There is one coming, there is one coming,

The uncanniness of it, for it was the dead of night, was too much for us, and we were soon out of there, and kipping in the cellars of the Chateau,

And sooner than many of us, cared to think about it, Jerry dropped a shell on our late sleeping quarters.

Needless to say, I did not have a row with Collinge, although my chest was sore for some days.

When we were allowed, only a few at a time, we would go off to Poperinghe, I myself only got in once, and round a back street, on the other side of the road to a Church, was a house where you could get refreshments.

Into this we went, and passed a pleasant hour away, we had signed our names in a book as we entered.

(I do not supposed that any of us dreamt, that this house, was the beginning of a movement that is now world wide. it was the birth place of Toc H.).

One day there had evidently been something doing, for we saw when we were in Poperinghe, a number of bills, printed in English pasted up, and we naturally went to see what was on them.

Who ever ordered them to be put up, must have been very indiscreet.

It was bad enough us having to read it, but to let every tom, dick, and harry, among the civilian population, of the Flemish, was a thousand times worse, and many were the remarks, about letting us down.

It seems that, a Sgt. (—) of the (—), had gone over to the enemies lines, and given himself up, was evidently taken to their Brigade Headquarters, gave a long detailed description of the preparations, being made by us, and the rough idea, of the number of guns, etc and many other helpful bits of information.

One British Batt. made a raid on his lines at night, and penetrated a good depth, and seized many documents, as well as prisoners, only on getting back, was the document, found amongst other papers, and the Sergeants signature at the end of it.

It was deplorable, that a British soldier should do such a thing, and if he had been caught when the raid was on he would have been shot at dawn, for myself, as just an ordinary Tommy, I never heard, or read of anything so dirty.

The remarks of men who read the Public Notice, are not drawing room remarks, so I will omit them.

Going for a stroll towards Dickiebusch, as there was a Y.M.C.A. in a small dugout in the side of the road I met Bill Jagger.

He was not his usual jovial self, sensing something amiss, I just talked as usual, when he turned to me, and said,

Blink, Lad, I am going to get killed next time up,

I tried to turn his mind, into another channel, but of no avail, he smiled, and said, its alreet Blink, are noes whats thee doing, but I know it.

I felt rather upset, for I knew this was so unlike him, that he had either a premonition, or was perhaps losing his nerve, the latter from Bill Jagger, was almost incredible.

I tried to talk, but I felt too miserable inwardly, all at once, he started talking about his Sisters.

He had not long before this, been on leave, and he was telling me what good Sisters they were and how they had tried to reform him,

But I went my own way Blink, and then when I joined up, they were that proud of me, and the last words, as I came away, were,

Look after yourself, for our sakes Willy, you are all we have, and we always pray for your safe return to us, we have prayed all along, and we feel our prayers were answered.

..... With tears in his eyes

With tears in his eyes, he said, I know I shall never see them again, I wish I had been a better Brother to them,

I tried again to cheer him up, and he did, become, a little more like his old self, but I felt it was only because he had been able to open his heart,

It was not long before this talk was to come back, to me, and so I will write of this later.

Being in the courtyard of the Chateau one day, we were watching some railway men laying some new lines, when all of a sudden, we heard the ominous rat-tat-tat- of a machine gun, and saw a Jerry plane having a go at them, he scattered them in all directions fortunately he did not hit any of them,

But one of our Lads, Ernie Clough gave a yelp, as a bullet hit his elbow, he was lucky, for it had spent its force, and so he only received a bruise.

One of the sights was the fighting in the air, Jerry was trying to get over, and see what we were doing, and ours were busy, trying to stop him,

Both sides had plenty of Observation Ballons, where ever you went, they had a view of your wanderings, and no wonder, both sides, used to raid them.

One day a Jerry came over, and made a rush at some, it was a wonderful sight, to see the terrific speed, he went at, five of them, one after the other he brought down, by firing into the Gasbag, and setting fire to it, and as wonderful was the sight of the Observers, all coming down to earth in their parachutes.

One particularly bright day, the planes went up by their scores, and we were able to witness, the most wonderful air-fight, it had been our chance to gaze on,

I counted seventy eight, and so did the others, but some who were the other side of the wood, counted, one hundred and thirty two, from both sides of course.

They were at all heights, some just seemed, to be flying backwards and forwards, along the line, but others were going for each other.

Several crashed, others flew away to their areodromes, but it seemed that the heavens, over the Line, either side of the Menin Road, was the battle ground, and as some left, so others took their place, it was a marvellous sight.

Tommy Barrass, met his Brother again, the Gun he was on, was stationed, at the side of the road, well camouflaged, not more than two, or three hundred yards from us, and some of us were in their company, when they were talking about Home, and the greatest trouble to them, was the fact that the miners, in their home town, were raking in the golden gobblins, whilst they were enjoying, a bit over a shilling a day.

One family, relations, never earned less than thirty two pound a week.

We were surprised when the Division was releived, during the last week in July, by the 8th Division, from whom we had a few weeks earlier taken over this Sector of the Line,

We moved out a little way, and we settled down by the road-side, near a place called Busseboom,

I was laying on my back, gazing heavenwards, at Jerry, he was dropping some bombs, fortunately he was, about forty yards, away with his nearest, when I saw some R.A.M.C. men, not belonging to our Division go walking by,

One of them, and myself, recognised the other at the same time, as he shouted hullo George, I said hullo Dickie, I got up and went over to him,

He was an old school chum, named Richard Standen, we were both in the same class at school, we had not met since those days over eight years before,

He took me over to a little dug out, where he kipped, and made me some tea, and we had a talk about old times,

I did not see him again as he moved that afternoon, the sky did not look too certain, so we fixed up our ground sheets with the aid of some bits of wood, and made certain of keeping the ground dry, we were to sleep on.

That evening about dusk, a huge gun, some said it was, eighteen inches, whatever it was, it was easily the largest,

I had seen, was brought up on the railway lines, by an engine

They loaded it up, with a huge shell, there was a terrific roar, the brakes scattered sparks in all directions, the nozzle of the gun waggled, the flame burst out after the shell, had left the barrel, then smoke all thick looking yellow, and green, and all ^{the} camouflage from the end of the gun, had been burned off by the terrific heat,

This little toy came up, and in its playful way, sent over, four, five or six love messages, and then skiddadled, and any mud of Jerrys, coming over to find it, came in our locality, I suppose it served its purpose, but the novelty soon wore off, as far as we were concerned, and we didn't mind, if Jerry did blow up the Line, as we would quite willingly, have done without our nightly gaze at it.

They changed the time each evening, and despite his planes, he never once got near it, in spite of the fact that it was right in the open, one of the crew told us, it was firing, at a place twenty five miles away,

Each night, Jerry would pay a visit, and drop his eggs, once he dropped an ariel torpedo, nearly six feet in length, it dropped between two tents, full of men, and was a dud, if it had exploded, it would very likely, have killed the lot,

The same evening, he dropped a bomb on a field across, the road to us, and all through, a brave sergeant, who to show he was not afraid of bombs, had a candle alight, and as was invariably the case, the innocent, suffered for the guilty.

He escaped, and those in the next tent, shared the bomb amongst them,

My Officer, was asbad, he was in a tent with Capt. Barlett, and in spite of the fact, that the warning of planes over, was issued, he kept his light on, it was a pitch black night, and it would be very noticeable to a Jerry plane.

Some of the Lads shouted,

Put out that (- - - -) light,

It was still alight, and the droning of Jerrys planes, were

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getting to plain to be pleasant, there were we, two hundred of us, with all we had for protection, a waterproof sheet,

Presently he dropped a bomb,

That did it,

Discipline, respect for superior officers went by the boards,

And a crowd of voices roared out,

Put that (- - - -) light out Ned,

Call yourself an Officer, Lescher, and scores of different remarks, which as they succeeded each other, not only got more pointed, got more insulting, and were freely intermixed, with curses, and oaths, that only a deaf man, could not have heard, and out went the light.

I could not for the life of me, understand him doing such a senseless thing, to endanger his own life, by disobeying orders, was his look-out, but to endanger, the lives of the rest of the Ambulance, was not playing the game, and he went down a bit more, in the estimation of the men, which after all, was a very serious thing, as the talks, I heard left the impression only too plainly, that bit by bit, the men were losing confidence in him,

He was a brave man, I will not say he was fearless, but I am certain that, it was only his actions up the line, that saved him from open contempt, as it was they could admire courage, but at the same time, he upset them, by the disregard he showed for them at times,

Next morning, I went to his tent, to give him his bath, and shaving water, when Capt. Bartlett called me in,

He had evidently been talking, over the affair of the light, with Capt Lescher, for he said to me, what was all the shouting about last night,

I said the men objected, to you having a light on, when Jerry was overhead,

There you are, Lescher, I told you, it was the light, that upset the men.

Capt Lescher, said in a plaintive tone, (very unusual for him), well it was I who would have been injured not them.

I said, that is where the men differ from you Sir, for they

..... were convinced

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were convinced that if he had dropped any bombs, it would have been them, who would have got hit, and not you, the same as the Sergeant across the road,

He was wild, but he was also upset, and from his words, and manner, I think it was more with himself.

On the 30th July, I was in Capt Leschers, tent seeing to his things, when he came in, he told me the attack was coming off in the morning, and that he wanted me to study the Map, he had,

He said, I am going to this point, and I want you to go to this point, it was a Farm, twelve kilometres behind his Lines, and establish a Dressing Station, and guide the Wounded, and Bearers to it,

I was of course, on my honour, so I did not speak about it, but I could not help thinking, that those in Power, were either unduly optimistic, or had a rod in pickle for him such as at the Battle of Messines.

The Ambulance moved up that day to the White Chateau again, and it was to be H.Q. once again we were in Reserve, we had been the same on the Somme, and when the 31st of July came and the Third Battle of Ypres started, we were once again, a Mobile Division, our Division was to go through, and take over from the Eight Division, and carry on with the good work.

Well the Battle started, and hell was let loose with a vengeance, the roar of our guns, the explosion of our shells, was deafening, the first news we heard was taking everything before them, but alas it was only rumours, and the attack was by no means the success that was hoped for, and then too crown it all, fate took a hand,

It rained in torrent, it really seemed as if the Gods, had taken sides, whenever we attacked, rain came, and held us up, when he attacked, it kept fine,

Well our Division took over from the Eight Division (who by the way had a real martinet for a G.O.C. Major Gen Heniker). that advance had not come off, it was nearer two, than twelve Kilometres,

And the rain had come, and the Ambulance went up, we had

..... to halt,

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to halt, for some time in Ypres, and at the finish we had to run the guantlet, and get a move on, we were in lucks way, there were no casualties.

The Advanced Dressing Station, was established in a deep dug-out on the side of the Menin Road, half a mile from Hooge.

The surrounding country was a quagmire, the shell holes, had over-lapped each other so much, that there were scarcely any holes, that were made by one shell,

And the majority of the holes were waterlogged, the water all colours of the rainbow,

As is only natural the water drain away, and it came through so quickly into the dug out, that men who were taking a rest from stretcher bearing, were on the pumps in relays, and this pumping went on night, and day,

In true Army fashion, it was most carefully pumped up, to the outside world, scattered round about, and so soaked through again, and again, and the merry game went on, until we were all heartily sick and tired of pumping.

The Eighth Division, had made their advance, under terrific fire, and as a result they had lost terribly.

When our Division took over, they were absolutely done for, tired out, weary, hungry, and so unutterably worn out, that they scarcely had the energy to get out and to crown their miseries, Jerry took his toll of those coming out,

Over two hundred of their wounded were left behind, and the first job was to clear them, it was obviously impossible for the Lads to clear them by themselves and Infantry, Engineers, and anybody that could be spared, were given a stretcher between six, we only had four as, we were used to it, and it was close on twenty four hours, before the last of the Eighth Division had been cleared, and our own Divisions casualties, were mounting up, I did very little stretcher bearing, I was mostly running about, on one occasion, he was lamping so heavily, the wounded man, had got the windup properly,

He implored us to take him to a disabled Tank, but of course we did not go, we had, had enough experience of Tanks, to know,

..... that where

that where they were, so would Jerries shells be,

We hid in shell holes, and anywhere, we could tuck in, and when he eased up, we got up, and carried on, the tank, had been hit, it was well alight, and the rat-tat-tat, of the bullets inside, sounded as if a dozen machine guns were firing,

The wounded man, was glad we had not put him in there for safety.

The number of disabled Tanks, about was disheartening, and one began wondering if they were, half the use they were intended for, of course the conditions were really against, any vehicle getting along, but these affairs, had been boosted up so, that they had evidently not been tested, under conditions, they would have to face out here.

Our Division was going through it, and the Stretcher Bearers, were day, and night trudging through the mud of Flanders, it seemed all mud, with wounded,

The Bearers only carried them to the dugout, on the Menin Road, and the Motor Ambulances came up to a place called Birr Cross Roads, half way between the dugout, and the Hell Fire Corner spot.

It was roughly a mile from Ypres, and you could see the Road the whole way, Jerry would be lamping away, on the Menin Road, presently he would stop, like a racing car, the Army Service Corps, Mechanical Transport Driver, would bring the Motor Ambulance down to the Birr Cross Roads, he would turn it round as quickly as he could, in would go the stretcher cases, and away up the Road, raced the Motor Ambulance again, and then would come another, and another, until the wounded had been cleared.

After the first few days of the Battle there were so many wounded, and another way was carried out, at Birr Cross Roads, just about a yard from the Menin Road, was a small dug-out affair, evidently put there for some special purpose, it was not the usual kind of dug-out, for it was more like a shed, put on top of the earth, the wall were three sand-bags thick, on three sides, the fourth abit sheltered by the bank of the road was open.

The top was three baby elephants, extra thick corrugated iron, and a splinter, or a bullet, or shrapnel ball would bounce off,

only a direct hit would penetrate.

They decided to carry the stretcher cases and put them in here, and wait till the Motor Ambulance came, which might, be five minutes, or half an hour,

This job, for you had to sit in this place until the Ambulance came, was looked upon as a Jammy one, and those who felt a bit groggy, or who had been carrying wounded till they were worn out, were put in here, and so were enabled to have a rest, they would be there for twelve hours and the nick-name given to this shelter, was the Y.M.C.A.

Capt Lescher and I went down to H.Q. for a couple of days, I was lucky, for the Stretcher Bearers were kept in the dug-out by the Menin Road, when they were not carrying wounded, a small attack was due in the morning, so the day previous we went up again.

We had a lift as far as Ypres, in an Ambulance, and then continued the rest of the way on foot,

We just cleared Ypres, and we were on the Menin Road near Hell Fire Corner, when he started, shelling the Road, and the surrounding country, for all he was worth, the Road in particular.

It was no use going back, for he was shelling there, so Capt Lescher said come on Swindell, we will try, and get to the dug-out, so I said what about my load,

I was loaded up like a Christmas Tree, so he took half my load, it was a rotten spell, and that mile took us nearly two hours, it was impossible to get onto the Road, they were dropping there every half minute, and the trench was battered in, at the side of the road, what was left of it was full of mud, but that way was the safest, and that way we went, and at last, reached the dug-out, fed up to the eyebrows.

The Lads had been up to their eyes in work, we had had several casualties, so far none fatal, although several serious the rain, had caused extra hands to be put on the pumping, and to add to the burden of carrying, and very little sleep, rations were not to plentiful, and no fuel was sent up to cook any food, a little tea was made.

Our Lads were going through it enough, but the poor Infantrymen, were worse off still, our Lads could get a biscuit, and a bit of bully beef at a pinch, which was the only food sent up, but the Infantry, in a great many cases, had to wait until they were relieved, which had to be more frequent than was usual, for the cold, and wet conditions were causing a deal of sickness, as well as shells, and bullets casualties.

I had occasion to take refuge, in one of Jerry's famous pill boxes, I was told it was full of German dead, when our side captured it, but none of them had a wound, they were killed by the explosion by one of our heavy shells right in the mouth of the pill-boxes, which must have displaced something in there heads, and one could well understand it, for they were so solidly built, that the majority of shells, scoring direct hits, just bounced off,

But I witnessed something here, that upset me, as well as many others who saw it, there in captured German Pill-boxes, were sacks galore, all marked in English, the contents (Cement) had been manufactured in England during the War, sold to neutral Countries, sold to the Germans, by them, and used by the Germans, to make these strong pillboxes, for defensive purposes and protection

And our Lads had got to go, and capture, these almost impregnable little fortress, with no more protection, than a piece of cloth, the casualties caused by there capture, by machine guns in them, were enormous.

And at Home, where our men looked for help, there were men, (I have not the slightest doubt, unknowingly) making Cement, that would reach the enemy, and so help Jerry, in the slaughter of their fellow countrymen, it was tragic.

The Padre, who had been in Canada met his end here, he was taking the Lads round anything he could, when Jerry hit him, and so died Padre East, not a drawing room clergyman, but a man, who was loved and respected.

The Medical Officer of the 3rd Worcs a tall man of huge build, over six feet was wounded, our Lads much against their

wishes, were told to take him down, they protested, but in vain, six were detailed off to carry him down, they had no sooner left the dug-out, than they shared a shell amongst them

Four were killed, two wounded, all through them being ordered, to take him down, he was dying, there was no earthly hope, for them to get the poor man down alive, I am certain, no private would have been sent down, it was only the M.O. being an Officer,

We were very upset when we heard the news, it arrived soon afterwards, when our wounded came in, it was the start of our heavy casualties,

The men were getting nothing warm, so I asked Capt Lescher, to have some Jam and Ideal Milk, and plenty of oil, for some primus stoves, that fortunately were here, sent up if he could, he gave me a signed paper, and I wrote plenty on it, and went to the Y.M.C.A. to catch the next Motor Ambulance,

I explained to the driver what I wanted, and the plight of the Lads, and he said he would bring it, or bust, he was a Londoner, true to his word he brought it, water was scarce for drinking, the soakage water, was not allowed to be drunk, even when boiled, as men were buried on top,

Many of the shell holes, were full of gasified water, so that was no use, so I decided, to make a kind of pudding for the Lads

I got two large buckets, that were used for medical purposes, and broke up biscuits in small pieces, put several tins of Ideal Milk on top of them, and hollowed out the centre, and put some tins of Jam, so that as it warmed up, it would mix with the biscuits.

Then the two largest buckets, I put some water in, there was no scarcity on the floor, and then put a few bricks at the bottom, and then the buckets with the doings in, inside the big buckets,

All the buckets had lids, so not only would no steam get in the pudding, and make it sloppy, but the lids on the outside buckets kept the steam in, then I put them on the Primus Stoves and boiled away,

Capt Lescher looked in to see what I was up too, and said he would taste it, at last it was cooked, and although not quite up to the Ritz standard the Lads were delighted

..... Capt Lescher

Capt Lescher tasted his bit, and at once sent round for a large helping, the Lads who were there, I shared it amongst, and soon had the buckets going again, and so kept this up for Twenty Four hours, and then had to get some more sent up, and so carried on for another twenty four hours,

It was the least I could do, for I was in perfect safety here, and the Lads were coming in tired, and then a little bit of this duff, and up they would have to go again,

I found a place for Capt Lescher to sleep not much of a place, still he was able to lay down, and down he kipped, next morning he was in a pleasant humour, for I had found him a place that was alive,

So for the next hour, I was big game hunting, he took off his clothes, and had a look himself, a photo of a six foot man, searching for a little louse, would have been worth taking.

A message came up, from the safety of miles behind the Line, the Director of Medical Services, wants a few samples of water from the Lake, on the way too Tonnebecke,

There were a few caustic remarks, when the Lads heard what was wanted and I delivered the message to the N.C.O. in charge of the Post, Sergeant Addicott,

As was to be expected, he glanced round for the right sort of man to go and get some, and his eye lit on Tich Parkins, to whom he gave the order,

Tich was a brave chap, and one of the very best, when it came to doing necessary things, but to go out, and court certain death, for the sake of getting a sample of water, for somebody, who hadn't got the pluck to come, and get it themselves, was just the sort of thing to rouse his ine,

A few remarks passed between him and the Sergeant, also Corporal Jones, and he finally said look here, if either or both of you have got the pluck to go, and get that water, I will follow, and get some too, but otherwise I'll see you in (H - - -) first,

Needless to say neither of the N.C.Os, availed themselves of Tich's offer, they both got on their high horse, and started raving about orders, and penalties, and all the time the others, in the

dug-out were saying things under there breaths, and the end of it all was Tich went, and he got the water, he left the dug-out, went to the nearest shell holes, and got some water, and came back, and handed it to the N.C.O. in charge,

The Lads were fed up with these two N.C.Os, and I heard them saying they would show them up later on, and if they reported any of them, the whole lot of them, would parade, and speak to the Colonel, of several incidents.

There was no mistake, in the report of this sector of the Line, mud, mud, mud, everlasting mud, everywhere was mud, and everything, including dugout, there was no excaping for the men up the line, it was so bad that, even when holding the Line, or rather shell holes, linked up the Infantry had too be relieved, every forty eight hours.

I at last, was to find out that being Neds servant, had its compensations, and where the usual Stretcher Bearers, carried there hundreds of cases, I only helped with dozens, still, I was not at all happy with running messages, for I had to go alone, whereas as a squad, you always had at least one pal with you.

One of my chums, the right half in the first team, (Jack Mumford) a miner from Durham, a neighbour of Jack Wilson, who died at Acleux, after being gassed, came limping into the dugout. Capt Lescher saw him, and asked him how it happened, Jack said he was shelling heavily, and I was making a dash across some barbed wire for safety, I don't know if it was barbed wire, or a piece of shell,

Capt Lescher said you had better have a rest, I will look at it later, and if it is no better, I will send you to the Unit, H.Q.

Four of the Lads, had gone on duty in the Y.M.C.A., and Bill Jagger, Basil Gardener, Mullins, and Teddy Parrott, they had not long releived another four, when Jerry started shelling the Memin Road,

I had to run along, and tell them their were some wounded to go down, so they came, and got them, two stretcher cases,

..... when I went

when I went back with them, two other R.A.M.C. men had taken shelter in the Y.M.C.A. also a couple of walking wounded, all four from the 56th London Territorial Division.

The all got in safely, and would have to wait, until the shelling eased up, for the Motor Ambulance to come, to take the wounded down,

Capt Lescher examined Jack Mumford again, and said I will give you a note, you had better go to the Unit, so go to the Elephants (Y.M.C.A.) and go down with the next lot of wounded,

I helped Jack along, and the Lads their said what about some tea, Blink I said I would get them some ready, so come along in about half an hour, and went back to the dug-out to prepare it for them,

I had reached the bottom of the dug-out, the shelling was still heavy, and had just spoken to Capt Lescher, when someone rushed into the recess we were in, and said to Capt Lescher, the Elephants have had a direct hit, Sir.

Capt Lescher sent me flying, and rushed up the steps, shouting follow me Swindell, only too true, the Y.M.C.A. was smashed in, a five nine had hit it, and one would have thought, that some huge weight had fallen on it, and smashed it flat,

The whole eleven had been killed, the injuries were terrible, as one man said, the only consolation is that they did not suffer.

They were all dug out of the ruins and were buried later on, Capt Lescher was terribly cut up, some of them were his section, and most of them had been with us, from the early days in Blighty,

I could not get Bill Jagger off my mind, and the talk we had, had, further back, he knew then, he was going to his death, and yet he had never flinched, I would have liked his Sisters to know, how affectionately he had spoken of them, but Capt Lescher said he would write, and Jack Davis the Bosom pal, of Jagger and Parrott also decided to write.

The Lads were very upset, for we were all so pally, who could forget Bill Jagger, with his thick, short sturdy figure, (he was a blacksmith, at Platts in Oldham) and his quaint

Lancashire brogue, and his many mannerisms, or Teddy Parrott, with his frail little body that seemed too slender, to stand the strain of carrying wounded, many nearly twice as heavy, as himself, on stretchers, but who at the blackest moments, would wag his dear old baldy head, and just dig up a little extra strength, and carry on, never whimpering, or shirking,

Then Basil Gardener, the Worcestershire Farmer, who I have mentioned before, and Mullins, the Regular Army Man, who had wiped out, any of his misdeeds, had won the Military Medal, and was looked on, by all the Bearers, as a safe man to be up the Line with,

And finally Jack Mumford, the other four had been in this dug-out on duty, but Jack, was sent there, to wait, and go down with the Ambulance, he was a married man, the same as his old Chum Wilson, no more to tease Canty, with the song that never failed to rouse his blood,

The other occupants of the dug, I did not know, I was to be at their burial, but orders intervened, the Lads got killed, wounded, but the Units work had to go on, we were to lose more before we left this spot.

Capt Lescher asked me if, I knew the Canal Bank, the Wooden Track end, I did, unfortunately, so said yes, I said, so long to the Lads, and left the Dug-out on the Menin Road, I felt a lump come in my throat as I passed the spot, were three of my section, had just been killed, and carried on through Ypres to the H.Q.

I reported to the Sgt. Major, who took me in front of the C.O.

Colonel Kelly, said you know what you have come down for, I told him that Capt Lescher, had said, I was to make some arrangements, to get the Wounded, on to the Light Railway, at the Wooden Track end, of the Canal Bank,

He gave me a plan, of the place, and said get a sleep, you will be called, before daybreak, the Division on our right, and the 25th Division, are attacking, you are to take a stretcher each, (this made me take notice, until now, I was under the

impression, I was to do it by myself), some sand bags full of bandages etc, and the flag, this to be a guide.

I went to see the Sgt Major, to tell him where, I was going to kip, and asked who was going up with me, I was amazed and did a grin, when he said Sgt Currell and Sgt Fishwick, (two clerks) Sgt Lynton, a (dispenser) and Jack Cousins (the Officers Cook)

What a quartet, they had never been nearer than Headquarters, the whole time, I didnt fancy the job, but as they had been detailed off, and were happy, as a lot of school boys, going for a treat, I felt they would not be too windy, for there was excuse enough, for any of the old hands, where we were going, never mind, chaps up the first time.

Dawn, and we were all ready, to my surprise, Sgt Currell, had the Mast, ten feet in two sections, I said what is that for,

To run the Red Cross up on,

I said we can't do that, where we are going,

He was obstinate, and said Jerry would respect the Red Cross,

I could not shake his confidence, so I said, bring it if you like, but you carry it, all the way, as far as I am concerned.

And off we set, their clothes, and their equipment, nice and clean, as befits those going up for the first time, I did not say anything about it being a hot Shop, as I felt it was better, for them to get there in a cheerful spirit, all went well, jokes were being bandied about, catchy sayings, snatches of songs, with appropriate words were sung, and every thing in the garden was lovely, till we got half way there, to a place called, Belgian Battery Corner.

Jerry chose the moment we were passing to drop a salvo, we quickened our step to a very brisk walk, almost a run, when the Battery stationed, thought they would reply to Jerry, that finished it, there were no more jokes, songs or witticisms,

I suppose familiarity had more, or less hardened me to its bangings etc, but, it was not until this moment, that I realised, how little those in the rear, understood what was going on up here, if men who had been with the Unit, all along had no idea, it was

certainty, those in Blighty could not understand things.

Further on I pointed out to them, the Light Railway, that we were to direct the wounded to, so that we could clear the cases, on the trolleys, the stretcher cases to go on the Motor Ambulances,

We tramped along the Wooden Track, all strangely quiet, still, it was not too early for Jerries, observation ballons to be up, and one was in a straight line, we were too small a party, for him to lamp away at.

We arrived at the Canal, and I pointed out to them the lay of the land, where the end of the light railway was, also the spot where the trucks were hidden, by a drop in the field, and left them, in a sap, while I went round to see if I could find a dug-out, that was not in use, I found one, and turned round to come back, I nearly had a fit,

The bold heroes were just about to pull the Red Cross to the top of the Mast, which they had erected, I run back, to them, and said, you can't put that thing up here, this place is full of Guns, and Jerry knows it. that Flag is to stick on something at the side of the road not to fly ten feet in the air,

It wasn't very long before some Artillery chaps spotted it, then the words flowed, from Gunners too Sergeants, they cursed the flag pole, the flag, the poltice wallahs, and lots of other things besides,

I was glad, as it made them understand, I was not trying to pull their legs, before we got it down, Jerry sent over a few, talk about rabbits, my four were out of sight in a twinkling, I myself was hugging mother earth,

We got the affair down, and went over to the dug-out, the attack was due to start, in about half an hour, when Jerry took it into his head, to bombard the canal bank and the Wooden Track, sleepers were flying all over the place, as shell after shell dropped on the track,

They were dropping in the Canal (now dry), and we were crouching in our little shelter, and looking out, I saw a shell explode on a

..... dugout,

dugout, a hundred yards away, when the smoke cleared away, I saw a figure emerge.

Like one possessed, he was clawing dirt, and wood away, I knew that someone was buried in it, I turned to the four, come on, there are some men buried, I grabbed up a stretcher, and rushed off,

When I got there, I started to help clear the debris at once looking for the other four to help, I saw four faces round a mound of earth, I couldn't worry about them,

The chap said my pals in here, and that was enough for me, we cleared the dirt and wood off his face, but he was near the end, we worked like demons, and got him free at last, but I knew it was too late, he lived long enough to thank his mate, and wish him good bye,

I went back to the others, I couldn't swear or curse them, I was so sick at heart,

They said there has been another shell hit some men, I said where, and off I went, the attack had started, and our guns were blazing away, for all they were worth, I reached the gun pit, and every member of the crew had lost a limb, or arm, I gave the Artillery M.O. a hand, and went back,

I said come on my lads, our work starts now, presently streaming backwards came the walking wounded, taking good care to keep clear of the Wooden Track, which was having a rough time, from Jerry, I spread them out, to intercept the Wounded, and guide them to the light railway,

I run over to see if the trucks were ready, got some of them loaded, when Jerry started shelling further back, he blew the line to blazes, and so I had to get the wounded off the trucks, and give them some idea where to go, and then went back to the other four,

We had a busy mornings work, and at last, got those who had been wounded, in the attack, cleared, it was no use, us staying here, as the object we had been sent up for, (the light railway) was no longer in being except in places,

Judging from the remarks, of the wounded, and the muddy appearance of them, it had been a proper little hell, and I must say most things up this way, could be described by that word,

.....We collected

We collected our gear, and set off back, there were no songs, or jokes, these four had seen something at last, the details they had noticed, us, who had been up so often, took them as a matter of course, but not so these four,

They talked about it, till it was enough to make anyone think, they had seen half the War, instead of twelve hours,

They did not talk to me about it at all, I suppose I had told them off, too much for their liking.

We were nearing the H.Q. and I was hanging back, a bit from them when they stopped for me,

The Sergeants said, wasn't it awful up there,

To which I replied Awful, why that was nothing to what the Lads up the Line are going through, we had all dry land to work on, and only heavy shells could reach us, up where the Lads are, they have mud, and shells, and plenty of both,

They were quiet for a while, when one of them said,

I never knew, until today, what the Lads had to go through,

What could I say, without being nasty, there was plenty I could have said.

We got down, and up I went to Menin Road again,

The Lads had been through it, and some more, including Brownhill had been Wounded, it was not a bad one Ernie had got, but he was sent down the Line,

Ernie had been a great Pal of mine, we were pals from September 1914, to March 1916, and were almost inseperable, we had not been so much together lately, but we had always been pals, it seemed as if all the old Lads, were going off, one, by one,

I left before the Lads, who were to be releived the next day, and got down, and had a welcomed shave, and wash,

The Lads came down the next day, and the C.O. turned out to greet them, when he saw them, he was upset, he never spoke a word, just stood there,

They were in a state, three weeks, and never a shave, or a wash, never had a decent sleep, there clothes almost hidden by mud,

I would like to have known the Colonels thoughts.

September had come round, and the Ambulance had been in the

Line since the 31st of July except for one short spell out, we had gone in about one hundred, and twenty strong, in killed and wounded we had lost about one third, a very big proportion of casualties to our strength, considering we were a non combatant Corps.

Bolton looking through my local rag, had spotted the name of Padre East, he had lived in Elleker Gardens as a boy,

We were not long here, just time for the whole Ambulance to get together when we marched out for rest,

We had no sooner got on the road, when some of the Lads started singing, a sure sign that we were not going up, a few remarks and then they started singing,

Old Sergeant (and then a grunt) had the Wind up, and

Oh. Where is the brave Sergeant, I know where he his, down in the deep dark dug out, I've seen him, ordering the little Privates out.

Capt. Lescher asked me what the men were singing about, I said some new songs, I believe he knew I was not telling the truth, but I certainly was not going to tell him, they were chipping some of the N.C.Os,

We marched to the Corps Area, well behind the Bethune Sector, and were billeted in a little Village, lying in a Valley, out of sight of the rest of the World, except for Khaki, there was nothing to remind us of the War, the Division were billeted all round this Sector, but we saw very little of them.

The Infantry and Artillery had suffered terribly, the casualty list run into four thousand, this last time in alone, and the Units, were back here to receive the new men, train together, and be reequiped.

As for our unit, we missed many old faces, we had not been used to losing so many at once, the Infantry were always going through the mill, but with us it had been, one's, and two's and three's, so we had become, so used to seeing each other that it come home to us, with a vengeance the toll, that our first visit to Ypres, had taken of us,

Poor old Vic, Wally King, and I used to take every advantage, of the afternoons, and evenings, and go for strolls, Vic was not feeling at all grand, he told me one day how bad he felt, and said

..... I must

I must report sick, I knew he must be bad to do this, but the gruelling at Ypres had taken it out of him,

Capt Lescher gave him a tonic, but it did not seem to have any effect, about this time, several rest Camps, at the Bases were established, and men, who they thought a rest would do good, were sent there, to recuperate, and if they were too far gone, they were kept at the base,

The place Vic went too, for three weeks, was a place named Wimereux, just a little way from Boulonge, he wrote me several times, that the sea air, was doing him a lot of good, and when at the end of three weeks he came back, he was more like his old self,

The Ambulance had a fine time in this little Village, where we were billeted, many of us learned for the first time here, that the men of the A.S.C. that were attached, to the Ambulance, had been taking ammunition up to Ypres,

Of course the Powers that be were perfectly correct in using A.S.C. men as they were not in our Ambulance, they were only attached for transport purposes, were armed, but they had never been called on before, and several reasons were given, one that they were going to take them away, this would have meant either bringing the Units strength up, or having less men to do Ambulance work,

The reason that was accepted by most was that there was a shortage of reserves, and this was made more plain, when it was published on routine orders, that the 2nd Batt. Royal Irish Rifles, would leave the 25th Division, and would be replaced by the 4th Batt. South Staffordshire Regt. (Terr.)

And the reason for this transfer, was that there were not sufficient recruits to keep all the Batts, of Royal Irish Rifles up to strength, our Batt. being regulars, were drafted to a Irish Division, and just took the place of a (new army batt) and that ceased to exist.

The Officers Mess was right at the far end of the Village, but I was often that way, and welcomed readily, the tit-bits that Bolton gave me,

.....There were

There were practically no parades, once going into an Estaminet, I sat, and watched some Frenchmen, playing cards, it was as good as an entertainment, the shouting, gesticulating, banging the cards down, when the layer, had the winning cards, he made us laugh.

One would have thought, that there would be a free fight, but after a few minutes of this uproar, fresh, glasses of beer would be called for, they would drink this in silence, and then off again, on another game, and more uproar, and so on,

We had a fine field to play on, and we had plenty of cricket, but one day, owing to one of the Team, not being able to play, I was ordered to play, and as I liked cricket, was only too glad, as I was not good enough for the first team, and as a rule, had to be content with being a spectator.

We finished the game before tea, and went off to our billets, when orders came, for the First Team to turn out for Football, being in this team, I with three, or four others, had the pleasure of playing, both cricket, and football matches, on the same day,

I had got my place in the First Team now, and I never lost it, thanks to the good coaching, I had had from Vic.

It was about now, that Major Vivian Woodward, who was in our Division and who was a friend of our C.O. refereed several of our Matches, and the hints he gave to me helped me a great deal, and saved me much pain, for previously, I had endeavoured to knocked all, and sundry over, instead of trying to get round them,

The C.O. got up some sports for the Ambulance, the best of it was the Boxing all the winners in their respective weights and the runners up receiving money prizes,

The only two to enter for the Heavy-weights were, Tom Lewis Jones, who was in the same tent as I was, at Tidworth, and Emerson, a heavy miner from Durham,

It was hardly a fair match, both were six footers, and Emerson the bigger and strongest, but Jones had been quite a prominent Amateur in boxing circles, in Wales, he therefore was too good a man for Emerson.

I was present when he offered, to spar with Emerson, instead of trying to beat him, to which Emerson, sensibly agreed, but no sooner, did the match start, than Emerson, rushed in and aimed a terrific blow at Jones heart, which if it had hit him fair and square would no doubt have knocked him out,

But I suppose instinct helped him to ward off the blow, and stepping up to Emerson, said that was dirty, and at the same time, gave him one blow, and they helped Emerson to his corner, and it was some time before he came too,

But the best sport was in the lighter weights, in particular, Young Frey surprising us, he lost too Jack Oliver a Londoner in the Semi-final, the other semi-finalist, had a walk-over, and kindly offered to box me, I had not entered, and if I had I was above his weight, he was such an insufferable individual, that I forgot I was heavier,

He lost in the final to Jack Oliver, but it was a good scrap, but Booth, was not so clever, or so quick, the men enjoyed the matches.

The next day were different races, and the other Ambulances, in the Division had been invited to compete, but not a great number turned up, except for the mile,

There were some fine races in the shorter distances, Sergeant Fishwick won the hundred yards, but owing to the bad start Barrass was left at the Post, and yet was only inches out, he was easily the fastest 100 yards man,

At the last moment one of the mule men, could not race, and being pressed I consented to run, although it was not my distance, all three Ambulances had six runners in, the first three in, and the first three of a team to get money prizes,

I was feeling stiff, so Page, one of our Nursing Orderlies, massaged my legs, and Archie Whitlow, came and asked me to pace, and if the Ambulance won, the whole six would share in the prize,

The whistle went, and away I went as if it was a hundred yards, instead of a mile, and set as fast a pace, as I could, and gradually began to get winded, at the three quarters, of a mile, I seemed done, I knew I was running, but had a feeling that I was just doubling, in the same spot, and it was no surprise when the rest of the runners,

one by one passed me, and I had the doubtful privilege of being a Welsh Winner, and came in last,

The Sgt Major came and helped me to the tent, as my leg had gone, and said you did that fine Swindell, Whetlow, said you won us the race and I drew my share of the spoils,

We also had a Cross Country race Section against Section

It was a long five miles, but A Section won, supplying first man in, our Section C supplied second and third I managed to scramble in third and received a money prize.

The Divisional H.Q. also got up some sports, and Competitions, open to all the Division

THE R.A.M.C. supplied one team from the three Ambulances, for the tug of war, and had the pleasure of beating, the team from the 8th Batt. Border Regt.

Jack Fraser was number one, he was the shortest man, but I should think was the strongest, he was a forester from Dufftown, Banffshire.

The Ambulance did not do at all well, in the Horse, Mule, and Wagon Competitions, they won the inter-Ambulance contest, and won with the finest pair of Horses, a piebald, and a grey, who looked a perfect picture, as they were led round the ring.

But in the Harness, and Wagon contests, we were no where, the time we had put in, and the work, but we were not in it, it was really wonderful, how the other Units, had got their things up, it was a most enjoyable treat, and all ranks had a little silk affair, given to them as a souvenir,

Leave was in full swing, and the men who had gone first, had already been again, there were plenty of new men to the Unit, including amongst them being two Brothers, named Fraser, they were of the same clan as Jock Fraser, and it was rather striking the way they treated him, and it was all through him, being some relation to the Head of the Clan, they were two fine young chaps,

We played in a Divisional Cup Contest, and got knocked out, the playing pitch, was in a field, on the side of a hill, and the opposing team, won the toss, and naturally selected to kick down hill,

and to crown it all, there was a tree just outside the penalty area, right in front of the goal, it was a nightmare of a tree, wherever the ball was kicked, it always finished up by the tree, and several times got lodged in the branches.

They scored one goal, and that was all the scoring, we were rather disappointed, but what luck was going, didn't come our way, another game we played against one of the Batts of the Cheshire Regt, and there Captain, was a man named Challenor, who had played for Everton fortunately, one man does not make a team, and we managed to beat them,

After several weeks, we set off again up towards the Line, and about the beginning of October, the 25th Division took over the Givenchy sector of the Line, which was a nice quiet sector, more like the Plug Street sector,

The Ambulance moved to a Farm just outside of Bethune, near a Village named Locon, called Mespleaux Farm, it was a fine billet, the farmyard, (square) was surrounded by buildings, and as you approached the entrance to the Yard, there was a pond, under the arch and into the yard, and following round from the left, were the Bulls House, Cows and Calves stalls, the Farmhouse, our Billets, C. Section right in the attic the Sergeants Mess, the Cook houses, a huge barn, and then several small places, that were used by us, as stores and two by the farm, as cowsheds, the Officers slept in the Farm, and just outside the farmyard were two huts, one used as a hospital, the other which was just a lean to shed, was a dining room,

This latter the Colonel didn't like very much, and detailed Cpl Balmer who was in the building trade in Civil Life, to make a concrete floor, drawing the Cement from the stores, some of the lads had to dig down, and find gravel, he made a splendid job of it, and would be sound for years,

There were not many squads, went up the Line at a time, so there was a lot of fatigues about, it was a jammy place, and not many casualties, one place that many of us were surprised to see was the spot where a man named (Cassidy) won his V.C. early in the War, he received it, for advancing here, and killing the crews of machine

..... guns,

guns, that were holding up the attack, and we come to the conclusion, that the good Angels, were indeed guarding him, for from the trench that he left, to the farm where the machine guns were, was as flat as a billiard table.

I did no stretcher bearing, only duties such as runner etc, coming back with some of the Lads, after being releived, we had no sooner reached the H.Q. at Mesplaux Farm than we were told to clean ourselves up, and be ready to march off at a certain time,

We fell in, and marched off to Bethune and into a place resembling a school, and halted on a huge play ground.

Judge of our astonishment when a Sgt Major came up, and told us we had to drill by numbers (what we did in 1914).

The first order to be given was saluting by numbers, it struck me as so comical, not three hours ago, we had been in the line, and here we were being treated like so many recruits, that I laughed.

Well, I was quick enough witted, to know that, I could not laugh on parade in front of 20 Officers, and get away with it, so I kept on laughing, screaming to the best of my ability, that they were only to pleased to lead me off the parade, under the impression, that I had hysterics.

So they calmly, and innocently sent a message back to the Amb. that I was not well, how the Sgt Major laughed, and the Lads didn't stop chipping me for days, still I had escaped punishment, and that was all I was worrying about.

My Officer being away the Sgt Major, was able to enjoy himself at me exence, and gave me all sorts of fatigues, and duties,

Being on Guard one day, I was going the rounds to see all was correct, and was passing the hospital hut, and spoke to a man on guard, at the same moment a youth not more than nineteen, of the 4th Batt. South Staffordshire Regt, who had replaced the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles, came out, with his right hand, and arm bandaged, and smiling, at being alive I suppose.

He came to us, and said look, I have got an S.I. wound, I shall get to Blighty with this alright, won't I, we did not disillusion him,

..... poor youngster,

poor youngster, he did not know, S.I. stood for Self-inflicted, and he was very upset, when the Military Police came, and arrested him, we felt sorry for him, as to our way of thinking he should never have been out here, he was too young.

We were able to have a few games of Football, and once whilst playing, I was unlucky enough to get a blow in the mouth, and a tooth stuck in my lip inside, and I had a lovely niggers lip for some days, still the Ambulance won, so it was some satisfaction,

It was at this time that we became acquainted with the Portuguese Troops, (some wag nicknamed them Pork and Beans) after some food ration, they looked a fine body of men, and many of them could speak English, They had taken over a section of the Line next to ours, in front of Estaires, and Jerry soon took advantage of them, never having been in the Line before, and bombarded them, and raided them.

The Infantry of our Division, sent some of their men to stiffen the ranks of the Portuguese, until they had got used to the Line, which after all was only following out the same routine, that we had been through, when we came out here first, and exchanged one of our Brigades for a Regular Army Brigade,

We were just outside the Village of Locon, where there was a large Y.M.C.A. and needless to say the place was well patronised, we could buy plenty of things there, and also were able to hear lectures and have sing songs, and concerts.

Occasionally some of us, would go into Bethune, which was really out of bounds, but there were so many units in the locality, and such a large town, that it was cancelled, or ignored, which, I never found out,

The Theatre was occupied by our Divisional Concert Party, which by now, was becoming a splendid show,

The gave performances, in the afternoon, and evening, and fairly low prices, and the place was always full, many times did Vic, and one or two more of us go, before we could get in,

One or two performances, a week were solely for the Civilians, and they were always well patronised, and one special performance, the whole of the takings, were to be used, in giving a treat to the Children of Bethune,

..... There were plenty

There were plenty of shops about and things were very reasonable, the silk postcards, were still one of my fancies, and I occasionally sent one home,

One thing about Mespleaux Farm the Lad were able to write home more regularly, and also got the Mail from home, my Local Rag was always in demand,

When Capt Lescher came from his short leave, we were all as usual ready for pay, and we were all very pleased when we heard he had gone to get the money,

I had gone to his room earlier on, and had to leave it for some reason, or other, and returned to it, and when I walked there were, thousands, and thousands in francs on his bed, that was enough for me,

The tenants of the place could have walked in and helped themselves, so I locked the door, and went looking for him, and said that, I was not going into the room again until he had counted it, in case any was missing, he told me off, for a start, and then by the time he had finished with me, I was boiling with rage.

I was dismissed his august presence, and went to see the Sgt Major, to see if I could not pack in the job, as I was fed up to the eyebrows,

He evidently went to see my Officer, for he sent for me, and asked me when I was going to do his room, I said, I want to give up the job,

So he replied, the Sgt Major has informed me of your complaint, get my room cleaned up, and let me hear no more of it.

What could a chap do,

If I refused, it would be orderly room in the morning, and I had already been severely told off by the C.O. for the same thing, and I had no desire to be put on the mat, in front of him again, so I had to swallow my rage, and carry on.

He had brought back some special cigarettes, about a dozen tins of fifty, and they began to disappear ten times as quick as he smoked them, he asked me in a casual way if I had started smoking, and upon my answer no, then put out another feeler, as to whether I gave my issue to any of the Lads, and telling him yes, he remarked

..... how quickly

how quickly his cigarettes were going,

I saw red at the imputation, and said I am not a thief, you will find your cigarettes in the other Officers Cases.

He was at great pains to explain, he had not meant, I had stolen them, and if I wanted any, I could always help myself in moderation, I was sick of the job, and once more asked him to get another servant, but nothing doing.

One evening he sent for me,

Call me at 2 a.m.

I went round to the Coporal of the Guard, and told him to give me a shake, at half-past one, urgent,

I told Vic, and he was of the same opinion as myself, that he was attending an execution,

That night, one of the Parades, that no of us felt happy about, was on, and after routine orders, the Sergeant read out,

Pte So and So of such and such Regt absented himself, from the front line he was arrested at so and so,

He was tried by a General Field Court Martial, and the order of the Court is that the prisoner shall be shot at Dawn, so and so date.

Only Vic knew that I was to go to it with Ned in the morning, I was not at all happy about it,

I was called, got spruced up, and went and routed Ned out, he was properly in the doldrums, he did not want to go, but like us privates, when his superiors, gave him an order he had to obey it,

I made him some tea, and cooked him some bacon and eggs, but he wouldnt touch it, he told me to eat as much as possible,

He turned too the Whiskey, and drank more than half a bottle, at last 2-45 came, and we had to go,

We started off, and stopping along the road, he turned to me, and said, do you want too go,

I said no, I haven't any wish whatever to see a man shot,

He asked me how I knew, I said it was read out on orders last night, that Pte So and So would be shot at dawn and you are going out just before dawn,

He then said, I don't see why you should have to go either, I

I don't like it myself, but I have been ordered,

You can go back, and wait in my room, until I come back,

I waited until he arrived back, he was very upset, so I gave him a strong whiskey, and didnt wait for orders, I just cleared off,

The Lads took it in turns, to go up the Line, for a fortnight, but I only visited it, when Ned went round, or messages were sent up,

One Night coming back rather late, I reported to the man, on guard, and he pointed out the Old man at the Farm, was still about he said, he his walking round with a lighted candle, I am going to report him, I went to my kip, and had something to eat, and was just about to undress, when the alarm, Fire was given,

I rushed into all the rooms in the loft, telling the chaps that the Guard was giving the Fire Alarm,

I bolted downstairs, and the big row of outbuildings, where the store, and dressing rooms were, was well alight, right outside of them, was the usual dung pit, full of manure, and water,

Some of the chaps in the excitement walked into this mass of filth,

The whole Ambulance was out, some on ladders, throwing what water they could on the flames, others carrying as much of the equipment as we could get, out of the places, and the rest were acting endless chain fashion, and passing buckets of water along from the pon outside,

We emptied the pond, and as there was no other water available, our efforts were wasted, as we had to stop and watch it burn out,

It was proved at the inquiry, which the Old Farmer demanded, that he was the Culprit, he had carefully, removed the cow, and calf from the stalls, but had foolishly left the candlestick behind,

The evidence of our guard, was too strong, so instead of a nice sum of compensation, he had the pleasure of paying for our C.O.s kit, that was in store, as he was on leave, and loss of the barns in the bargain.

The hut where Cpl Balmer, had put the concrete floor, was very convenient for cards etc, as well as the Dining Room, and one or two whist, and crib drives were got up, you just paid a small entrance

fee, and the whole amount, with some from the C.O. went in prizes,

I was fortunate, and won two pocket wallets, one for whist, and one for crib,

A curious thing about crib was, that I was considered a good player, and I played everybody in turn, and had lost and won games, with all of them except a L Cpl, and everytime I played him, he beat me, it did not matter how good my cards, he held better, and he would often ask me for a game, and being only too anxious to beat, I accepted, but he always beat me, and yet he would as often as not lose to the next person, he played with,

The stay here was too good to last, a short spell in the Line, and then some weeks down at the Farm, for the Ambulance, plenty of rest, football, and journeys into Bethune, and regularly we were paid, leave was in full swing, and taking it all round, it was a jammy sector of the Line, although there were always casualties every day, it was the usual sniping, and shelling associated with these quiet sectors, one or two raids,

At last we were relieved, and we were no sooner out of the Line, than the Battle of Cambrai started,

We were on our way down at the time no doubt, but they got an extra move on, and we landed down at Havrincourt Wood, just when Jerry was delivering his heavy counter attack, and not only it seemed taken all that he had lost, but was after more,

The C.O. lined the Ambulance up, explained there were a lot of wounded in the Wood, to be cleared, said that every available man, must go stretcher-bearing, Clerks, Servants, Orderlies, and all the whole lot,

We Servants went to clear up our Officers kit, and Jack Hayes, the Irish servant of our Irish Colonel, went off the deep end, and shouted, and raved about having to go up, and that as soon as he got up he would give himself up to Jerry.

I had a few words with him, and wound up by calling him, a dirty sinn-feiner,

He was like a mad-man at that, and said I will report you to the C.O. but I eventually calmed him down, by telling him that I

would be only to pleased for him to report me, for I would then tell the Colonel, that his servant had decided, to surrender to the enemy, if he was sent up the Line.

It was not without a feeling of wind up, that many of us got ready, for the Colonel had told us that they beleived Jerry was in the Wood too, and that many of us might not meet again, so he would take this opportunity of wishing us Good-bye and Good-luck.

A pleasant surprise was in store, for us, for after we were all ready, word came that we were not required, and we stayed there for a short while, and moved to a place called Faveruel.

Just a little way outside of the Town of Bapume, we had never been so far on the Somme, when we were this way before, for Bapume was still in Jerries hands, when we left this locality twelve months before,

The thing that struck most of us was the utter desolation, of the whole of the countryside, one of the Lads near me saying, why the grass is red, I talked this over with Vic, and I found out later, some of the others came to the same conclusion too, that it must be something to do, with all the blood spilt, hereabouts, for the casualties on our side, were near the million mark, and then there were the German casualties.

There was not a whole house to be seen, even the cottages, in the fields for a labourer in peace time, were in ruins, giving a good idea of the awful fighting that had gone on here.

We took over a hospital from another Ambulance, and bivouaced round about until they had moved out, and then we moved into jolly good quarters, for the rest of the Winter,

The whole camp, were Nissen Huts, so nobody had to worry about rain etc, we were not a great way from the Line, but to all intents and purposes we were in safety,

Once again I was to have an easy time for except for a short spell, near the Lines, and occasional missions with my Officer, I was at Head-quarters, it was a very quiet part, except for the usual trench warfare, and only a few of the Lads were needed, they only took a couple of spells the whole three months we were in the Line as a Division,

The leave was carrying on, at a much quicker rate now, and there was every likelihood, of it speeding up more still, it was rather curious too, for there were a great many hundreds of thousands more troops than in 1915, and yet leave was more frequent,

We soon had a game of football, for before the outgoing Ambulance left they challenged us to a game, and our C.O. was nothing loth, and there was a lot of chipping from them, as they had not been beaten previously by an Amb.

There centre-forward was a professional footballer, but our centre-half, who had played Amateur, for one or two pro. teams, kept him well in hand,

Half time came, and he had not put our goal-keeper in the hospital, or the ball in the net, the second half, he went right ^{inside} and our centre-half, Archie Ware said, keep your eye on the ball, get in his way as much as you like, don't worry about him, Just go for the ball,

I had a bad time, and by the end of the game, he had knocked me over several times, walked over, fallen over me, in fact we stuck together like a couple of leeches, while I was busy with him, our forwards were playing a grand game, and we eventually played out time as the winners, by three too one,

They immediately challenged us to a return match, and our Colonel accepted to play the next day, unfortunately they moved under orders, that night, I for one was not sorry, as I ached from head to heel, Vic told me I had played a good game for our side, and praise from Vic, was not forthcoming unless earned, so I had some compensation for my sore bones.

C. Section had two nissen huts, and I was kipping down between Vic, and Ernie Parkins, we had struck a quiet part of the Line, so the Powers that be, must have decided to play us up in the food line,

The first day bread came up,

One whole loaf for the Ambulance,

One loaf wasn't much to share between 230 Officers and Men, so the outcome of it was, that everyone was put in a party of eight,

and as the loaves came up, they were shared out in turn, running to bread, about once in three weeks,

The biscuits were as usual, but one got tired of Bully, and good old Plum and Apple, and Pork and Beans, and long for a Canteen like at Ballieul, where we could buy somethings, or the French villages, where we could get eggs, and chipped potatoes,

The nearest canteen was at Albert umpteen miles away, and out of bounds, and the nearest villagers were about the same locality, between us lay a strip of land, that was desolate of Civilians, only Troops all in the same boat,

The murmers at last reached the right quarters, I helping it along by suggesting to my Officer, how about a canteen corporal to go and buy somethings at Albert or wherever there was a place, and retail them to the troops,

It was a better idea than many of us thought, for by buying in bulk, they were bought cheaper, the Canteen Corporal sold them to the Lads at the usual price, and the profits went to buy extras for the whole Ambulance,

Another way we had of getting some extras, was by collecting articles, as the battles had been fought, equipment of every description was left lying about, and the waste of good stuff was tremendous,

A definite value was put on all goods, and as they we brought in, they were checked for the mans unit, and ultimately the C.O. of the different units had cheques sent them, and the money went in luxuries for the unit,

Our General (Major General Bainbridge) had a brain wave,

War Savings Certificates were in full swing in England, and he issued a moving appeal to all ranks of the Division, to buy as many as they could,

And to give it a good start, he proposed, that, for every certificate bought the buyer would on the payment of francs, buy a chance in a lottery, the winning number, fetching its lucky holder, Five Hundred Francs.

The was no limit to the number you could buy, for myself, I

bought three certificates, and I bought one lottery ticket,

The Ambulance showed up well, both Officers and Men, who had different lotteries,

The response was so great that when the lottery was drawn, there were two prizes of 500 tickets, accepted by the G.P.O. as a receipt for certificates, and hundreds, of other prizes, ranging from one hundred, down to one,

Half a dozen in the Ambulance drew winners, myself included, I drew one certificate, my 3/4 earning me 15/6.

The General was very pleased with the result, for it was said it was his own brain wave.

We were the first Division to buy Certificates this way, and he passed the good news on, and later almost, if not all Divisions followed suit,

One reason for the success of the venture was the increase in pay, not only was our weekly pay increased, but chevrons were issued out for length of service overseas,

A red one for Mons Star men, and Blue ones for others, to be issued one for the beginning, of each year, and to carry a penny a day pay with them, the most of us having been in France two full years and well into the third, it meant, three pence a day stripe pay for us, and it was welcomed indeed.

We had not been here many days before we found, that although Jerry did not shell us, he made up for it in bombing

It was really amazing to see a game of Football on our pitch, three miles from the Line, the touch line crowded with troops, and Jerry over-head, dropping a bomb, here and there, and our Aircraft Guns potting away, for all they were worth,

Not far from the Ambulance, was an areodrome, and going round for a look with some of the Lads, one day, we saw as dapper, and perky an Officer, as could be imagined, strutting up to a machine,

In he jumped, and away he sped, we asked one of the mechanics, who he was, and he replied Captain Mc-cudden he was one of our greatest air-fighters.

Near the Drome, was a stable with about 200 horses, Jerry came

over one night, and a Sergeant, against orders had a candle alight in a tent, as was usual in these cases, the guilty one escaped,

Jerry dropped his load right in among the poor old horses, killing and maiming over 180 of them.

It was a most miserable sight to see the poor old horses, how they suffered, there eyes seemed to get more appealing, as there life was leaving them,

The mules, and horses killed must have been tremendous, and one couldn't carry them down, so if they couldn't walk, they were shot to end their misery, which was more merciful, than letting them die in agony.

The cooks were dishing up, rotten food, and the men groused, and groused, but it was no good, so I went and asked my Officer for some food, this was only a blind,

Don't you get enough food,

Yes Sir, but it is cooked so bad, that the Men cannot eat it,

Well, why haven't you men complained,

Because, there has been no Orderly Officer round.

True to his promise to me, about complaints, he did not go by my word and the next few days hung about the cook-house, and gave the cooks, a lively time, and things improved for a while,

I never told any of the Lads, even Vic that I spoke to Ned, about these things, but I had long ago learned, I could get more for the men, from my Officer, if I told him, of good causes of dissatisfaction of the Lads, he would soon rettify it,

So the men carried on cursing him, and yet often he was the cause of little things they appreciated, and no matter how hard I pleaded his cause, his stand offish manner undid all my words, one of the Lads most attaganistic to him, was a great chum of mine (Tish Parkins) from Victoria, he simply detested him, and would not listen to any good of him, for he would remark, all the good he ever does, he counteracts by the bad ones.

My Officer went on another jaunt to Paris, and as I had lately, except for Football, got into the Sgt Majors bad books, I was soon under his thumb,

As the Officer went on leave today so tomorrow, I was on Guard,

he was a funny boulder at times, for he came round, and spoke to me, and actually had the cheek, to say, with all the carny manners imaginable, I put you on Guard, Swindell, as I knew you would like it, I know you are fed up, with being a Servant.

What could I say, I knew he was having a go at me for past sins, but I was a humble private, and he was Lord of all he surveyed.

I was never left without a fatigue the whole time my Officer was away, and the Lads used to laugh, and say,

Hallo Blink, clicked again

The rottenest fatigue was going to the Army Ordinance Corps, and helping to tidy up a huge dump,

The 24 hours before my Officer came back, Sgt Major Ivens had me on Guard again, I had two bets of excitement, for Jerry paid us, a few visits during my two hours on,

Two bold heroes, lit a match as they were walking along the road, Jerry who was over-head, scenting no doubt troops on the march, dropped a load, and the two heroes were unfortunate to stop one, and were buried next day,

My two hours in the morning, were 5 to 7, and I had to fill the Coppers with water, and light the fires,

I called, and called the cooks, and at last about three quarters of an hour, before breakfast, out they rolled to cook oatmeal for breakfast,

Breakfast time came, and the Lads not only threw best part of the stuff away, no Orderly Officer, coming round, they went, and had a few words with the cooks,

The Cooks in their turn, blamed the Guard, for not calling them, and not having the water ready,

Vic, and Tich, and one or two others came round to the guard tent, and warned me of what was on,

I decided to make a fight of it, and on being dismissed Guard, I went on Parade with the other Lads, and took my oatmeal with me, although you were excused parades, for the day,

When the Sgt Major, came to detail off fatigues, I took a pace forward,

The Sgt Major came up, what is the matter with you Swindell,
Food not cooked Sir.

Very well go, and warm it up, this with a smile he tried to hide,
for just as if, I was going to cook it, and be made a fool of, in
front of the Colonel,

I parade at Orderly Room as the Sgt Major had ordered, the C.O.
sent for the Sgt Cook (Charlie Blacker) who was a pal of mine, as he
was responsible for the cooking, although he was not on duty before
breakfast,

There was an unholy row, all on the one side, and the upshot
was that food was cooked a lot better for sometime, but Army Cooks,
were notorious as grub spoilers, and they gradually slid back to
there old ways.

I was pals with most of the cooks, they blew me up for reporting
them, and they soon forgave me,

The Sgt Major had a talk about my general conduct, and wound
up bt saying if you would only keep that tongue of yours still, you
would soon have three stripes up, instead of being an Officers Servant,

This was the umpteenth time, he had told me to go in for promotion.

I did not fancy being Sergeant over the Lads whom, I had been
in the ranks with, and told him so,

Well there are stripes going today, and they are yours, if you
stop sticking up for yourself, as you call it,

I was still Officers Servant next day, and I knew I had trod
on his corns again, for he sent for me and said,

Swindell, just because your Officer is back it is no reason,
whyyou should shirk fatigues,

Tell the other Servants, that you are all to parade at 10-30 am
for fatigues.

Round I went, too Solly, Heley, Burgess and the others, and
said in the usual army way, when out of his hearing, Old Ivens says
we have all got to Parade at 10-30 for fatigues

As our Officers cleared out of their quarters at 10-15 for 10-30
parade, we had got to get everything done in less than fifteen minutes,

We decided to go on Parade, and I got a job, down the dump,

I heard later there was a row with the other Officers, and their Batmen, and when I got back to Camp that evening, I had to report to Capt Lescher, and the Guard who warned me, said he his in a rage too.

I reported, and told him the Sgt Major had ordered us on Parade, I had to fetch the Sgt Major, and as was to be expected he lost the day, for my Officer was the Adjutant,

After I had cleared his place up for the night, I went back to my hut, on the way I was stopped by the Sgt Major,

He started at me right away,

Alright Swindell, I know you, and the other servants, did that for the purpose, I admitted it, and said, I wanted to get it settled as to what we were, and what we had to do.

He took me into his quarters, and we had a long talk, I felt we understood each other better, after that talk, some-how or other I always seemed in the past to have rubbed him up the wrong way, he was really an extraordinary easy going Sgt Major, and as I knew from things in general, he always stuck up for the Lads.

The upshot was we did not after that, go on parades in the morning at all, although we used to go, and do fatigues with the other lads, when we had finished,

The winter was setting in now, and the amount of sick cases soon out-nubbered the casualties, but on the whole we seemed to have struck a quiet sector, or as the Lads said a proper home,

The Lads changed over, in the Line and were always saying how cushy a place it was, and we can finish the War here, and other pleasantries.

Jerries bombing was getting too regular, for our liking, and the limit came one night,

As soon as dusk came he started and what with him dropping his loads and our air-craft guns, banging away it was a perfect nightmare of a time, although he passed over-head and we often saw him, in the search-light rays, we escaped as regards casualties.

We amused ourselves, in our usual manner, one great thing about the Camps, was we were always sure of a dry kip, cards, chess, singing,

writing, for it was a dreary hole, but somehow, it was all taken for granted, the whole of the countryside, could not boast a whole house,

One day into the midst of this chaos, came a Woman.

It was quite two months since 99 per cent of us had seen a woman, and now under an Officers Escort, one of our V.A.D, or Army Nurses, was being shown round, the whole of the troops all about came and gazed on this product of civilization, it all seemed wrong for her to be there, and many remarks were passed, as to the wanting of a job, for a woman to come, and see the sights.

Just before Xmas 1917, the weather turned decidedly cold, and snow began to fall, it was not in such a convenient spot as Pont-de-Neippe but efforts were made to make it as merry as possible,

A sing-song for the evening, after the whist drive was over,

The day came, and snow had fallen heavily, and settled, we had a good dinner, Roast Beef, Potatoes, Cabbage, Plum Pudding, and Beer, a pint per man and an orange and apple,

We hung about in the afternoon, and had tea, and later went to one of the huts, a large one for the evening,

The Whist Drive was in full swing and half time had arrived, and I was leading scorer, the first prize was a silver wristlet watch, and if luck held good, I had a good chance of winning it,

My evening was to interrupted, for the Orderly Sergeant came in,

Pte Swindell,

Yes, Sergeant,

You are to report for duty in the Officers Mess at once,

I felt mad, but there was no hope to get out of it, so Parish one of the Lads who came from Chorlton-cum-Hardy near Manchester, took my place, and as luck would have it, won the watch.

I arrived at the Officers Mess, the first time, I had had to help since June and asked Bolton what the game was,

He said Capt Lescher said both you and Solly were to help for this evening,

Just then my Officer, was passing and asked me what I was doing when I was detailed off,

I said playing in the whist drive, and doing well, Sir,

Alright, we shall have plenty of Turkey, and you can have a good feed for you disappointment,

The Officers had a good spread, Cousins there cook, was a miner in Civil Life, but he was an excellent cook, and the Turkey, Ham, Pastries, Puddings, and other things were a credit to him,

Bolton waited on the Officers and Solly and I washed up, and made ourselves generally useful,

All went well until Bolton was on the way out with the Turkey

Captain Paul, the Mess Officer, told him to put it on the table over there it will do for tomorrow,

Bolton came out, he was like a raving lunatic, and told us the sad tale, we were all banking on Turkey and he were our expectations nipped in the bud,

Bolton was not one to take it lying down, and approached my Officer he said if the Mess Officer, has told you, that you are not to have it, I cannot override him, he his in charge of the Mess catering,

We sat round the fire, while they were smoking, and drinking, and some of the remarks, would have made Captain Pauls hair stand on end, if he could have heard them.

Ten oclock had come, and the Lads had all had rum, and coffee, we were to busy at the time to worry about ours.

We had a snack, and Cousins made some coffee, into which he pour more rum than was good for us,

We all had more than sufficient, and when my Officer said, we shall not require anything else, we decided to make for home,

It was bitterly cold, and the snow was thick on the ground, as we opened the door to go out, voices reached us, and lo there were the Sergeants, serenading the Officers,

They got what they were singing for, a tot of Whiskey, and off they went,

And off we went (now I had often heard, a drunken man speaks, a sober mind), I was myself rather merry, but I can remember all that happened,

We were happy, Solly led the way, and I followed, and all the way across the Camp, I was singing to Solly.

And I traced Old Sollys footsteps in the snow, we arrived at

the lines, and parted company, Solly to his hut and I to mine,

Outside mine, one of the Lads, was bringing his heart up, the rich fare had proved to much for him, he was a strict teetotler, but something had upset him,

I treated him kindly, making far more fuss of him, than was at all necessary, and at last entered the hut,

Vic had got our bed down, but very few of the Lads were in bed, Tommy Barrass, Tich Parkins, Parish, Vic, Pope, and several others were having a final song, when in I burst,

I was naturally called upon to give a song, and was only to pleased to obliged, in fact was only too willing to carry on for the rest of the night if they wanted me,

We were all enjoying ourselves when in came the Sgt. Major.

Now then you chaps, it is time you were in bed.

Alright Sir, just one more song,

He graciously consented, even then it was near midnight,

We had our song, and then we turned towards bed.

Vic soon tumbled in, but the majority, were more inclined to stop up,

Some time went by, and back came the Sgt. Major, he spoke a bit sharp this time, and came over in my direction asking Parkins what he was doing,

Parkins replied putting Blink to bed, and he was with a vengeance, he was sitting on me, as if I was a sack of shavings, and taking my puttees off,

The Sgt Major had to laugh, and left us, some time later all was quiet, and so came to an end, one more Xmas in France

The Lads in the line were releived next day, things were getting uncomfortable up there, it was so terribly cold, and very little chance of warming themselves up, sickness was very prevelant, trench feet, trench fever, and all the cold in the medical line, fortunately the casualties were not so severe, the Infantry had enough, in battling the elements,

But as usual, the powers that be could not let well alone, and over the Infantry had to go, raiding Jerry in white smocks, to make

themselves less conspicuous, with the resultant casualties,

Some parties from the Ambulance went up daily, to help in making a huge brigade dug out, our section, was a large one, and it entailed a lot of work, but when it was finished, it was well worth the labour expended on it, for it held such a number of casualties, and being very deep, there was not the chance of the wounded getting another dose, as had often been the case in the past,

Jerry still continued his nightly visits, and one night was more spiteful than ever, thirty six different raids between dusk and dawn, the hundreds and thousands of his bombs exploding, and our aircraft guns blazing away, even to us who had been out so long, it was impossible to sleep,

He had done a rare lot of damage, curiously enough, he had missed all the ammunition dumps, but he nearly blew the ordinance dump to smithereens

Some of us were detail off to go and help clear a part of it, and the bombs hitting the frozen ground, had spread out like hitting the setts, on the main roads, and left very little hole where they struck,

He managed to spoil our football pitch with three large one, one in the middle, and one at each end.

Our Colonel decided that it was time we protected the huts, all available hands, were put on, banking the earth up the sides of the huts to about three feet, and two feet thick,

The ground was so frozen, that the only way to dig into the earth, was with pick-axes, just as we were starting it over came a plane of Jerrys,

He came that low over our camp, that the artillery dare not fire, as we should have got all shrapnel, being a non combatant corps, we had no rifles, otherwise I fancy his number would have been up, after have a good look round, he made off for his lines help on the way with rifle, machine gun, and artillery fire, the gods were with Jerry, for he reached his lines safely,

The Colonel sleeping in a small portable hut, decided to dig a pit for it, and a dozen of us were put on it

Staff Sgt Ingram, was the N.C.O. in charge of the party to move it, and it was to be run to its little pit, on rollers, made out of some boughs,

We got it on the boughs, after a struggle, and before we were ready, Yummy as we call, Staff Sgt Ingram, gave the order to push, my foot was in the way, when those at the back pushed, and in the mix up, they pushed too hard, and the side of the hut, came on my foot,

I let out a glorious yell, fortunately for me, the logs held the hut a bit, or my foot would have been crushed,

The Lads levered it up, and released my foot, and I was hopping about cursing Yummy, the C.Os, hut, and any and everything,

Yummy came, and spoke to me, and I told him off, for giving the order to push,

He plaintively replied, in his quaint northern brogue,

What does thee think, I'm here for Laddy,

I was in a rage, as well as pain so I said the first thing I thought,

Your are like all the rest of them, from the G.O.C. down to a L. cpl you are here for the inconvenience of Privates, a foolish remark, and an unlucky one for me,

For at that moment, the Colonel himself turned up to see if we had got on well, and heard my remarks,

Bring that man to Orderly Room in the morning, Sgt Ingram,

And to Orderly Room I went, the evidence was read out, and the charge, and I don't know what,

When the Colonel asked me what I had to say, I pleaded first offence, (the Blessed excuse), that you could bring out, no matter how many times you had been to Orderly Room, providing you were not punished, and told the tale about my foot,

I was lucky once again, as he told me off, for insolence, and discharge me as doing it under great provocation,

After a long spell, nearly seven weeks the frost lifted, and the thaw set in slowly, but the rain came fast, the trenches were soon water logged, as the frost had gone in so deep, the water could not soak away,

The Infantry were in a terrible condition, and several men were drowned through falling into 6 or 7 feet of mud, and no one there to help them out, for when it was dark, one could take a false step, and have no chance to recover,

The Ambulance received a challenge from an Infantry Battalion for a game of football,

The ground was in a deplorably slushy state, and near the end I had a pot for goal, the fullback, got his face in the way of the muddy ball, and over he went,

When he got up he chased me, shouting, you did that on purpose you little ——,

Fortunately the mud was still in his eyes, so I was able to elude him, and he gradually calmed down, to my joy, for he was a big chap.

Bolton sent over to the hut for me one day, and round I went to the Officers Mess, to see what was doing

There was an Infantry man in there and Bolton said,

George, here is a man out of your Brothers regiment,

I could see he was in the Royal West Kent Regt,

I asked him what Batt, and he replied the Eleventh,

He told me where the Frank Swindell lived, and worked, I had never told anyone in the Unit, so I knew it was my Brother Frank,

He told me several bits of news about him, and at last told me how he met his end

The Company went over in front of Flers, and Frank was wounded, they bandaged him up, and put him in a shell-hole, until he could be taken away, unfortunately a shell exploded by him, killed him, and the aftermath was he was buried, and no chance to report his grave,

He was very decent the way he told me, but I felt as broken as a man could be, I could see him laying there, helpless,

I was not only within a few miles when he was killed, I was now the same a good two hours walk, and I would have been at Flers, but it was out of bounds so I was not able to go.

After spending about 3 to 4 months in the Line, the Division was releived, and moved away to the other side of Bopume,

The Ambulance was billeted, in the once, but long before we saw it, pretty village of Courcelles, and we were free to roam about a bit more than we had been allowed too.

It was surprising how quickly the Lads were going on their second leave, but a bigger surprise still was in store, for as soon as we got on rest, more went at a time, and more frequently, and many of us who had waited over twenty months for the first leave, had great hopes of getting the second one in twelve months.

Staff Sgt Ingram, was walking down the Village one day, when a real crusty pre-war looking Colonel stopped him, congratulated him on his decorations and asked him when and where he won them,

Yammy replied, I dinna know Sir,

That was too much for the Old Colonel, he nearly had a fit, and bawled,

Then what the Devil, are you doing with them up, and stalked off in high dudgeon,

Pool old Yammy, just as if he was going to tell him how he won them, he should have asked one of us, for a chap who had won the D.C.M. Croix de Guerre and the M.M. had not got them for nothing although, we used to say medals come up with the rations.

We were in decent underground cellars, and dug-outs, and did not have a great deal to do, so the usual letter writing, reading, cards and other games went on, but there were no Estaminets in this devastated area, no Civvys had come up either, so the Troops, held sway everywhere,

A bit of excitement came our way, there was a Cinema show, in a Barn a few kilometres off at a Village called Petit Miramont,

Several of us made a visit to it, the Village had not escaped damage but there were very few houses, without some sign of shells, the Barn roof was off, and they had put a cover on it,

One thing that struck us, as we climbed up the slope to it, was the Cemetery, the Churchyard was rather battered about, but some of the stones still remained, and also plenty of the artificial wreaths crosses etc. were there,

On the other side of the road was a cemetery full of Germans, buried by our Lads, and all had wooden crosses, and with the exception of one or two had all particulars painted on,

We passed on, and paid our entrance fee, and entered, the inside was great, the man at the door, was shouting out standing room only, we did not appreciate the joke till we were inside,

Except for a few that were sitting on beams that supported the building, it was all standing room,

Just as the show was to start, our Friend Jerry came over to have a look round, the light from the projector was covered up, as our Barn, was not exactly free from holes,

He dropped a few bombs and passed on, and the show commenced.

The first picture was (Charlie at the Bank) the majority of us had never heard of the individual before, but some had, and one heard remarks about him being an Englishman, who had run off to the States to escape joining up,

The picture started, and so did the laughs, the place was packed, scarcely elbow room, and as the picture went on so we laughed the more, tears run down the faces of many of us.

The war, and everything else was left behind, and although we were in a battle scarred barn, we had forgotten, the war, the voices of some of the men could be heard, I'd like to have it again, and at last it finished,

When the operator put on the next film, the men held up their tin hats, and after an uproar of several minutes, on went (Charlie at the Bank) again, with the same enjoyment, in fact with great enjoyment, good things come to an end, and so the film finished its course once again,

This time an entirely different procedure was adopted,

The men all chanted in unison we want Charlie again,

We want Charlie again,

The operator came forward, and tried to persuade the Chaps to have a different picture, he threatened at last to have none on, for some time the Barn was filled with the chant,

We want Charlie again,

..... And we got him,

And we got him, the operator came out, this time with a smile all over his face, and said

All right Boys.

The third show finished, and off we trooped, after a treat that had made us laugh, till we cried,

We soon found our feet again, for on passing the Cemeteries, Jerry had found them both, and from being orderly, were all upside down, as only a shell, or a bomb can do.

A few days later, and Vic's name went up for his second leave, I was not a great number behind him, so my leave was nearer than, I had hoped for,

Leave had now been extended to ten days, I was able to go along the road with Vic, he wrote to me from Blighty, and so I was well able to send him innumerable field Post-cards.

I had plenty to do for my Officer, and then most of us were so chummy, that although you missed a chum, whether on leave, or killed, or wounded, you seemed to carry on, without showing the loss, I put it down to the comradeship,

Before Vic came back, I had my name posted up for leave, Tich Parkins asked me to call at his Home, and see his Wife, for him, and several others gave me commissions, little things to buy.

And heedless to say, I wrote home, that I was coming, and I sent to Guy, and told him,

Vic came back, and after a few days the notice was put up, that I was waiting for,

37789 Pte G.H. Swindell, will proceed on leave, the 10th March 1918.

Twenty one months, I had been in France, before I got my first leave, and here I was only nine months, and my second leave was here, and three more days than previously.

I went to a baths, and gave the man on the clothes a drink, and got some decent under clothing from him, had a good bath, went to see my Officer who gave me thirty francs, and hoped I would enjoy myself.

Needless to say next morning, I was up in plenty of time, saw to my Officer, and got some sandwiches, and coffee from Bolton,

went round, to the Lads and being the lucky one was as lively as a cricket, curiously enough, it had so worked out, that the day, I went, I was the only one from our Unit.

I went to the Orderly Room, and was given my leave money, and pass, went back to the cellar, and picked up my pack, found Vic and said goodbye, and away I went,

Vic waved to me, as I went down the road, it was so unlike him to show his feelings like this, I turned round for the last time, before turning the corner, and there he was, waving to me, and coming down the road for all he was worth,

Thinking I had forgotten something I waited for him, and he caught me up,

I'll come along a little way George,

I noticed how pale he was, a kind of drawn look, that came on him, when he had overdone it in the Line.

After walking on for a while, without a word, he suddenly stopped, and said, George, we shall not see each other again.

I was too upset to say much, but I felt, it was not me he was referring to as the one that something was going to happen too.

So I said, do you feel so ill Vic,

He replied, no George, but I have a feeling that we are not too meet again, I have had it for some days, but I did not like to say it to you as you were going on leave.

I said cheer up Vic, it is because you are a bit down, after coming back off leave.

He said, No George, something is going to happen.

I said look here Vic, will it cheer you up, if I meet your Wife in London, or go to Birmingham and see her, and just speak to her about you,

He agreed to this, but then said No, for if you do, she will at once think there is something wrong.

Before you go George, I want you to promise me, (that the miniature of My Wife, my pocket wallet, letters, and one or two other things) will be sent direct to my Wife, when I am gone.

..... I felt done,

I felt done, there was something so matter of fact, about him, that I just said, of course I will,

We then walked on for a while, and he talked about different things, at last he said, I will go back,

Good-bye George, and looked at me with his quaint quizzical expression, I hope you will have a nice holiday.

I bid him good-bue, and shaking his hand I tried to look, as cheerful as he was, I did not feel very happy, but I did not mention about his remarks,

And with that I left him,

I reached Acheet, Le Grand, and joined the Troop Leave Train, and away we went, as happy, as only we could be, and arrived at Boulouge, and had my pay etc, changed from Francs, at 34 to the £1. into English Money

We had a splendid trip across, and landed at Dover before the Leave Boat, that had started, when we were pulling away from the Berth.

From Dover to London, and on to Dear Old Richmond, and at last home,

Flags were flying, and I was made to feel, like what I was not a Conquering hero,

My Mother and Jan, were as excited as I was, and my Uncle George, an Old Soldier himself, was there, and he looked me up, and down, round and round, I suppose, he was thinking of our different equipment, to what he and others wore during the Zulu War.

I felt anything but happy, so took the first opportunity to examine, mu under clothes, and what a shock, I had given the chap, in the baths, a tip, for some decent clobber, and here it was, as full of game as anything, I had every had,

So the first job, I had was big game hunting, and then put the things out in the cold cold air, where they stopped, the cardigan for months, the shirt and pants till I went back,

We retired that night, after a long talk, and I was allotted the small room near Mother and Jan,

It was nice to be at Home again, and nice to be in a decent bed,

..... and the luxury

and the luxury of it soon sent me into a sound sleep,

It happened to be one of those fine nights, in March, and what is called (The Northern Lights) were on,

In the early hours of the morning, I was awakened by my Mother, saying,

They are here, George,

I was only half awake, and said, who,

The Germans,

I realised then, and quickly dressed and went downstairs, the searchlights, were picking the Jerries out, and the aircraft guns, were blazing away,

I was trembling, like an aspen leaf, and felt an awful empty feeling, at the pit of my stomach,

I was never like this in France, and after trying to put a bold face on it, for the others seemed more composed, than I felt, the Jerries departed, and we retired,

I did not feel much like sleep, and so I lay down, trying to pull myself together, I worked out in my own mind, why I had had the wind up so,

I came to the conclusion, that being up near the Line, you took the bombing and shelling, as a part of your life out there, something you were always pent up in expectation of,

And leaving it for Blighty, I suppose I let it slip from me, as a thing to be left behind, and then the first night home, to get woke up, and hear the awful crashes, and reports of the Guns, which at the time sounded louder, than any I had heard in France, I must have lost control of myself, although I tried not to let anyone see it.

Next day, I walked along to hand in my food ticket, at the Ration Rooms, near Church Road, and get the 10 days ration cards due to me.

I arrived just on the heels of a Sailor, and we sat down, and waited, there was a woman the other side of the counter, drinking tea, when she finished that, she started next preening her feathers,

In came another Damsel, and leaning across the counter, these two beauties, got ready for a lengthy bit of scandal,

..... I looked at

I looked at the Sailor, he looked at me, we both rose together, he reached the counter first, and asked how much longer, he'd got to wait,

If I wait much longer, my leave will be over,

The woman, made a sudden dash round, and decided our room was preferable to our company, and gave us our tickets, the Sailor laughed when he got outside, and so did I.

I went on to Coppens, and had a great time queuing up, but when I reached the counter, I made up for it, and was able to buy more than I was entitled too, for they gave me ten days rations, and only tore off half my cards, so I was able to go later on and get some more.

My Uncle George had a brain wave, and extolled the virtues of a play called (Romance) so Mother Uncle George and I went too London,

We found we were unlucky, for all the seats (except the gallery) were sold, we did not like leaving, so we went round the back, and found out that there were plenty of seats in the gallery, and in we went,

The play started, and the longer it carried on the more fed up with it I grew, I tried to appear interested, but was more like a young woman sitting in front of me, she was reading, while the play was on,

It ended at last, and out we came, and the only thing about it, to remain in my memory was Doris Keane, flopping on the sofa, out would go the lights, and then you would hear plenty of kissing.

We eventually plucked up courage to tell each other what we thought of it, and our thoughts were similiar, and each of us had tried to appear as if we were enjoying it, so as not to hurt the other two's feeling.

I paid my promised visit to Tich Parkins Wife, before I came away, she was in tears, and I felt rather awkward, her Mother went out of the room, and she rushed at me, and said, Ernie has done his duty, and several other phrases.

She was greatly upset,

I told her, that there was not a man in the whole ambulance that had done more, only plenty who had done as much.

I do not know what she took me for, as the next thing was,

If a safe job comes, will you try and speak for him, I said yes, but what could I do, a full blown private the same as Tich, and yet the opportunity came,

It was remarkable how the time slipped by, I had a most wonderful time at home, My Mother seemed to be always doing things for me, like all good things, the time seemed to fly, and the 20th March came round.

My Mother made me plenty of crinckles and other cakes, I am afraid run herself short too, we spent the last evening together and stayed up late,

I was to catch the first of the Leave trains back, and five o'clock saw me up, and ready to go, I did not have anybody with me, for it was bad enough, saying good-bye at Home, I did not fancy facing it on the platform at Victoria,

I set off, and got to Victoria in time, but somehow, or other, the whole journey up, I was getting more miserable as the time went on, I tried to shake it off, but I got worse,

I marched up to the barrier then jibbed, and saw the first train go out,

I then lined up for the second train I got more depressed, and jibbed that one,

As I walked away, I felt a tap on my shoulder, I turned round to find a Sgt. Major of Police,

He said, whats up old chap, fit of the Blues, come along with me, and have a cup of coffee, and a chat,

I followed him, he had been out himself, he asked me where I had been, and all about things out there now, and the time slipped by, I felt different, and when he looked at the time, and said the last train is getting ready, I was almost myself he saw me onto the train, wished me the best of luck, and away we went,

I felt that I was in a dream on my journey down to Folkestone, trying to fathom the reason of my depression, and wondering what would have happened if the M.P. had not spoken to me,

The Officers Leave Train, the one I was on, went straight alongside the quay, and on board we went, we had passed the other

five trains they were held up for some reason or other.

We got across to Boulonge, and what a sight met our eyes, the Railway sidings were full of trains, Ambulance, and otherwise with wounded aboard.

The walking wounded, soon set about us, with the most appalling, and what seemed to us incredible stories, such as,

There is no need for you to go up the Line, Jerry will be here in a week,

At the last moment, we were marched to a Camp, on the hillside, at Boulonge,

I there learned, that no more men on leave who were due back that day, were to leave England, the Officers Boat that I had got on, was the only one to return,

The others stayed a fortnight at Foljstone, before returning to their Units.

We had no sleep that night, for Jerry kept us awake, and we spent the night in trenches, we were quite at Home in them, but we hardly expected to sleep under the earth, one hundred miles behind the Line.

Next day, we saw reports in one or two papers, of what was going on, it was enough to make ones flesh creep, to hear the way some of the Base Wallahs commiserated with (you poor blighters) who have got to go up there.

We were marched down to a siding and more and more trains of wounded were there, it looked as if half the British Army was wounded.

Those who spoke to us, gave us a better idea of what was happening.

Jerry had opened a terrific bombardment, and then attacked on the whole of the Sector just South of Arras to South of St. Quinten.

We boarded some dirty cattle trucks for all the others were in use, and away we went, all the way we heard the same old song, (Jerry's playing Hell)

After a journey that had nothing cheerful about it, we arrived at Petit-Miramount, and were told that all must detrain as Jerry had blown the Line up,

This Line, was laid by our Engineers over the devastated Somme

Battlefield, and was part of the British System of Track, that had gradually replaced the very unsatisfactory French System, and it was now in a very sorry plight,

We were lined up, by the Officer of the Station, and told that one and all must get to there Units with all possible speed, (at which there were a few rude remarks) told the locality where to make for, and dismissed, there were only a dozen of us from the 25th Division.

We set off, and met some stragglers who had lost touch with their Units, and all making so they said for Albert.

The sight of these, set the tongues wagging, it was quite evident that all was not roses, where we were bound for,

One suggested, we should also make for Albert, and say we could not find our Units.

His suggestion was not acted upon, and we carried on, we came to some Nissen Huts, the one nearest the Road, was smashed in, and just then we met one of the men of the 1st Batt. Wilts.

He told us, how Jerry attacked, and how he advanced, and the terrific bombardment he put up, before the attack.

Pointing to the smashed hut, he said, that was full of the men of the 1st Batt, who had come out in 1914, and all were killed, and wounded,

Out of curiosity I asked if Paddy Stephens of the R.A.M.C. who had been with the Unit since they came out was in the hut,

He replied yes, and he was killed.

I felt as miserable as could be, for he had put us on the right road in 1915, when we first went in the Line, and was one of the bravest of the brave,

And now irony of fate, after serving in the Line with the Batt, the whole of the time, out of the three years and six months, that had been in France and never getting a scratch (and if ever a man had asked for trouble he had), he should now get killed while at rest, over ten miles behind the Line,

The next bit of information we came on was a batch of Scottish Troops lying down on the roadside having a breather,

Quite half of them had bandages on, and the Sergeant told us,

that there were 188 of them out of the whole of one of the Brigades of the 51st Division

The rest were either killed, wounded or missing, and so they two thousand strong, they had been roughly mauled,

They were in the line when the attack started.

We met some more stragglers, and after a talk with them, as to how things were going, and what they were going to do, and hearing they were making for a concentration camp at Albert, several of our little band thought it a good idea to go also,

But, just at that identical moment, a batch of Military Policemen appeared on the scene, and demanded pay books,

All of us coming off Leave were soon seeded out, the others marched off under escort to Albert.

We twelve only had three Policemen to escort us, and to add insult to injury they all had there revolvers drawn, it was obvious that something serious was amiss, and off we went, we first patred company with four, and an Escort, and going on further across country another four, and an Escort, leaving four of the 7th Brigade, and an Escort,

Just after coming in sight of Bapume, One of our A.S.C. Sergeants met us, I immediately told the Escort who he was, had my Pay Book handed to me, and went off with the Sergeant, as the Escort, and his revolver were hardly fit and pleasant companions, it made me feel as if I was a prisoner,

We had no sooner set off to the Ambulance, when naturally being anxious about the Lads, I asked how they had got on.

I was not ready for what was to come, he said rotten, Vic Hunt was killed the first day,

I felt dazed, I could have gone for him, he knew he was my Pal, and it seemed to me at the time, how callous of him, but later I forgave him, for it was better to know at once,

My last talk with Vic came back to me, Good-bye George, and don't forget your promise to send my things to my Wife, what premonition had come to tell him that we should not meet in this world again,

I felt I could not speak to him anymore, and we walked on in

..... silence,

silence, we reached the Ambulance Hd. Qtrs. and reported to the only Officer there, the Quarter master Capt Beard.

The first order I received the moment he spotted me was, (my Officer was now a Major), Major Lescher says you are to report to him as soon as possible, in five minutes Sgt Lechmere is going up, and you can go in the Ambulance.

I then asked him if I could speak to him aside, and told him of Vic's request, and my promise, he went, and got the list, and read it out, all the things were down, and had already been sent off, to the proper quarters from where they would go to his Wife, I felt disappointed to think, I had been unable to carry out his last request, but consoled myself with the thought, that they had all been sent,

I dumped my kit bag, and climbed into the Motor Ambulance, in Battle order, which made it possible to get about with speed, when marching, and within five minutes of reporting to Capt Beard, I was on my way to the Advanced Dressing Station.

Sgt. Lechmere was far too occupied to talk, for the roads were a bit congested, as we neared Bapume, he turned and said, we can get a move on here, as only the Ambulances, are allowed to go through Bapume,

Just then a Salvo dropped just behind us, and he put on more speed, the next moment on went the brakes, for another Salvo landed in front of us, one right in the middle of the road, both of us, and the Motor were untouched, he manouvered round the hole, and we then reached the A.D.S. without further excitement.

I reported at once to my Officer, who was in one of the ovens, of some Brick-kilns, he said I am glad you are back Swindell, I have lost all my kit, they forgot to put it on the G.S. Wagon,

Be ready to accompany me, in a few minutes, the Colonel is missing, and if he is not here shortly, we must go, and search for him, as he may be lying out there wounded,

What a glorious job, thought I, no sooner back, than into the soup with a vengeance, he dismissed me, but not before I had seen him, making a mess of a bottle of Whiskey,

..... I went to see

I went to the Lads, and just bringing in a wounded stretcher case, were four of C. Section including, Tich Parkins, and Jock Turner, they handed their case in to the Dressing Room, and came over to me,

They greeted me with all the warmth of a long lost pal, which seemed to always be the way, for somehow, or other Life was so different out there, and I first told Tich, how I had visited his home, and how his Wife, and Baby Boy was growing up.

Tich thanked me, and Jock and himself asked, if I had heard about Vic,

I said yes, how did it happen.

Tich said he was kneeling down in a hut, a shell landed in the Camp, and a piece came through the side, and pierced his chest, he died shortly afterwards,

We will tell you all about it, later, on, come on in here, and have a drink, the place had ample evidence of having been used as a Tavern

There were any amount of empty bottles lying about, and when I asked where all the stuff was coming from, they said, orders have been given to all ranks to take what they can, from the three large Canteens, and when Jerry was near, the remains were to set on fire,

And every time they passed, they took what they could, Whiskey, Port Wine, Biscuits, Cigarettes, Chocolates and anything else they could hold of.

I said, I have had nothing to eat for 36 hours, any cook house, they said no, we can't get hold of any food,

All we have had is what we have scrounged out of the Canteens.

They said have you seen Ned (our disrespectful way, of speaking of my Officer), I said Yes, and there he his finishing off a Bottle of Whiskey, and told me to be ready in a few minutes to go, and help find the C.O. as he was missing,

Tich gave me a packet of Biscuits and a bottle of Port, and it did not take me long to make a hole in the contents of the bottle, as well as the biscuits, and when the shout went up,

Blink, Major Lescher is looking for you, I was as far on the

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way to being full of Port, that I felt not the least qualm in going to fight the whole German Army if necessary, never mind looking for the Colonel,

The first thing I spoke to him about, when we were on the way was Vic, he was very upset, and asked me if I knew his Wife,

I told him, I had never met her, and then related Vic's, last talk with me, I told him the things had already been dispatched.

I will write to her, Swindell, when things are more settled,

One or two squads passed us, with cases, and reported that the C.O. had not been seen, presently, Sgt Lechmere went by in the Motor Ambulance, and was going full speed

Some stretcher cases, had been reported within a mile of Jerry, we heard later he got to them in time, had them put in the Ambulance, and how he dodged the shells, providence was with him, they kindly awarded him the Military Medal, for as plucky a deed as I had seen.

We struck across country, and our Infantry in little batches, were digging in an ominous sign, for it was plain that they were either retiring then, or expected too shortly.

I was sent along one part to enquire if anyone had seen our C.O.

The Infantry were just about down, or seemed to be, they had had very little food, and very little rest, I told them I had just come off leave, so hadn't seen much, they cheered me up, to the best of their ability, it was wonderful to hear them joking, one of them was on the look-out, he detected movements, and they all set too faster than ever, so I went on,

I reached my Officer, he had heard nothing, he was talking to a Sergeant from our Ambulance, who had told him, that the light railway was done for, but all the casualties, on the trucks had been cleared, and that the men, were clearing the casualties well now, for our troops were holding positions so lightly, that we were not suffering heavy casualties.

One of our Lads, Jock Fraser, who had been, a machine gun instruter in the Gordon Highlanders before the War, but had met

with a bad accident, and as they would not take him into the Infantry, had joined our Corps, found himself a job,

He came on a machine gun, in its place, the crew all round it dead, he gave all his R.A.M.C. things up, pulled off his jacket, as it had red crosses on the arms, and calling to two of the others, promptly took up position, and carried on.

My Officer and I once more parted, this time as we met we were under no doubts of our position things were getting decidedly unpleasant we were taking advantage of all available cover, Jerries advanced guards, were within rifle range, but his bullets were about spent,

Some more of our Infantry had dug themselves in here, in favourable positions, quite big gaps between each party, I went along, and asking here and there no one knew or had seen Col. Kelly, I got back to Major Lescher.

An Infantry Officer had told him, that owing to a big flanking movement by Jerry, the Division had got to retire, or be cut off, but were to make Jerry fight for every trench, and he told him that Jerry would no doubt be in Bapume that night, considering we were some two or three miles from Bapume, it was quite evident, that the Division had a big withdrawal on.

He had also explain, that the Troops in front had received orders to pass back, through these troops who we were now amongst, the Port was evidently a wonderful nerve tonic, for I wasn't at all afraid, although I was just as careful as at other times,

We had crept forward a little, taking advantage of the lay of the land, and after a while came on small files of our Lads trickling back, I was not exactly pleased at this, and as far as I could see my Officer, was the same.

It was a wonderful sight to see our Infantry, worn out with fatigue, they stuck it, a few yards, down they would go, any flashes, or signs of a Jerry moving, and they were potting him,

We were very fortunate, for there was some cross firing going on, at last when we had reached the Infantry who were fighting the rear-guard action, we heard news from the Officer in charge, that

an Officer of the R.A.M.C. was speaking to him, just before they retired to these positions,

He pointed to a battered farm-house a couple of hundred yards, and said he was in there, and if we were going there Jerry must not see us, for it was a machine gun nest, and he must not know it is occupied, until he advances,

He sent a guide with us, who cursed at having to go forward, after getting back safely, and small blame to him, whilst Jerry was not potting at us directly, he had already spotted the withdrawal going on, and was letting fly, with rifles, machine guns, and artillery, after a considerable time, of creeping, and crawling, trying to hid behind tree stumps, or even smaller things, one sighed to be the size of a worm,

For me it was not so difficult, but both my Officer, and the guide were about six foot, and to hid their bulk, was not so easy,

We at last reach a little trench that led to the Farmhouse, and getting a move on now, for we had now to send back the guide, we had been spotted by the small garrison, long before we arrived, so if they had spotted us, no doubt Jerry had, and the Garrison had been cursing us before we got there, they did so when we arrived,

The Officer greeted Major Lescher, with, what the Blankety Blank Blank fo you think you are doing, do you know that there is no one in front,

Then he asked what we had come for, and we were both bucked up, to hear that the Colonel had left sometime before,

The place was full of machine guns, Jerry had taken advantage of a rise in the ground to advance some troops for an enveloping movement,

The garrison spotted them, and blazed away, it was marvellous to see the way they came forward, in masses, and the casualties must have been terrific, he was forced to retire, and the Officer said if I was you I would get away now,

We left them, and struck down the trench to the Bapume Road Jerry had decided to pulverise the obstacle, and his Artillery opened a terrific bombardment we heard later that excepting for some

..... killed,

killed, whom they left behind, they were lucky to escape, practically unharmed,

It was a marvel how any of them escaped the bombardment, before we got out of sight Jerry made another attack from a different angle this time, but with the same results, I had often seen our Lads going forward, but they always advanced, in extended order, whilst Jerry came forward in mass, they made a good target for our gunners, they must have had some pluck, for their pals were falling around them, but they still advanced, until told to retire, or at least one must suppose so,

We carried on taking cover where-ever we could, and at last there was no more trench, we kept near the Road, and had just reached, a battered house that had obstructed our view of the road, we heard the noise of an engine, we hopped round the house, some of our Amb. Lads had collected the wounded, and put them here, and were going here there and everywhere and collecting all the wounded, that it was possible too.

Our C.O. was here, and we all helped to load the Ambulances, and away they flew, and returned, other casualties we scouted round for, bandaged up, and directed them down, the road to the Brickfields, the Colonel, received a dispatch, and showed it to Major Lescher, but we did not hear what was in it,

He left us, and went on to the Brickfields, my Officer, and I were left here, to see all the Cases were moved, away to the South we could see our Lads, in a Midland Division retiring rapidly, and Jerry coming on in droves,

It could only be a matter of an hour, before they would be on us, unless they dug in, and held him up, fortunately they did, our own Division were now owing to the retirement South of the road exposed on their right flank, Jerry was quick to seize the opportunity and he tried a turning movement,

Our Division although in such a dangerous position, were fileing back, through each other, and digging in again at the rear, as if they were doing it, in some peaceful place on Salisbury Plains,

At the same time they manouvered, and so stopped him from breaking through, they must have simply cut him to pieces at this spot, for seeing the gap, he had sent a big column to try and break the Line in two.

This time he was only checked, and he dug in, we soon knew all about it, the Motor Amb we were loading with stretcher cases, was now within rifle, and machine gun range, and Major Lescher, told the Driver not to come up again, he collected the Bearers where-ever possible, and taking on stretchers, and helping the lightly wounded, we were fortunate in getting back about a mile and a half with the lot, without a casualty, Jerry was hammering away at the road, and we had kept to any bit of trench or covering available,

We arrived at the Brickfields, and all the medical equipment had been sent back the whole of the cases had been cleared, there must have been a tremendous amount of work, since we had left here a few hours earlier,

The whole of the Bearer Squads were now here, excepting for those attached to the Infantry, I met most of my pals in C. Section they told me what a fool I was to have come back, and plenty of other pleasantries, we had orders to be ready to move off at a moments notice, so we were all lying and standing about in our kit,

Tich, and Jock Turner, and one or two others now told me about Vic, after I had gone on leave, they were moved from Courcelles to a hut Camp at Achiet-Le-Petit, on the morning of the 21st when Jerry had bombarded the back areas, as well as the front, before making his attack, one shell dropped by the hut, just as the men were all packing there valises to hand into stores,

Vic was kneeling down, and a piece of shell came through the side of the hut, he did not live long afterwards, and they buried him at once, in the Cemetary close at hand.

He had been very popular, he was one of the finest men any one could wish to meet, I knew more than the others, with his trouble, he could have left the Ambulance long before, but he had begged to be allowed to stop, I know from his talks that he was not afraid of being killed, and often afterwards, I have thought of him, and

..... knew, that

knew, that with that all he was leaving behind, he would have preferred death as he met it, to living a lingering death at Home.

There had also been another Death, our Transport Officer, had been killed, Capt, Mc Elney, was not a bad officer, but he was not exactly loved by his men, Capt Arnott, had been captured in the Brigade H.Q. which we had helped to dig, when stationed at Favreul, and Capt. Bartlett had been sent to the 1st Batt. Wilts, as there M.O. Capt. Hughes, D.S.O. and Bar and all kinds of other Medals, had after to all intents, and purposes, going to meet death hundreds of times, had got a bad leg wound, we heard later he would most likely lose it,

That meant, the 1st Wilts, had lost the medical orderly Paddy Stephens who came out with them in 1914 and there M.O. the same day,

Capt. Bartlett, had not been with the Wilts a day, before he got a packet, it was not so serious, but he had to leave the Unit, and go back to Hospital for a time, and he later rejoined us,

When the Unit had moved forward on the night of the attack, Cousins the Officers Cook, in spite of warnings light a fire to cook the Officers, some food by, as usual in such cases, the innocent suffered for the guilty

Jerrys planes came over, and spotting the glare of a fire, unloaded, and four of the A.S.C. men, got severely wounded, we heard later they all died, whereas, the guilty one Cousins, just received a small flesh wound, and got to Blighty with it,

This meant the Officers were without a Cook, and Bolton was promoted from the Mess Orderly to Cook,

The majority of the Lads, had been working with very little sleep for three days now, and were getting in the same state as the Infantry exhausted,

That was a cause of much mis-giving amongst the Division, several times, I had been asked,

Seen any Reserves coming up,

Have you heard if we are being relieved,

It was an awful time, (I had always replied, I have seen no

reserves, and I have not heard any thing about being releived),

One interesting piece of news I heard was that owing to some mischance, my Officer had lost the whole of his kit, that should have been put on the Wagons, he was possessed of the clothes and equipment he stood in, so I could see a good time coming,

Some of the Lads were told off, to to, some to the right, and some to the left and see if there were any wounded they could pick up, and then full back, to a place the other side of Bapume, as all traffic was now stopped.

The rest of the Lads were formed into their squads of four, one Officer to come with the last squad, the Colonel, Major Lescher, and myself to go off first, the squads to follow, each one about 40 yards behind the others.

Away we went, I was told to go, light as possible, I soon realised what for, Jerry was dropping them all over the place, the Colonel decided to go through Bapume itself,

We had got near the Town, or the ruins of it, a wounded man was lying there, he had been hit, and had crawled to the road, hoping to signal to someone, the C.O. and Major Lescher bandaged him up, I as pre arranged held up my hand, and the squads all passed it back, and halted,

As soon as he was done, I signalled come on, and handed him to the first squad the C.O. and my Officer, were calling out for wounded, and searching for them, and the reason for me to go light, was soon apparent, I was shown were a wounded man was, and I would have to rush back, and see that no squad went through without a case,

There were so many to clear, that two men only were allowed to a case, all the time a squad in front halted, to pick up there case those behind had to halt, Jerry was dropping a great number of 5 point nines, in the Town, and it was a rotten job, the men got windy having to keep on stopping, the cases got windy, and needless to say, I was the same, I would be rushing backwards and forwards, diving into a cellar or a shell hole, or hiding behind a wall when one sounded on top of me,

The whole ambulance at last got through, and not a casualty,

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we were in lucks way, once through and taking cover in a sunken road, the C.O. got rid of the cases as fast as the Ambulances came up, a roll call was taken, and two squads who had gone to the right were missing,

Swindell, go over there, and see if you can find these two squads, and rejoin us over there, pointing to some large Marquees, my Officer gave me his field glasses,

I had gone about a mile, and no news or sight of them, I met some men of another Division, who said they had seen some R.A.M.C. men, the Sergeant was pointing out to me, where they had seen them, when crump, a shell landed within a yard of us, and a bit tore right across his legs, fortunately only a flesh wound, and none of us others were touched,

I bandage him, showed him, where I was to report, and carried on, soon found our missing squads, helping another Division, they pointed out where Jerry was carrying out a flanking movement, with the evident idea of enveloping Bapume, we looked through the glasses he was in masses, and suffering accordingly, we soon afterwards moved over to where the Unit were, and joining them, we moved off, as the C.O. seemed to be now entirely without orders, and had to use his own initiative.

We struck a very busy spot, and several of the lads were allowed to go to it, it was the three huge Marquees, of the Canteen where the Whiskey, Port, and other things had come from, the men inside were handing out boxes of all kinds of eatables and the men were to be seen, some with twenty pound boxes of chocolates, dates or any and everything that was sold, the orders were to give as much away as possible, what was left, to be burned,

Our Lads got a good share, the Infantry were about the only ones who didn't, when they reached them, it would be time to set them on fire.

We turned into a road that was a bit unhealthy, but it was the best our Colonel could do, as we still had wounded, some on wheeled stretchers and some being carried on the usual way,

We had got about a mile along here, and not another lot,

..... within

within 2 or 300 yards, when suddenly we got the shock of our lives, four Jerries appeared out of the Blue, and raked us from end to end, the bullets hit the ground all amongst us, and all around us, but by a piece of good fortune, not a soul was hit, they had no sooner passed over when they wheeled, and came back again and repeated the dose,

It was the dirtiest bit of work, that I had met, it was such an obvious attack that it was mentioned officially for we were on the road by ourselves, and he came so low, a good thrower with a stone could have hit any of them, he would never have come so low, if he had not known who we were, and we were not like his Red Cross men armed, and after going over us, and coming back, he suddenly was attacked by our side and all four made off, and we were sorry to see the four get safely away,

The next move of the Colonels, was after looking through his glasses, and seeing the Jerries coming round on us, was to make a move partly back the way we had come, and then struck more towards the north,

We witnessed a sight, that we had never seen before, we had seen, horses with the light guns galloping along, but here we saw our heavy guns, pulled by twelve heavy dray horses, gallop into action, fire off a dozen rounds, then gallop off to another spot, they were evidently upsetting Jerry, for his planes swarmed over, it was a wonderful sight to see his planes swooping and attacking, and the gunners urging there horses to more effort, there were a number of casualties, but what was most noticeable, was the absence of our planes, Jerry seemed to be allowed to come, and go, without any interference

Night came on, and the Colonel was still trying to pitch our caravan, but the Line was changing, (through Jerries flanking movements) so rapidly, that it was a difficult job,

Just before midnight, we came to a deserted Camp, Jerry had dropped a few amongst the huts, but the C.O. decided to stop here, for the night, as the Leds were about done, all this time squads had to keep in touch with the Infantry, and clear the wounded, which

was now very difficult, for one never knew where to meet the Motor Ambulances,

There had been no rations issued, some had still got some food, from the Canteens (which were now up in smoke), others were unlucky, but the Lads shared, all my lot had been lost in one of my journeys.

We had laid down, when up comes Bolton,

Come on Blink, you Bloke (as he politely termed my Officer) wants you, seeing he had only just dismissed me, and told me to get some sleep, I was wondering what was doing,

I reached the Officers hut, and there was a Conference with the Officers going on, it seemed that I had been picked to go a message, for I was asked by the Colonel if I knew my way, to Albert, I was then told I should not be sent, as they would no doubt be here for the night.

I was taken on a scouting trip by my Officer, to see if we could get some information, we got a little that was comforting, and returned to the Camp, I was able to scrounge a drink of Port out of Bolton, and away I went to kip,

As soon as I reached there, he started to lamp away, hurried orders to clear Camp at once,

It was marvellous how quickly the Lads were lined up, and so at two in the morning we were trekking again, the Lads were tired with carrying cases, for nearly four days, with very little food, and little rest, I was tired with running about, since I had reported in the early morning, I had covered miles and miles, and felt done,

I was so tired that I fell asleep on the march, and was only saved from falling, by grabbing hold of the man in front of me, as I awoke, I spoke to the Lads afterwards, and they had most of them had the same experience as myself, just walking along, and then seemed to go right off to sleep, and wake up with a start, and find you were still marching

We passed through both, Achiet-Le-Grand, and Achiet-Le-Petit, and my chums showed me the position of the Camp they were in when Vic was killed

We marched till daybreak, and it had been a march, for the

roads were in a terrible state of congestion, and needless to say Jerry's planes paid any amount of visit, and dropped their bombs any, and everywhere, on the off chance of getting something, or somebody, no lights we allowed,

Guns, Limbers, Wagons of every description were going backwards and forwards, and all troops on foot had to make way for them, we spent half the night getting off the road,

At daybreak we were in a road running along the foot of a hill so the Colonel halted up against the side nearest the hill, Jerry could bomb us, but not reach us with shells,

The sight of the streams of traffic going backwards and forwards was amazing, only gun limbers were going up, and they were going at the gallop to no doubt save guns, that had perhaps had their limber knocked out,

As the morning progressed, no more traffic passed us either way, Jerry was still advancing, we heard from one of our dispatch riders that he had heard Officially, that the Division was to be relieved, or what we had been waiting for,

Quite half the Lads were sent to a place about 28 Kilometres, I never heard any regrets passed, about having to march that distance, tired and hungry as they were,

The rest of us, were all over the place, taking any cases, and hoping a Motor Ambulance would turn up, so that the squad could return,

A lot of the Guards Division were hereabouts, and when Major Lescher finally stopped at a Farm house in the ruins of Gommecourt, which was still occupied by the Civilians, Why I do not know, for Jerry was almost within rifle range, I had visions of sleep,

There was still an absence of food, for the troops, plenty of ammunition came up, but heavens alone knows what the Infantry existed on,

Major Lescher told me to scrounge round, but nothing doing, so none of the Lads got any food,

Gerry was beginning, to show signs of coming on again, there was only the remnants of our Division, and the Guards Division,

to hold him on a long sector round this part, and the old ruse, of marching troops round, and round with fixed bayonets, and letting them disappear, and turn up a good way off, and march up again, and keep on repeating to deceive the enemy, that large numbers of reinforcements were coming up,

It really did seem as if the longed for time of relief had come, none of the Lads who had gone down the previous day had been recalled, and we were looking forward to joining them, for sleep, and food were two things, we could not get a share of,

Some of the Bearers worn out, had been able to snatch a lay down, by the roadside, but so far, I had not laid down since I joined the Unit at the Brickfields, how Major Lescher kept it up was a marvel to me too, for he had been on two days longer than I had,

Some of the Bearers brought rumours that Gerry was massing for an attack, he banged away with his artillery, and whether our machine guns held him up, or he hoped we would retire, we could not find out, anyway, we stayed where we were,

Later we got some food, and so did the Infantry, all kinds of troops were on this, some carrying food up to the supports for the Infantry, others stacking it in little heaps, and men directing any and everybody to where food was to be had.

After another day of rushing about, and feeling well done, Major Lescher, said you had better get a bit of rest, I sat on a chair in the Madames Kitchen, and resting my arms on the table, was soon in the land of Nod,

How long, I was there, I do not know, it could not have been above an hour, or so, when Major Lescher woke me up,

Come into my room Swindell, and I followed him,

There are a terrible lot of casualties in the Line, and we have not the men to clear them, you must go back to the H.Q. and bring the other squads up,

I asked where are they,

He showed me the Map, eighteen kilometres away.

I said I will try and get lifts down,

No, he said, you are a Cross Country Runner, I have got a pair

of Ladys so and so's, you must put them on, and a pair of shoes, and get there as quick as you can, for the roads are so congested going down, you could walk quicker.

I cursed my love for cross country running, and as I was donning my shorts, He was ordering the Civilians out of there abode,

I left Gommecourt, amidst a proper hell on earth going on a mile further up, which meant the Poor Devils in the Line were going through it, and that the Casualty list was swelling,

After alternate running and walking, for the roads were in a terrible state of congestion, most of the way I had used the off side, as that had to be kept clear, for Ambulabces and food and Ammunition wagons, I arrived at H.Qs. handed in the message, got some tea, and something to eat, and was fortunate enough to catch an Ambulance just going back, it was packed with the Bearers, it would hold all standing, the rest to follow as best they could,

We arrived at Gommecourt, the squads went straight up the Line, to help clear the wounded, I changed into my own clothes, and then up Major Lescher and I went to do our bit.

It was rotten for us, but when one thought for a moment, of how the Lads in the Infantry had to stick it, trying to hold Jerry, it was the very least we could do was to hang on too,

One Young Infantry Officer, said to my Officer, that he did not beleive that the Division would ever be releived,

The men were convinced that, they were too stop in the Line, until he stopped or they were wiped out, and if there were any left, they could shake hands with themselves

And it certainly looked as if the Lads in our Division were being sacrificed, for the time had long since past, when they had had any rest, or proper food, or for that matter support, mostly the Infantry had nothing, but themselves to depend on, and the order to hold on, was very nice on paper, but what the Lads wanted to know was, were those in the Line the only fighting troops, in France,

Not that I heard grousing about the Job of hanging on, but only that there was an uneasy feeling, that the reserves were not in sufficient numbers, to make up for losses, for one thing each

brigade had lost a Battalion, reducing the strength from 4,000 to 3,000, and then each of the Battalions were reduced from 1,000 to 750 men

So what had been a Brigade strength in 1915 and 1916 of 4,000 men was now 2,250, a loss in a Division of 5,250 out of 12,000.

Jerry made a big attack, and both ours and the Guards Division at this spot, gave him a terrific hammering, but as one of the Infantry said, he must be making men, there is no end to them

Later on in the day, they were getting enfiladed, as a result of Jerry's method of attacking until he found a weak spot, then pushing his troops through, and carrying out his turning movements,

So once more we were retiring, not as the newspaper's would have it according to plan, but for two big reasons the most important being his heavy massed attacks, and our men's orders to hold him up, until the place of defence was almost untenable, and then clear out, and dig in further behind, and make him pay again for his next advance.

Our Division on this Sector although greatly under strength, with the casualties and no reinforcements, were by following out this skeleton form of defence, held up ten and fifteen times their number of the enemy, and this was perhaps the most important point, in showing the difference between the two Armies.

Our men fought, held him up, died at their post, or retired and carried on again,

Jerry generally, would fight, mow our men down, and then if our Lads got to close quarters, up would go their hands, and they would bleat, Kamerad, Kamerad,

The next two or three days, and the same sort of operations were going on, we would be clearing wounded to one spot, then Jerry has it under fire go there, shortage of rations, no sleep, no rest scarcely, and still Jerry came on, how the British kept on will always be a marvel to us who were there, there was reason for Jerry sticking it better, he was not only advancing, but we could by the prisoners, that came through that they were much fresher.

We had to evacuate some wounded through Albert, and some of our Lads trying to snatch a few hours sleep, had a night of shelling and

bombing to keep them company the damage Jerry did to the railway, made it impossible to use it,

All things come to an end, and at last on Thursday 28th my Officer said we are going out of the Line,

Jerry must have heard for where the remnants of our Division were, just north of Albert, he launched another attack, and advanced, but he was not there for long, for the remnants gathered together, and counterattacked, and back he went again, and with this assault the Division was finally withdrawn from the Line, having like the rest of the Divisions, made Gerry pay heavily, for the old Somme Battle-field, and had suffered heavily in doing it, Casualties amounting to over three thousand Killed Wounded and Missing.

We marched to join the rest of the Ambulance, in the Doullens area, and on the way passed some fresh Divisions going up, arriving there we fell out at once, I hadn't seen my Officer for 24 hours, and I didn't bother to look for him,

Into our Billet we tumbled, not that hungry, for although cooked food had been non existant during our retreat, after the first spell, Bully and Biscuits were to be got, almost whenever they were required,

Half the Ambulance had been here 24 hours earlier, and were refreshed, us who had just arrived, laid down and slept, I myself slept the clock round and when I awoke, I had a splitting head-ache, ached in every limb, and felt as if another 12 hours wouldn't do me any harm,

I had no sooner awoke, than one of C. Section said, Bolton came, and said your Officer wants you as soon as you awake, I slipped out, and had a shave and a wash and went round to the Officers mess, and Bolton told me, where Major Lescher was to be found,

I found him, and went in, he asked me if I had slept well, and upon my answering Yes, said, when did you last lay down, I said, on Friday Night the 22nd.

Somebody had evidently told him I had never had more than about an hour at a time for a sleep whilst sitting, he said he had told the Colonel, about me I felt it was all worth while what I had done, to hear that, for I had never had a word of praise from him before, and I had never heard him praise anyone else, still he had stuck it with

..... the rest,

the rest, and although some stretcher squads had perhaps had harder going, and more excitement than others, all had done the almost impossible, and as the Colonel said only one could get the reward for what the Ambulance had done, and he got it, a Bar to his D.S.O.

Later the following was in the Commander in Chief's Official Dispatch.

The 25th Division was in close support when the German Attack opened, and was at once sent into Battle, in the neighbourhood of the Bapume - Cambrai Road, Though constantly attacked, it was not dislodged from any position by the enemy's assault. When withdrawn from the Somme fighting the Spirit of the Division was exceptionally high.

One could only have a feeling of pride at seeing the above, about one's work, but it was mingled with the thoughts of the price paid, and once again my thoughts, and many of my chums in the Ambulance said the same, that the Infantry once again had the rough, in far greater proportion, than the rest, in fact the Ambulance, never had a scratch after the third day, which was almost incredible seeing the amount of wounded we had removed, and the proximity to the front line men, we had advanced to get them, made it more surprising,

We entrained for the second time from the Doullens sector, and made our way north, and went up to the Plug Street Area at once, the Division taking over a long stretch of the Line, allowing the Troops (Australians) to go down to the Somme Area.

It was a change after the place we had left, it was as quiet as when we were up in this locality the two previous winters.

The H.Qs of the Ambulance were at a small hamlet called Romavin, several huts, making a good camp for hospital etc.

The first job after we were settled was, to write out a complete list of the things my Officer required, a Motor Ambulance was going to St. Omer, and Major Lescher said, I will go into Ballieul and get some money, and you must do the best you can for me,

I was looking forward with pleasure to a trip to St. Omer, and to be able to spend plenty of money, even if it was not on myself, was a treat,

I was disappointed, for he decided it would be better to get the

..... things himself,

things himself,

The Ambulance arrived back, with all his purchases, but my Officer stayed in St. Omer until later,

When I opened the parcels, I got a shock, not more than a quarter of what he had purchased was of any real use to him, and the bills totalled over three thousand francs,

Next morning he asked me if I had looked over his purchases.

I said yes, but there are no shirts, socks underclothing,

He went a bit red, and said he lost the list, and went round buying what he thought he required.

The next time a Motor Ambulance went, I left a list, one for Major Lescher and one for the M.T. Sergeant, as I was booked for the Line, and he gave the Driver the money, and he bought what was required,

I had a rough time here, for I had another upset with my Officer,

He ordered me to call him, in plenty of time for a special parade, as all kit, lost on the Somme, had now been replaced, to the Men, Officers had to replace their own, so that he could inspect a party bound for the Line early,

I went to his hut, left his tea and shaving water, and got his bath ready, took his kit away to clean, when it was finished went back to the hut, there was my Bold Hero fast asleep, tea cold, shaving water cold and bath untouched,

He jumped out of bed, drank his cold tea, and then had the audacity to say, I had not called him,

Once more I was guilty of a gross breach of Military Discipline, for I answered back.

I said, I know I did, and what is more Sgt. Currell can prove it, as he was at the door,

That did it.

In the excitement I had forgotten the Colonel was asleep in the other half of the hut, and he could hear me through the wooden partition,

Out he came, report to Orderly Room, at the morning parade.

I left the hut, (my Officer was already on Parade) feeling fed up to the eyebrows, and saying a few things to myself, about the Officers,

and the Army in particular. I decided I had had enough, so round to my Officers hut, I went as soon, as the Colonel went to the Mess, and told my Officer, I had to go to Orderly Room, for Insolence, and once more said I would like to return to the ranks.

I went to breakfast, and when I returned to his hut, the Colonel and my Officer, had evidently been talking it over, for, I had a proper dressing down from the C.O. there and then, and he finished up by ordering me to carry on as Major Leschers servant, and any more insolence etc. etc. and I should be for it,

I had gone round inwardly furious, I left furious, and dismayed, none of my chums were about, so I had a nice time to brood over things, I thought of Vic, and thinking of Vic, I remembered his sudden end, and fell to thinking my turn might come, at any moment, and then remembered I had never made my Will so on the 4th April 1918, two years and eight months after I landed in France I made my Will,

Later I heard I was for the Line, and got ready, went round to see Bolton in the Mess, he was kept extra busy but had settled down to the cooking, and was talking about who was to come in the Mess.

I left him, and reported to my Officer who was talking to the Colonel, and curiously enough the first thing they asked me, was there a man in the ranks I could recommend for the Mess.

I said No. but I should like to have recommended Tich Parkins, especially, as here was a chance, to put into practice the suggestion of his Wife, but I had already received, strict instructions from Tich that he would never have anything to do with me, if I told the Colonel he would do for the Mess,

But fates were kind, for I overheard my Officer say, he would ask Swindell, who was a good man for fatigues, I guessed at once that they would give my suggestion a trial in the Mess,

So when Major Lescher said, Swindell, who is a good man, to do fatigues,

I said Pte. Parkins, Sir, and away I went, Tish was sent for, and told to start work in the Mess.

He came back to me in a white heat rage, and W - - - -l did you recommend me to the Mess for Blink

I said look here Tich, the C.O. asked me if I could recommend a man for the Mess, and I said No.

He had to leave it at that, but of course I conveniently forgot to tell him, it was my fault he was there,

If ever a man had earned a rest he was one, not that he had done more than others, but there were none who had done more than him,

Up I went with my Officer, the Lads had some cushy dug out, nothing strong about them, but this was a quiet part of the Line, and we had got used to hearing about Ploeg Streate, that to think of anything doing here, was not done, this was a Rest Sector, where you got as many casualties in a month, as many others got in a couple of hours.

My Officer was fidgety, very unusual for him, have you got this, that and the other, and then said the A.D.M.S. is coming round, so you men have your answers ready if he speaks to you,

A.D.M.S. means Assistant Director Medical Services, in rank he was the head of all the Medical Services in the Division, and as the Men said, far too cushy a job to come up and view how things are in a rough place, but a nice quiet sector like this, he can manage, and then write out a nice report,

Up he came with the Colonel, and went his rounds, and in his best Hotel manner told the Colonel he would have some dinner, when he had done the rounds, which would take some time.

When he had left our Dressing Station, my Officer came back, and said Swindell you must go back to the house at the Cross Roads, and get some Dinner ready for eight. and off he went after the Party,

I came in for plenty of chipping by the Lads,

Warm them up a Machonicie each,

Make them some nice Bully Beef Stew,

Give them a feed of Pork and Beans,

Away I went, and when I reached this House, I found some of our Nursing Orderlies here,

I went round, on the usual Army Stunt, on the scrounge.

I arrived back with some onions and potatoes I had won, got some bully and machonicies, put them through a mincer used for patients, and with the help of another chap made a stove out of a Biscuit tin,

..... sufficiently

sufficiently good enough to make a cottage pie, and my old Ypres pudding came in useful again,

Next was the scrounging of plates knife and fork I had, but eight knives and fork,

Anyway when they arrived, they sat down to Cottage Pie, and finished up with pudding, and tea, I was the Cook and Waiter in one,

After the A.D.M.S. had eaten his repast, in a pleasant jovial manner chipped the Colonel, about the Officers do not do at all bad, on the fare and turning to me said, a very good dinner what did you make the Cottage Pie off.

I only got out Machoncie, and he was up, and saying, I wouldn't have touched the stuff if I had known what it was made of,

I cleared off, and he never saw any more of me, but the Lads laughed when I told them, how nice he said it was, until he heard what it was made of, it was quite plain that he had not had much Army food, and these were the sort who shared (in there own imagination) the hardships of War.

I was soon up at the Dressing Station again, and we had an easy time, for things were as quiet here, as one could wish for, and casualties were rarities.

As dusk came my Officer went down and when we got to the house where the Officers had had their repast the C.O. came up, and my Officer going back to H.Qs, I went up again with the Colonel,

As we neared the communication trench, a big batch of Youngster were going into the Line for the first time, we entered the Trench about the same time,

The night was very dark, and the Verey lights showed up brilliantly, suddenly the rat, tat, tat of machine guns broke out, and the swish, swish of the bullets sounded as they whistled overhead.

A voice shouted whats up in front, and then the usual chorus, get a move on, and then a sight, that I, am glad to say I had never seen before,

A youngster about 18 $\frac{1}{2}$, was absolutely terrified, it was a case of quick acting, and the Colonel said.

Swindell take that Lad down, and tell them to keep him until I come down,

I carried some of his kit, and half carried him, he was in a terrible state, what he felt the most, was showing funk in front of the other Lads, whom he had trained in Blighty with.

He told us when I had got him down to the Old House, that he was going up alright, and all of a sudden, out of the darkness, came the sound of the Bullets, going past, and it so frightened him to know he was actually in the Line at last, that his nerve gave way,

Poor kid no wonder, our C.O. when he came down, wrote out a long report saying what had happened, and that he, and any more like him were a danger to the rest of the Units, and that he should never have been sent out, and made a special request that he should be sent back home,

I had never seen our C.O. in the state he was in, he was in a state of half dismay, that Youngsters such as we had seen, should have been sent out at all, and half rage, that men between the ages of twenty and thirty five, were skulking at Home, as indispensables, and letting Youngsters be dragged up to the Colours, trained, and be sent out here to fight there Battles, because they were too big a cowards, to do their duty,

I had never heard him use bad language before, and one realised how he felt it, and he was not alone, for one and all condemned, the sending out of these poor Youngsters,

It will go down in history, that the skulkers at home, between 20 and 35, let these Youngsters get killed, that their skins might be saved,

And another big point with these Youngsters was, instead of coming to our Units out on rest, and so mixed with the older Soldiers, and get broken in a bit, they were sent into the Line at once, and had to join almost skeleton units, and so not get the support, and help that was needed by older soldiers, never mind Boys.

It was a great blow after all that the Division had been through, to think that England was so low in man power that she must call up Boys,

Not that the Boys were cowards, on the contrary my experience of them in general, was that as long as they could get plenty of food, they were more enthusiastic, than the reverse, but being growing Lads, the chief trouble for them was the food, and where ever one went, in Canteen, or Village, all their little pay went in food,

Many of them seemed to have not the slightest idea of danger, but in spite of their ability, it nevertheless, left a nasty taste, in ones mouth, they were far to Young,

On the following days, I was looking after some other Officers, up the Line, running messages, and any odd job that came along,

My Officer was down at H.Qs, and I had not seen him for some days. I had to go on a message over towards Pont-de-Nieppe, it was more battered, than when I had last seen it, Wally Kings brother was in the Lincolns, in the Division (34) on this Sector, but had so far been unable to meet him.

Things were wo quiet, that as some of the Lads said, he his too busy down on the Somme, to worry about here, we were in for a rude awakening,

The first we knew about it, was after hearing on the morning of the 4th of April, a terrific bombardment going on South of us,

Jerry had attacked on a wide sector, from Armentieres, to below Giarenchy, he had used the same tactics, as on the Somme, and luck was with him again, as he was able to advanced under the protection of a heavy mist,

He was not attacking on our Divisional Sector, which was very fortunate, as we were holding an extra long sector, and were considerably under strength, and the reinforcements were mostly Youngsters, new to warfare in any form,

He made a flanking movement against the Division on our right, and they had to retire to make up the Line again, one of our Brigades, the one in the reserve as the other two were in the Line, was sent to help them, they went in near Steenwerch, or Steenbeck,

Our Divisional Front, fortunately had not been attacked, for not only were the Division, holding an extra long front Line, but the Units were understrength, and most of thereinforcements were youngsters,

..... and had not

and had not had time to get used to the trenches.

Some of us R.A.M.C. had to go, and help on the right and the Civilian population from Armentieres, were fleeing, he had heavily bombarded all round, and in Armentieres with Mustard Gas Shells,

The unfortunates who had got a dose, were painful to look at, many of them had blisters as big as five shilling pieces, he would no doubt have been very pleased, if he could have had the same done to his own people, I helped with scores, mostly Women and Children.

They were in a state of complete exhaustion, miserable at having to leave their Homes, and altogether they added considerably to the work of the British in getting them to safety.

We could see by the flashes of the Guns that night that Jerry had continued his advance, so far I had not seen much of my Officer just lately, I had heard from Bolton that he had had some proper clothes and other things bought for him, by the Driver of one of the Motor Amb. who had to go into St. Omer, but I had not been down to H.Qs. so had not seen any of his kit,

We were quiet on our Sector during the evening and night, a fair amount of shelling, but he seemed to be concentrating more on where he had advanced,

Morning came, and a mist overhung No-mans-land, suddenly a terrific bombardment started on our Sector, and under cover of the mist he made advances in small parties, he was successful in some places in getting through, and he advanced so rapidly that he was round the back of the Lads, and so they had no reserves to help them he captured considerable numbers

Our Reserve Brigade having been sent to assist another Division our General had to mobilize the Royal Engineers, A.S.C. and the Pioneer Battalion, and use them as the Divisional reserves, and into the breach they went, and were successful in recapturing a lot of ground he had taken,

Jerry began his moves of the Somme advance again, and started working round the back, and sides and forcing our Lads to retire or be captured, owing to our Division holding him here a while we were able to clear our wounded,

..... But the Division

But the Division had had some severe blows, the Commanding Officers of three Batts. were captured, in a temporary H.Qs. including amongst them being Lt. Col. Olgolvie, of the 1st Batt. Wilts Regt, who had joined the Unit as a private in 1914, and worked his way up, through all the ranks, till he reached the Command of the Batt, with him was his trusty Scout, familiarly known as Darkie of the Wilts.

We lost some of our Lads, both captured, and wounded, and incedently one of the most prominent squads in our Unit were broken up, the four were, Emmerson, Le. Dennis, Oliver and Walker, a squad that are worth describing,

Emmerson a big strong miner, 6 ft in height, Le. Dennis who was as slight, as Emmerson was brawny, but he was a wiry sort of chap, always swearing, as if to make up for not swearing in peace time, and it was obvious that he was anything but the Blackguard, a newcomer to the unit would suppose him to be, and always one to help another chap, Oliver, a short sturdy Cockney, and Walker a Cotton worker in peace time, one of the smallest members of the Amb, they were the extremes, and yet all of us recognised them as one of the finest squads in the Amb, and were always picked amongst the first

Walker got wounded, and Oliver was captured, so the famous squad was broken, Le Dennis was very upset, and was all the time saying that him and Emmer, (to give his nick name for Emmerson) would get it next, Emmerson took it more calmly,

Owing to the Division falling back and taking up fresh positions, we had to move our Dressing Stations, and several of us went sent to H.Qs. I arrived there just as the Unit H.Qs. Staff were leaving, and was met by my Officer, have you got my Washing, I said what Washing Sir, I have only just come down,

He said go and see Bolton, and ask him where he sent it,

Round I rushed to Bolton, and asked him where he had sent Neds washing, he pointed out a couple of cottages, and off I went as fast as I could run when I got there the cottages were empty

The occupants had got away, before Jerry was knocking at their

..... door,

door, and with them had gone my Officers clothes,

Back I went and told him the happy news, that all his new kit had gone with the good lady, he was upset, and with cause, Officers had to supply their own kit, he had only just replaced what he had lost on the Somme, and now that lot had gone.

The H.Qts moved off, and left the Bearers to clear the wounded,

One Old Flemish Couple did not intend to leave there old Home, they had a little farm, fairly well stocked and as Jerry had shelled their house, they had taken refuge behind a small hedge.

It was too tragic for words, this Old Couple not wanting to leave, and Jerry within rifle shot, it took a lot of persuasion, but only then on the understanding that their live stock was saved with them,

So in the full gaze of Jerry, one by one, the cows were driven down the road, how none were killed was a mystery, the pigs, goats, chickens, and ducks were cleared, and an hour later Jerry was in that Farm, so he just missed a nice capture, the Old Couple presented a big problem, but were eventually out of Jerrys reach, and joined up, so we were told with their livestock,

Not all the people in this locality were so clinging, and many had made off, and left chickens, pigs, goats, ducks and one place thirty cows, the latter were taken back, by one of our Tommies who had been a Farmer before the War. but not the other items, and I must say that Chicken, instead of Bully, was very nice, but what a shindy if we had been caught.

We were gradually falling back on our Sector to keep in touch with the right, and took up positions in front of Neuve Eglise and Romarin,

We knew this Section well as we were here for the Messines attack things were not quite so comfortable, I was not doing much stretcher bearing, but was away from my Officer still, there were a lot of wounded when he made a big attack to get through here, but our Lads had some good positions, and held him, and it was only when he drove towards Bailleul from the South, that the position on our Sector was untenable otherwise, he would in all probability

have been held up at Ravensburg Ridge,

I was sent back to find H.Qts, the only information was, some where the other side of Bailleul, I decided to cut through the Town,

There were very few Civilians about, those that were, were all making tracks for safety, with all the goods they could carry,

Jerry was gradually getting closer, from the South Side, and the British were barricading the streets Beds, Tables, Chests of Drawers, Boxes, any and everything that would give our Lads a little protection were stacked across the roads at Strategic points, I gave a hand until, Jerry came too close, and made off, to the rear, with our Lads rattling away,

I found H.Qs, and once more took up my duties as Batmen, not that there was much, I could do for my Officer, for he had little more than the Clothes he stood up in.

Some of us went up to form fresh places, and were relieved on the 18th of April, and moved back into the Area round Proven,

On the way we were resting at the roadside when some French Cavalry went by, one and all of us agreed, that they were the finest body of Troops, any of us had seen.

We learned later they had been several months away from the Line, and had been held in Reserve by the French, for any emergency that might arise, they had a great heartening effect, on our Lads, for it had seemed as if we had no reserves, except the Youngsters, and to send Lads just over Eighteen into this slaughter, when there were so many men, skulking in Britian was vile, and only the Politicians were too blame,

We welcomed our respite, the rest gave us a breather, we were bivouac near the Railway Head, it was surprising the number of our Railway Engines there were here, and all with the usual three letters on, R.O.D. Royal Ordinance Dept, we had a different title, it was the usual thing to cry out as they steamed by, whats that, Roll on Duration,

We were enjoying our well earned rest, the weather was cold but fine, and although we were not allowed out of the area, we managed by means of a little scrounging to round up some stray ducks, and

..... chickens,

chickens, some of the Lads said look here Blink, if we cannot cook these things, without the Officers catching us, we shall be for it,

What about three to the Officers Mess, I took them round, later in the day, my Officer said,

Swindell, I see a lot of feathers about, where do they come from, have the Men had Chickens,

Yes, Sir, I answered,

They found some stray ones, and sent three into the Mess, which you have had today.

The Lads never heard anything about Chickens.

We had not been here, above forty eight hours, when the rumour went round, we are for the Line again,

True enough we were,

I spoke to my Officer about getting some new clothes, and by this little ruse found out, as he said No not yet, as we are to be in readiness to move off at an hours notice,

Next morning we all paraded, Jerrys long distance guns were dropping them too close to be pleasant and in small parties of thirty we moved off, at 200 yards interval, the party I was with, just got to the place where the switch road and the main road, on one side of Poperinghe met, when Jerry hammered the switch road, we made a bolt for it, and just escaped a salvo but the next party, belonging to one of the Divisions Ambulances (75th), had three shells, drop right amongst them, they had eleven killed, and fifteen wounded, out of their thirty,

We skirted Poperinghe, and they were putting up extra lots of camouflage, as fast as they could, as Jerry had this Road under observation, and it was a hot shop, several times we had to bolt for it,

We marched through the town of Goodasvelde, and he had properly hammered it, a few Civilians were sticking to their cellars,

The other side of the Village was alive, with Guns, Troops, Ambulances we were now at the back of Kemmel Hill, and Jerry had made a big attack, that morning, he had failed, but they were rushing up reinforcements,

The French held this Sector, and it was a treat to see such

..... healthy,

healthy, well dressed, smart men, they also we learned, had had a stay of several months in Reserve.

They were very cheerful, and one would not have known them, for men who knew that for many of them, it was their last day on earth, unless you had a talk with them, and although we had heard a few rumours of mutiny etc, we got nothing but the wish to die in the attempt, or get Jerry out of their Country, from this lot and they were full of joy at going forward with (Tomme) as they called the British Troops.

We arrived in the Rheninghulst ? area, and were soon told off, once again, unlike Todd, Major Leschers previous servant, I was told off for the Line, not as a Bearer especially, but as a runner or bearer if necessary,

We made for a Village, called La Clytte, Kemmel Hill laid on our right, and we could see the Sector quite plainly, only to plainly, where we were to work,

Things were fairly quiet, just the usual shelling going on, four squads were detailed off, for the Line, and the rest of us were put on making, a house that was chosen, strong enough, to put the wounded in, by sand bagging it, we worked like galley slaves, and soon found our work in vain, as Jerry either took a fancy to the House, or it was in his way, for he lamped, and we were as safe outside as in, rushing out as a shell went through the roof, I saw something shining on the path and picked it up, and rushed into a ditch,

It looked like a locket of some kind, and opening it, one of the Lads said thats a good souvenir Blink, that is a locket, with a piece of Martyrs Bone in it, belonging to a Roman Catholic,

We lend later that the House we had been working on was the Local Priests Home,

He had evidently made tracks for safety with the rest of the Civilian population, and small blame to him,

Our next order was to try and strengthen the cellars, we did, and Jerry kindly left us alone, until we had finished, he then decided it was not to be used, and undid all of our work, we, as soon as he started made a bolt for safety, and the powers that were, decided

to have two houses, on the corner of cross roads at La Clytte, in full view of Jerry, as the place to bring the wounded, and the Motor Ambulances to take them to H.Qs.

On one of the other corners, were some Nissen Huts, and a lot of Infantry were just leaving them when Jerry started to shell them,

We understood all the Camp was clear, but after one shell had landed right on top of one, some of the Lads, foolishly (myself included), went over to have a look,

Inside was a man sitting with his back to the wall, as pale as death, but fully alive, his first words were anyone got a fag, and on this being supplied, we surveyed him,

He was standing up when the shell landed, that was all he remembered (the report of the explosion) and here he was sitting down alive, not five feet, from where a 5.9 had burst, but although he was alive, he had two terrible injuries, his legs, were both turned round, and round, just as if you were wringing out a flannel, the bones, and flesh were simply pulverised by the force of the explosion, we soon had him on an ambulance, and he was off to C.C.S, as our M.O. could not do anything for him, for both legs would have to come off.

Major Bartlett spotted me, and said Swindell, there are some Officers sleeping inside, and have had no food for two days can you get them anything, I said we have no rations, only our own, but I will do the best I can,

I went off on the scrounge, and as luck would have it, struck oil, I spotted this house, well back from the road, and made for it, and found some onions, carrots, and potatoes, and on further search a saucepan, I had a brainwave and went over to a shed, and clicked, half a dozen eggs, how old I did not know, and a chicken,

She went into the saucepan, with the vegetables, and the eggs being sound the hungry officers had a feed.

Major Bartlett spoke to me in his usual way, where did you manage to get all the food Swindell,

Found it Sir,

Splendid Fellow, Splendid Fellow,

One thing about this Officer, he was liked more by the men, than any of the other Officers, nobody would dare to be familiar with him, and yet he would always seem to treat all the men as Brothers, never tell them to go to places, he would not go himself, and always look after all under him,

He then said be ready early in the morning with something hot, we are off soon after daybreak,

Several of the Lads asked me, what he had said, and what was on, but as regards the latter, I used to keep all that sort of thing to myself,

I had to go down to H.Qs, on a message, and I could see they were all full of bandages etc, for a rush of wounded, My Officer was still here, why I was sent up, I could not find out, for the other servants where with there Officers here,

I took as much extra rations back as I could carry, to the Lads delight, for rations were not too plentiful up this way, and not much of a health resort for any thing or anybody, for it was only just behind the line, and in full view of Jerry,

Early morning came, and all the Lads knew we were for it, for presently a terrific bombardment started, from our side, and then Jerry set too, our little spot, was lamped unmercifully, but luck was with us, for apart from wind up not one suffered,

We went straight up, and started to clear the casualties, in spite of the smoke from the exploding shells, we could make out Division going forward rapidly,

We were pretty close behind, and it was soon obvious to us that all was not well for although, we were well past his lines of the early morning, a tremendous lot of mud was coming at us from over on the right,

Our Lads had to gradually fall back and us ditto, and from some of the wounded we got an idea of how things had fared,

As soon as 3 a.m. went, over the top went the Division, and also the 49th on the left, and the French on the right, our Lads got right through to his ~~lines~~ guns in no time with but few casualties, but what we had to put up with the cross fire, was where Jerry had held up the right, and left wings, and our Division had to retire,

..... and got

and got a lot of casualties,

As they were holding on, all of us were now put on clearing the cases from the Aid Post to the A.D.S. at La Clytte, up to this time we had been bringing them into the Aid Post from where ever we could get them,

It was miserable carrying, as it had rained so heavily, we got our cases, and set off, and along the road near the Wood, were a crowd of Frenchmen, as we drew near they went down on their knees, and beg the wounded to forgive them, tears were streaming down their cheeks, and it was rather upsetting,

They spoke about letting Tommy down, who was helping to liberate their Country, and a lot more things,

We at last found out what all this to-do was about,

They said they had not gone forward with our Lads as, some how or other the times of the Two Armies were different, we were an hour earlier, what ever the cause, they were a crowd of despondent Men,

We cleared our Cases, and except for intermittent shelling, things became on the quiet side, and down to H.Q. all of us who had been at La Clytte were sent, and were there just long enough to get to like it, as it was a cushy place, and handy worth old Jerries while to shell it,

The first thing I clicked was on Guard, and later on was visited by Sgt. Ingram, to tell me I was to get ready to go up again,

I went off guard just in time to be in the billet, to hear a little bit of sauce going on,

Sgt, Ingram had just told one of the Lads, Le Denis to get ready for the Line, he was of the squad who had lost two Oliver and Walker just before at Plug Street, and he was going off the deep end, about why this and that couldn't some of the others who hadn't been up, have a go, there was certainly logic in what he said for all of us detailed to go up, had just come down, his final fling was,

You will send me up, until I am ---- - well killed, and then you will have to send some one else,

It was unusual to hear Le Denis, carrying on like this, but not a great deal of notice was taken of his outburst,

The section for us, as detailed lined up and off we went, once again I left my Officer although, he still paid me,

We arrived at La Clytte again, and merry hell was on, how the two houses escaped was a marvel, it seemed as if they bore a charmed life, the fragments from exploding shells outside on the road would hit the sandbags, that were covering the window, the doors, and the walls and yet not a shell on the houses.

Outside in this shelling, we would occasionally dash, for Infantrymen, Engineers, and Machine Gunners, were all feverishly working, at strengthening a reserve line, for it was known that our attack not having been successful the previous day, Jerry would take advantage of the salient he had made to try and capture Kemmel Hill, and so gained command of the whole ground round Ypres, and force us to retire.

The Lads doing this exposed job, came in for a lot of Jerrys mud and we were kept going, Major Bartlett decided at last that it was far too warm, for us, never mind the many wounded, we kept bringing in, who had to lie about on stretchers, until the Motor Ambulances rushed up, or we had a chance to carry them back to Rheninghulst, were they were in a little quieter zone,

Eight men were detailed off, to use the place as an Aid Post, the rest of us took all the medical equipment and made our way towards the rear, and took up position at the Curies House we had, worked at earlier on,

A few dugouts had been made so we did not use, what Jerry had left of the House,

Early in the morning, Jerry opened up, about 3 a.m. and all we knew for the next few hours, was that he was making a tremendous effort, on the whole of this front, for right and left of us for miles he was attacking, our section of the line, owing to so many casualties, and no reinforcements, had been shortened, he got in on one of the sections, but was fortunately soon pushed out again,

We were extremely fortunate for our part, for in spite of scores of journeys backwards, and forwards we escaped injury,

Not so, those left in the Aid Post at La Clytte, for almost as

soon as the bombardment started, he dropped a shell right on it, many infantry having taken shelter were wounded and five of our unit were outside, getting a case the other three were in the cellar, when the shell dropped, two were wounded, and one killed, our Old Chum Le Denis,

As soon as we heard of his death the words he had used at H.Qs, came to our minds, how soon had his forebodings been realized, in less than 24 hours,

If ever a man in the Ambulance had done his bit, Le Denis was he, for in spite of an almost skeleton frame, he could carry the heaviest of wounded men, for hour after hour, curse like the proverbial trooper, about the war and all to do with it, but never by one effort shirk, he was possessed of a strong determination to carry on, at all costs, as we who worked with him knew, once more one of the characters of the ambulance had left us, the squad, of Emmerson, Le Dennis, Walker and Oliver was no more,

The stretcher bearers were as busy as ever, although very little trench carrying cases were on, for the reason there were none, but being under observation by Jerrys ballons, he was continually bombarding and it was no use laying low for a while for your spot might be the next one he would shell, fate was with us, a few minor wounds, and slight doses of gas, and after a nightmare of a time the welcomed words came up, that we were to be releived, to our surprise the French took over our sector, and down we went, and joined H.Qs, the other side of Rheminghulst, they were all packed up, and lining up in our sections off we went, as glad to be out for a rest, as ever we had been, we laughed, and joked with the French Poilus who were lining the Road, as the Division came out,

We marched passed the camouflaged roadside, and if it had been darker one would almost have thought it was trees, and bushes, so cleverly had it been done, we passed through Pop, and were marching along a road that seemed as far away from the war zone, as anywhere we had been,

The proverbial Estaminet was there, right away from any other houses, and several Women, and a few old Men were standing outside,

.....I was on that

I was on that side of the ranks, and as we came abreast of them, I looked up, to pass some remark as the rest of the Lads had done, when one of the young women, said,

Oh, Georges,

It was Madelaine, her Sister was standing by her, they were the two Sisters, at whose home my Officer had been billeted, when we were last at Outersteene,

I waved my hand to them, just then My Officer who was just at the rear, called me to him, and said,

Did you notice Madelaine and her Sister,

I said yes, they had spoken to me,

When he said, leave the ranks and go and find out, what they are doing here, I was only too pleased to run back,

The Sisters when they saw me, came and hugged me, I knew I should hear all about it, when I got back again for the Lads were looking back,

They almost carried me into the estaminet, jabbered away in French to the one behind the counter, and to all the others,

I was placed on a chair, and a large malaga was handed to me and all the others except, Madelaine and her Sister, were firing questions at me that I could not understand,

I felt a proper hero, once more my glass was filled, and I drank it to shouts of Bon Sante, Tommee, then I at last got a word in, and told Madelaine, that Major Lescher wanted to know, how they were faring, and what they were doing so far from Outersteene,

Then I heard their story, they had stopped in Outersteene as long as they could, and only when our Lads had retired to the Village, and were holding Jerry up with machine gun fire did they run for it.

They left all there belongings behind, and their Father was ill, with the ordeal they had been through, they were stopping here temporarily, and asked me if I thought the Germans were winning.

I had to laugh at their question, it was something that had never entered my mind, and I had never heard a word from any of our Lads, Infantry, Artillery or any other Corps or Regiment, to even suggest by any stretch of imagination, that we were losing or likely

to lose, plenty of growls, about not sufficient this that and the other, to help them, but to do it all their blooming selves.

I said No, most decidedly No, while the British are in the War, there is not any likelihood of Jerry winning, I explained to her, our point of view of Jerrys attacks, and advances, how in the early days of the war he had everything in greater quantities than the Allies, but now we were on equal, if not superior terms, and that the fact of him having advanced so far from his Railheads would prove his undoing, and lots of other items,

They told the others what I was saying, I said at last that I must go, but not before I was pressed to one more glass of Malaga, which I did not refuse, and with Madelaine and her Sister helping me on with my kit, and plenty of good wishes and good health from all and sundry, I kissed Madelaine and her Sister, wished them happiness and a prosperous future, if they went to their Brothers at Boulonge, and hoped their Father would recover, although they were afraid he would not, that was the reason they had not gone to Boulonge, I left them, and hurried after the Ambulance as fast as I could, I kept turning round, they were still waving to me, I reached a bend in the Road, and waved a last farewell, to two of the nicest French girls I had ever had dealings with,

After a left, and having a spurt, I at last reached the Unit, told Major Lescher, all that had happened, and then got chipped by the Lads,

We at last reached our Billels for the night, rumours were rife, the Division going out for a long rest, and going back again up the line in a day or two, were the most common, our minds were soon set at ease,

We were going to the Champagne District for a Rest, none of us knew where it was, and soon there was a hunt round, one of the papers had the whole front on a Map, and we could see it was miles beyond where our front joined the French Front, and as there was no fighting going on, we were in for a rest.

Our Ambulance in the last twenty five days had been through a rough time we had had four killed, twenty nine wounded, and ten were

..... prisoners,

prisoners, and missing but they were nothing to the greivous losses to our Division, at full strength now including all those who never went up the line our strength would be no more than 15,000 and yet we had had

529 Killed

3,766 Wounded,

3,407 Missing, mostly Killed

When the order did at last appear that the Unit would proceed to a siding on the next day, we were happier still, for we were fed up with marching,

On the 9th of May we entrained, or entrucked to be correct just outside of the Town of Poperinghe and pass through a large number of Stations, at last we stopped long enough at one of them to enquire of a Froggie whereabouts we were in France, and on getting the answer not far from Paris, we knew we were bound for a spot we had never been to before, and eventually we unloaded our Wagons etc, and were told we were marching to an old French Camp, as usual we arrived in the dark, marched through a small straggling village and immediately came on a large camp all huts, on both sides of the road, which was on a slope,

The Officers had their huts at the foot of the hill, our being C. Sec. were the last of our unit up the Hill, I put my Officers bed ready and went back to the Sections hut, and to sleep.

Reveille, and we were up and about, what a glorious place we were in, all beautiful countryside, the only thing to spoil the view was the huge double row of wooden huts, plenty of water was laid on in wash houses, we hadn't dreamt of this luck.

Going to my Officers hut, I found he had a cubicle in a hut the same shape and size as ours, I did not have a great deal to do for him, as Jerry once again had got best part of his kit outside Baillieul, and we had not yet had a chance to replace it,

The first thing was the reclothing etc, there were some wonderful tales to tell, as to why one and the other had lost half their outfit, the first day we were excused all parades in the afternoon, and were free until Lights Out,

Some of us took a stroll up the Hill some stayed in the huts, and others went down to the Village, most of us spent the evening searching our clothes, and having a cold water bath, it was a very warm spot, and we poured cold water over each other by the bucketful, we felt we could very well see the War out here,

Word soon went round the Camp, "Champagne" real champagne Five Francs a bottle, many of us decided to have some and went forth, but we were a trifle to late, the usual business instincts of the French villagers, had scented British money to be bled from the Tommy in Franc notes, and we were dismayed to find, in the short space of six hours, the Wine of the Champagne vineyards, had doubled in price, not to be done, those of us in C. Section who had decided on a bottle between four, had a go, and bought some falf dozen Bottles,

Needless to say we enjoyed it, and promised ourselves some more next pay day, we need not have worried, for before another 24 hours it was 15 francs a bottle, the men protested to the Officers who likewise reported the matter to the French Liaison Officer, a French Police Officer, interviewed the inhabitants of Fiamas, and warned them that the fleecing of the Tommies must cease, and fixed 10 francs as the charge,

We could not buy it for 10 francs for the wily villagers had run out of it, but (in a whisper) if you really want some, we have a freind who has a little, but might be persuaded to sell one or two bottles for 20 francs each, of course it was not really for sale, but to oblige Tommy, and the funny part was, you could go to any house and they always had sold out, but could get some from a Friend, so much for the French Officers orders, as was to be expected the Lads returned back to the old drinks, beer, vin blanc, vin rouge, Malaga, Coffee as being cheaper,

The Divisional Concert Party was resurrected and in the largest hut they gave two performances per day, and were always crowded out, they had new costumes, songs, and sketches, and several new men, three of them professionals, and they were really a treat,

Being nice and warm, cricket was set going, and matches soon arranged, between the different Sections, my old Pal of Tidworth days,

Bolton, still Officers cook, was to play for A section and I was ordered to be one of the Umpires for the match between A and B sections

I came in for Boltons usual sauce, and was sarcastically told to do the job properly, I promised him he wouldn't make a big score, and to my delight an opportunity soon presented itself, for before he had opened his account, the ball hit his legs, up went my finger not a word said I, not a change of expression, Bolton roared, what are you talking about Blink, nobody has even appealed, I ordered him off the field out L.B.W., and told him the Umpire has a right to reverse his decision if he thought he had made a mistake, but I had no intention of altering my decision, and grumbling I watched him go off the field, the bowler, said he wasn't out Blink, I said I know he wasn't, but I promised him before the match he wouldn't make a big score, when Bolton heard what I had said, he was furious, but we laughed about it in the end, and Bolton said, you wait Blink,

A day or so later, and C section were playing, and Bolton was one of the Umpires

I was very keen, but quite a poor cricketer, compared with some of the others too my surprise I was one of the team, and it looked a planned affair, for I was put on too bowl, I guessed when I went in to bat Bolton would have his revenge, he didn't wait for that, for the first ball I sent down, was no-balled ditto the second and third, fourth, fifth, I developed a strained shoulder and couldn't bowl, but it didn't stop me from throwing, still it was a proper squaring up of accounts,

Walking into the Officers hut one day, Major Bartlett spoke to me, and called me into his cubicle, and said sit down Swindell, Major Lescher will not be back for some hours yet, and we had a good old yarn, he was very much liked by the Lads, I had often talked with him, and when he was by himself, he asked you to be man to man, once outside I knew the rules, and naturally knew he was Officer and I was Private, this day he wanted a chat about my life before the war, he had touched several of the places, I had been too at sea, so we were able to compare notes, his batman Solly was upset about this time,

domestic troubles cropping up again, and he was anything but attentive to his Officer, I did the necessary things, and went into my Officers place, cleared up etc, and in came Capt Wells batmen, lend up you cleaning tackle for my Officers kit,

I said what for, he answered,

The - - - - said when I told him he was short of cleaning kit, to go and borrow some,

I promptly told him to go and ask the Colonel for his, and knowing it was no go with mine, went round to the other batmen with the same results,

Next thing we knew was,

Capt. Wells wanted another batman,

After we had been here a while Major Leacher sent for me, write out a full list of what I require Swindell, I had visions of a trip with him to some big town, I was unlucky, for he had got another leave, the Lads carried on, for they said, he his always going on leave, there was no doubt that the Lads, felt the granting of so many leaves to Officers was unfair, and spoke in no uncertain voice about it,

Next morning he went on leave, and I came in for more fatigues etc, how the Sgt. Major played me up, as soon as I was free,

Orders came out that there were to be Divisional Sports, all men wishing to enter (and a list of events were put up on the board) must hand his name in, I was fed up somewhat at the dance I was being led, and when asked by Coporal Whitlow, why I was going in for the cross-country race, said nothing,

The Sgt Major met me in the Village and we had a talk, he told me off, and said if you don't run I shall report you, so I joined the others and went into training for a 10 mile race, it was good training country plenty of hills, and ploughed land left idle,

Walking down through the Village one day we passed a Convent, and saw several of the Nuns, they had an ideal spot,

Three other Divisions that had come down here before us had taken over a part of the French lines, it was called The Chemin des Dames (Ladies Walk) we knew by this we would soon be moving up towards the Line, a few days and we left Fismes, and marched to a

Village called Montigny, and took over a French Hospital,

There were great huts, both for the patients and the unit, ours being on a different scale, as the French had put in wire bunks in three tiers, they were very comfortable,

There was a small dip in the land here, and the Officers Quarters were on one side of the Valley, ours and the Hospital on the other,

Montigny itself was an ideal spot, the land gently rising from our Camp to the Village, and the land rising high above it, the place looked like some fairy spot, with green fields on the lower side and woods on the high land,

On the 26th of May, I was told to hang about as Major Lescher would be back some time, he came some time too, I was hanging about till one in the morning, and when I saw him, my what a swell, I had never, seen him look so smart, even in Tidworth days with new clothes, he had an entirely new rig-out, and the Motor Amb. driver brought in a great sleeping bag also new, and full of new clothes

He must have seen my astonishment and for a wonder spoke to me, he remarked jokingly, I shouldn't have much to clean for a while as everything was so bright, and then he told me he had got married and gave me a drink of whisky, he was as a rule most aloof, so I was still more surprised, still I drank it, and it tasted like poison to me, then told me he had also attend his Fathers funeral, and had been to the Palace,

I got him some food, told him what we had been doing, and were just in the midst of it when crash, bang, the same old game, we sensed it at once just the same sudden attack as on the Somme and The Sys, we got no sleep, the Lads were ordered up, no doubt the powers knew all about an intended attack, for our Lads set off in very short time,

But what of the poor Infantry, our Division like the other three were made up to fighting strength with all 19 year old youngsters, and they had only just arrived, and had not had even a week to settle down to Divisional work,

Early morning came, and practically the only bearers left

behind were the cross-country runners, so at 6 a.m. we went on a final practise run, for the sports were to be held on Wednesday the 29th.

We landed back, and the whole batch excepting myself were ordered up the Line, we heard what was going on up the Line, Jerry has smashed through, all of us left behind had to set to, and get all our Medical Equipment packed ready to load, I went round to the Officers Mess, and Bolton said, wheres Ned (my Officer),

I said I don't know, so went to the Orderly room, saw the Sgt Major, who said the C.O. had left orders, I was to be runner, some job, I had never been out on the road since we arrived, and was as strange to the place, as if I had only just arrived,

I went back to the Mess and had a meal, when along came the Sgt. Major,

Wheres Solly, no one knew,

Well he said, Major Bartlett wants a man at Bouvencourt,

So I said, well why can't I go, I am doing nothing here,

Because I had orders otherwise but eventually he gave me a note, in case I met the Colonel and Major Lescher to explain why I was away from the Camp.

I said good bye to Bolton and Parkins gave them my pack, as I was to go up in battle order, and jumped into the waiting Motor Ambulance, and were half way down the Camp, when I called to the driver to stop, as Parkins was rushing down the road, no doubt he had something to be taken up to the Officers,

The Ambulance waited he panted up, and said I only wanted to tell you Blink, don't go mad look after your self, I was dumb struck,

Fancy Tich Parkins, the man who one and all knew as the stretcher bearer with the ever ready gibe on his tongue, who never showed the slightest sign of fear, and who faced danger with a smile, running after me 2 miles behind the line, and telling me to take care of myself,

I said whats up Tich,

Well I wanted to tell you Blink, so we shook hands and I promised, but didn't pay much heed to his desires, as I thought

being out of the line, he was a bit windy, and starting off again
I sat with Sgt Leckmere who was driving,

He told me what was going on, just the same breaking through,
turning round a hill, we saw the familiar sight come towards us
from all directions

French civilians by the hundreds fleeing before the enemy with
all they could take horse and cart, donkeys and carts dogs pulling
carts, bullocks pulling carts, all of them pile up with whatever
the people could save from their homes, even the children were all
loaded, and all of them had several suits and dresses on, so as to
have more room on the carts, the kiddies crying, the boys and girls
thinking it a spree, and the Old and Young Women and Old men looking
as if the end of time was near, there were no young men,

Further on, we saw the French Troops retreating in anything
but formation, the road was being shelled but we were fortunate
to get to Bouvencourt with danger,

Sgt. Leckmere told me to jump off, as he had to go somewhere
else, and off I jumped, and away went the ambulance,

I started to walk up the hill towards the Advanced Dressing
Station when Zipp, Crash,

A Jerry shell had landed just behind me, on the road which
was all sets like so many of the roads, before I could bolt, or
lay down, a terrific clout hit me, right in the centre of the back,

I had carried enough wounded down, but had always escaped,
my first thoughts I am alive, next, I feel blood running down my
back I stiffened my back, and brought my two Shoulder blades
together, to keep the blood from running, and rushed into the first
hit, shouting I'm hit,

Where-ere said a windy orderly

In my back said I,

Just then in rushed Major Bartlett,

Where are you hit Swindell

In anything but a firm voice, I replied in the back,

Quickly he looked, and said Thank Heavens, your are not
wounded, in came Cpl. Whitlow, and said that put the wind up you
Blink, and held up half a sett from the road

It seems he was just about to come down the hill, when the shell arrived, and saw me knocked forward against a big tree and the brick roll off, however it didn't kill me on the spot is a mystery, and as the Lads who were there remarked,

It hadn't got your name on it Blink, so it drew back at the last moment,

They painted my backed, which was beginning to feel as if a tank had been over it,

I gave the note to Major Bartlett and he said where is Solly, I couldn't tell him, nor anyone else, until later one of the Ambulance runners, said he was up the Line bearing, what he was doing there no one knew, for he was Major Bartletts servant,

A little later, and the Colonel and Major Lescher came in, I reported, and was told to prepare myself, as a runner which meant heavens knew what,

First thing, go that way, and see if you can find touch with Brigade or Divisional H.Q. and ask what we are to do, when I got back after drawing blank, Lance Cpl Jones, was there and had brought a message from just the opposite direction to what I had come, and I was anything but pleased when I heard its contents as the C.O. read it to the other Officers,

Your are to stop with all your wounded, if they are not cleared you must stay with them and be captured, as areoplanes report that Enemy are killing wounded,

It was not eavesdropping on my part, for I was just entering to report failure, and could not help myself, still he did not say anything about it, but just gave me instructions, to get round to different places he then pointed out to me, and see if I could meet any Ambulances, or men to help clear the wounded, we had now been some hour, or more and no fresh cases had been brought in,

Things were looking ominous, away I went, and never a sign of even a civilian or a soldier, did I see, but I found something that made me bolt back in a hurry, and that is, that I was either being fired at by our Lads or the enemy,

.....I reported

I reported at once to the C.O. and he said help get the wounded into the dug-out and then report to me again

I must now give a description of the place, it lay on the south side of the hill, a few huts had been erected for the hospital and under a bank, and right into the hill had been made a dug-out, there was one house on the other side of the road from the hill, and a farm house, and out buildings on the top of the hill, which was about 200 feet above us, the Lads had got most of the wounded in, and I just helped take the last few in, there were about 150, mostly stretcher cases, and the floor of the dug-out was pretty well covered,

I went back to the C.O. he then told me to go round towards the way I had come up from, and not to tell anything to anybody as to what I saw or heard, away I went taking cover, as shells were dropping often, and could see nothing, no a soul in sight, I was coming back, when just above me, when ping, ping of the bullets from I didn't know where.

Back I came again, and reported to the C.O. he called Major Lescher, and they had a talk, and then called me, and said do you think we are surrounded, I said, I had seen a movement anywhere, my Officer had lent me his glasses, I said the way no troops have come over the Hill, and the way the bullets came round both sides of the hill, it looked to me as if there was a gap in the Line and Jerry was afraid to attack the Hill not knowing who was there, but was going to encircle it,

I said shall I go up the top and see if I can spot Jerry, and the Colonel said yes, I got to the top, and then went down on my stomach and worked my way along by the house I could see down the other side a bit, and presently over heard went some machine gun bullets

I crawled back, and reported to the C.O, who said I will come up

Up we went, and near the house showed him where I got down on Mother Earth, it was one thing for me, to do it, but an entirely different matter for the C.O, he was taller, and much stiffer built than I was, and to crown it, had something of a corporation, I had

either been unobserved by myself, or Jerry had not then reached a place of observation, for we no sooner reached, what appeared to be a covering wall, when we came under fire, the Colonel got down well enough, and the bullets were striking the wall just above us,

We squirmed along the ground backwards to the house, and entered and observed from a hole that one of his shells had made, I looked through my glasses but no movement anywhere, still all the time bullets were flying about,

We went back I told Major Lescher the C.O. wanted him,

The Colonel said, there is nobody in front of us, and at night fall the Germans will push forward, Poor Old Ned, I can see his face now, he looked a picture of agonised despair,

Just then L. Cpl Jones came on his Motor Bike again, the C.O. gave him a message to take down to Major Bartlett, who had been sent down by the Colonel to H.Q. at Montigny to ask why no ambulances had been up, and that if the wounded were not cleared either by stretcher bearers or ambulance by night fall we should be captured.

Away went Tommy Jones, I offered up a prayer that he would be able to do something, I think Major Lescher had given up hope, the C.O. look troubled, and who would not be in his shoes for he had already been captured by Jerry in 1914, and exchanged in 1915 for a German Medical Officer,

I had been kept away from the dug-out, and had only been in C.O.s and Major Lescher's company, so I had no idea what the Lads were thinking,

An hour went by, and no Tommy Jones returned it was only 10 minutes each way for him, out I had to go and see if I could see him, no sign back I came, and dusk was beginning the C.O. said to Major Lescher we had better get to the dug-out,

The Lads were soon after me, what news Blink, I told a half lie, and said Tommy Jones has just gone down on his bike, they were jumpy for several of them said, are we surrounded Blink, I said quite truthfully no,

Presently voices rang out, Blink the C.O. wants you, I made my way as best I could and reach a little room that had been made,

no doubt for Officers, and was away from the main part, I entered the C.O. looked glum, Major Lescher quite unlike himself, I had never seen him like this, he blurted out, Swindell we are going to be captured, and you must get through to our lines,

He gave me a pencil and a piece of paper, and said write the names of all of the unit who are here on it, I did so, there were the C.O, Major Lescher, Capt Witte, and Lieut Findlay all Officers of our unit, and 27 other ranks including myself, among them many who had been with the Ambulances since it was form, Cpls Whitlow, and Ware, Barber, Sammy Ingham and among the others were, Black, Johnson, Morgan, Elsbank, Acland, Keefe and many others who were of more recent days with the unit,

I showed the list, and was ordered to put it in my boot, and get through to our lines at all costs, both the Major and the C.O. shook me by the hand, wished me the Best of Luck, and told me to write to there People with Major Bartlett,

Away I went it was now 10 o'clock at night, before I got outside a shout went up, Blink, Major Lescher wants you, back I came, see if I can find his British Warmer, was his request, I must have had the majority of the wounded moved, and not until almost the last did I find it, being used as a pillow by a wounded man,

In my search I had picked up a couple of lbs of tobacco, and I put it in the pocket, and gave it to him, I had been nearly an hour searching for his coat, I was all on edge to get away and Major Lescher told me to get off

I reached the top of the steps, and pulled the blanket aside, they had candles in the dug-out, but outside it was black, I could not make out anything at first, my eyes soon got accustomed to the gloom, and I stepped out from the entrance, the next moment, I felt something pressing into my stomach, and a voice in perfect english say Hands Up, Tommy, you are now a prisoner,

I was not at all happy, up went my hands, for I had something pressing in my back now, and was in a ring of Germans, not a sporting chance, I felt humiliated to think of having to give in so easily,

The first speaker then said, answer my questions,

..... Who is in

Who is in that Dug-out,
The Red Cross, and wounded
How many,
About 30 Red Cross, and 150 wounded,
Any armed troops
No.

Well you go first,

So around I had to turn with my hands still up, and march into the dug-out before them, one of them pulled the blanket aside, and using me as a shield the German Officer said,

All here are prisoners, any treachery and you will all be bombed,
The remarks going on, are not for this book,

The Officer pushed by me, and then looked around, and spotted the four Officers together,

Hands up you four, and step this way, and you, pointing to Major Lescher put that bread down, my men have need of it,

We were then allowed to pick up the four dangerously wounded, and told to assemble outside,

And thus ended my time as a member of the 77th F.A.

Was Parkins forwarned, in telling me to take care of myself.

We lined up outside the dug-out, and Jerry came along counting how many of us were here, having heard a few rumours of what Jerry did to the Red Cross who were armed (yet all of his were) we buried our jack-knives with marbine spikes, in case he took objection to them,

One man went to the length of burying his wrist watch, and as he said come back and getting it after the War,

Along came another Officer, and switched a torch on us, and said take off all of those Gas Masks, they wont need them anymore,

The light was evidently seen, for we were under the fire of British Machine guns in no time, it was bad enough being hit by one of Jerries but to think you might get a packet from our own side, was anything but rosy,

Next over came the shells galore they had the right direction, but went over about 50 feet, so none of us got hit,

..... We were

We were ordered to pick up the four stretchers, and off we went, armed guards in front, rear, and sides, straight up the hill, where I had gone to find out things not 6 hours ago,

After marching about an hour, we were relieved, by those at the back, who had not been carrying a stretcher,

I got to the back, and a Jerry said something to me, I didn't know what and I replied,

I don't know what you mean,

The Officers were just at the rear and Major Lescher said,

Is that you Swindell,

I said Yes Sir,

Good God Colonel, Swindell has been captured to, and despair was in his voice,

He said, I thought you were miles from here,

I then related how things had happened to me, and I rejoined the Lads, we marched till about three in the morning, when we halted in a Village,

Out of a large farmhouse came a lot of Germans, in great excitement they shouted to the Germans with us, they took there rifles and stood guard over us, and in they went but not for food or drink,

Next thing we heard were womens voices, screaming out, two of the men said who could speak French well, they are ravaging the women,

Sure enough, in barns, rooms in the house, in the grounds, under our very noses, (with our new guard cheering and jeering at us, and threatening us), were the poor females, young girls, some of them not more than 15 or 16 years old, young women, old women, it was immaterial to these individuals, as long as it was a female were being forced to submit to these beasts,

When what was happening dawned on us, a movement was made, and so did Jerry, we soon saw we should throw our lives away, and yet not save these poor women, after about an hour, out came our guard, well filled with drink and pleased with themselves, no one had been to this Village that day, but one or two thought its name was something like Ventelay,

..... Away we marched

Away we marched to the screams and sobs of frenchwomen ringing in our ears, one man said, what would they say in Blighty,

We had heard a number of things pertaining to Jerry, and we had as prisoners, not had to wait long, for us to witness that he hadn't been painted black, for they, our guards were different beings now, the wine was in the head,

We marched on until 8 o'clock, when we reached a large farm house, and evidently it was the concentration camp for prisoners to be sent off in batches further back,

To our surprise the first Britisher we saw, was Tommy Jones, (the dispatch rider) whom the Colonel had sent down to H.Q. the previous evening,

He had a glorious black eye, and a terribly swollen face, he met us cheerily enough, and we asked him in the same tone where his bike was,

He said after leaving the A.D.S. he hadn't gone a mile along the road when he saw a party of Germans, he knew if he got round a corner ahead of them he would be shielded, so he opened fer full out, and went right through them, but unfortunately one Jerry, swing his fist as Tommy flew by, and caught him in the eye, and sent him off his machine, he said they did not go for him at all, several of them speaking english just chipped him,

One thing that was unfortunate was nobody had any food, Jerry had taken all that, so all we could do was to hang about, presently more batches of British prisoners came in, when there were about 200, we were line up, a crowd of Jerry wounded came in, and we were told we were to carry these 25 Kilometres,

The squad I was in clicked, a young Jerry wounded in the leg, and as he had not got a stretcher, we had to carry him on a duck-board, or at least we started off with a duck-board,

Some one with a sense of humour wanted to know what Whitlew and I had been training as cross country runners for, and then not making a bolt for it,

I had scrounged a slice of bread for my Officer, and he had it dry with a drop of water, he said when we reach the camp, I will

..... speak to the

Speak to the Commander and see if I can have you as servant to us four Officers.

We set off and followed the valley of the Aisne, for miles, twice during the trek, as we went through woods, that had been drenched with mustard gas I amongst many others inhaled it, I was extremely fortunate, it no sooner got inside me, than I vomited, that was unpleasant, but nothing compared to the sufferings of many of the others, fortunately, having had 24 hours, it had lost a lot of its venom,

We were all carrying our cases and working our way along the river, the place hereabouts was honey-combed with dug-outs and shelters, one of the latter partly blown in, was seen to contain a lot of utensils, Major Lescher, went over and picked up an enamel cup, next moment, a Jerry was setting about him,

He seemed only too pleased to put the mug back again, it was almost laughable to see this incident and yet it brought home sharply to us that our captors were no respectors of persons, high or low, in the capture line,

All this time, the beastly little Jerry we had on the duck-board was making himself as objectionable as he could, he would playfully prod us in the back with a stick and if he missed, and it hit you in the neck or face it highly amused him, and was everlasting informing us, that we were Damn Englishe Swinnerhunde,

He rolled about, and jumped up and down on the duck-board, and it was a hot day, and the roads dusty, at last in exasperation, when the next halt was called we had a pow wow, the upshot was out we kicked one of the cross pieces out at each halt, until we left him too too sit on, he called an N.C.O. and told him something, he didn't seem to be pleased with the answer, so for the rest of the journey he had to sit up, and hang on to the sides of the duck-board, for if one of the two at the rear saw him, ready for some hunnish joke he would give it a little jerk, and Jerry would forget what he intended to do, in his panic to save himself from falling,

The guard called a halt, and pulled put some dark looking stuff, which we heard was bread, it was very nice watching them eat, and

our own insides were calling for something but we were unlucky,

We set off again, and after a while struck right across "No Mans Land" the most striking thing that had struck us so far was, how on earth had he advanced so rapidly, "No Mans Land", was to all intents and purposes just the same as it was before he made his attack,

At last towards evening we marched under a railway bridge and on for about a 100 yards, turned to the left, and about 200 yards down the road on the right hand side, we saw a camp crowded with British Soldiers,

At the left hand corner of the road, if we had turned right at the cross roads, was an enormous dump of ammunition, and the remarks went round He's short of Ammunition, I had seen the dump outside Ballieul go up, but this was much larger,

We were marched into our barb wire cage, privates into the enclosure, and Officers and N.C.Os into a small place where there were some huts, with beds for all of them,

The privates had one large hut hold 100, and as there were something like 2,000 of us then, we late comers were unlucky,

Of course the first thought was something to eat and drink, the earlier prisoners, (24 hours older) joked about tightening your belt in my lads, and Jerries too bust, so when nightfall came we laid down on the ground as we were,

Several of us Ambulance men were together, there was a nasty cold nip in the air, and we were talking in general of our fate, one of the Lads said Blink will go with his Officer,

We could not settle to sleep, presently a plane seemed to be circling overhead, and some cheerful soul suggested it was one of ours and he sounded as if he was after the big dump up the road,

Jerry was making no attempt to find him with searchlights, so he was one of his we felt sure, presently we heard him making away, a minute later, we heard him coming back, his engine got louder, and one could almost feel he was coming to earth, we then heard a different noise, the next moment up went the dump, it was a mercy for us, that a slight rise between us, and the dump was crowned with trees, as it was we had pieces of shell whistling

about, a few curses, as one man after another got a packet,

After the first series of terrific explosions had ended, we tried to settle down to sleep, but very few of us slept that night, for every now and then up would go a part of the dump,

Dawn came and we heard a word that really tickled our fancy, in spite of our predicament, to suddenly hear a dozen Jerries shouting, Rouce, Temmee, Rouce,

Parish who was captured with us, spoke German well, he said come on Lads we have to get up, this was about 4 o'clock,

The word went round we have to get out and work, and naturally our thoughts wandered to food, and drink, after a while we fell in and marched up to the cook-house and if you had a dixie or mug you got some coffee, it was a funny taste, some of us got the dregs, and we found out what it was,

Roasted Barley well boiled, as regards food we were unlucky we were told there was no food in the camp, that we were to go out working, and as soon as food arrived they would send it up,

Major Lescher and the rest of the Officers were told they could go back to bed, and also with a few exceptions all the N.C.Os,

Major Lescher called me over and said we are leaving here at mid-day, you have to go out on this working party, and when you come in, you will come back into Germany with us, and thus I left him, and saw him no more for eight months,

Thousands of us were lined up outside, under escort, whom we learnt were called "Posterns", one to a hundred, we also saw that the name of the place was

Ami Fontaine,

Off we went like some rag time mob, no step, line or other kind of military order, we very soon learned, that Jerry had a nervy attack on, the whole of the postern got on the right side of the column, and as we neared the dump, up went some more ammunition, down they went like rats down a hole, we were to amazed, to do anything we just laughed at them, and they heard a few complementary remarks, as to their efficiency as guards,

We turned right under the bridge, and struck across country to the left until we came to a store, where we were all issued out

with some tool, pick, axe, choppers, forks, spades and shovels,
and told to fall in,

Up came somebody of importance and our Postern were like a
lot of frightened rabbits, it was a Major a real nice Hun, he told
us in English, that we were to connect his light railway across old
No Mans Land to the French light railway before we returned to camp,
also before we got anything to eat,

He next said, anyone got any complaints to make, us R.A.M.C.
had already discussed the matter, that it was a breach of International
Law for us to do work, in a Military way other than attending Sick
and Wounded, we were told not to be fools, but Sammy Ingham and I
decided to chance it,

Up we marched, and stood too attention,
Well what complaints have you, this to Sammy Ingham,
We are Medical Corps Men, and we are not supposed to do any
Military Work,

He ignored Sammy, and turned to me,
Your complaint,
And I repeated what Sammy, had said,
With a look of unutterable boredom, and a wave of his hand,
he said,

Get about your work, Nobody knows that you are prisoners yet.
We were delighted to leave his presence, for only by hearing
the menacing tone that he adopted, could you really appreciate the
significance of his remark,

We told the other Lads, what he had said, and we all decided
not to be over rash in future,

Away we marched towards the Old No Mans Land, we came up to
where his light railway ended, we were then split up into parties
of a hundred, and put to dig, level, carry, and lay the light railway
to connect up with the French, as both were of the same gauge.

We had no sooner started levelling the ground, when a quick
reminder, of what this place had been 48 hours before,

A sharp explosion, we all ducked, next moment a cry of R.A.M.C.
come on, we rushed over, but there was no chance, one of our Lads,
out of the Northamptonshire Regt, had struck at the earth with a pick
..... and had

and had hit a buried bomb, which exploded, and a large wound in his wind-pipe gave him no chance, we were ordered to bury him then and there, no service, no nothing just a bit of trouble to get rid of as quickly as possible,

We were learning rapidly what sort of individuals the Germans were, we were ordered to our work again, still with one postern over a hundred men, it gave us a chance to take stock, and it was remarkable the difference that had taken place, if Jerry had understood, he might have acted differently, if he was capable, we had yet to learn it was his usual conduct,

Mutterings went on about, no grub,* and his callousness, and whilst the postern would be chivvying and chasing one lot the others were hanging fire and taking their time, we did far less work in 8 hours than we had in the first half-hour,

The Major aforementioned came along, he was furious, and termed us Englander Swinerhundes, and a few other complimentary titles, some shouted what about some food, and he replied with an onslaught on the Posterns, they went green, Parish who could understand all he had said, told us that after raving about us being lazy etc, he had threatened the whole of the Posterns with duty in the Line the next day if the railway wasn't connected in an hour or so, and that there would be no food for us, till the job was done, and off he went,

Poor old Posterns, we had got their measure, Wind-up, with a capital W, first they threatened us with violence, to which they got saucy answers, and told to come on, with every Tommy having hold of some implement,

One amongst a hundred, didn't stand much chance, the whole crowd, some thousands took up the same attitude, and you could see the whole crowd idle, and shouted in chorus,

We want Food,

The Posterns, went rushing up, and down like mad-men, screaming at the top of their voices,

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Nix Arbite (no Work) Nix Essen, (no Food), and we replied in chorus, Nix Essen, Nix Arbite,

It was the most comical state of affairs, in less than 28 hours a bit of the old bull-dog breed was rising, all this time not a pick or a shovel was used, into this feeling of stubbornness, came a junior Officer, and said in perfect english

Food is now on the way, get on with the work, and you can stop as soon as it arrives, one somehow or other instinctively felt, he was speaking the truth, and word passed along the whole route,

Food on the way,

We had no sooner restarted than, we heard the sound of an aeroplane, thinking it a Jerry we did not take much notice, he passed high overhead, suddenly a man shouted, he his coming down,

Down he came, and almost seemed to be landing, when he turned and circled round a spot time after time, then suddenly made a bee line for us, we all downed tools to watch, a cry went up, one of our side, out from the side fluttered the Stars and Stripes,

We cheered, waved and shouted to him, and before Jerry could fire at him, he was out of sight, some of us had seen a Jerry come down low at Favereul on the Somme, but this was the cheekiest bit of flying I had ever seen,

We were aroused from our elation, by shouting from our Postern, to the fact that we were prisoners, presently, lightening would be the word for it, word passed along,

Grub coming, we downed tools, and awaited its arrival we did not take much time in lining up, and each man was ladled out, with a pint, of what looked before we got to it like a white soup, long before our turn came, we were treated to some fine language, as to what he called this - - - - stuff,

Still we were hungry, and he was giving food out we were going to have our ration, and we got it, in fact, there was more than enough, but our delighted, was soon changed to dismay, of all the ghastly stuff,

Thirty six hours since we had had food, and we were feeling hungry but there was not a man that I saw who could swallow it,

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one or two got a mouthful down,

The rest, well our first meal from Jerry was wasted, one swore he had cooked it, with sea-water, but the nearest we agreed was from an Artillery man who said, more in a serio-comic way than as stating a fact,

I believe he has put salt into down the taste of the alum, because he wants to put a few tucks in your stomach, so that you will not have such big appetites,

That dry taste that goes with alum, was certainly the stumbling block to any one eating the muck,

Jerry moaned about wasting good scoffun, we offered it to him, but none of the posterns would touch it