

PHASE III

The Soldier

A soldier,—

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous of honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.

SHAKESPEARE'S *As You Like It*.

Part III of "Actor - Soldier - Poet"

by Robert Henderson Bland, Captain, Late Gloucestershire Regiment. First published in 1939.

R. Henderson-Bland was married to my father's (Lieut. Graham Clarendon-Hyde) half sister - Maud Hyde.

PDF version prepared by Robert David Hyde (pseudonym - David de la Hyde) - June 2019.



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AN APPRECIATION

By GENERAL SIR HUBERT GOUGH
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., etc.
(Commander of the Fifth Army).

NO one can read these notes, these odds and ends of memories of the war, without feeling that they are a reflection of the daily thoughts and actions of a real soldier during the terrific ordeals which soldiers went through in the war.

Captain Henderson-Bland's own record is a fine one, a true type of the best British officers—cheery in peace, and when at rest, thoughtful and efficient in the care of his men, courageous and resolute in action.

His description of the life and feelings of British soldiers brings home to the reader the solid characteristics of the race, and what we owe to those who went into the field to serve their country.

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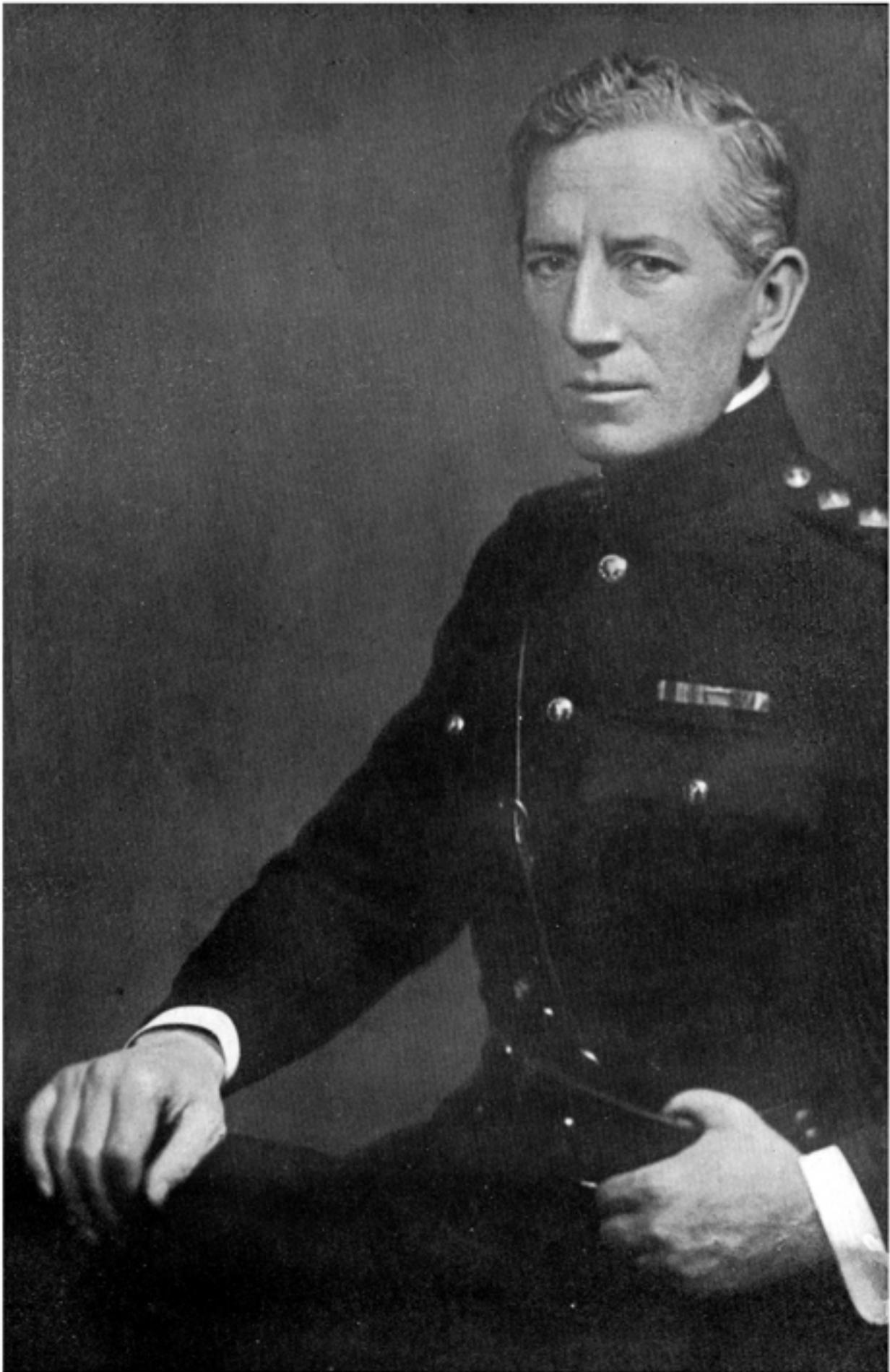
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Captain Robert Henderson-Bland (1876-1941)

Appointed 11 August 1915 as 2nd. Lieutenant 11th Gloucestershire Regiment. After WW1 he stayed in the Regular Army Reserve of Officers until 1927, and attained the rank of Captain.

He was married to Maud Hyde, half sister of Lieut. Graham Clarendon-Hyde

CHAPTER I

War

Modern Warfare Compared with Waterloo—Goethe's impressions of the Battle of Valmy—The Influence of Goethe, Carlyle and Tolstoy on a Youthful Mind.

"THE hard necessity of war breeds men," wrote Oswald Spengler in his monumental work, *The Decline of the West*, and one is tempted to ask: "What else does it breed?"

It certainly did not breed genius in the last War.

In writing about the War I am, of course, referring to the World War. All other wars seem small in comparison with that cataclysm.

In the Third Battle of Ypres, lasting from July 31st to November 10th, 1917, the British suffered 200,000 casualties. Wellington, when he faced Napoleon at Waterloo, had less than 70,000 bayonets in the field.

I do not propose to write about any particular operations, because so many books have appeared dealing with such phases of the War. I am merely going to set down my own reactions.

A regimental officer with his men was little more than a glorified sergeant; but in my opinion he occupied a position so important, so thrilling, that all other positions pale into insignificance. I wrote an anonymous article for *The Graphic*, entitled "The Platoon Commander," which attracted a good deal of attention, and, looking back, I am still of opinion that I was right in some of the things I then said.

A brother of mine who was wounded in the Retreat from Mons dined with me after he came out of hospital, and I asked him about that famous affair, but he could tell me very little. He was so busy looking after his men that he had little time to think about, or to find out, what that

operation portended, and this brother was no fool but a very gallant officer. Later he was killed in action.

Few men who have fought in the Line and have seen the unspeakable horrors of war wish to see the dogs of war unleashed again. What does annoy them is the talk of ardent pacifists who have never heard a shot fired. A very distinguished American recently addressing an Annual Convention, said of the War that it "sent to their unmerited death millions of human beings who had not the least notion of what the fighting was all about." A truculent German—I have many German friends, and no one has a greater admiration for their fighting qualities—who had never been in uniform, said to me recently: "What was the War about, anyway?"

I pointed out to him that my brother, brother officers and men, and I myself, knew very well what it was all about. I told him that if certain men had not "bared their breasts to the spears" we should have had the Germans kicking us off the pavements in Piccadilly; and I went so far as to say that I was in two shows on the Western Front where the enemy nearly pulled off the plan to subject us to such pleasantries. Britain was fighting for her very existence.

I am much against competitive and armed nationalism, and am all in favour of international co-operation, but why belittle the efforts of the men who laid down their lives in the War?

I have read most of the important War books, and have found many of them most interesting; some of them tried my patience. Reading certain of them, people might get the idea that war was a bestial and entirely demoralising experience. To many it may have been so; but I can honestly say that the men I had the privilege to serve with did not find it so, and it was a great test of manhood. The bloody battles of the Somme, Ypres, and the agony of the Fifth Army tried men as few things could try them.

When one looks back to the period immediately after the War one is reminded of the situation that existed in France after the fall of Napoleon. Henri Beyle (de Stend-

hal), Prosper Mérimée, Alfred de Musset—all men of genius, have given us graphic pictures of the despair and longing of youth at the time when, to them, the glory had departed out of life.

The two conditions for happiness for Beyle were :

“The thrill with which a man, in his unbounded devotion to a cause, or another man, risks his life; and the tremor communicated to the soul by happy love.”

In two of his favourite characters you find young men who were made for soldiering stuck in a morass of hypocrisy through having adopted the Church as a career. Of one of these characters he says :

“He would be a fit colleague of those gloved conspirators who aim at completely changing the destinies of a great country, but are determined not to have even the smallest scratch to reproach themselves with.”

How like in character was Mérimée to many of the brilliant young men of today. Mérimée examined everything. He had no religion, no philosophy, was stoical and sensual, and if he had any enthusiasm it was lodged in his heart working secretly like radium.

De Musset in his *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle* cries out that he was born at an unlucky moment. Everything that could make life supportable was gone. The day of Napoleon and the Empire was over, and Faith was dead.

The conquests of love titivated his spirit, but it was not enough and, like many young men, he was unhappy, and he wrote :

“And when the young men talked of glory they were answered : ‘Become priests,’ and when they talked of honour : ‘Become priests,’ and when they talked of hope, of love, of power, of life, it was always the same : ‘Become priests.’”

The young men of today feel that they have been cheated, and know not what to become, and yet never were there such opportunities to the adventurous.

I had the temerity to lecture on Tolstoy at the age of twenty. I can see the audience in that hall now. Some

present were amazed at my enthusiasm. My admiration for Tolstoy lasted for some time after my lecture, but somehow or other the conviction was borne in upon me that he had set himself an impossible task, and that he was a dangerous guide. Although Tolstoy was treading the paths of greatness, I feared that his career might end in madness.

One of Tolstoy's sons came to my apartment in New York recently, and I had a long talk with him about his father. My early summing-up was not so very far from the truth. I think that Tolstoy had more to do with the Russian Revolution than Karl Marx.

I have referred to the influence Goethe had upon me as a young man. Disinterestedness: that was something Goethe taught me. I will confess that I took him as a model, and one line of his was always in my mind:

“To be disinterested, more especially in love and friendship, was my sole aim, my practice.”

It will be remembered that Goethe rode out to watch a battle (Valmy) one day, and left his companions and went forward alone. This is what he said of that experience, according to Eckermann:

“I had now come right into the region where balls were playing over me. The sound of them is curious; like the humming of tops, the gurgling of water, and the piping of birds combined. . . . As I rode back and found myself in perfect security I was interested to find that all that glow faded away, and not a trace of feverish agitation remained.”

He then goes on to speak of a resolution he made when witnessing the misery of a retiring army. He vowed that he would never complain again of a neighbouring house shutting out his view from his window, and never complain again about the boredom and vexation of a German theatre.

I wonder what his reactions would have been if the weight of metal released at the opening of the battle of Passchendaele had passed over his head?

When some of his friends complained that he never wrote war poems, he pointed out that he only wrote out of experience, and that it was best to leave all that sort of thing to Theodor Korner.

“To write war-songs sitting in an armchair? That wasn’t in my way of life or my business. . . . In all my poetry I have never shammed (*habe nie affectiert*). What I have not lived through, what has not touched me to the quick, I have never uttered in verse, or prose. I have made love-songs only when I was in love.”

It was the intellectual honesty of Goethe that appealed to me and not his pantheism.

He had no need to hide from his readers. Napoleon must have been deeply impressed with his appearance or the words “*Vous êtes un homme*” would not have been wrung from him.

Napoleon asked how old he was.

“Sixty,” said Goethe.

“You’ve preserved yourself well,” observed Napoleon.

I think my youthful estimate of that great character was right.

When he heard what I had in view, he thought I was a fool, and told me so.

He amused me by saying: "Do you want to have your posterior shot off?" I laughingly told him that I hoped that would be the last part of my anatomy the enemy would pay attention to.

I was reminded of this one night when a man was shot in that quarter in the Salient when clambering out of a trench to join some men who were going out to deal with an enemy patrol. I congratulated him on getting a "blighty," but he said he could never tell anyone where he was wounded.

Mr. Comstock released me from my contract and wished me the best of luck.

I never saw him again.

I returned to England, and that great surgeon, T. Crisp English, now Sir Crisp English, operated on me, and I was passed fit for Service on May 14th, 1915, and was gazetted to the Gloucestershire Regiment the same day. I could have been gazetted as full lieutenant, but I refused that offer because what I wanted was to command a platoon in the Line. How glad I am now that I made that decision!

So successful was that operation that I never had occasion to see a medical officer till I was wounded on April 25th, 1918. I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to Sir Crisp English once more.

When I arrived in France, in July, the Somme Battle was "on" with a vengeance. I found that three Company Commanders of my Battalion who had preceded me only a few days had been killed.

It will give some idea of our losses in that battle when I relate that my first job was to take 200 men up to the "line," somewhere opposite Pozières; the Australians were on the right; and the battalion to whom I was to hand over was so badly shattered that I was ordered to hand the men over to another battalion.

I am not going into details about the Somme battles that I was engaged in. To speak truth, I was a little

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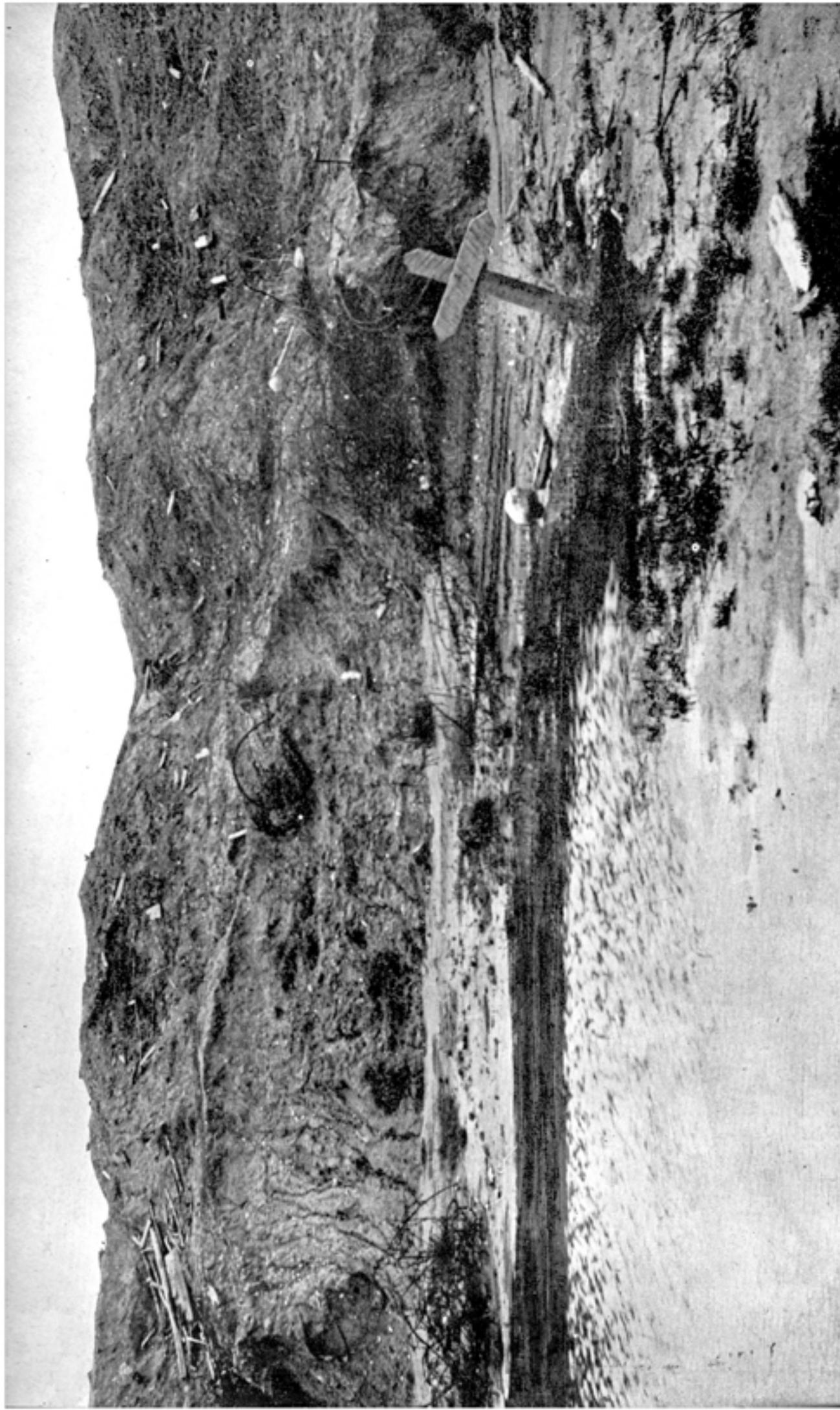
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I am not going into details about the Somme battles that I was engaged in. To speak truth, I was a little

depressed and sickened, but will let extracts from letters to my wife which appear later in this book give some idea of what I thought of happenings at that time.

It was not until the great German offensive, in March 1918, that I knew anything of the real thrill of soldiering. Then we were dealing with an advancing army, and called on to exercise any horse-sense and leadership we possessed. Yes, that was a thrilling experience and one I can never forget.

I had a good deal to do in training troops, and was kept in England till July 18th, 1916. I arrived in France (Rouen) on July 19th, 1916.



Hill 60 (Ypres)

Photo: Antony Ostend

CHAPTER 3

With the Fifth Army

The Stand of the South African Brigade—The Defence of Manchester Hill—Ludendorff's "All or Nothing"—Lord Birkenhead's Tribute to General Gough.

I BELIEVE that it was the heroic behaviour of the Fifth Army that wore down, and finally broke the offensive spirit of the Germans. It is true that they made a determined advance when they took Mount Kemmel on April 25th, but I include that in the Fifth Army's job because I, with a remnant of a division that was never made up again after the March fighting, faced that attack. That was the Germans' last serious bid for the Channel Ports.

I know that unfortunate things happened. I witnessed some of them, but I am not going to write of them. They were so rare that they assumed proportions far larger than they should have done.

What were they in the face of many of the glorious things that happened?

The stand of the South African Brigade at Chapel Hill (Gauche Wood) will go down to history as one of the most heroic exploits of the War. The Brigade was at full strength when it took over. Something like 200 men came out of action! I knew Chapel Hill well, and I had seen the South African Brigade. A finer-looking lot of men were never seen in any army.

The defence of Manchester Hill by the 16th Manchester Regiment, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Elstob, was a feat as fine and stirring as any deed in the War. Lieut.-Colonel Elstob was posthumously awarded the V.C.

I would ask you to read these extracts from Winston Churchill's *Thoughts and Adventures*, etc.

“Ludendorff’s All or Nothing.

“The following was the artillery appointed to torture the British : 375 field, 297 heavy and 28 super-heavy batteries ; or expressed in numbers of guns : Eighteenth Army 2,500 guns, Second Army 1,800 guns, Seventeenth Army 1,900 guns ; total 6,200 guns.

“And this was the method of torture :

“Beginning at 4.40 a.m.—Two hours ; 50 minutes of gas against our batteries, trench mortars, headquarters, telephone exchanges, and dumps ; then ten minutes’ surprise fire against the infantry position. These 50 and ten minutes’ fire were then to be repeated.

“Three periods of ten minutes’ fire to verify ranges : 70 minutes’ shooting for effect against the infantry position : 75 minutes more, but with special sub-periods of 15 and ten minutes of intense fire.

“Finally, five minutes to prepare for the infantry assault. Covered by this monstrous battery, 66 German divisions were to be launched in the dawn of March 21st against a front held by 19 British divisions.

“On the whole this attack, a super-attack of the Haig-Passchendaele type, but far larger, represents the most terrific and most inhuman (in the sense of it being wholly impersonal) of all the battles in the annals of war.”

Now read this extract from *Germany, Prepare for War*, by Prof. Ewald Banse.

“There is no doubt victory stood on a razor’s edge on many occasions ; more than once it only wanted five minutes more to turn a German success into a decisive victory for Germany (the Marne, 1914 ; Russia in 1915 ; Rumania and Verdun, 1916 ; Amiens, 1918).”

In *Turning Points of History* Lord Birkenhead says :

“On them fell the brunt of the attack. The armies on his flanks did not hold as firm as they might have done. Gough had neither adequate rear lines of defence nor reserves. Yet with such tenacity and courage did he continue to oppose and muffle the enemy’s advance, after the first terrible fortnight was passed, the front still stood, and Ludendorff’s last throw had patently failed. Amiens was saved ; so was Paris ; so were the Channel Ports. So was France. So was England.”

In *War Memoirs* (Book V) Mr. Lloyd George says :

“In the numbers of *killed* during the German offensive of March and April, the respective losses were : British 28,128 ; German 56,639. Thus in killed alone the Germans lost more than twice as many as the British.”

General Gough writes in his book, *The Fifth Army* :

“If the Fifth Army had attempted to hold their ground at all costs—if the tactics had not been those of a great rearguard action—the whole army might have been overwhelmed, in fact almost certainly would have been, in the first two or three days’ fighting.”

I remember one thing that struck me about a week before the attack on March 21st. I was watching some signallers burying telephone lines, and the thought occurred to me that most of them would be out of commission in fifteen minutes after the battle opened. I based my conjecture on what I saw of the state of the enemy front after the barrage had done its work in the Battle of Passchendaele. Our guns for that show were eight miles in depth, and after the barrage was put down the ground before and behind the enemy front line was sadly ravaged, and if the Germans were relying on telephones they must have been as disappointed as our staff was later during the Fifth Army fighting.

In the end one must fall back on personal contact.

XXXIXth DIVISION (in Reserve) on
March 21st, 1918

Major-General E. Feetham.

G.S.O.1 Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Gossett.

116th Infantry Brigade	Brig.-Gen. M. L. Hornby
11th Royal Sussex	13th Royal Sussex
	1/1st Herts
117th Infantry Brigade	Brig.-Gen. G. A. Armytage
16th Notts and Derby	17th K.R.R.C.
	16th Rifle Brigade

118th Infantry Brigade	Brig.-Gen. E. H. C. P. Bellingham
1/6th Cheshire	4/5th Black Watch
	1/1st Cambridge

PIONEERS. 13th GLOUCESTERS

On March 21st, 1918, the XXXIXth Division was in Congreve's Corps VII; but on March 25th the XXXIXth passed to the command of the XIXth Corps (Watts).

At 11.20 p.m., March 24th, G.H.Q. issued orders for VIIth Corps Headquarters and all VIIth Corps troops north of the Somme to be transferred to the Third Army, and for the troops of that Corps south of the Somme (XVIth Division and XXXIXth Division) to be transferred to XIXth Corps. The order took effect at 4 a.m. on the 25th March, General Fayolle (Commander) Group armies of the Reserve.

Fighting strength of the XXXIXth Division when relieved was 500 bayonets.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote :

“The total losses of the XIXth Corps during fourteen days of battle came to from 35,000 to 40,000 killed, wounded and missing.”

Again on March 23rd, he says :

“All day the 39th Division was fighting rearguard actions as it fell back upon the Somme.” And . . . “The 39th Division turned at bay again and again, giving them time to get clear.”

In *Military Operations* (p. 454) occurs this passage :

“The XIX Corps, though under General Fayolle, still received orders through and from General Gough.”

What a panic must have been raging in London while the Fifth Army was trying to hold the enemy! I find in the Diary of Lieut.-Colonel C. à Court Repington this entry relating to the Fifth Army as late as April 7th.

“It was the worst defeat in the history of the Army.”

On April 9th in the same Diary occurs this passage :

“I had written an article yesterday defending the Fifth Army

against their traducers, but the Press Bureau, under orders, I suppose, took care that it should not appear."

It should not be forgotten that the Fifth Army fought after the loss of a battalion per brigade. A brigade in action generally fought with a battalion in reserve.

On the morning of March 21st, twelve attenuated divisions (most of them had been through gruelling fighting entailed by the Passchendaele battles) faced forty-two fresh German divisions at full strength. When the battle opened the XXXIXth Division (in Reserve) was disposed in and behind the Green Line, from Tincourt northwards towards Nurlu. Headquarters were at Haut Allaines, north of Peronne. The 13th Gloucesters were in Tincourt. I was in command of a Platoon of the Gloucesters.

At noon of the 21st, the Division was placed at the disposal of the VIIth Corps Commander, and it moved at 12.35 p.m. Outside the loss of Ronssoy, which had been held by the 16th Division, the situation had been reported as satisfactory. At 4 p.m. orders reached two brigades, the machine-gun companies, the 227th, and half 234th Field Companies Royal Engineers, and the 13th Gloucestershire to dig a switch line connecting the Green Line at the Bois de Tincourt (a mile north of the Cologne Valley) with the rear line of the Battle zone, nearly due north of the Bois at Saulcourt. By dawn a very good chain of posts had been made with some wire in front. Twelve tanks of the 4th Tank Battalion were allotted to assist in the defence of this switch line.

On the 22nd, at 2 p.m. the enemy attacked the XXXIXth Division. The 117th Brigade on the left was struck first. The 16th Rifle Brigade, south of Saulcourt was nearly surrounded by 3.0, and by 5 p.m., after a heavy bombardment was driven out of its position.

This is how Sir Philip Gibbs, war correspondent, who accompanied the Fifth Army, described the situation in an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, on the twentieth anniversary of the memorable retreat :

“The remnants of the Fifth Army still fought back and back. Some of its shattered divisions were put under the command of the Third Army north of the Somme. The French had taken over others on the right. There was very little left of Gen. Gough’s command when at last they were relieved. The poor Irish of the 16th, whom I had known well, had few men left. The 6th Ulsters, who had fought like lions at bay, could only muster 300 men at Journey’s End.

“How did these men endure so much and still keep standing during the eight or 10 days against that terrible impact of 50 German divisions? How, with their weak numbers growing less as every hour passed, did they wear down the finest German troops, so fresh and strong when they started? There is no answer possible. I do not know how it happened. But it did happen.

“The German troops, in spite of all their reserves, were exhausted. Towards the end they could hardly advance, hardly stagger another mile or two. When our men stopped, they stopped. They were almost as spent and done as our own battalions who had been fighting without relief night and day.

“‘Being attacked,’ said one of our officers, ‘was the only thing that kept our men awake.’

“Towards the end of the fighting they had a drunken craving for sleep, and slept standing with their heads falling against a bit of earthwork, slept hunched in ditches, slept like the dead men around them when they lay on open ground. But they awaked again when the enemy attacked once more, and fought him and killed him, and dozed again. They were footsore, and their limbs were stiff, and they felt like old men.”

CHAPTER 4

A Tight Corner

On the Proyart Line—Ordered to Retire—The Enemy hot on our Tracks—We Capture a German Prisoner—Interrogate Him—And Gain some Interesting Information.

LET me write something of the "stories" and the atmosphere, almost approaching a panic, when I arrived in England after being wounded on April 25th, 1918, in the Battle of Kemmel.

I was so astounded and disgusted that I never said a word even when I heard derogatory things said of the Fifth Army. To give an idea of the disgust that I felt for a long time I will refer to the fact that the editor of *The Graphic*, knowing I had been through the Fifth Army fighting, sent me Mr. Shaw Sparrow's book on the Fifth Army to review. The editor cut out a line in that review that was actually spoken to me by a brigadier just as I was moving off to counter-attack. The editor said that the line was too strong. Well, this is what he exclaimed :

"Look at the swine! Legging it like Hell!"

Sure enough, the enemy in front were retiring rapidly. I am convinced in my own mind that the enemy thought that my small tired remnant was the spearhead of reinforcements. Whatever they thought, it was lucky for me that they retired, leaving the troops covering their retirement the job of splattering us with rifle and machine-gun fire. Properly directed fire could have wiped us out; but although I had some narrow shaves, and bullets zipped into the ground about us, there were no casualties.

I had been ordered to put my men in on a line—the now famous Proyart line—from a certain farmhouse to a hedge-row, which the General had pointed out with his ash stick, and to hold on until further orders. I got to my objective and found some derelict trenches, and then I learned that

the Brigadier knew very well what he was doing. I disposed my men and waited developments.

It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was going down, and I had a faint suspicion that I would not be left quiet enough to allow of my doing some crossword puzzles.

Presently a few shells arrived. They were registering—a few over the parados and some over the parapet, the farm end of the trench; a few over the parados and some over the parapet of the hedgerow end of the trench, and then silence.

Now what was going to happen? Surely our little manoeuvre had not halted those victorious troops for the rest of the day? It evidently had. Night came on, and with it a "nipping and an eager air." I could not issue any rations because I had not any; so, taking an orderly with me, I went to have a look at the now famous farm on the right.

The late occupants had evidently bundled out pretty quick. Coats, hats and cloaks were hanging on the doors, and the beds were made up. I found a few eggs and little else in the way of food. A drink of water was not to be sneezed at, and I drank like a thirsty colt.

My orderly carried a little food and some water back to the trenches and I handed it over to the N.C.O.s.

It became very cold; anyhow, I was cold. It *can* be cold in France in March. It was getting near dawn when one of my sergeants came to me and told me that the Second-in-Command had arrived.

I found him waiting for me with an orderly at the end of the trench. He had orders with him, which he handed to me. I was to retire and take my men to a certain map reference. I was also to take over the remnants of another battalion on my right. I then told the Major that there was an officer in the trench who was senior to me. This officer had stuck with me in a sort of daze all the afternoon. He said: "The Colonel knows that. You are in command."

The Second-in-Command then went off, after wishing me the best of luck. I never saw him again. He was killed

in action a few days later. I went along the trench to find the officer whom I had mentioned to the Major. I found him and showed him my orders. He winced a bit and smiled wanly. We remained the best of friends, and I heard from him after the War ended.

I sat in the trench for a few minutes thinking how I could best carry out my orders with a minimum loss of life.

The enemy had registered on us, and we were within range of rifle and machine-gun fire. Through my months of experience on the Somme and in the Ypres Salient, I had developed a certain vulpine intellect—in other words, a glorified horse-sense.

I conceived the idea of getting the men away in small groups under N.C.O.s. I saw the officer on my right, showed him my orders, and told him of my plan. I ordered him to get his sergeants together and instruct them. My plan was to get small numbers of men at intervals out of the trench with instructions to proceed to a certain map reference, which I pointed out to the N.C.O.s. I was to join them as soon as all the men were evacuated. The men were not to keep bunched up because that would make targets. They were to be looking about as if siting a trench. My hope was that the enemy who intended to mop us up if possible would hold their fire if they saw a few loony-looking men drifting about.

I hope I may be forgiven for giving my men the first chance to get off. After all, I knew them all personally, they were friends; while the men on my right were good fellows and all that sort of thing, but I had not even looked them over.

The plan worked splendidly, and I had got all my men off and had only a corporal with me in the trench. Not a single shot had been fired. I gave orders to the officer on my right to start his show. Whether he had got the pip over the preference I had showed the men of my Battalion, or thought it was getting late and that my men had a good start, I cannot tell; but I do know that they all clambered out simultaneously, and then Hell was let loose.

The enemy put the stuff down in great shape. I got out

of the trench with a corporal, who received a slight wound.

I found my men at the map reference I had given the N.C.O.s, and they were in good spirits because the little manoeuvre had succeeded so well. I then proceeded in the direction of the village where the Division was reforming. I saw, with the aid of my glasses, a cavalry patrol coming out of the village full tilt, pursued by a plane. One of the cavalymen was shot down.

I immediately decided that there was something wrong with that village, and determined to give it a wide berth.

I looked at my map and decided to make for Cayeux. I marched my men into the village in column of route, and they made quite a stir. There was great business going on in the village. I found the rest of my Battalion, and was very glad to see them.

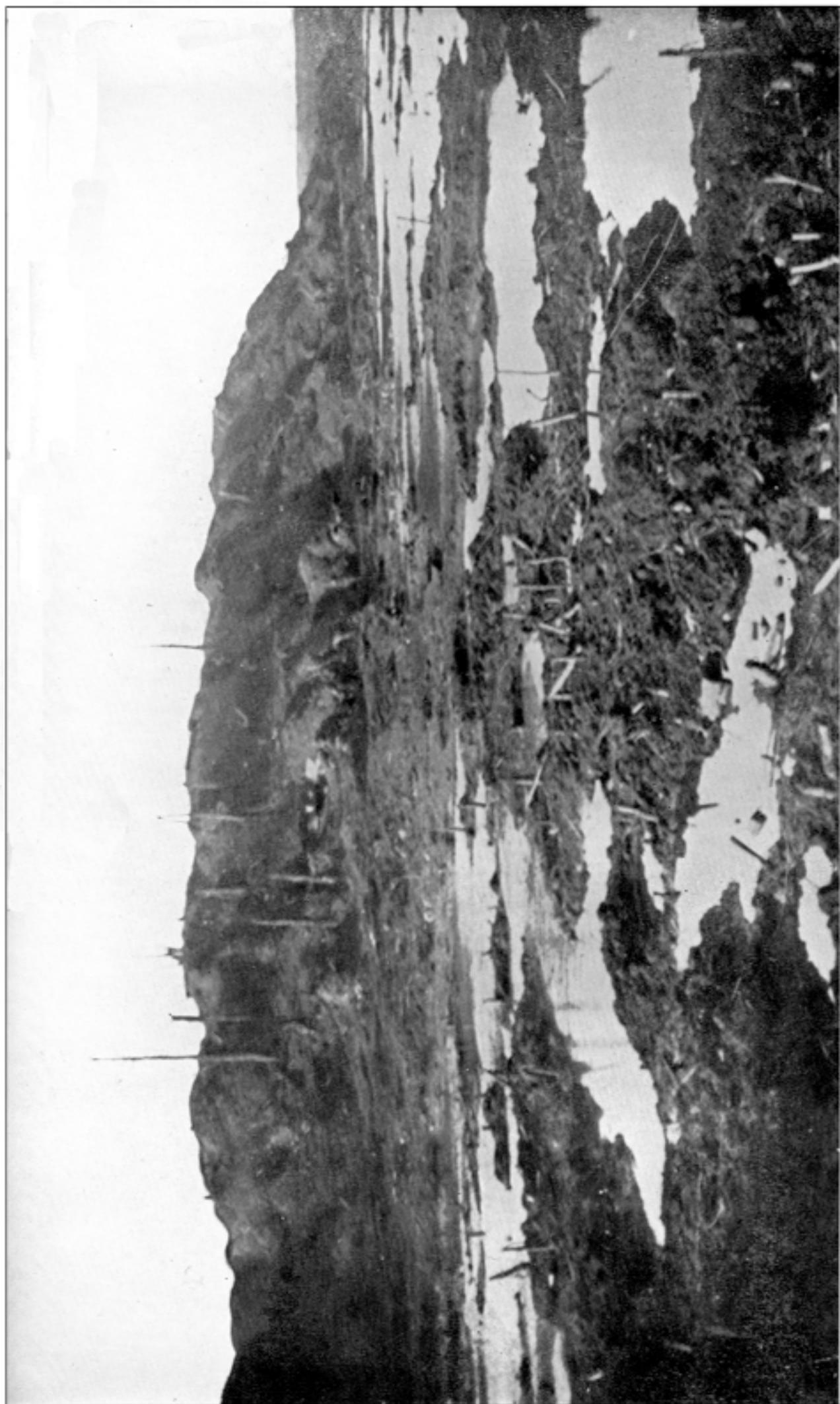
On March 25th the XXXIXth Division passed into the Command of the XIXth Corps.

The enemy were hot on our tracks. Our Battalion had orders to hold a wood; the name of the place I do not know.

I put out some piquets. "Field Service Regulations" has very definite instructions about piquets. If the instructions are properly carried out, the piquets have very little chance of doing useful work by reason of the fact that they prove such good targets that the enemy amuse themselves by potting them. I wonder if any part of that interesting little book has been re-written since the War?

To continue. I put out some piquets, and placed two picked men, and told them to keep a sharp look out on a bridle-path running on the edge of the wood. I told these men to keep concealed, not to move about, and to get a prisoner if possible for identification.

It was raining hard, and an occasional whiz-bang crashed among the saplings. Late in the afternoon a sergeant reported that my men had captured a prisoner. I went along and found the prisoner. He was very tall, but slightly built. Deeply chagrined at being captured, he



Polygon Wood

seemed very sullen. I took him off to advanced Brigade Headquarters, which was a small hunting-lodge in the wood. I can see that small room now ; there was a bunch of onions in the corner.

I knew that our Colonel could speak no German, so I wondered who was going to question the prisoner. The Colonel asked him if he spoke English, and he shook his head. Then, much to our surprise, the Acting Brigadier began speaking in German to the prisoner who supplied some excellent information. He said that the Germans had a fresh Brigade in position ready to attack the wood, and gave the names and numbers of Battalions.

He told us that the Germans had large reserves of fresh troops, and that they were leap-frogging through the attacking troops. We had every reason to believe that statement. In that very room a major of Engineers, who had achieved a D.S.O. for gallantry, told me that he himself had accounted for fifty Germans with a rifle since the show started. The next day he was shot through and through, and as he was carried past me by my own men, I heard him mutter : " Why don't I die ? "

However, everything the prisoner told us was not believed, for these captives had a trick of talking in a big way, with the intention of putting the " wind up " their listeners, I suppose.

The prisoner before us was taken away, and the Colonel asked the Acting Brigadier where he acquired his German. Pulling at his moustache, the Brigadier said waggishly :

" It is the only thing I learned at Eton."

I went out, and a few minutes later a sergeant reported to me that the men had killed a German and that the body was lying on the bridle-path. I went along with another officer, and found one of the biggest Germans I had ever seen, lying face down on the path. We turned him over for purposes of identification, and found that he was wearing a sort of black gauze mask. I suppose that the idea was that the face would not show up so well if covered with something black. The uniform looked new, and he appeared to be as fresh as paint.

I cut off the shoulder-straps and took them to Brigade Headquarters. They corroborated something the prisoner had told us, and that night the Brigade was retired within a hundred yards of the dead German and the enemy guessed nothing. We took up another position, and punished the enemy the next day.

It was that sort of thing that broke the heart of the Germans.

CHAPTER 5

Speeches Behind Locked Doors

Foch and General Gough—Was Foch an Intriguing General?—Did Clemenceau Know His Countrymen?—Suppression of Colonel Repington's Article Defending the Fifth Army—I Hear Lloyd George Speak Behind Locked Doors.

ONE of the questions that General Foch hurled at General Gough was :

“ Why are you at Headquarters and not with your troops in the fighting lines ? ”

Very properly, General Gough pointed out that he was at his Headquarters because he had been asked to meet him there, and also because it was his proper post. Also, he told Foch that his task was not to lead a battalion or a company, but to attend to what was going on along his extended front.

As early as 1916 Commanding Officers were forbidden to expose themselves.

So many derogatory things have been said about the staff of the Fifth Army that I should like to say something about what happened to the staff of the Division with which I was fighting. On March 21st, when the battle commenced, Major-General Edward Feetham was on leave, and Brigadier-General Geo. A. Stewart-Cape, acting for him, was killed early in the fighting. General Feetham was killed later. I applied my own field-dressing to the ugly wound in his head. He was dying while I was attending to him. He died in my arms. Brigadier-General M. L. Hornby had a leg blown off at the thigh. Brigadier-General E. H. C. P. Bellingham was captured. Brigadier-General G. A. Armytage behaved with the utmost gallantry, and was with the troops directing things all the time—a wonderful officer.

I have no reason to believe that staffs of other divisions did not suffer, and behave, in a similar manner.

In his book on the War, General Foch says that at the time he took over there were no troops between the enemy and Amiens. His statement was incorrect.

Was Foch an intriguing General?

Did he minimise the work of the Fifth Army and exaggerate the gravity of the situation on March 24th to insure his getting a post he always wanted? Let me quote his own words:

“ Sunday, March 24th, on my own responsibility asked to see Monsieur Clemenceau, the Prime Minister, and handed him a note in which I called his attention to the evolution of the battle then going on. I explained the military dispositions which should at once be taken, and for the necessity for an ‘organ’ to direct the war—one capable of giving orders, and seeing they were executed. Otherwise the risk remained for the coalition of going into a battle entailing the gravest consequences inadequately prepared, inadequately equipped, and inadequately directed.

“ His first words when I gave him my note were: ‘ You are not going to desert me. You! I am in agreement with Haig and Petain, what more can I do?’ (This from the Tiger, the stuffed Tiger, as Lloyd George called him.)

“ ‘ No, Mr. President,’ I answered, ‘ I am not going to desert you; but each one of us must shoulder his own responsibilities, and without delay; that is why I have handed you this note.’ ”

The next day (Monday, March 25th) at Doullens, General Foch was appointed Generalissimo, and after the Conference this is what took place according to Foch:

“ At 2.30 p.m. the Doullens conference came to a close, and we went for a hurried lunch at the Hotel des Quatre Fils Aymon, which I remembered from 1914 (I wonder if any one of those Frenchmen remembered that it was at the hotel of the same name in the rue Sentier now a warehouse that Mozart stayed when in Paris in 1778). As we sat down Monsieur Clemenceau turned to me with these words: ‘ Well, you’ve got the place you wanted so much.’

“ It was not difficult to answer him—and Monsieur Loucheur joined in my reply—that to assume the direction of a battle which during successive days has been largely lost, could hardly be the object of any great desire on my part, but rather

constituted by reason of its risks an act of duty and sacrifice in the service of my country."

Did Clemenceau know his countrymen better than anyone?

I rather think he did. In any case, it was not a very pleasant remark to make to a man who had just been appointed to a dazzling position, and General Foch's reply about "duty and sacrifice" does not ring true to me.

I found in a copy of the Paris *Daily Mail* (dated April 7th) an article entitled "General Foch's Method." Here is an extract:

"The most satisfactory feature of the situation at the front is that those who know most about it are most calm and self-possessed. People should not allow themselves to be hypnotised by the official bulletins, said a high authority to a representative of *The Daily Mail*. People ask 'Will the Boches get Amiens?' The reply is 'Perhaps they will—if General Foch can smash more German divisions by letting them in than by keeping them out. Unbeaten armies are more than towns. The important thing to remember is that Germany has *nowhere broken the line*. General Ludendorff is being fenced with and hustled, not *by our main forces*, but by little more than covering armies.'" Exactly! Now we know why reinforcements were so late in reaching the Fifth Army.

On April 9th, Mr. Lloyd George, after the suppression of Colonel Repington's article "defending the Fifth Army against its traducers," made his famous speech in the House of Commons, and talked a lot about "Carey's Force." I know a good deal about that show from a splendid young officer of my own Battalion, who had been awarded an M.C. earlier in the War, and who had had a lot to do with that force. General Carey did not flame about and gather dispirited chickens under his wing and then hurl them at an astonished enemy. He was not there until that force had done their fine work.

Speaking of Mr. Lloyd George reminds me of an interesting evening. The Benchers of the Middle Temple gave a banquet during the War to four Prime Ministers: Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Robert Borden of Canada, Mr. W. F.

Massey of New Zealand and Mr. W. M. Hughes of Australia. One of the Benchers, an old friend of mine, Judge Terrell, managed to get me an invitation. I was on leave and went in uniform. The Lord Chancellor was receiving the guests. I had just been presented and was shaking hands with him when the stentorian voice of the butler roared out :

“ The Prime Minister.”

I immediately side-stepped to make way for Mr. Lloyd George, who apologised for being late and said he had dressed in a tremendous hurry. This was very evident, because he had forgotten to button a certain part of his attire. I did not think that I, a humble lieutenant, who had not met the Prime Minister, was the right person to point out his neglect of a certain position. I guessed that he would be ruffled if I asked him if he had the Abyssinian Medal, and would entirely fail to grasp my meaning, so I pointed out the trouble to Judge Terrell, and he explained the matter so quietly and tactfully that he won a laugh from Mr. Lloyd George.

We dined in great state in Middle Hall. We sat on a dais at the end of the hall. Although I had never been a Member of the Inn, I had shared chambers with a friend in the Temple years before, and I never thought I should find myself sitting on a dais in that magnificent hall in the company of four Prime Ministers.

After the banquet was over, our party of about fifteen processed through serried rows of Members of the Inn to a lovely room where, I understood, naughty barristers were often disbarred. Here we found dessert and wine spread before us. After the port had gone round once (oh, that port ! it is nonsense to think that the gods ever tasted anything like it ; had they done so they would have descended among us to urge those decanters themselves), the waiters were told to leave the room, and the door was locked, and then speeches began.

I must confess that Mr. Lloyd George easily made the best speech of all. Insomuch as I was the only person in uniform, and he spoke, of course, on the War, he seemed

to keep an eye on me the whole time. There was I, a Platoon Commander, listening to speeches made by four Prime Ministers, in a locked room.

Among the guests that night was the brother of the late Professor Ray Lancaster, the famous scientist, and I had a chat with him. Knowing nothing of science, I spoke of the port—a subject he seemed to understand thoroughly and one for which he seemed to have a very great respect.

But to return to my story.

The “windy” ones were not entirely confined to London: there were many of them behind our lines. I will tell you of one of them. Early one morning I had taken up a position to cover the retirement of certain troops, and I knew very well that it was impossible for the men in front of us to hold the enemy for long however well they fought, because of the preponderating force they would encounter.

I was occupying a very old disused trench intersecting a road, and in front of me at a distance of about two hundred yards there was a high ridge which precluded me from seeing anything of the fighting in front; but the noise of battle reached me. After three or four hours, the troops in front began to retire and came through me. They had been badly mauled. I asked a sergeant what had become of his Colonel—the youngest Colonel in our Division, and a man I admired very much—I am uncertain of his name. The sergeant said that he had been killed after he had emptied his revolver into the advancing enemy.

There were many walking wounded among the troops that came through me, and several had halted in front of my position when the order reached me to retire. I decided to “hang on” for a time to allow the wounded a good start, and I told my sergeant—an excellent fellow who was killed two days later—of my intention. He and the men were very “game” and quite excited at the idea of punishing the enemy. I gave the range (250 yards) and told the men that on no account was any man to “loose off” until he got an order from me. I also told them to keep still and not move about, because the success of the stunt was only possible if the enemy were ignorant of our presence.

I then gave orders about our eventual retirement. The troops on my flank had retired and I was waiting for the sight of the first man to appear on the ridge when, suddenly Colonel P——, who was Acting Brigadier, appeared. He said to me : “ Did you have orders to retire ? ” “ Yes, sir,” I replied ; and he said : “ Then what are you doing here ? ” I told him that I was in a very good position—something about the wounded—and wound up by saying that I thought I might be able to annoy the enemy a little.

I then noticed that one of his arms was in a bit of a mess, and asked if I could do anything. He passed that off and asked : “ How are you going to evacuate your men if you are hard pressed ? ” I told him of the orders I had issued, and he seemed satisfied and told me to “ carry on,” after warning me that the enemy were confidently advancing in great strength.

I left him for a moment and went down the trench and told the men that I was going to “ hold fire ” until a good group of the enemy had appeared, and that I expected each man to find a target.

Presently two Germans appeared in a crouching position on the ridge ; they had with them what seemed to me a light machine gun. For some time they remained motionless, looking over our position and apparently not into it. They evidently could see the troops retiring in our rear, and they did not seem to notice us. Then one stood and waved an arm. After a few minutes they were joined by several of their comrades. The men were itching with excitement, and I feared that one of them might “ loose off ” and spoil the whole show ; so I kept saying : “ Keep steady ! Keep steady ! ”

I had in my mind the avenging of the death of that splendid young Colonel, and I knew that if a single shot was fired by one of the men the enemy would take some time to advance in front of me, and might get round the wood on my right flank, where I intended to retire. I waited till I counted about fifty of the enemy—some on the ridge and some coming down the slope. Then I gave the order : “ Fifteen rounds, rapid ! ” and most of that enemy group were “ laid out.”

CHAPTER 6

Grave Perils

A "Windy" Officer Under Fire—A Narrow Shave of Being Blown to Smithereens—I Meet an Officer of the Black Watch at the Front—
And Two Years Later at the Poet's Club.

WRITING at the close of the previous chapter on the subject of "fifteen rounds, rapid!" reminds me of a story that my brother told me of the first days of the War.

After being engaged with the enemy they captured a fine-looking German officer, who said to my brother: "There is only one thing I want to know and that is how many machine guns have you to a Battalion?" He spoke in English. My brother told him that each Battalion had two machine guns. He couldn't understand it. It was the "fifteen rounds, rapid!" order carried out by men trained to find targets that jiggered him.

Military Operations refers to the retirement of the XXXIXth Division in these words:

"The 39th Division similarly brought up its reserve brigade, the 116th, to south-east of Chuignes, some three miles west of Dompierre, to cover the withdrawal of the other two brigades. In conjunction with the 13th Gloucestershire (Pioneers), the brigade fought a rearguard action back to the new line, during which, according to their own accounts, the Germans suffered severely from machine-gun fire." (*German Offensive and its Preliminaries*, page 504.)

Let me quote *Military Operations*—"France and Belgium. The German March Offensive and its Preliminaries." (Page 355—March 23rd, 1918):

"The 64th Brigade (with all three Battalions and the 13th Gloucestershire Pioneers in the front line) on the right of the 21st Division, fared better. The German infantrymen advancing

at 7 a.m., preceded by a line of machine guns, though not visible until they were thirty yards from the wire, were shot down with great slaughter. Another attack came an hour later. Again fire was withheld till good targets appeared, and then opened with such effect that the enemy retired, leaving many dead and wounded on the wire. A small counter-attack even was initiated, and it captured some prisoners and two machine guns, which were then used against the enemy. So far the fight had gone well, but it was soon to change."

I gave the order to retire. Colonel P——, who had remained with me, came along when I joined the supporting troops. A corporal drew my attention to men on the skirt of the wood. Satisfying myself that they were Germans, I opened fire on them and they retired.

They had done what I thought good soldiers would do: they had advanced rapidly here, and had been very cautious on the ridge. Colonel P—— left me and told me to wait for orders. He evidently "handed over" and went off to a dressing-station, because I never saw him again; but the late Captain M——, M.C., of my Battalion, told me that he was in the same ambulance wagon with the Colonel, and that he related the story of my little "stunt" and said he was recommending me for something. If Colonel P—— is alive and this meets his eye, I hope it may win a smile from him.

Now for my story about the "windy" one.

While I was awaiting orders, I looked the men over when, suddenly, a huge horse rumbled up. I use the word "rumbled" because that is what the horse did. It was a great thing of seventeen hands, and could have carried a howitzer on its rump. It was the sort of horse depicted by Dürer, and of the kind I imagined used by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

On this strange horse sat a wildly hysterical officer. In excited tones he begged us to remember England: told us to stand firm; said he would see that we had all the ammunition we wanted; said he would bring us everything, etc., etc.

His evident excitement led us to believe that he was *tête*

montée, and we said nothing. The words of the wily Talleyrand occurred to me: "Above all, gentlemen, no heat."

Excitedly he said to me: "What can I bring you?"

Rather impatiently and hardly, I replied: "You can bring me a small Bass served with parsley." My reference to the green decoration came from my recollections of the late Dan Leno, the famous comedian, who said that his Bass was served with parsley when visiting the North Pole.

The man on the Dürer-like horse looked at me for a moment, and seemed to grasp my meaning. Without saying a word, he turned his horse, and rumbled away to safety, and I rather think to the enviable possession of a D.S.O.

A few minutes later I was talking to the new Acting Brigadier. Fortunately for me, he asked me a question instead of giving me an order.

Pointing to a sunken road, flanked by a small red brick building—a railway station, he said: "Do you think it a good idea for you to put your men in there?" Without a moment's hesitation I replied:

"No, sir."

I had a horror of sunken roads after seeing a huddled mass of dead men in one (the Bloody Road) after Thiepval had fallen to us. The lines of Baudelaire's macabre poem, "Une Charogne," had occurred to my mind after I had disturbed a myriad of flies when I went to identify the badges on the uniforms.

I ventured to point out that the enemy would "register" on that station building in a short time because they knew all about that sunken road. I told him that in my opinion the front of the road was the place to put the men. I was ordered to put the men in there.

Had I been ordered to put them in the sunken road I should not be writing this now. A company that got into that road twenty minutes later was blown to smithereens, and I had a narrow escape myself lying out in the open, because I got caught in the fire on that road when going to report the position of my men in some spit-locked trenches I had found. Several shells fell within two yards of me, but

later the fire lifted and found that fatal road. The men seemed pleased to see me when I turned up.

The enemy took Saulcourt and Guyencourt from the 21st Division.

“ At 7.30 p.m. the whole of the 64th Brigade was ordered to retire south-westward past Longavesnes to the Green Line, where it was reinforced by the 13th Gloucestershire (Pioneers).

“ On the 23rd the enemy began a heavy bombardment of the Green Line using a number of Trench Mortars, and as the Green Line trenches were only spit-locked a foot deep, there were a good many casualties.” (*Military Operations*. “The German March Offensive and its Preliminaries.”)

A company of the Black Watch linked up with me in this show and one of the officers laughed with me over the fact that our posteriors had such little protection from machine-gun bullets when lying in those spit-locked trenches dug two feet.

I met that officer under very different circumstances a couple of years later. I arrived at a dinner at the Poets' Club a little late one night and Gilbert Frankau was acting as Chairman—he makes a very good Chairman—and was speaking when I came in. Rather than disturb him I stood at the end of the room until he had finished.

I noticed that a man at the speaker's table hardly took his eyes off me whilst Frankau was on his feet, and at the end of the speech left the table and came down the room to me. When he reached me he said: “I know you; don't you know who I am? I'm that blighter of the 'Black Watch' who was with you exposing a posterior during the Fifth Army business.”

Of course, I remembered him immediately, and we both congratulated ourselves on not being wounded in the wrong place. I asked him during our chat if he had picked up anything from the ration-box, and he laughingly told me that as far as he could judge, nothing had been awarded the “rabble” of our Division in the Fifth Army because all the staff were laid out, but that he himself was awarded the M.C. after carrying the Colours of his Battalion into Cologne.

The 64th Brigade was threatened from its left rear. The enemy had broken through on the north and had taken Templeux La Fosse (it was in this village during the night of the 21st that a company of the 13th Gloucestershire was totally destroyed while sleeping in a large hut. An Austrian shell with an instantaneous fuse, that had a sort of lateral action when detonated, hit the roof of the hut and wiped them all out.) At 9 a.m. order to withdraw reached the Brigade. It was a difficult job because the ground immediately in the rear of the position sloped up hill, so that any troops leaving the trench were in full view of the enemy. Anyhow it was done, though in the attempt to avoid Templeux La Fosse, it led to a loss of direction.

On the 24th no attack was made on the 39th Division south of the Somme, with the 16th Division behind in Reserve, but it did some good work with enfilade fire on the enemy advancing north of the river.

At 11.20 p.m. G.H.Q. issued orders for the VII Corps troops south of the Somme (16th Division and the 39th Division) to be transferred to the XIXth Corps. This order took effect at 4 a.m. on the 25th.

To quote *Military Operations* :

“ This did not mean that General Sir Hubert Gough ceased to exercise control ; only that he received orders as to the conduct of operations from the Groupe d’Armées de Reserve (formed by the French First and Third Armies) instead of from G.H.Q.”

Of the work done by the VIIth Corps up to its transfer to the XIXth Corps let me quote *Military Operations* again :

“ On March 24th, the V Corps, the right Corps of the Third Army, finally escaped from the grave perils with which it had been threatened as the result of clinging too long to the Flesquieres Salient. . . . Fortunately the stout resistance offered by the VII Corps (Fifth Army) to the south of the salient, and by the IV Corps to the north had slackened the speed of the German advance, giving Lieut.-General E. A. Fanshawe time to draw back his divisions.”

On the 25th, when Lieut.-General Watts found that the intended counter-attack by the French was not going to

take place, and though more or less the XIXth Corps had managed to hold up, he came to the conclusion that there was grave danger of isolation. The VIIth Corps was being driven back. After a talk on the telephone with General Gough he issued orders for a withdrawal, at 4.15 p.m. The withdrawal was to begin as soon as it was dark. The Cambridgeshire (118th Brigade) were forced to fight a sharp rearguard action, but the remainder of the 39th Division was not engaged with the enemy.

At dawn on the 26th the whole of the XIXth Corps was on a new line. The heavy artillery had been ordered on the 25th to cover the line Rouvroy-Rosieres-Proyart in case a further retirement was necessary.

The XIXth Corps was the only corps of the Fifth Army now in the front line. It had six divisions in line holding a front of thirteen miles from Fransart to Frise. If seriously pressed it had orders to fall back on the Rouvroy-Rosieres-Proyart line.

About 6.30 a.m. the 24th Division was heavily engaged and fell back, and Herbecourt in the 39th Division area was captured and the Division was forced to retire. The 66th was also forced to retire.

At 9.30 a.m. corps headquarters gave orders for a withdrawal to the Rouvroy-Rosieres-Proyart line. It was to be done slowly so that the new position would not be reached before dark. This was not too easy in the face of a confident enemy, more especially as he knew all the ground over which the Corps was retiring. This knowledge undoubtedly helped his gunners tremendously. In many cases their gun-fire was extraordinarily accurate. Sunken roads, railway stations and certain farm-houses were definitely taped. On reaching the Rouvroy line, details of the XIXth Corps enabled the battalions to snatch some rest.

The enemy did not attack, and the night passed quietly.

CHAPTER 7

“ *The Battle Was Over* ”

I See the Smoke Screen Used for the First Time—“ They May Get Us by Lunch-time, and you by Tea-time,” said Lieut.-General Watts to General Rawlinson when Taking over Command—An Interrupted Dinner.

AN interesting thing happened in the fighting around Lamotte. It was an awful tangle there. When we were lying out in extended order I saw the smoke screen used for the first time. It certainly worked beautifully. It started on the enemy flank like a cloud let out of a bottle, for all the world like something our old friend Sinbad the Sailor might have seen. Suddenly it grew in volume and drifted like a curtain right across our front. It was quite spectacular and impressive. The Germans were reinforced here, and when we got the news that they had crossed the Somme at Cerisy we had orders to retire. This was done in good order, but we had to fall back on a small valley, and on reaching it an aeroplane swooped down on my lot and I ordered the men to extend as much as possible so as to make lesser targets. The pilot loosed off a belt and managed to kill one of my sergeants.

I went into a house in Lamotte at night and one of my men saw a German bolt out of the back door. He disappeared into the darkness.

That part of the show was a mix-up. No one knew what was happening. Let me quote from *Military Operations* (Page 48) under date March 28th.

“ The 39th Division, which had some troops in the line north-west of the 66th Division, facing east, made a gallant and successful counter-attack to stop the German advance, when the latter division was falling back, using the 116th and 118th Brigades, each formed into a weak composite battalion. These brigade-battalions, with the 117th, subsequently formed on the left of

the French, then at Cayeux, so as to prevent the enemy from overlooking the Luce valley.”

And again (page 51) :

“ There now remained in the front line of the XIX Corps only the 66th, 39th and 61st Division, with the 20th in close support on the left of the Groupement Mesple, and the 16th Division and 1st Cavalry Division on the left of Carey’s force.”

In his remarkable book *The Fifth Army* General Gough writes, after he handed over to General Rawlinson on March 28th :

“ Before I handed over the command, the task of the Fifth Army can be said to have been completed. Very little more ground was lost, and that principally by the French. Within a few days the remnants of my exhausted divisions had been relieved by fresh troops, after having performed feats of gallantry and endurance that will be a military byword for many years to come.”

Once more let *Military Operations*, under date March 28th, tell the story :

“ Earlier in the day General Rawlinson had rung up Lieut.-General Watts to enquire about the situation. The latter in a cheerful voice replied : ‘ They may get us by lunch-time, and you by tea-time.’ ”

Several more days passed before we were relieved. I mention this because General Foch stated that when he took over on March 25th there were no troops between the enemy and Amiens. It is true we could not have done much to check the Germans if they had come on with the persistence and rapidity and weight that they displayed in the first six days, but we were there.

At 6.30 p.m. of March 28th General Rawlinson in a letter to General Foch expressed himself in this manner :

“ The situation is serious, and unless fresh troops are sent here in the next two days, I doubt whether the remnants of the British XIX Corps which now hold the line east of Villers Brettoneux can maintain their positions. I feel some anxiety for the security of Amiens, and draw your attention to the danger

in which this place will be if the enemy renews his attacks from the east before fresh troops are available. I fear that the troops of the XIXth Corps are not capable of executing a counter-offensive.”

At 8.35 p.m. General Fayolle ordered the French Third and First Armies to continue their attacks “without respite night and day” in the general direction of Roye; the British Fifth Army was to cover Amiens at all costs.

On the 29th of March the 39th Division was withdrawn from the line into reserve. *Military Operations* (Page 92) says :

“After ten days’ continuous fighting the 66th, 61st and 39th Divisions were not only weak in numbers, but all ranks remaining were thoroughly worn out.”

And again on Page 104 :

“In the course of the 31st the 39th Division (less artillery which remained in the line near Villers Brettoneux) was withdrawn and assembled at Longueau (south-east of Amiens), the last troops reaching that place late in the afternoon.”

I found two stragglers in Péronne having a lively time at a wine cask. I ordered them to fall in with my men who were in the road, and found something with which to broach that cask. I thought it was too big a temptation for tired, thirsty men. Some of that wine flowed out into the street and the men looked at it with mingled feelings. I didn’t touch it myself, so my conscience was easy. We were the last out of Péronne. At night after we had taken up a position across the river we heard the Germans singing in Péronne.

One morning I was awakened in a wood in front of Amiens by voices. It was pouring with rain, and I was under a “bivvy” sheet that my servant had fixed for me. There was a French officer and a French N.C.O. standing by, and I learned from them that we were relieved. We had been surprised the day before to find that the Germans did not come on. They could easily have finished us off because we were there in no strength at all, but, of course,

they might have got wind of the news of the movements of reinforcing troops or they might have shot their bolt. I do not know.

As a cocky gesture we went out in column of route, and they might have dusted us, but they did not do a thing. Let me quote from *Military Operations* (page 137): 5th April 1918.

“At 8 p.m. Lieut.-General Watts and his Staff were relieved in the command of the XIX Corps by Lieut.-Colonel Butler, and the Staff of the III Corps.”

By his work with the XIXth Corps—his superb handling of the XIXth Corps—surely this great General (Lieut.-General Watts) passes into History with a name second to none?

LUDENDORFF.

“The battle was over by April 4th. . . . The enemy’s resistance was beyond our powers. We must not get drawn into a battle of attrition. This would not suit either the strategic or the tactical situation. In agreement with commanders concerned, O.H.L. was forced to take the extremely hard decision to abandon the attack on Amiens for good.”

He, Ludendorff, calls the attack on April 24th an attempt of the Second Army to improve its position at Villers Brettoneux.

LOSSES OF THE 39th DIVISION: MARCH 21st-APRIL 5th

OFFICERS			OTHER RANKS			
Killed	Wounded	Missing	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
30	130	71	231	1,776	2,300	4,538

CASUALTIES OF THE 39th DIVISION: APRIL 9th-30th

Killed	Wounded	Missing	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
3	17	6	67	409	327	829

Again on page 94: .

“Truly the survivors of the Fifth Army, who were still holding a 19-mile front, deserved well of their country. Far from being swept away and destroyed by the onslaught of three or four times their numbers, the XVIII and XIX Corps, now united under the command of Lieut.-General Watts, and the VII Corps,

now under the Third Army north of the Somme, had with little reinforcement not only brought the Germans to a standstill, but after ten days' heavy fighting were still in the line."

After an hour's marching we got a "Fall out." The men were lying by the road and I was sitting on a heap of stones talking to some brother officers when I saw a car slowly approaching, displaying the fanion of the Commander-in-Chief. I did not call my men to attention because they were so tired. I stood with the other officers and we saluted Sir Douglas Haig as he went slowly by us, gravely returning our salutes. He looked seventy that day. I saw him some months later, driving with two other Generals to Buckingham Palace to be received by the King. He looked young, debonair, and handsome that day.

We had been out resting a few days and I had got permission to go into the neighbouring town with several officers. We ordered a topping dinner beginning with fried soles, and several bottles of a good brand of champagne. We walked about the town until the hour set for our banquet. We had got going on that dinner and had finished the soles that were particularly good, and were dreamily sipping our champagne, when suddenly an orderly appeared. Saluting, he said: "All officers of the Gloucestershire Regiment to report immediately to Battalion Headquarters."

We rose and proceeded to put on our Sam Brownes, and several officers billeted in the town who were dining that night came over and shook hands with us. They knew we were for it again. We paid the bill, and casting a few wistful gazes at those bottles of champagne we went out into the night.

Our division no longer existed as a division, so I guessed there was going to be some "shake-up."

When I got to my billet I had orders to report in "Battle Order." At Battalion Headquarters I was given orders to take over a company at a certain map reference. I was to entrain that night. A staff captain would meet me at the station and issue ammunition. I could take one subaltern with me, other officers would be detailed at my destination.

A subaltern piped up, and volunteered to come with me. I asked if it was in order and was told that it was so, and off we set.

I found a company of The Royal Sussex Regiment waiting at the map reference mentioned in my orders, and I inspected them with the aid of a "lantern dimly burning."

At the station I found a Staff Captain. Ammunition was put on the train and checked, and I moved off once more to the Ypres Salient.

CHAPTER 8

The Ypres Salient Again

General Inspecting's "Best of Luck, My Boy"—Led Me to Think
we were "for it"—And we were—A Gas Attack, and the Pitiful Result
—Mount Kemmel, a Veritable Inferno.

THE morning after my arrival in the Salient, I reported at Battalion Headquarters at Vormezeele. The Colonel showed me a line that I marked on my map. I was ordered to take eight sergeants and look this area over—it was the crater area. I was to put it into a defensive position and later occupy it. This line was pushed out to the left of Mount Kemmel in front of the Scherpenberg-Vormezeele line, and became the outpost line. The Colonel asked me if I could find my way all right. I told him that I knew the Salient very well.

I did my job, came back and reported, and found a Sussex officer, senior to me had joined us, so I became second-in-command.

The next day I was on that line with the men and a few thousand sandbags, and soon they were working away like beavers making fire-bays. I did not hide from the men the fact that we were going to be attacked and that we would be the first to "get it in the neck."

They made a very good job of that line. Later I saw two officers—one wearing a general's badges—walking towards our position, and I got out of the trench and reported. It was the General Commanding the 21st Division. (Major-General D. G. M. Campbell was commanding the 21st when the March offensive opened, but I had not seen him, so I was uncertain whether I was speaking to him or not.)

He walked down that wretched line and inspected the work the men had done, and expressed himself as very pleased and asked me to congratulate the men.

I ventured to point out some positions where I thought

machine-guns could operate successfully—machine-guns at that time were not under the command of infantry—and he seemed much interested. Then he did a curious thing. He suddenly put out his hand and took mine and said quite warmly :

“ The best of luck to you, my boy.”

It was quite unusual for officers in the line to shake hands, and I knew that it meant something. I thanked him and he moved off with the G.S.O.I.

They had not gone far when the G.S.O.I. ran back. I thought he was going to speak of the machine-gun positions ; but no such thing. He put out his hand and said :

“ The best of luck to you.”

I thanked him and he rejoined the General.

Getting into a prophetic mood, I said to my sergeant who had been standing by all the time :

“ I think we are for it tomorrow, sergeant.”

“ I think you’re right, sir,” the sergeant replied. “ We’re for it hot and thick.”

The O.C. Company was in a dug-out at Vormezeele, and was keeping a platoon in reserve.

Whilst trying to get a little rest I was awakened by shell-fire, and roused another officer who was with me. “ They’re off,” I said, and ordered the men to put on their gas-masks. Although the fire was not so intense as I had known, it was unpleasant enough at 2.30 in the morning. Gas-shells were coming over. We were all quite used to these, and I realised the value of battle experience when I saw the casualties suffered through gas by a certain division in the Salient. The sound of gas-shells always made me think of the noise that a flight of arrows fired by bowmen in early English battles might have made. How the enemy kept on sending them over in such numbers was always a mystery to me.

The sight of men badly gassed was a pitiful experience. I visited two of my men who had been gassed in Ypres one night. They were in the dressing-station under the prison where the Town Major, Captain Lamb, had his quarters.

They were fine men, both six feet tall, and to see them lying there helpless, making futile gestures at intervals, as if to ward off something, fighting for breath, the while a sort of green moss exuded from the skin of their faces, filled me with a greater feeling of pity than I had felt when looking on mangled men.

But to return to our little show. After the gas-shells the enemy began putting over the H.E., and fifteen-inch stuff was going over us searching for Battalion Headquarters and other places in our rear. This went on till 4.30 a.m. According to the German account this barrage was put down by 191 field batteries, 121 heavy and many super-heavy batteries, assisted by the artillery of the Sixth Army.

Mount Kemmel was a veritable inferno. The Germans were concentrating a tremendous weight of metal on that position. When dawn came I could not see anything beyond fifty yards of the trenches.

Mount Kemmel, overlooking the whole of the Salient, was a place the Germans were concentrating upon and determined to have. After the show, a wounded French officer who was in the bombardment told me in the dressing-station at Dickesbusch that it was worse than Verdun, a battle in which he had participated.

A 5.9 shell had killed two of my men in a fire-bay and left the other three untouched—shells do strange things. I could not evacuate them, so covered them with a ground-sheet. While I was doing this a sergeant arrived with a private and said :

“ Private B—— wishes to speak to you, sir.”

I turned to the man, and asked what he wanted. The man stuttered a bit, and at last blurted out :

“ I’ve a pain in the stomach, sir.”

“ Good God ! ” I replied, “ we’ve all got pains in the stomach, and I’ve got the worst pain of all. You will carry on.”

The sergeant and men in the fire-bays laughed. I had no more frivolous complaints that day.

To the lay mind this story must sound hard, so I will

write of an occasion when "all the mother came into my eyes." It was during the Passchendaele show, and I think the date was September 22nd, when a determined attack was made by our troops on a section of the line that the enemy had held successfully since July 31st. A series of concrete pill-boxes seemed almost impregnable. I saw direct hits by shells on one of these pill-boxes, and beyond breaking off some of the concrete seemed to do little damage.

The Germans were pasting us hotly after they had got the range and I wanted to send a message to some of my men who were getting it badly. My orderly had been wounded, and I turned to the man who had been deputed to take his place. He did not look much more than eighteen.

I gave my orders and he started off. It was then that I had my compunctions. I called him back, and when he reached me I told him I would do the job myself. He looked surprised and peeved. I hadn't got far before a shell roared down in front of me and it got two men to the left (not my own men) quite fifteen yards from where the shell fell. When I got to the men, one was dying with an ugly wound in his head. I took off his helmet and saw that nothing could be done, so I told the other man, who was slightly wounded, to get back, and I went on and managed to do what I set out to do. Possibly if that young orderly had been there he would have "got it." Who knows?

Our Medical Officer did some good work that day in an advanced dressing-station. He worked under hot shell-fire with little protection the whole day. He got a bar to his M.C.

About midday a tall sergeant of the Cameron Highlanders with two men came along the trench. One of these had a part of the lobe of a human brain adhering to his helmet. It looked like a heckle. The sergeant told me that the shell-fire behind my position was terrible, and that his Colonel had been blown out of his headquarters and was sitting in a trench. I couldn't offer the Colonel any better accommodation, so let it go at that. When they went off, the last thing I saw

was the strange decoration on that helmet. I suppose I might have told the man that it was there, but I didn't.

It had now cleared and I saw one or two Germans running from shell-hole to shell-hole. We accounted for a few. They seemed to be dribbling men through on the right. I did not know that Mount Kemmel and Kemmel Village were in possession of the enemy. The French had been blown off at seven in the morning. Now things began to look livelier, and machine-guns in my rear came into action and annoyed me greatly by occasionally firing into my men. I had not been informed about machine-gun positions so sent runners to locate them and to point out what was happening. If they could not find machine-gun positions they were to report to O.C. Company.

Just after they had gone I got a message from O.C. Company which told me that the enemy were within three hundred yards of a certain map reference, and that our troops were concentrating at H.33 b.9.2 to clear them out. There were Battalion Headquarters at H.35 a.4.9 Vormezele and Spoil Bank *still*. That was a line that made one think. He went on :

“ Will try to get up to see you later, but messages keep coming in, etc. We are having a rotten time back here with their bloody shells. Cheerio.”

I still have that message.

Things became decidedly lively. At 4.40 I got a message by runner from the officer commanding the — on my right telling me that he was going to withdraw. I scribbled him the following message, the carbon of which I have now :

“ Have just had information that our troops are concentrating at H.33 b.9.2 with object of clearing enemy out on the right. Can you hold on a little longer ? ”

I sent that message by two runners in case one got killed, and in half an hour they were back to tell me that the officer and his command had withdrawn.

I went to the right to see what was happening. I found

that the enemy had dribbled some men through and were still continuing to do so. One party seemed to be about fifty strong and were making signals with what seemed to me a sort of Verey light to their colleagues ; the idea being, I suppose, to tell them their position.

I got a bombing party together, and then went out to the officer on my left and borrowed some Lewis guns from him. It was now about 5.30. On my return I had to cross an exposed position with no cover and so got hit. Nothing very serious, the bone was broken and I was bleeding a good deal. The O.C. Company appeared. I reported the situation to him, and proposed to bomb the enemy out of the position they were occupying. I also told him that I had borrowed Lewis guns. Even then he knew nothing about the enemy being in possession of Mount Kemmel, and Kemmel village.

He suggested that I went to get my wound dressed. I told him that I thought it could be attended to later, but he thought it best to have it put in order.

So off I went. I was directed to Dickesbusch. At one time I was under canvas there, just by the lake. How things had altered! I remember seeing a Boche airman bring down two Rufuses, and there were four parachutes in the air simultaneously. One officer lodged in a tree and I spoke to him. He raced off to report.

I found there in the cellars a charming, eager young American Medical Officer who dressed my wound and plied me with questions. He was tremendously interested to hear that I had been through the March Offensive. He asked me the strangest questions. Among other things he wanted to know how many times I had seen the M.O. during my service in France. I told him that my visit to him was the first since my arrival in France in July 1916.

He then left me, but soon returned to tell me that I was in Advanced Brigade Headquarters and that the Brigadier would like to see me.

I found the Brigadier, a soldierly figure, with the Brigade Major.

The Brigadier asked me questions about the state of the

sector that I had come from, and I told him about the withdrawal on my right. I produced my Field-Book and showed him the message I had sent the officer in command there.

He read it and passed it to the Brigade Major with the remark: "That seems all right." He immediately gave orders for a Company to be sent up to fill the gap. That order must have been given to the 1st Lincoln's Unit, who were "standing to"; at 6.30 they had orders to move.

I heard later that the officer who withdrew was court-martialed and things went badly with him. I had no wish to get him into trouble, and if he ever sees this I hope he will put down to the exigencies of war something he may have marked up to me.

The Brigadier had a sandwich and a whisky-and-soda brought to me, and I enjoyed them immensely. I then got up and said I was getting back to the job when, to my astonishment, the young M.O. began telling the Brigadier that I was not fit to return to the line: told him about my being through the March show—was relieved only to be flung in again. I began to get quite stirred up myself, and only feebly protested.

The Brigadier listened to me and then said: "You've had quite enough of it. You skip it."

The young M.O. immediately said that there was an ambulance outside. I said good-bye to the Brigadier and Brigade Major and went out. I got into the ambulance, in which I found a young officer of the Cameronians who asked me how long I had been out, and when I told him he said quite ruefully: "It's my second day." He was suffering from shell shock.

While we were talking a Boche aeroplane swooped down on us, loosed off and spattered the wall near us with bullets. The driver immediately vacated his seat and dived for cover, but we were too tired to move. After the aeroplane had retired, our driver reappeared looking rather sheepish, and we drove off.

It was the last time I was under fire.

CHAPTER 9

Letters from France

At the Base—Posted to the Gloucesters—Up to the Firing Line—An Impressive Experience—The Heroic Stand—The Last Post.

DURING the three years I was on active service in France my days were so full that there was little time to spare for overmuch writing—in diary form, or otherwise.

One's movements were so uncertain, so unexpected, that it became necessary to rely upon the expedient of correspondence as a means of recording the many things that were happening. Many of the letters that I wrote to my wife whilst in the field (1916-18) are in themselves almost as good as a diary, and fortunately these have been preserved. In the after days I have been able to go over and make extracts from many of these old and tattered remnants of the past, and it has struck me that they might, in this form, help to piece together a somewhat disconnected, but still, I venture to hope, an interesting story of my movements during those momentous days.

I have, therefore, quoted passages from a number of these old letters, in the hope that they may serve a useful purpose, in the absence of a more connected diary.

July 19th, 1916. Here am I writing to you from the Base (Rouen). We got here at five o'clock. I have been posted to the Gloucesters together with many of our fellows. About six of our group have been posted to the Worcesters (29th—sister regiment). We shall not go up to firing line just yet. We get a few days here.

July 22nd. I am not up in the firing line yet but may go at any time now. I like the life here. We parade every morning and afternoon with about 9,000 troops. It is quite a sight to see them played on to parade ground which is called the "Bull Ring" by us. We get very little news from actual firing line.

July 23rd. I am in a train going up to firing line in charge of a

draft of 200 men. I was O.C. of 1,000 men when marching to station. When I have delivered draft to O.C. "Oxford and Bucks" I return to Rouen. I don't know what may happen then. Most of the other officers who came over with me went up to firing line today.

I was sorry to say goodbye to little G—— and others but I'm sure to see them again. I was warned late last night. The journey there and back will take over four days.

July 25th. Approaching the firing line at night is quite impressive. The mighty rumble of the guns, and the incessant flashes lighting up the heavens help to make up an unforgettable memory. After breakfast I marched my men up to Battalion Headquarters near firing line. The Battalion, with one exception of the transport officer and Quartermaster, was fighting hard and had been for days. The transport officer took me up to an artillery observation post—our guns were firing on my immediate left—and explained the positions to me. At this point of the line they have had the hardest fighting since July 1st. We are doing well.

The absence of excitement is remarkable. Everyone is doing his job as coolly as if on parade in peace time. I've not had my things off for three days.

July 28th. Although I have seen for myself, and know what I have to face, I would not be out of it for anything. Much better fellows than myself are going down every day, and I am proud to think that I am fit enough to take the same chances.

July 29th. I prepared another draft for the front today. They went off at one o'clock. I shall go early next week. Terrific fighting.

July 31st. I go up to firing line for good today. Do not worry about me. I shall be all right, and soon be with you again.

Aug. 2nd. I am quite near scene of "The Heroic Stand" (a poem of mine on Scots Guards, printed in *The Graphic*). The Battalion Headquarters are situated in an old Chatcau belonging to a certain well-known Vicomte. It boasts a beautiful old Courtyard which reminds me of a scene in *The Three Musketeers*.

THE HEROIC STAND*

"Two officers and eighty men of the Scots Guards fought to the last cartridge, and were found dead in the Rue du Bois surrounded by heaps of German corpses."—*Daily Paper*.

* The first poem I wrote on the War. It was set to music by Madame Adelina de Lara, and sung by Anderson Nicol, accompanied by the Band of the 1st Life Guards, at the Central Hall, Westminster, during the War. First printed in *The Graphic*, August 1915; quoted by Mr. Stephen Graham in his book, *A Private in the Guards*.

O, would that I had seen them lying there,
 A dauntless few amid the German dead,
 With twisted bayonets, and rifles spread
 Amid long grass that surely looked more fair,
 Seeing it kept a vigil unaware
 Of all the glory hovering o'er the bed
 Of brave proud men, who fought as they were led,
 While thinking on the fame the Scots Guards bear.

Let someone mark the place whereat they fell,
 And hedge it round, for in the after-time
 Their fame will draw the many who would dwell
 Upon those deeds that made an hour sublime.
 I hear them shouting there "Surrender? Never!
 Take the last cartridge here. Scotland for ever!"

Aug. 3rd. Last night when out with a working party in front of German lines, I was warned about a bombardment with our guns. I got the men into the fire-bays—trenches—and it started. The Germans replied vigorously. It was quite interesting to hear the shells whizzing over us. It lasted about an hour, and then we went over again. Got on with the job. No one was hit last night.

Aug. 3rd. We had had rather a nasty time of it with machine gun and rifle fire. One poor fellow near me was shot through the stomach and died early this morning. He took things very well, poor fellow; only asked to be turned on his side, and for something to drink. We lost another man the night before. To say that it's a pleasure to hear bullets whistling and hitting stuff all around you would be absurd but you soon get used to it. To get to the front line we have to go through a village as famous as any in the War (Festubert).

You cannot conceive such a scene of desolation. Not a roof on a single house; of the Church hardly the walls standing. The cemetery round the Church looked wonderful in the moonlight. Innumerable crosses standing up as if to rebuke the wilful mind of man that had caused such wanton destruction.

Bullets whistle over the road through the village all night. Yesterday I went over one of the numerous cemeteries here. All the famous regiments are represented. Nearly all the brave fellows buried there fell in the first month of the war. The Indians have a portion set apart for them.

THE LAST POST

A British cemetery near Festubert, where the names of most of our famous regiments are to be seen. Written in France, August 1916. Printed in *The Graphic*.

They will not take the village ways again,
Nor streets of towns made splendid in their dreams ;
They will not wander by the Highland streams,
Nor see loved shores encircled by the main.
Yet shall they live, and living ease the pain
Of those that loved them—knew the fitful gleams
From proud unbending wills for happy beams
And portents of the strength in noble strain.

Near where they rest guns stab the sullen night,
And o'er their beds the shells go screeching past
While bearers bring from van of latest fight
A stricken comrade sleeping long, and fast.
Let them sleep on while England gathers might
To make the future great. The die is cast.

Aug. 5th. Major H—— ; Captain W—— ; and Captain S—— are all officially reported missing. I knew this nearly two weeks ago but have said nothing because I hoped some news might come through. I did all I could when at the Base to get the truth. I visited with Major T—— four hospitals and questioned wounded of the 8th Battalion and saw all the returned wounded at the Base. All the men seemed to give the same account. Major H—— had command of two companies in support. When ordered to advance they were held up by a barrage of fire—held up for one hour and a half. A command for reinforcements came through again, and Major H—— determined to try and get through and was killed.

Aug. 5th. I send you a rosebud taken from the ruined churchyard at Festubert. You cannot imagine what a scene of utter desolation it is. Last night we had a warm time from machine gun and rifle fire.

Aug. 14th. We have been on the march for three days now and I have stood it well. I have had no trouble with my feet thanks to boracic powder and vaseline. We are now in rest billets at some considerable distance from firing line. It is quite strange to be out of the sound of the guns. We shall, I think, be here

doing what is called "Divisional Training," for about four weeks.

Aug. 15th. We are supposed to be "Resting." We are doing a good deal of drill now. The Division has been worked fairly hard for several months.

Aug. 16th. You need not worry at all about me. We are supposed to be "Resting." We shall not get near firing line for some weeks now. We are billeted in a farm, and the country around is charming.

Aug. 19th. We are now packing up preparatory to moving off. I met a French Captain yesterday in a town near here, and this morning he called for me in a car and wanted to take me out for the day but I could not go. We have a march before us today.

Aug. 21st. Attended a Divisional demonstration of Liquid Fire Attack today. It certainly is a terrible thing, but now that our men know about it I don't think it will bother them much.

This terrible flame can be thrown twenty-five feet. Dante might have imagined such a weapon being used by the myrmidons of the Devil at the Gates of Hell. It is the most horrific thing I have ever seen. When in use it roars like some evil monster. It can do no harm to our men if they lie at the bottom of the trench.

Aug. 22nd. We are off again. I shall have some big news to give you in a week's time.

Aug. 23rd. A hurried line to tell you that I was up at 3.30 a.m. and have arrived at a certain town. Tomorrow I shall have to be up at 4 a.m. so am off to bed. I stood march very well and am very fit indeed. I send you an oak leaf I found—good omen.



Maud Henderson-Bland - née Hyde

Photo: The Gainsborough Studio

CHAPTER 10

An Intense Artillery Bombardment

Basil Hallam Killed—An Intense Bombardment—Under Shell-fire for hours on end—My Dug-Out—Gas Respirators as Sporrans.

AUGUST 27th, '16. I have had no opportunity to write recently. We have been on the march for four days, and have arrived at our destination. I have stood march very well indeed, and am very fit.

As many as two hundred fell out in one Battalion but our men stood it remarkably well, only eight falling out. The G.O.C. praised our men for their grit. One man died in another Batt. so you can imagine it was fairly stiff going in full packs, and helmets.

On a Divisional stunt before our march the Colonel gave me the job of acting Aide between himself and staff. I had a horse and dashed about with orders. Quite interesting day. You'll be amused to hear that the Brigadier-General asked the Colonel, when I dashed up a bank on my horse and delivered a message, if I was the Adjutant. Rather amusing, eh?

It is wonderful how our men stick it. They go on till they drop. I have always told you that I was much stronger than you thought and have stood the marching as well as anyone. Little C—— was almost done, but is all right now.

I have been trying to write something about Festubert but have not managed it yet. Impressions are crowding in on me all day. It is all quite wonderful.

Poor young Basil Hallam has been killed. Address the enclosed to Mrs. Radford, mother of Basil Hallam, Park Crescent, Regent's Park. Do not worry. I was born under a lucky star, and shall get out of this all right. I may get leave in three months' time. No one is certain about such matters.

August 28th. It was a wonderful sight. Batteries were flinging tons of metal over our heads all the time. The firing hardly ceased for a moment.

August 29th. They were shelling us an hour ago, and I had a big piece of shrapnel by me, and when I picked it up it was quite hot. They did not do any damage.

We are having lots of rain and it makes it hard going. We have had news from Headquarters that Roumania has declared war against Austria. If it is true it will help things enormously.

An intense bombardment is now going on. Guns are going right, left and over us, an incessant noise which one gets used to.

As I am writing shells are arriving fairly frequently. They are falling to our left a bit.

August 31st. Nearly every night huge bombardments have been raging. You can have no conception of the scenes. Magnificent, almost appalling. It is hard to write about.

Heavy storms have made us wet through. I didn't tell you that we had a big fire at the farm we were billeted at. Nearly lost my stable loft, and my things were on point of being pitched out, but somehow the men got the fire under. . . .

Sept. 1st. Fortunately we have had sun today, and it has dried things up a bit. You have no idea what the mud is like in wet weather. Horses and thousands of men churn up the stuff day and night. I have not had my things off for two days. I slept with the men last night and had them up four times during the night. Shelling and gas alarms. One does not get much sleep here but we shall get some when we are resting.

Sept. 3rd. The artillery bombardment last night reached, I should think, the maximum intensity of the war. Sleeping on the floor of the trench.

Sept. 7th. You would be so amused if you could see my dug-out. I am about 15 ft. down; it is 5 ft. wide, about 5 ft. 9 inches high and 8 ft. long. I have a bed made by one of my men. It has a wooden frame covered with wire netting. It is quite comfortable. I am quite pleased with my dug-out. They shelled us last night and I slept peacefully through it all. Poor young Hallam (Basil) was killed and buried near here. (The brother of my batman was his batman). I am going to try to find his grave. If I succeed I shall write his mother about it.

Terrible things are happening out here and one day when a big attack is on means more losses than we sustained in six months during the Boer War.

I could not tell you, in my earlier letters that our division, in conjunction with others, was making a big attack. It is over now and I can write a few lines about my experiences. My company was not in the actual attack because it was in the last one in the last part of the line where we have been before coming here.

Our company went in the trenches to consolidate and clean

up. What a scene ! I could not convey the right idea to you were I to write twenty pages. We were shelled continuously. We had not been in the trenches many minutes before we were held up—a dead soldier on a stretcher, and the stretcher-bearers lying dead. We had to carry them to a small opening in trench so as to allow the company to pass. It was a grim and terrible scene. The flashes from the guns lit up the poor, still, pale faces, and the large dark blotches on their uniforms showed where they had been hit.

When we got near the front line, the order came to put on gas helmets. The Germans put over more than a thousand gas shells that night. We had the gas helmets on for five hours. Then we got the order to "About Turn" and we tried to grope our way back. One cannot see a foot in front at night when wearing a gas mask. I used to put clip on my nose and risk it.

After the barrage of gas shells the Germans shelled with high explosives. We lost our way and had to wait for the shelling to lift. They got the range to a few yards and I expected some terrible casualties because the trenches were full. One Battalion was going out and another coming in and we were trying to get out. At about 4 o'clock we found the right trench and just as we were getting out to cross country a shell badly wounded four of my men. One had a terrible wound in his right thigh. I set off to a certain village to get a motor ambulance. After a lot of trouble I got a horse ambulance. We had one officer killed and about sixty casualties among the N.C.O.s and men. The particular section of the line where we are is looked upon as the stiffest proposition out here.

Two days ago we had to move up and take up a position in some trenches. My valise did not turn up and wet through I slept in the trench with one of our officers. It poured with rain half the day and night. I expected to get acute rheumatism through sleeping in wet things, but nothing happened. We are always getting shelled in our rest camp by an Austrian high velocity gun. Last night we could not get through Mess, and had to retire to our dug-outs.

Sept. 10th. Yesterday I walked six miles in trying to find Basil Hallam's grave. My servant was told by a man in the artillery that Hallam observed for their Battery and said he was buried at a certain place. I visited two Cemeteries but could not find his grave. Did you send my letter to his mother ?

Sept. 12th. Yesterday the Brigadier-General was in the

trenches looking round and had a word with me. He was pleased and said he was telling the Colonel so.

They have not been shelling us much during the last two days but of course one never knows when they are going to start. The Zepp affair must have been exciting. I am sorry to say it has started to rain again. The trenches are in an awful mess. You would laugh if you saw me sometimes covered in mud. I don't know how long we are going to stay here. Possibly some time.

Sept. 15th. I have just been sent for and must clear off. You will be sorry to hear that of the officers who came out with me, K—, B— and P— have been killed. Yesterday I buried the remains of an officer of B's regt. (Black Watch Brigaded with us) that I found in a dug-out and took his razor, soap-box, and shaving-brush to one of his brother officers this morning. Two officers were blown to pieces on night of attack in same dug-out when assembled waiting for orders to advance.

While I am writing, the Pipers of a famous Regt. (Black Watch) with drummers are marching up and down a few yards away. They are wearing their gas respirators as sporrans. It is very inspiring. The Battalion is with us here, and did famously in the attack. The Pipes sound so gay. They remind me of the Scots Guards' Garden Party. We have been in a very hot corner, and got shelled most of the time. We have been very lucky up to the present. Things seem to be going very well just now. It seems to me the French are doing very well too.

Sept. 16th. I am writing during a bit of a shindy—shells misbehaving—and it seems rather strange for a Sunday. Early this morning I wrote the Editor of *The Daily Telegraph* re *Somme Battle* film asking him to use his influence to get it shown with becoming dignity.

I have been in a very hot place all day. You'll see fairly good news in papers before this reaches you. I slept in a flea bag last night! Excellent, but you would be surprised to learn how cold these dug-outs are. I only have a sheet-waterproof hanging over entrance, and of course they are damp.

Our Company Commander has been recommended for Military Cross for work done on night of gas attack. (It was awarded.)

Sept. 20th. One's feet get cold in these damp dug-outs. Mine is very damp now. The rain—very heavy now—has swamped one wall and corner. Two nights ago I heard a noise and turned on flash lamp and saw a large frog blinking at me. I flung him outside and ten minutes later the brute was back in the same place.

I leaned out of bed to get hold of him and he jumped into the tin mug my servant puts my tea in at morning time. I was so annoyed, and flung him headlong, flaming into the night even as Lucifer was flung from Heaven. Rats and frogs are frequent visitors.

Last night they shelled at about 2 a.m. Some of the men came into the trench where my dug-out is situated and I got up to see if they had their gas helmets on. After enemy had finished shelling I went to bed again. Most of the shells passed immediately over my dug-out. These large shells make a very unpleasant noise.

You will be interested to hear that the steel waistcoat (like one I returned to you) we got for B——'s servant saved his life on day of big attack. He went over the parapet and a shell exploded about a yard from him killing two of his comrades, and tearing two holes in his tunic at back. H——lent his to an officer that day and he was hit by a splinter from shell but felt nothing much. S—— who found us in hotel, was gassed and slightly wounded on night of gas attack, I told you about.

[Apropos the above this paragraph from *The Evening Standard* (April 10th, 1939) will be read with interest: "Pall Mall was peaceful in the Easter sunshine. But in one shop window I saw a sign of the times. It was a bullet-proof waistcoat in Wilkinson's sword shop. . . . Quite a number of British officers are said to have taken this measure of self-protection. Wilkinson's declare that if every officer had worn one of these the casualties of the last war would have been reduced to one-third."]

Sept. 25th. I have been waiting for post but it has not come in and as I have to go out with my Company Commander in a few minutes I think I'll get a line off to you. We had a pleasant evening with the things you sent. I told the mess it was your birthday and they were charming about it. I told them that if I got any more parcels from you I am going to start a canteen. It amused them greatly.

Sept. 26th. I have had no time to write, and we are now "standing to." There is a big affair on which is going very well—so we learn from Headquarters. I was in rather a warm business yesterday. Boche found us out and several of my fellows including a man of another regiment were laid out.

Goodbye, dear. We are all as merry as crickets, so don't worry.

CHAPTER 11

Thiepval

Trying to Locate a Church—The Broken Crucifix—A German Dug-Out that Held One Thousand Men—The French Nightingale—And the Weasel—Thiepval Taken after Bloody and Bitter Fighting.

UNDER date *September 26th, 1916*: I am quite used to shell-fire now. We get it day and night. Don't say anything in letters about where you think I am. I can tell you nothing. The Censor might think I am trying to tell you. Several officers have been court-martialed for using a sort of code when writing to their wives.

The French did intend leaving Thiepval as a monument of devastation, but it was not to be.

I remember standing with another officer on some ruins and with the aid of a map we tried to locate the church. I found a crucifix whereon was suspended a plaster figure of the Christ. The legs were broken. We found out later that we were standing on the site of the church.

Oct. 14th. The taking of that Redoubt cost the 39th Division a lot of men. The Schwaben Redoubt was another ugly place. A recital of the state of the trenches there and at Stuff Redoubt and Zollern after capture could not be set down here.

Regina Trench is a place many men will remember. Literally the trenches were strewn with dead and limbs.

The Battle of Beaumont Hamel, November 13th was the neatest of all jobs on the Somme.

The 51st Division (Highlanders) took Beaumont Hamel, and the 39th Division St. Pierre Division.

The famous 51st Division were to be alongside of us again in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) July 31st, 1917. It was in St. Pierre Division that we found the largest German dug-out that had come to our notice up to that time. It could accommodate one thousand men. There were some swagger dug-outs in Thiepval.

It was at the Battle of Beaumont Hamel that Colonel Bernard Freyberg won his V.C. The Naval Division struck an awful snag

in being enfiladed by machine guns and was thrown into confusion, but Colonel Freyberg managed to rally the troops and they made a successful advance.

Just before we knocked off at 5.45, I was talking to an officer who deplored the fact that we were up against a nasty fog. I said that I thought the fog an advantage. It proved so. One Battalion of Germans was actually surprised making a relief and put up no resistance, but fed out of the hand like a bunch of canaries. Speaking of birds reminds me of an amusing incident. Coming out of the line one night I gave the men a fall out at Englebelmer, and presently a nightingale began singing. The men were from the Shires and knew all about birds. Their criticism of this particular bird was one of the richest things in the way of comedy that I struck in the War.

Two men compared it with a nightingale they used to hear in England, and vilified the voice of the bird they were listening to in such a bitter manner, that one man came to its defence and said: "Well, well, perhaps the bloody bastard has had a whiff of gas."

Another incident was amusing. I was coming out of Thiepval and was in front of the men with a sergeant. In the morning the Germans had put over some gas shells and we had been forced to put on gas masks for a short time. Gas always goes down and rodents have really a rotten time. It was late afternoon and it had been raining. There were a few puddles on the road. Presently I saw a sorry-looking weasel crossing the road in front of me and a line of Keats came into my mind: "The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass."

The weasel came to a puddle and began to drink and I halted, and flung up an arm and the men halted. We must have stood two minutes watching the weasel drink, and during that time the men preserved absolute silence. After it had finished its drink the weasel went off with much greater alacrity than it had displayed when approaching the puddle. I'm sure that it had had a little gas. The men were delighted with the incident and talked amusingly about it for some time.

These little things helped to humanise the men. There is so much talk about the men being brutalised that I think it well to speak of such incidents. Many a time I saw our men, who were "walking cases," taking back some prisoners, share their "Woodbines" with the Germans.

Sept. 27th. A big affair was on yesterday and is still going on.

I was lucky last night. I had expected to have some considerable losses. We had only four, three of them in my platoon. You will see all about the affair in the papers. We have done well, and are doing well. We had a very warm time last night. Myself, another officer and one hundred and twenty men. I must confess I was somewhat tired when it was over.

Sept. 29th. I was in the thick of one of the fiercest engagements of this tremendous battle. (Taking of Thiepval.) One shell narrowly missed me as I was giving orders. In fact the sergeant near who threw himself on the ground shouted: "Has it hit you, sir?" I could feel the warmth of the beastly thing. However that was nothing to what happened later. A shell burst just over my head and the explosion knocked my helmet off.

While I was talking to a sergeant a man came up to report that "Gas Alert" was on—meaning that gas was coming over. I ordered the men to put on their gas helmets and then the Germans started to rain—really to rain—shells on us. Some of the men got a little excited but I steadied them.

This beat the last affair to fits. It was the stiffest thing the men had been in. I was particularly glad over this show because it showed me that I could keep my nerve under the worst fire the Germans could put over. The parapets of the trenches were licked with flame. No one knows what they are going to do under heavy shell fire. Some of the seemingly cool men curl up under it. I know now that I can stick the worst, and I am so pleased. I don't write this boastingly—one is too near death out here to do that—but you can have no idea of the satisfaction it gives a man to know that he can "carry on" with hell raging round him. We have had one of the biggest days out here.

Of all places on the Somme Thiepval stands out as a fortress so stubbornly, so bravely defended, that it assumes in my mind a grandeur and importance out of all proportion to its appearance. Thiepval was held by the enemy with a tenacity and courage that reflects lustre on German arms.

It was taken on September 25th after three months of the most bloody and bitter fighting. It was at this place that we were repulsed with such terrible losses on July 1st. I was there on the late afternoon of the day it was taken, helping to consolidate, and the enemy were in a most angry mood, and put down a lot of stuff.

I have some interesting souvenirs of Thiepval, among them, something I got from an officer's full-dress tunic that I found. It was light blue and on the left arm in yellow, half encircling the sleeve, was the embroidered word "Gibraltar." I have that piece of embroidery now. I found out that it was worn by the officers of a certain German regiment that assisted the British at the capture of Gibraltar in 1705, 97th (Hanoverian) Regiment.

I was told that Thiepval was held throughout those three months by one regiment—the Wurtembergers. Every battalion of that regiment which "took over" did so with a thrill of pride. Did the enemy look upon Thiepval as another Gibraltar? I think they did.

Later I found in front of this terrible place a company of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers 36th (Ulster) Division. Advancing in extended order on July 1st they had been mown down by devastating machine-gun fire. The company Commander was there and four platoon Commanders also. We buried some of them, and I sent to an Irish mother a Bible found on one of the men with an address on the fly-leaf. A sunken road, now known as the "Bloody Road," was literally heaped with our dead.

Extract from Despatches

"The Division was raked by machine-gun and shell-fire from in front and from both flanks and our losses have been very severe."—*General Nugent.*

From *The Life of Lord Carson*. (By Ian Colvin): "Every trench and shell hole was full of their dead, and for three nights they worked, dragging their wounded from 'No Man's Land'; often on blankets for lack of stretchers. Seventy-five officers, and 1,777 have been killed, 102 officers and 2,626 wounded; actually there were some five thousand casualties."

CHAPTER 12

“*The Bloody Road*”

A Dangerous Affair—The Devastation of War—“The Bloody Road”—Beaumont Hamel.

WE are shifting again (Oct. 2nd, 1916), and I am very busy owing to the fact that I am O.C. Company. Captain H—— is on special leave.

Oct. 6th. We have moved twice since last I wrote and may be off again at any time. Things are going very well here. Hard fighting—perhaps the hardest of the war.

Oct. 10th. I have had no opportunity of writing for last three days. I received your letter containing card from Basil Hallam's people. Glad my article was accepted. I had a letter from Bulloch saying it had passed the Censor. I understand that he has accepted the poem.

Oct 22nd. I have not written you for two days because I knew I was taking my platoon into an important and dangerous affair—consolidating captured trenches. If I had written before “going in” you would have worried. I got out safely. In the evening after the battle, Nature laid a finger of beauty on the scene softening the horrors and crudities of it all.

Oct. 25th. I had no time to finish my last letter. I have been in two other awkward shows since I started that one, but am now having a rest. You will be pleased to hear that on my recommendation my sergeant who was with me on a certain occasion (Thiepval) has been put forward for the Military Medal. I am very pleased about it because he is a fine soldier. Some very big things are going to happen in a few days' time. B—— has arrived back with a parcel as big as a coffin. You should not have given him such a job. You have no idea what travelling is like in France. I think we shall shortly get a rest. We have been in the line a long time now.

Oct. 29th. I shall have some news for you in two or three days' time. Big villages, such as you have often seen out here, have not a wall standing. I found the site of the Church today through identifying some of the masonry. Several of us who knew the

place well had an argument about the site, and even when standing on it with maps and prismatic compasses in use we were uncertain. The Château, once a fine place, is only a huge heap of rubble. A more terrible picture of desolation no one could conceive. (Thiepval.)

I lost six men, and had ten wounded two nights ago. I am very fit at present and earnestly hope I may keep so. I want so much to see things through. I have not seen my article in *The Graphic*. I have a copy with poem (Oct. 21st). I enclose a letter from Mr. Moreau (the late Emile Moreau, C.B.E.). He is entirely right when he says that the majority at home don't realise the vastness of this war. No one who has been through the fighting on this sector—some parts of the Line are comparatively quiet—can ever be the same. Sometimes a battalion has no time even to bury its officers. The truth is never told in the Press. In one sunken road I have seen huddled groups of our dead (the Bloody Road, Thiepval). The heroism of our men in taking a certain place (Thiepval) on July 1st has never been surpassed in the history of our fighting. (Thiepval held out till September.)

(On October 30th, 1916, name of Reserve Army officially altered to the better-known Fifth Army.)

Nov. 1st. There was a service to the men which I attended. You could hardly hear the Chaplain's voice when the guns were roaring. A slug moving across my face last night woke me and I was nearly sick. The 8th are lying near us, and some of our officers have seen them. They did some fine work a few days ago. They have a V.C. in Command (the famous Brigadier-General Carton di Wiart). An officer walked up to me yesterday and asked if my name was Henderson-Bland. He was with me under Colonel Phipps.

Nov. 6th. The post has been held up. We shall be out of this part of the line presently. I shall be pleased in one way and sorry in another. I am returning the letter asking for my book of poems for the Savoy Fair. Send them two copies of 1st edition and draw Mrs. P—— B——'s attention to the poem on Captain Beachcroft Towse: "Two Eyes were Shattered." Tell her I am on the Somme and cannot sign books, but that all my sympathy is with the movement to help our blinded men. I did not put my sergeant in for a Military Cross, dear. That is a decoration for officers and some Warrant Officers. It was the Military Medal. We have had three more Military Crosses granted to officers in this Battalion.

I have had *The Graphic* with my article, "A Stunt on the Somme." It seems all right. I am still keeping fit. Send me the numbers of all the shoulder-straps I sent you. We have a German book about them now.

Nov. 7th. It has been pouring here. One cannot keep from getting wet through. B—— got blown up and buried by a shell yesterday. We are working in "No Man's Land." I buried one of our officers (not this Batt.) yesterday and put up a notice: "Unknown Officer—Inniskilling Regiment." There was not much to be seen of the poor fellow (been lying there since July 1st). "No Man's Land" here is strewn with our dead.

Nov. 9th. I have found three Captains lying in the open here. It was a grim struggle getting this part of the Line. Our dead are lying everywhere. It is a beautiful day, the first we have had for weeks. I cannot tell you anything about "Leave." You see our Division is still in the line. It has been longer in the line than any Division, so "leave" will be easier to get when we go out.

Nov. 12th. Don't suppose I shall get any leave till Christmas. There are many fellows to go before me. One of my best men had his leg smashed with a piece of shell-casing today.

Nov. 14th. We were in a big battle yesterday (Beaumont Hamel) and I am glad to say that I have come out all right. Our Division did well. We captured yesterday 1,200 prisoners, and many came in today. Yesterday's work was a grand finish up for the Division. We go out for a rest tomorrow, so you need not worry about me for some time. My sergeant has got his Military Medal. He is so delighted.

Nov. 22nd. We are now resting in a pleasant village, and there is a chance of our being here a month. It is pleasant to sleep above ground once more. I am in a charming billet with B—— (later killed in action), very clean but very small. I have changed my servant. I like the new one, very smart and knows his job (was killed in Ypres. Perhaps saved my life, for he was talking to me when he was riddled by a shell). Send him some cigarettes.

Nov. 27th. I know things are getting harder in London. Don't get depressed. It is a time of trial for everyone. Yesterday, I had a most pleasant horse-ride to a charming place about six miles away. It was Sunday and I went after Church Parade in Square here. Drum-head Service. A member of the Club passed

me in a car when I was marching to this place. He recognised me and waved his hand. I cannot remember his name.

Nov. 25th. I think we stay another fortnight. We are very comfortable here and busy smartening up the Batt. I have a very good servant, and get a fair amount of work done. I gave my lecture on the Gloucestershire Regiment today to the company. Yes, I think of many things out here.

CHAPTER 13

Christmas and New Year's Day

Presents for the Men—Christmas Eve in the Front Line—A New Year's Night Engagement—"Hell" in the Front Line—"I Was Born Under a Lucky Star."

WE are in the line again; arrived yesterday. (Dec. 3rd.)
We are in quite comfy dugouts.

I am very well, and have been busy all day looking over the area. Don't worry, dear. This front is nothing in comparison with the front we have left.

Dec. 5th. I was immensely interested in what you told me about Colonel H——.

I don't know what to say about his remarks concerning me. I should like to serve under him again because I think he is a very fine soldier and will do big things. The late Colonel of the 8th is a V.C. and has been wounded thirteen times.

I had a letter from Scottie telling me that he is thinking of going into the trenches. As A.P.M. (9th Division) of course, he is as safe as anyone can be safe these days. (He was killed in action.) Must now censor Platoon letters.

Dec. 17th. I got a letter from you yesterday telling me that you had seen Percy. I have lost his address. Has he got his staff appointment?

(This refers to my brother who was killed in action with 1st King's Liverpool Regiment at Fricourt.)

Dec. 11th. Don't trouble about pipes. Queen Alexandra's Fund has sent pipes for all the men. My men tell me they would like metal cigarette-cases.

Dec. 12th. We have got snow here, and it seems quite seasonable. A new draft of 150 men has just arrived. I have got a fine Sergeant, a Corporal and ten men. They will help my platoon. I am just off to front line.

Dec. 13th. Had an awkward dust-up in front line this morning. One killed. It has been quiet for some time, bar machine-guns and snipers occasionally. One never knows when they are going to start shelling. Don't worry about the incident I mentioned. We had that sort of thing every day on the other front.

Dec. 18th. The men will love the gramophone. I am just off to front line. Send a metal cigarette-case to my servant ; a very good fellow. Thirty-eight in my platoon. Send parcel to my platoon sergeant : 19508, Sergeant R. C——.

Dec. 19th. Yesterday I heard that the "Leave" train was stopped. I am not certain of the reasons.

Dec. 24th. I have given out most of the cigarette-cases, and the men are very pleased with them. I am going along to wish them a Merry Christmas in the morning. I shall be with you in thought all Christmas Day. Be as happy as you can. We shall not have a bad time.

Dec. 28th. It was bitterly cold last night—a white frost covered everything. Have handed over gramophone to Sergeant C—— but am keeping the other thing till New Year. The men are delighted. We had quite a pleasant Christmas.

Dec. 30th. Many of the men in their letters refer to the gramophone sent out by their platoon officer's wife and friends. They say it cheers them immensely. I am sending you a little cross found in a German officer's tunic in "No Man's Land" one night. If you unscrew the bottom of it and slip the face of the cross sideways, you'll find some relics and the words, "Victoris" and "Agnus Dei" inside. Do not touch the contents. Leave it just as it is. You will also find a French farthing of the reign of Louis XIII which one of my corporals found when he broke a brick in half. Very rare. Don't lose it. I enclose a poem of Craven's which appeared in *Daily Express*, and his letter to me. (Captain A. K. Harvey-James, killed in action.)

On Christmas Eve I was in front line. It seemed very strange to be spending Christmas Eve there. It got very hot for us.

Another year has slipped away and we have embarked (January 1st, 1917) on one that will in all probability bring forth events more momentous than any the world has seen or known. In the meantime they are on the knees of the gods. We had quite a jolly New Year's Eve. I am due at front line tonight.

Jan. 2nd. I was so pleased to hear that Mr. Hampton had carried the portrait to you. I think it was charming of him to do it on Christmas Eve. (Portrait of myself painted by Herbert Hampton in Gilbert's old studio in Maida Vale. Accepted by Royal Academy but not hung.)

Jan. 2nd. I am going to tell you something about what happened to me and my men last night—New Year's Night. I was on a job with a half-company remaking the front line. I had two

separate parties, one working to left and one to right. After posting sentries I went over the top—to escape getting up to my thighs in water—to see the sergeant (the one who got the M.M. at Thiepval) who had charge of the party on right. He told me that an officer of a famous Scottish Regiment (Black Watch) had told him they were expecting an attack from the Boche and that Mills' grenades—bombs—had been handed out to every man of his party. I didn't think much of that because we often get that sort of thing, but I did think the enemy had been cutting the wire by shell fire for the last two or three days. I gave him certain orders and returned with my orderly the way I had come.

When I got into the trench one of my corporals told me that an officer was asking for me. I saw an officer taking a party into the open from which I had just come, and learned from one of my men that it was a machine-gun crew that he was fixing up in a position. He came back alone and told me that an attack was expected and that he was going to block the trench, which meant completely isolating my men on the wrong side. I asked him to show me where he intended to do the blocking. With my orderly and a corporal I went with him.

While I was discussing the matter, an intense bombardment opened all down the line where we were working. Both ends of the trench were cut off and literally hundreds of shells rained on parapet and parados for half an hour. The machine guns never got into action. In the first minute my orderly was killed standing by me, and a man fell on to me shot through the stomach. I had to get in touch with my other party, so sent Corporal C—— with certain orders. This hell went on for nearly an hour. The trench was blown in and crumbling. We were expecting the Boche.

The corporal got back with a satisfactory report, but I had to send him again with further orders. The Boche came over but were beaten off. It was all over at 2 a.m. The officer I mentioned in previous part of letter was wounded and taken out of the line by stretcher-bearers. He had wished me a Happy New Year. The sergeant who got the M.M. was wounded and is in hospital. Three are missing and there are several dead. I saw my orderly buried this morning. It was not my servant Bailey (he was killed later).

I have recommended my corporal for the Military Medal, and was requested to write the citation myself. The Commanding Officer had me at Headquarters and took down in writing my report of the whole night's proceedings. For the time it lasted the

barrage was the stiffest thing I've seen out here. The Scotties had fifteen casualties. I am grateful that I have got out of it alive. I had pieces of earth weighing about twenty pounds lobbed on me by force of explosions and my helmet has a fine dent from a piece of shrapnel—it was a sight, and Webley was in a mess.

Jan. 6th. I have just written to the mother of the poor fellow who was killed while acting as my orderly. Last night an officer told me that his company Commander thought he had trodden upon a body in the water—the trenches are full of deep water in places. I took an orderly with me and tried to find it but with no success. I will send you a copy of recommendation I put forward about my corporal which has been forwarded to the proper quarters. I hope it will come through because the man thoroughly deserves it. (Corporal C—— was awarded the M.M.)

Our Colonel has been granted the D.S.O. in New Year's Honours List, and two other officers were mentioned in Despatches. I have to go out with a party now. Do not worry about me. A lucky star was in the heavens when I was born.

Jan. 7th. Last night when I was on the job with two platoons an orderly arrived to say that a raid was expected. I took all precautions and was on the work for four hours. At three o'clock in the morning the raid came off. One officer and several men were killed but the enemy was driven off.

Jan. 12th. I have been detailed to act as Second in Command of another company. It is supposed to be a compliment. The Company Commander tells me that I'm the next down for promotion. I am at present on my own in a certain town (Ypres) having taken over billets from another Batt. I have one officer with me. I am writing this in an interesting cellar which has certain attractions though somewhat gloomy.

Jan. 13th. There was a biggish "stunt" on last night. Much work to be done on front line. I am officer in charge.

Jan. 21st. We have been instructed that "Mail" between 18th and 23rd of December has been lost; so many of my letters to you including Christmas cards have been jiggered. We have snow here, but I do not feel the cold so very much. You needn't worry about me at all. I don't think I should care much for the job you speak of. I want to see this job through if I can manage it. However, I'll see Major T—— (he was on Promotions Committee) when I get home. I shall get leave in about six months' time. We are in a very warm corner of the line, but so far have been very lucky.

CHAPTER 14

A Birthday Dinner

A Message from "Ye Burgomaster of Ypres"—I Lose my Batman
—On Leave.

HERE is my birthday. Jan. 31st, 1917. I have spent birthdays in several strange places, but this I spend in the strangest place of all (Ypres). They are giving me a little birthday dinner here tonight. One of the other companies—the one I was attached to—sent very jolly greetings. It took the form of a scroll with the Flanders Lion in the corner. It began: "To our Trusty and Well-beloved R. Henderson-Bland. Greeting on your Natal day." Then followed some amusing doggerel and was signed "Ye Burgomaster of Ypres."

Feb. 1st. We had a very pleasant little dinner—my birthday—and B—— made a short speech to which I replied in a joking manner. Enclosed you'll find some verses sent to me by officers of Company I was attached to. I have crossed out certain lines that were amusing but not for your eyes.

Feb. 3rd. C——'s complimentary remarks about me amused me somewhat. This life makes one modest so don't tell me any more things like that. It is bitterly cold out here.

Feb. 4th. Corporal P——, a man I have saved from the burning—a man who got two years in England for leading a mutiny, and rather wild, told me he knew all the records of music you had sent by heart. I have got this fellow two stripes since I had the platoon, and he is the best corporal I have. Brave as a lion. I always take him with me when I have an awkward job on hand. Perhaps music has soothed his savage breast.

Feb. 6th. I am tremendously interested in the American crisis. I think they will come in.

Feb. 13th. Things have been very lively in this place during the last few days. The Batt. will be going out quite soon now.

Feb. 15th. We have been having a very warm time of it for the last three days. P——, my fearless corporal, has been gassed together with three others. One poor fellow was killed. P—— was not in great danger but one of the men gassed nearly died.

I went to the Dressing Station (Ypres) to see them. It is a dreadful sight to see strong men fighting for breath. P—— has been evacuated but I hope to see him again.

Feb. 16th. We are going out for a "rest" tomorrow. My men who were gassed are getting on well, and will I hope return to us some day. I am very well, despite the lively times I have had in this place (Ypres). I have been here eleven days longer than anyone in Batt.

Feb. 21st. I am acting as Mess President while B—— is away acting as Adjutant.

Feb. 22nd. I cannot tell you anything about leave yet. I have very little news. We are "resting" or rather smartening up. Today we went for a route march. We shall be going back to the "line" in a few days. I have been glad of the rest.

Feb. 24th. We go into the line again tomorrow. The frost has gone now and it is muddy again. You must not worry about the leave business. After all leave is a privilege and not a right.

Feb. 27th. We are now back in line. Leave has opened again so may get mine presently.

March 2nd. I am sorry to tell you that my servant Bailey was severely wounded yesterday. He was talking to me when he "got it," and was wounded in several places. I went with him myself to Dressing Station. He was carried on a stretcher—they were still shelling heavily—and he looked desperately ill. The worst thing about it is that he was hit in the stomach in two places. He had a bad wound in the shoulder that I bandaged up myself. He was also hit in both legs. I have just written his wife. I am quite distressed about it because I was attached to the fellow.

I got a piece in the heel but though it broke the leather of my elegant field boots it did not break the skin. It was a 15-inch shell that roared into the courtyard (Cavalry Barracks) and killed six and wounded ten. The place was a shambles. If the worst happens to poor Bailey I will send you his wife's address and you can send her a letter. Corporal P—— is in England but I don't know where. Corporal C—— who got the M.M. with me one night was wounded yesterday. Not seriously.

March 3rd. I am glad to say that we have not been notified about the worst happening to Bailey. I feared the worst myself but it is quite possible that he may pull through.

March 8th. I made a visit to hospital where poor Bailey had been taken and was very distressed to learn that he had died two

days before and had been buried. He was an excellent soldier, smart, and one of the best servants in the Batt.—and I think he was attached to me. The Chaplain who saw him not long before the end asked him if he could write any letters for him and he said: "No, thank you, sir; my officer is going to do that for me." . . . I have written two letters to his wife. Will you write her a short note? I am getting my Platoon sergeant to write Mrs. Bailey a letter about her husband. He leaves one little girl who is I believe five years old. I lost another man whose address I cannot get hold of at all. He only wrote one letter all the time he was here, and never got a single letter from home. Isn't that strange?

March 9th. It has been snowing up here again for last few days. I thought we had finished with the Winter because we had a week of delightful Spring weather.

March 22nd. Today the C.O. sent a note down here enclosing a letter from Mrs. H——. In the letter Mrs. H—— says you are ill, and has asked the C.O. to use his influence in getting me special leave. I do hope you are better. I feared you were not at all well. The C.O. was quite charming and sent me the enclosed note to say that he had put forward a special application. We have been short of officers and consequently much work has devolved on those here. Enclosed you will find a letter from Mrs. Bailey (widow of my late servant).

April 10th. Arrived safely after a rough crossing. I was beastly ill but am feeling fit again. Hundreds on the boat suffered in the same way as myself. I enjoyed my leave immensely. Our Division has left the place where I sojourned with them. I think it is "resting."

April 14th. The Battalion was in the place where I left it, but under orders to move so was off with my platoon in the evening.

April 21st. I was quite interested in Arnold White's letter to you. Whatever made him think I was a Major? I suppose he made a shot at it. I shall write to Walbrook. On the day I went out to look for the 8th I met the Black Watch officer who was with me in that enemy raid in front of Ypres. We had tea together. He told me that he was recommended for the M.C. but didn't get it. He got a letter of congratulation from Lieut.-General Sir A. Hunter-Weston. He said it was the hottest thing he had been in and did not expect to get out alive. The other officer is still in England suffering from shell-shock. He's not likely to return to France.

April 24th. Mr. Lewis Hind has sent me such an interesting parcel of books including one of his own on Art. I know that you will be grieved to hear that poor Scott Craven (Captain A. K. Harvey-James) has been killed. He really was a very lovable fellow, and we were such great friends. I am very upset about it. I must write to his poor mother. Look up his address in *Literary Year Book*. (I dedicated my last book, *The Mirrored Heart* to Scott Craven and Alan Seeger.)

To CAPTAIN A. K. HARVEY-JAMES
(Arthur Scott Craven)

Killed in Action. May 1917

O all my youth came singing back to me
 When first I learnt that you were dead, my friend.
What of the years when you and I did see
 In life a splendour daily spilt to mend
Our souls grown tired of trivial delights?
Not lost to you the glimpses of the heights,
For you went gladly where the worst is surely best.

Printed in *The Graphic*. June 16th, 1917.

April 26th. If they have returned one of the portraits it looks as if they are going to keep the other, but of course when it comes to hanging they may not find room for it. (This refers to two portraits of myself by Herbert Hampton which were submitted to Royal Academy. One was accepted but not hung.)

CHAPTER 15

"The Roaring of the Guns"

A Thrilling Air Fight—News of Beerbohm Tree's Death—A Spanish Gentleman—Messines Ridge.

WE had right over our camp today, May 1st, one of the most thrilling air-fights I have seen. The Boche was brought down and I went with an officer to see the machine. The Pilot was shot through the heart. He was wet through when I saw him, the machine had fallen in a pond.

May 2nd. Arnold White's letter is interesting. I was sorry to hear portrait was "crowded out." Anyhow, Mr. Hampton must be gratified to know it was accepted. We go into Line tomorrow.

May 4th. I am now going to write poor Mrs. Harvey-James—Scottie's mother. Of one thing I am quite sure, and that is that he did not fear to die.

May 5th. The guns are roaring tonight. There is something on. Possibly a raid. I want you to copy out my sonnet to "A Spanish Gentleman" printed in *The Graphic* which you'll find among my manuscript. I am sending it to Lewis Hind who has a fine tribute to the painting in a book he has sent me. "How did he do it? I shrug my shoulders, mutter the word Velasquez, bow the knee, and try to write about the unwritable."

A SPANISH GENTLEMAN

(Written on a famous Velasquez portrait, supposed to be the artist himself, in the possession of His Grace the Duke of Wellington)

Superbly proud, in mould heroic cast,
This sallow, dark, unknown with cheek-bones high,
Looks on the world like one who gives the lie
To such as said the might of Spain had passed.

The painter with his vision held him fast,
And with sure rightness made his paint outvie
The very flesh he sought to glorify,
What time he worked a wild enthusiast.

Well might some think Velasquez' self is here
For genius broods about the eyes and brow,
And lifts the face to that high plane, and sphere
Where men put on the strength that must endow,
The mighty shapers of all god-like aims,
That play the soul about and break to flames.

May 11th. I am very fit and quite sunburned. I think Percy is in firing line down South. He told C—— that he was “going over the top” in last letter. I hope he's all right. (My brother who was killed.)

May 14th. I am very grieved about poor Percy. I was on the point of writing him and regret so much that I did not do so. An officer in this Company had a letter from a friend of his in 1st Battalion of The King's (Liverpool Regiment) to say that her son had been killed. He must have been in same affair. I shall have the Company till Captain H—— returns.

May 16th. I got your letter enclosing letter from Colonel N——. Our C.O. knows him. I had a two hours' chat with the C.O. alone in my tent. He amused me by saying that he was quite unaware that he had a celebrity in the Battalion. He was looking through my little book.

May 16th. I am glad you liked lines on poor Scottie (printed in *The Graphic*). I have been very busy as O.C. Company.

June 1st. There were five “Mentions” in despatches to this Batt. and I had to read them out to the men.

June 2nd. Only got two hours' sleep yesterday: didn't take off my things so am a little tired. Yes, I saw Graham's name in list of awards. I am sure he deserved it. It is a mere farce in many cases. *

June 5th. I have no news of any importance. Of course we are very busy as you can guess. Things are getting very warm. Have both the Shepherds been killed? Saw obituary notice of Colonel M——, father of Scottie's wife. Enclosed you'll find a note of congratulation to G—— C—— on his getting M.C. *

June 8th. I got another affair the night before last and had a narrow escape. I had three wounded. We were very lucky because he gave it to us hot with H.E. (High Explosive).

June 9th. Got it again coming out of the line. One of my best men splattered badly, I fear fatally. I got him into a dressing station (Essex Farm) and then went out and waited for the

* Lieut. Graham Clarendon-Hyde - Maud's half-brother

opening of the Battle of Messines Ridge. It was one of the most beautiful dawns I have ever seen. The sky was blood-red: truly awe-inspiring. The noise of the guns, their flashes, the burning of big ammunition dumps, the explosion of huge mines made an astonishing impression on me. Our Division was not engaged. The hour of our destiny is not yet.

June 18th. Are you sure that young C—— has got the V.C. ? (A cousin of mine who was put forward for V.C. and was granted the D.S.O.). I hope he's got it. Today we had a thunder storm. The artillery of heaven engaged man's artillery. Both did well.

June 23rd. I have not been able to write for two days. I have been away with some N.C.O.s looking over the Line. Yesterday we went out of the Line for a week's rest. We are likely to have a peaceful time for eight days.

June 24th. We are "out" for eight days' training. It is called a "rest."

June 28th. I am here for another seven days. The poor youth who got wounded coming out of the Line with me the other night died a few days ago.

July 3rd. It is very hot here. Possibly more hot than in England. Captain H—— is going on leave and may ring you up to tell you that I am very fit. I have now to write to the father of young Lewes and tell him of the death of his son.

July 4th. We have been rather unlucky the last few days. One officer killed and one wounded. Several men wounded. You will be amused to hear that my Platoon came out first in Drill. I lost the Bombing—lost on the Range, but produced the best shot. A General inspected us. We were very much praised. The General came to our Mess and told the Colonel that there was not a Battalion in the Brigade that could have drilled so well.

July 7th. Enclosed you will find a letter to Lady Tree. Will you forward it to her? (A letter of condolence on hearing of the death of Sir Herbert Tree.) We are very busy here. Things are moving and getting very lively.

July 9th. Had it very hot the night before last. We were working in front of front line with a covering party when the Boche came over. The men behaved very well. I am now out for a rest.

July 12th. We have been out for two days' rest some miles behind the Line (D. Camp) and unfortunately got shelled in the

camp. I had one of my men killed and two slightly wounded. I was about the camp with one poor fellow on a stretcher trying to find the Medical Officer. He died a few minutes after I took him into the M.O.'s tent. I was a strange sight in my pyjamas, tunic and tin hat. We are back in the line now. I am very fit and cheery ! *I am having a rubber stamp made of the last sentence.*

CHAPTER 16

Passchendaele

Preparations for the Opening of Battle—My Second Pip—Tributes to the Gloucesters.

GOT into another warm show last night (July 16th). We were caught in the open with heavy shell-fire. (Communication trenches were so taped by enemy in Salient that I often found it better to get into the open.) I got my men lying down and hoped for the best. We had been there about fifteen minutes with pandemonium raging round us—our artillery opened and fired over us—when a R.E. corporal in charge of a small party reported to me that a man was lying on the track badly wounded. I could not find any stretcher-bearers; they were in rear of my party and had tailed off. So I ordered the Corporal to come with me and carry the man in. We found a man of another Batt. groaning on the track. We put him on a trench-board and brought him in.

July 18th. Got into another warm show last night. Had two gassed and one wounded.

July 22nd. I want you to take a holiday. Why not go to the Vicarage, Podington? You are always happy there. I sent back the body-shield because the men have nothing like it. If the men had them I would wear it. I think an officer should take the same chances as his men. But don't worry about me. I have just had a letter from a relative of one of my poor fellows thanking me for a letter I wrote and asking for particulars of his death. What can one say when a poor fellow is literally blown to pieces? (The man in question was immediately behind me when going over a small bridge on Ypres Canal in single file at night when a whiz-bang came over my left shoulder and blew him to pieces. I had some difficulty in recovering his Army Book.)

July 24th. You remember poor young Seeger? Here is a short article about him. They would not look at his poems when he was alive, now they praise him. The irony of it! Am so very busy just now.

July 27th. We are very busy with this training business (preparations for the opening of Passchendaele Battle, July 31st). When day is over I am tired out. I have little news.

Aug. 1st. Battle opened yesterday (Passchendaele). I am all right. You will read about the happenings here in Press. I cannot tell you much for obvious reasons. All goes well. The opening of the Battle was tremendously impressive. The guns were eight miles in depth. No doubt the gun-fire was heard in England. I will try to send you a Field Card every day.

Aug. 4th. All goes well. What a battle! No one at home can conjure up an idea of it.

Aug. 9th. We are out for a few days' rest, and I think we deserve it. We have had a fairly warm time lately. Always date your letters. I cannot tell when they were written otherwise.

Aug. 10th. I hear Paris leave is off. Quite charming here. I am sleeping in a tent. Mess in an old farm. I am Mess President. Wow-wow!

Aug. 14th. I do hope you are not too disappointed about Paris leave. It might have spoiled my chances of Home leave. Another thing, I am not out for asking any favours. We got into the Line again yesterday. I believe we are going out for a fortnight's rest presently.

Aug. 18th. Have you seen enclosed account? I knew most of the officers who have fallen including the Colonel. The day after the battle the present C.O. came and had a chat with me. I met him when he was Second-in-Command at Festubert. Our Division did splendidly.

Aug. 22nd. I have put in for a week's leave to Paris. If you get there first leave a note at Cook's Head Office at corner of Avenue de l'Opera. You know the place. I will go to Cook's first and then to Embassy.

Aug. 25th. Paris leave granted from 30th. . . . Great haste. You must leave on 29th.

Sept. 8th. Here am I sitting in a tent writing you a short letter before going to report to H.Q.s. I stayed the night at Officers' Club, Poperinghe, and came on here this morning. I am sending this home because I don't think it will reach you in time if I send it to Paris.

Sept. 14th. P—— has been wounded and has gone to England. It may be eight months before he comes out again. I don't suppose he will rejoin this Batt. We are short-handed now and consequently worked pretty hard, but it ain't so bad. I had a

nice ride today to get Company money. I do hope you had a good "crossing."

Sept. 16th. Captain E—— has asked us to dine with him at Officers' Club, Bailleul. It embraces six of us. It should be very pleasant. I was talking to Colonel H——, who first told me about Paris leave, and a shell killed him an hour later by the place where we had been chatting. I must censor platoon letters.

Sept. 17th. I dined last night with Captain E—— at Bailleul. It was a very pleasant gathering. We all enjoyed being together. He enquired after you. We had nearly a ten-mile walk in front of us coming home, but fortunately we got cars to give us a lift.

Sept. 24th. I am out of the Line now, and with three other officers am looking after four hundred new men. We have had a warm time in the Line.

Sept. 28th. Have had intimation from Orderly room to effect that I can put up second pip. I am very busy with the new 400 men as I have no N.C.O.s. I have written your Aunt D——. Very grieved to hear news. (Her son, a Flag-Lieutenant, went down on *Queen Mary* at Battle of Jutland.)

Sept. 30th. I was so sorry to hear about the raid. You must not worry too much. There is really more chance of your getting hit by Archie dud shells than by enemy bombs so always get under cover.

Oct. 2nd. The day I came out of the Line the Boche bombed an advance dump crowded with men and laid out about thirty. My men assisted the wounded. I am taking the draft of four hundred men to Batt. tomorrow.

Oct. 5th. Post very irregular just now. Yesterday I marched draft to Batt. which is out of the Line. Curiously enough Sir Thomas P—— was Commandant of the camp I have just left. Our troops did well yesterday. Be ready to hear that I am in London any time now. I may get leave any day. I shall telegraph but it may not get through.

Oct 24th. I enjoyed my leave very much indeed. I think it was charming of Mr. Hampton (Herbert Hampton, the sculptor) to see me off so early in the morning. I have seen three or four officers reading the "Pill-box" article (an article of mine on the Pill-boxes used by the Germans in the front line of Ypres—printed in *The Graphic*).

Oct. 26th. I have little news to give you. During my leave one of the best sergeants was killed instantly by a shell. Did you see fine tribute to the Gloucesters in *Daily Mail*? There was another in *Daily Telegraph*.

Nov. 1st. We are having a fairly strenuous time. Only two officers of D Company available for duty. *The Times* leader of October 31st pays fine tribute to Gloucestershire Regiment.

Nov. 12th. In great haste. Was detailed to attend IX Corps School yesterday. Am here for a month. Am due to Parade now.

Nov. 13th. Am so very busy here that I have not much time to write. Two days before I came here I had a very narrow squeak. I was coming out of the line and was in rear of the men with several sergeants when a 15-inch shell roared down on us. One could do nothing. I shouted to the men to "scatter" and flung myself down because it seemed to be coming right on to me. We were on what is called "Plumer's Drive" which is made up with railway sleepers. The Boche were evidently after that so as to interfere with Transport at night. The shell fell a few yards in front of me and made quite a crater in road and scattered the sleepers right and left. I was stunned by the concussion and lay there for some time. When I did get up it was quite dark, and there was no sign of the men. When I got to our Mess everyone was surprised to see me because one of the sergeants had come in and reported that I was blown to pieces.

Nov. 17th. I am here for another three weeks. We were inspected by our Divisional General a few days ago, and he stopped near me, said something to the Commandant and then came up to me and asked me my name. As I was the only officer he spoke to, it was rather amusing, eh? I have a good deal of work to get through—tactical schemes, etc., etc., etc. We have Ceremonial Drill every morning with band in attendance. We are kept at it here and I have to do a lot of work that I thought I had finished with when I passed out.

Nov. 30th. I have no time to write. We are at it all day and sometimes we have night marches on compass bearings. I shall not be sorry to get back to the Batt. From what I hear the General asked my name with a view to my taking over Reinforcement Camp. Anyhow I am not keen about it. I would rather be back with the Batt.

Dec. 5th. You asked me about the Corps School. There are 1,000 here, Officers and N.C.O.s. It is a sort of refresher course, largely what I have done before. The officers gave a concert last night and they called on me for something. In the words of the poet "I obliged" and they were quite kind and considerate. It is dreadfully cold here now. There was a quarter of an inch of ice on my washing water this morning.

CHAPTER 17

The March Offensive

I Meet Godfrey Tearle—Another Christmas at the Front—Bonar Law on the March Offensive—The Commander-in-Chief's Famous "Backs to the Wall" Message to the Troops.

I MET Godfrey Tearle out here (Bailleul) and had tea with him. (Dec. 15th.) He looked very fit. I was shown my "Report" when I was leaving IX Corps School. Not too bad and in "Remarks" the Captain, who was our instructor, told me that he had added something that he had never put on a Report before. It would sound like swank if I told you what it was, and what he said after I had read it. It goes to Divisional Headquarters and later it is entered in a little book called *Officers' Record of Services* which all junior officers carry, so if you are curious you can see it one day. I was not offered the job at Reinforcement Camp, and I am not sorry. I should not have liked it.

Dec. 24th. It is Christmas Eve. Three Christmas days we have not been together. B—— has got a job on Tanks and has left for England. (He was killed in action in March Offensive.) He will call on you.

Dec. 28th. We are on the move early tomorrow and have some marching before us. We have had heavy falls of snow and the "going" for the transport will be heavy. We had quite a bright Christmas. We drank to you all at home. We have stern business in front of us and we are all conscious of it out here, but we are still cheerful, so do not worry. Poor old Percy! (Killed on Arras front.) When I arrive home, I'll put a crêpe band on my arm. I think I have two.

The War Office have passed the Service chevron. I am entitled to two and in three months' time to three. Soon we shall look quite gay with signs and portents all over us. I have lost many of the men who were with us last Christmas.

Dec. 31st. After a hard two days' march we have arrived near our destination. I am very fit and cheerful. It was bitterly cold on the march—snow and ice. Numbers of officers and men slipped down. We were up at 3 a.m. and on the march

shortly after. I hope you will have a pleasant New Year's Eve. The dear Hun has been merrily bombing here for the last half hour.

No letters from you. (Jan. 7th, 1918.) Mail must be held up. It has been bitterly cold. My hands were so cold yesterday that I couldn't hold a pencil to write. I shall get home on leave on or about 15th. A new draft has arrived.

Jan. 31st. I have just arrived at a place near our destination after journeying for two days. There are no beds left so I am going to sleep on a chair. I was in charge of Divisional troops including 24 officers. I had a busy time. I enjoyed my leave very much indeed.

Feb. 1st. We were on march again today, and have now arrived at a place where we may stay for a few weeks. We are in part of the line where I thought we should go (Gouzecourt). It is interesting after being so long in our old part of the line (in front of Ypres).

I was looking at a large German cemetery today. It was curious to see our men walking about the cemetery looking at the graves.

Feb. 8th. We are kept hard at it, dear, just now and there is much to do. You must not worry if you do not get letters from me daily.

I am very fit, but, of course, get a little tired. Do not worry, dear. I know that you will be very brave and carry on in the same manner that you have been carrying on.

You may be certain I'll write you when I can do so. I have little news, dear. Things are very quiet here, *but it may be the lull before the storm.*

Feb. 12th. Only a note to tell you that I am very fit. A brother officer is posting this for me and he's just off.

Feb. 14th. I am wondering all the time if you are really looking after yourself. A pound of meat a week is absurd.

Feb. 21st. I am fit but very busy indeed, and we are all awaiting the coming clash with confidence and good hearts.

I have no news that I can give you, dear.

March 1st. Of course tell Mr. Hampton of Major T—— seeing Lord Islington. I see in list of casualties that B—— is wounded. * (Mr. Clarendon-Hyde, my wife's half-brother.) I do hope it is not much. Don't grieve about it, you'll soon hear.

March 2nd. It is bitterly cold here now, and it has been snowing all day. I am hoping that Japan is going to do something now. She is very efficient, and will be of immense service.

* "Bonnie" - nickname for Lieut. Graham Clarendon-Hyde

March 5th. The enclosed about poor young Seeger in *The Sphere* will interest you. I have written a line to the Editor—Clement Shorter. Perhaps you would like to read same. (This refers to Alan Seeger, poet, who wrote *A Rendezvous with Death*. Clement Shorter claimed to have discovered him. I pointed out that I was the first to read his manuscript in Paris before War, took it to London at Seeger's request and Heinemann turned it down after seeing report of their reader.)

On March 7th, 1918, Mr. Bonar Law, spokesman in such matters in the War Cabinet, had declared: "There will be no dangerous superiority on the Western Front from the point of view of guns any more than from the point of view of men," and added that he was "Still a little sceptical about the threatened offensive."

March 18th. (Three days before March Offensive.) In great haste a line to tell you I'm very fit. Got into another small dust up. One man killed. No time now, must be off.

March 18th. I had three letters from you today. I noted all you said about "Staff." It is out of the question. Division would not put it through and I have no aptitude for it. As a regimental officer—I'm all right. I have no wish to leave the fellows out here.

March 25th. We are in this show. Do not worry. I am very fit and cheery, but naturally a little tired. I am trying to get this through to you because I know you must be worrying.

April 9th. After ten days of very stiff going we started out on the march and have done over one hundred miles. I am very fit and quite cheerful so do not worry about me. I am hoping that you have got my letter telling you about what sort of time we had when the offensive started. We had a hot time but I am glad to say the Battalion did well. The Germans spent themselves the first ten days, but I feel sure that they will make other mighty efforts. They must do so or own to defeat.

April 11th. We are waiting in reserve ready to move into battle position at any moment. I must tell you this in case anything should happen to me.

It was on this day that the Commander-in-Chief issued the special Order of the day which became popularly known as "The Backs to the Wall" message.

When I came out of hospital I was sent to a Battalion of my Regiment on the East coast, and given the "Draft" finding Company. For some reason or other it was thought that the Germans might effect a "Landing." I must confess that such a possibility never caused me any sleepless nights. I rather liked the work because all the A.I. men came to me and I had the job of training them and supplying the "Drafts" for France.

I was all on my own with a Company of three hundred and fifty men.

After the Armistice this Battalion was disbanded, and I was sent to Ireland to join The Somerset Yeomanry (dismounted) in Athlone, Galway.

Here I had a curious experience.

I had been at Moy Drum Castle (the late Lord Castlemaine's place—later burnt to the ground) in the afternoon and was sitting in the Mess when the Adjutant came in and said that I was the man he was looking for. He said that a message had come over the wire from General Pagan's Headquarters in Dublin (General A. W. Pagan, D.S.O., had commanded the 1st Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment in France with great distinction) to the effect that we were to break up a meeting to be held at the Town Hall that night in honour of Mr. Lawrence Gunnell, Member for Galway, who was to address his constituents for the first time after having served two years in prison.

I knew that every seat in that Town Hall had been sold weeks ago because a stationer who had sold most of the tickets told me the facts when I questioned him.

I was ordered to proceed with thirty picked men in "Battle Order" and fifteen rounds of ammunition to break up the meeting and see that Mr. Gunnell was sent to Dublin. I was to remain in possession of the Town Hall until further orders. Remembering what had happened to a friend of mine in Dublin in 1916 I asked if I could have my orders in writing. This was refused, but I was told that I could choose two Subalterns. I fixed on two and the Adjutant said they would be warned.

I thought this the ugliest job I had faced for some time. Many unpleasant things had been happening and this show I was ordered to do looked like applying a light to a keg of gun-powder.

I sent for the Company Sergeant-Major and told him to pick the most reliable men, gave him the time to parade, and said I would issue the ammunition myself.

The Constabulary at this time were entirely "woggy." I knew this from one of the D.I.s, a friend of mine. The wives of the men could not buy food in the shops. No one would associate with them, and the spirit of the men was broken. I remember the D.I. asking me to arrange a football match between his men and ours just to "buck 'em up," and I did arrange it.

I waited to see the two subalterns and then went and got into my kit.

I can confidently say that I had never been ordered to do anything I disliked so much.

I issued the ammunition, told the men of the seriousness of the situation, and pointed out that no matter what provocation they received no one was to "loose off" without orders from me. Thirty men isn't much of a body, but those men in "Battle Order" marching at attention brought a lot of people to watch them pass. There was a tense air about the town.

I halted the men outside the Town Hall, and gave the men a "Stand Easy."

I knew the Town Hall well because I had seen moving pictures there so I went in by myself.

The place was crowded. I recognised several prominent Sinn Feiners sitting near the stage and I went down the gangway and addressing them told them to leave the hall.

One man well known to me rose and said: "What authority have you to ask us to leave this hall?"

"I'm not here to argue with you, or to answer questions," I replied. "I'm here to put you outside." He then said: "We refuse to leave." I then addressed the audience and said: "Do you all wish to be forcibly ejected?" and most of them shouted "Yes."

I went up the hall, threw open the large doors at the side, and marched the men in with rifles at the "trail." I gave them a right turn and they looked down the hall. I ticked off four men with my arm and ordered them to remove the man who first addressed me. I ticked off three other groups and gave them similar objectives. They had those men outside in no time and one man was carried out.

Several women wearing Sinn Fein Colours got on to the stage and began singing. Picking out the one that I thought the leader among them I said: "You have seen what has happened to those men. I don't wish to do the same thing to you, but I will do it unless you go quietly."

That woman gave me a look such as I had never seen before, tossed her head, and led the way off the stage.

The hall was emptied in a few minutes. I sent Mr. Gunnell to the station with one of my Subalterns and ten men.

I put sentries on the exits and told my sergeant that I was going down below where I guessed a number of men were pretending to play billiards.

I told him that if he heard my whistle to send two men and a Corporal down at once. It was as I surmised, packed with men. I stood at the door and ordered them to leave and to my surprise they did so without a single comment.

Ten minutes later I was standing at the end of the hall when a big man in Australian uniform came into the hall. There were several of these men of Irish descent in the Australian forces in Athlone making trouble.

I ordered him to leave the hall. For a moment he demurred, but when I threatened to put him under arrest he went off.

I'm sure that he had only come to see how many men I had on hand. Anyhow, twenty minutes later a big and threatening crowd had assembled in front of the Town Hall.

I spoke to a sergeant of the Constabulary lined up in front of the hall, and told him to clear the square with his men, and he said he could do nothing. I went among the crowd and told them to leave the square, but they made no move. A priest got up on a plinth of some memorial and addressed the crowd, but still they made no move.

I knew that if they rushed the hall and got possession ugly scenes might happen so I drew my Webley, and gave the order "Fix Bayonets" and advanced slowly on the crowd.

I was possibly doing something very unconstitutional, but there was no Mayor to read the Riot Act and no Police to be relied on. A few minutes of irresolution and pandemonium might have been let loose.

I succeeded in clearing the square.

Half an hour later when I had found some musical talent among the men who were utilising the piano on the stage and one was singing, I was told that someone wanted to see me.

I went to the door and there was a charming Irishman with a lady who I presumed was his wife.

He removed his hat, and I saluted, and then he said: "I'm sorry to trouble you, sir, but we lent the flowers in the pots for the stage, and I'm hoping that your men won't be harming them." I assured him that my men would not harm a leaf of those flowers, and suggested that he took some of the pots away under his arm. He evidently thought that might be a little derogatory, and said he would send for them in the morning and raising his hat he wished me good night.

Comedy stepping into the path of what looked like tragedy half an hour earlier.

The next morning the local paper came out with a headline across the front page:

SUPPRESSION BY BAYONET LAST NIGHT

and then went on to say that it admired the way the Military had carried out their duties.

I still have a copy of that paper, and am still wondering what there was to admire.

Helvetius, the philosopher, said that selfishness was at the bottom of every action. It may be so, and I will confess that on that night remembering burnings of larger places than that hall round about, and not wishing to be roasted in the manner Charles Lamb assured us Chinamen are reputed to roast their pork I was prompted to act in the manner I did.

A few weeks after this show I was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, and later to the 1st Battalion back from the occupation of Cologne.

Two things stand out in my memory about that period.

The first is as follows. Very early one morning—I was dressing at the time—Captain M. A. James, V.C., M.C., of whom I had written in *The Graphic* presuming that he had been “Killed in Action” as reported by the War Office, strolled into my quarters and said: “I want to congratulate you. *The Times* this morning has your name down for a Mention for valuable services rendered in connection with the War.” I was so embarrassed that I didn’t know what to say. Here was this gallant young officer wearing the V.C. ribbon congratulating me on a Mention. I blurted out “Thank you. It’s such a small thing.” I don’t think he guessed how embarrassed I was.

The next happened in this way.

One morning the Adjutant came into the mess and said: “Some very interesting orders have come through. The Battalion is to find 200 men—they must all be volunteers—to proceed to the Near East to stiffen a Brigade. I thought this might be something in your line.” “Yes,” I replied. “It’s very much in my line.” He said: “Very well. I’ll tell the Colonel and your name will go down as officer in charge of the party.”

When the party paraded on the day I was to leave for Dover I was very proud of the men. They were the cream of the 28th. When I got to Dover I found a similar party from the 1st Battalion the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders detailed for the same job. It looked like a good show to me.

I had been there a few days, but had received no embarkation orders, and was wondering when we were going to move when in one of the daily papers my eyes caught a headline which read “Another War,” and then followed a lot of stuff about what this country might be involved in through the aspirations of that great soldier Mustapha Kemal. Next day more on the same lines appeared in the Press, and still no orders to move.

One morning while I was inspecting my men the Commandant of Dover stood by watching. When I had dismissed the men he came up to me and said: "I have had many thousands of troops through my hands during the war, but I have never seen a finer body of men parade in my life." I must confess that I was very pleased with his remarks because I was very proud of the men myself. Apart from the way they paraded every day, I had had no occasion to "crime" a single man. I thanked the Commandant for his remarks and enquired if he would mind writing something to that effect in a little book I carried. By that time I had an idea that we should be ordered back to the Battalion, and I thought it might please the Colonel to know the men had put up a good show.

The Commandant said he would be delighted to accede to my request. He not only wrote what he had remarked to me, but added something more. On my return to the Battalion—everything was called off—I showed the Colonel the Commandant's remarks. He seemed pleased.

I had been flirting with certain offers that reached me about films that were commencing to do well, and America was calling me, so I put in for a release. I was released with effect from 22.10.19, and place for rejoining in case of emergency was Chisleton, but did not relinquish my Commission till 1921. *London Gazette*, November 21st, 1921, printed the announcement and added that I was granted the rank of Captain after having had Acting rank for a long time.

I was appointed to The Regular Army Reserve of Officers Class 11 (this allowed me to go to America) The Gloucestershire Regiment with seniority from April 18th, 1921.

Seven years later I received the following letter:

The War Office,
London, S.W.1.
March 2nd, 1927.

SIR,

With reference to the provisions of Articles 621 and 628, Royal Warrant for Pay and Promotion, 8926, I am directed to inform you that as you attained the age limit of liability to recall on January 31st, 1927, your name will be removed from the list

of Officers of the Regular Army Reserve of Officers. The requisite notification will appear in the *Gazette* in due course.

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

E. F. L——, Major.

For Major-General ——

Military Secretary.

Captain R. HENDERSON-BLAND,
Regular Army Reserve of Officers,
The Gloucestershire Regiment.

London Gazette

March 16th, 1927.

REGULAR ARMY RESERVE OF OFFICERS

“GLOSTER R——. Capt. R. Henderson-Bland, having attained the age limit of liability to recall, ceases to belong to the Res. of Off., Jan. 31st, 1927.”

and that was the end of my soldiering.

I have often been asked what gave me the greatest pleasure during the War and I have always evaded the question, although the answer was with me all the time. As this is the finish of the War Section of my book I will set it down.

It was when I found written in my *Officer's Record of Services*, Army Book, 439, a little book issued to every combatant officer below the permanent rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, the following statement signed by an Acting-Brigadier :

“A most efficient officer, and leader of men, and good disciplinarian.”

I cannot close this section without a reference to “The Ypres League,” which I had the honour to represent in America.

The late Field-Marshal the Viscount Plumer of Messines gave me a letter to Major-General John F. O’Ryan asking him to co-operate with me in forming a Branch of “The Ypres League” in the United States.

A Committee was formed to help to bring this about. The Committee comprised :

Major-General John F. O’Ryan.
 Brigadier-General Cornelius Vanderbilt.
 Brigadier-General J. Leslie Kincaid.
 Colonel Edward Olmsted.
 Colonel Franklin Q. Brown.
 Colonel George W. Burleigh.
 Captain R. Henderson-Bland.

No Committee ever worked more harmoniously, and a Branch of the “Ypres League” was formed with Major-General John F. O’Ryan as President.

It was decided to give a dinner to bring the “Ypres League” and its objects to the notice of everyone who served in the Ypres Salient.

A dinner was held at the Hotel Roosevelt, New York City, on March 19th, 1931.

It was one of the most brilliant affairs that I have attended in New York, all the officers being in uniform.

The Standards of Great Britain, the United States, France, and Belgium, were brought in separately with Colour guards, and the different National Anthems were played with the audience standing.

Later the Standards were placed behind the Speakers Table. On the Dais were :

Major T. B. Hilton

President, Manhattan Chapter, Reserve Officers’ Association

Captain Twining Tousley

France-America Society

Colonel Lefferts Hutton

Society of the Cincinnati

Captain R. Henderson-Bland

Representative of Ypres League in America

Honourable R. A. C. Smith

The Pilgrims of the United States

Brigadier-General John Ross Delafield, D.S.M.

Commander-in-Chief, Military Order of the World War

Colonel Edward A. Greene, U.S.M.C.

Representing Third Naval District

M. Maxime Mongendre

Consul General of France

- Major Philip J. McCook, D.S.C.
Justice, Supreme Court, State of New York
- Mr. William Nelson Cromwell
Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour
Vice-President, American Society of the French Legion of Honour
- Brigadier-General Cary F. Spence, D.S.M.
Former Commander, 117th Infantry, 30th Division, A.E.F.
- Major-General Hanson E. Ely, D.S.C., D.S.M.
Commanding Second Corps Area, U.S. Army
Former Commander 5th Division, III Army Corps, A.E.F.
- Viscount de Lantsheere
Chargé d'Affaires of Belgium
- Major-General John F. O'Ryan, D.S.M., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.
President, Ypres League in the United States
Former Commander, 27th Division, A.E.F.
- Colonel Maurice Fitzmaurice Day, M.C.
Military Attaché, British Embassy
- The Right Reverend William T. Manning, S.T.D.
The Bishop of New York
- Major Emmanuel E. Lombard, D.S.M.
Military Attaché, French Embassy
- Lieutenant-General Robert Lee Bullard, D.S.M.
President, National Security League
Former Commander, II Army, A.E.F.
- Major-General William N. Haskell, D.S.M.
Commanding National Guard, State of New York
Former Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations, II Army,
A.E.F.
- Mr. Gerald Campbell
British Consul General
- Brigadier-General Cornelius Vanderbilt, D.S.M.
Commander, 77th Division, U.S.A.
Former Commander, 102nd Engineers, and Engineer Officer,
27th Division, A.E.F.
- Mr. James Gustavus Whiteley
Consul General, Belgian Embassy
- Colonel Franklin Q. Brown
President, Army and Navy Club of America
- Brigadier-General George A. Wingate, D.S.M.
President, New York Society Military and Naval Officers World War
Former Commander, 52nd Field Artillery Brigade, 27th Division,
A.E.F.

Mr. John Daniels
English-Speaking Union
 The Reverend Pryor McN. Grant
Toc H.

A telegram from General Pershing was read by Major-General O’Ryan, and speeches were made by :

Major-General John F. O’Ryan
Commanding General 27th Division, American Expeditionary Forces

Viscount de Lantsheere
Chargé d’Affaires, Belgian Embassy
Honorary Patron of the Ypres League in the United States

Colonel Maurice Fitzmaurice Day
Military Attaché, British Embassy, Representing the British Ambassador
Honorary Patron of the Ypres League in the United States

Major-General Hanson E. Ely
United States Army, Commanding General, Second Corps Area
 Right Reverend William T. Manning
Bishop of New York

Major Emmanuel Lombard
Military Attaché, French Embassy, Representing the French Ambassador
Honorary Patron of the Ypres League in the United States

Brigadier-General Cary F. Spence
U.S. Army Reserve of Knoxville, Tennessee. Representing 30th Division, American Expeditionary Forces

Captain R. Henderson-Bland
Formerly of the Gloucestershire Regiment, British Army
Representative of the Ypres League in America

Music by courtesy of 18th Infantry Band, United States Army

COLOUR DETAILS

107th Infantry (Seventh Regiment), New York National Guard
 British Great War Veterans
 French War Veterans
 Belgian War Veterans

After the dinner I received the following letters :

British Consulate General,
New York.

March 25th, 1931.

DEAR CAPTAIN BLAND,

His Majesty's Ambassador has asked me to forward this letter to you, and I have much pleasure in doing so.

Yours Very Truly,

(signed) GERALD CAMPBELL.
H.B.M. Consul General.

Captain R. Henderson Bland,
c/o Roosevelt Hotel.

British Embassy,
Washington.

March 24th, 1931.

SIR,

I have received instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to inform you that the King much appreciated the telegram of respectful and loyal greetings which you addressed to His Majesty recently on the occasion of the inauguration dinner of the Ypres League in America.

I am to convey to you His Majesty's thanks for this message.

Yours very truly,

(signed) R. C. LINDSAY.

Two British officers wrote me about the dinner. Colonel Fitzmaurice Day, Military Attaché, British Embassy, wrote :

"The dinner was an excellent one, and you are to be heartily congratulated on its success."

Major Arthur de Bles, late Welch Fusiliers, wrote :

"I have been to hundreds of similar affairs in the eleven years I have spent in this country and without any desire to express insincere flattery, I think that everyone will agree with me that last night's affair was one of the most brilliant and representative gatherings held in this country since the war."

Colonel (now Brigadier-General) Edward Olmsted was largely responsible for the staff work involved in the forming of the "Ypres League" Branch in the United States and I

take this opportunity to thank him again most cordially.

I had the honour of meeting General Pershing when he was taking the Salute on "Army Day," April 2nd, 1932. I was on the staff of Colonel Olmsted who was one of the Marshals, and led the Veteran Organisations.

After we had passed the Saluting Base we dismounted, and Colonel Olmsted took me on to the stand and I was presented to General Pershing. The General held my hand for a few moments while he said a few charming things about the British Army, and I was thinking that I was speaking to a man who had helped to make History.

The Parade was brilliantly carried out.

BURIAL OF FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT PLUMER IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Written for *The Ypres Times*

The pulse of England throbs in this place, and on this high occasion brings about the heart an "indescribable feud."

It is well for England that she has such a place, and that she produces men worthy of it.

It is a memorable scene. The scarlet uniforms and the vestments of the clergy stand out against the black dresses of the women and the black coats worn by many old soldiers.

I note the Bishop in Egypt and the Sudan (Bishop Gwynne), The Rev. P. B. Clayton, The Earl of Harewood, The Earl of Ypres, The Countess of Oxford and Asquith, Sir Bindon and Lady Blood, Lady Rawlinson, Lady Pulteney, Lady Bulfin and many others.

General Sir Hubert Gough, the Commander of the Fifth Army, and General Sir Ian Hamilton go to their places.

We all stand as His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury is conducted to the Sanctuary. The Lord Mayor in his robes passes up the nave with the City Marshal.

The voice of Tennyson is heard through his famous poem, "Crossing the Bar"—was it not the last poem that he wrote?—and the noble setting by Parry is used with thrilling effect :

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me.
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

The beautiful rendering of this anthem touched all hearts.

A frail woman is seen wearing decorations awarded her dead husband, and first among them is the Victoria Cross. Her eyes are shining with tears.

The Dean of Westminster (Dr. W. Foxley Norris) and the Abbey clergy go to meet Field-Marshal The Duke of Connaught and to receive the coffin.

Through a small door in the nave I could see the bearskins of Guardsmen, and the strains of Chopin's *Marche Funèbre* drifted into the Abbey.

What is this power in great music that takes the soul and causes it to range in high places?

In at the Abbey door, surmounted by the Memorial to William Pitt, who was in power in the days of Trafalgar, they bear the coffin, which is preceded by the Abbey Cross borne aloft.

It is meet that all that is mortal of the famous Field-Marshal should pass immediately by the grave of the Unknown Warrior.

The Unknown saluting the Known.

When this generation has passed away, the story of England's travail in the Great War will prove to be the greatest of all stories, and the body that is borne in upon us, flanked by figures that have touched the finger of History, calls to me from places of the Spirit so often overridden and forgotten.

Who are these men who flank the coffin?

First on the left where lies the heart, LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM PULTENEY, one of the dearest friends of the Field-Marshal. The name of Pulteney conjures up scenes of the Peninsular War and Waterloo. Sir William, who was once adjutant of the Scots Guards, was commanding the III Corps when the late Field-Marshal—then Lieut.-General Sir Herbert Plumer—was in command of the V Corps at Ypres in 1914.

First on the right walks LIEUT.-GENERAL LORD BADEN-POWELL, who was gazetted to the 13th Hussars on the same day that Lord Plumer was gazetted to the York and Lancaster Regiment.

Ladysmith and Mafeking knew Baden-Powell and Plumer too well ever to forget them.

Another pall-bearer is GENERAL THE EARL OF CAVAN, who commanded a composite brigade in the first Ypres Battle, and who will go down to history as the distinguished commander of the Guards Division.

FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT ALLENBY, who commanded the

Cavalry Corps at Ypres in 1914, is here. All the world knows that he has immortalised himself in Palestine.

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR GEORGE MILNE. On April 27th, 1915, when all troops serving in the Ypres Salient came under the Command of the late Lord Plumer, Field-Marshal Sir George Milne was his Chief Staff Officer. That Command was known as "Plumer's Force."

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR CLAUD JACOB, who ranks among soldiers as one of the great fighting commanders, is on the right.

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON, who, as Quartermaster-General in the early part of the War, handled one of the most stupendous tasks with conspicuous success, walks by the coffin.

The Navy is represented by Admiral of the Fleet, SIR OSMOND BROCK, and the Royal Air Force by MARSHAL OF THE R.A.F. LORD TRENCHARD.

GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD, who was senior Staff Officer to Lord Rawlinson on the Somme, is another pall-bearer.

Carrying insignia one notes the features of General Sir Charles H. Harrington. Did not Lord Plumer, the great picker of Staff, call him from the East, where he was serving as a Major?

The senior Field-Marshal, the Duke of Connaught, representing the King, is seen behind the coffin.

A group of old Chelsea Pensioners who had served under Lord Plumer add colour with their scarlet to the magnificent scene such as we do not often face the like of.

The procession passes into the Sanctuary; for a little time the coffin rests there, and then it is taken to the Warrior's Chapel, followed by members of the late Lord Plumer's family.

The coffin is committed to the ground, and the clergy return to the choir. A hymn is sung and then the Dean, an old friend of Lord Plumer, asked for prayer. "Let us pray in silence," he said, "and give thanks for the life and example of one who worshipped regularly in this church, and throughout a long life did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly before his God."

The Archbishop of Canterbury delivers the Blessing, and then throughout that stately Abbey the notes of the "Last Post" ring out. The soldiers present had heard the "Last Post" sounded in every clime, but surely never with so tremendous and portentous an effect. The august plumes of Fame seem to rustle in the air, and on the inner ear steals the noise of great names—YPRES; THE SOMME! PASSCHENDAELE! MESSINES! MAFKING!

The soldiers, who stand rigidly at attention, hear those names, but their impassive faces give no sign.

There is silence for a moment, and then there is heard the note of "Réveillé." The famous warrior has passed on. The organ commences to play Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*.

I linger for a moment at the Warrior's Chapel, where the insignia of the late Field-Marshal are displayed on cushions.

The splendid simplicities of the ceremony impressed me. At the risk of being thought insular, I will venture to write that I think our people display a singular sense of the fitness of things on such occasions. And then, again, the handsomeness of those English heads. There was one among the Abbey clergy that would have delighted the heart of Holbein and would have set Dürer busy with his pencil. The easy bearing of the soldier-men in their splendid uniforms was another noticeable thing. There was Major L. F. Hay, of the Black Watch, so tall that the famous Captain Ames of the Life Guards would have looked small by his side.

My one regret was that there was no officer present of the 27th American Division so ably commanded by that distinguished soldier, Major-General John F. O'Ryan.

The 27th American Division served with great distinction under the late Field-Marshal in the British II Army.

I was representing the 27th American Division, whose staff had some training with the 39th British Division with which I had the honour to serve. The THIRTY-NINTH DIVISION will always be remembered by reason of the fact that it was one of the Divisions of the immortal NINETEENTH CORPS which covered itself with glory while in the FIFTH ARMY in the March 1918 fighting.

I went out of the Abbey thinking that it is a good thing for England that she can honour in death a great soldier in so stately and in so moving a manner.

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