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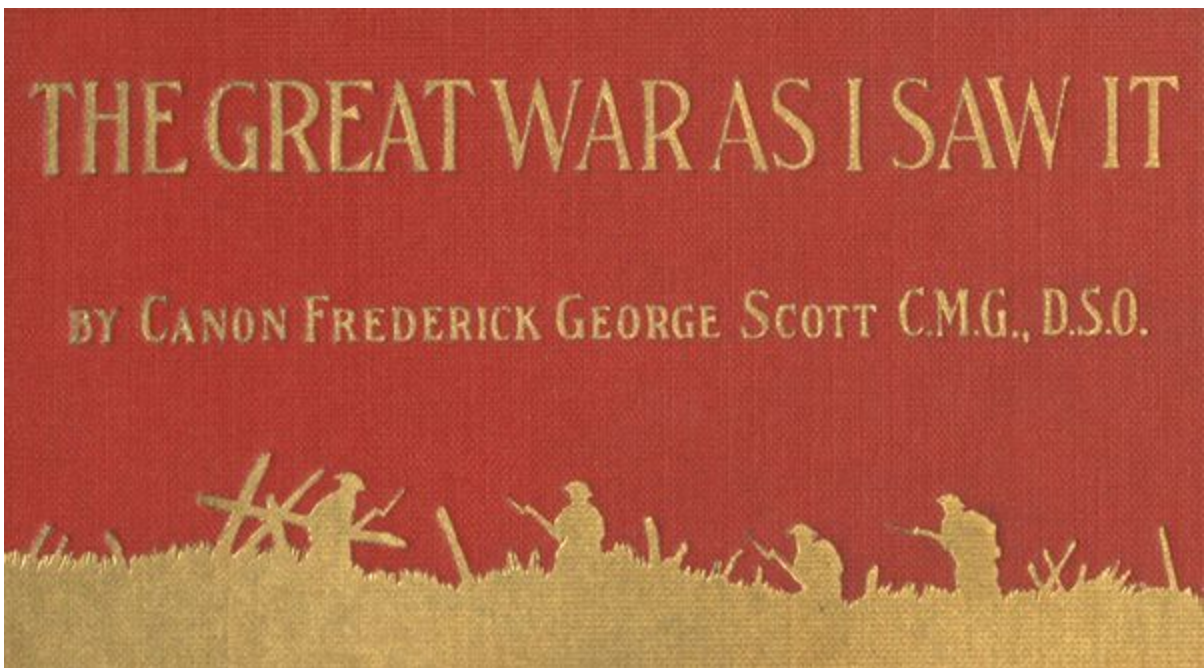
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The Great War as I Saw It



The Great War as I Saw It

by

Canon Frederick George Scott, C.M.G., D.S.O.

*Late Senior Chaplain
First Canadian Division, C.E.F.*

Author of "Later Canadian Poems," and "Hymn of the Empire."

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**TO
THE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE
FIRST CANADIAN DIVISION, C.E.F.**

"THE UNBROKEN LINE."

We who have trod the borderlands of death,
Where courage high walks hand in hand
with fear,
Shall we not hearken what the Spirit saith,
"All ye were brothers there, be brothers
here?"

We who have struggled through the baffling
night,
Where men were men and every man
divine,
While round us brave hearts perished for the
right
By chalice shell-holes stained with life's
rich wine.

Let us not lose the exalted love which came
From comradeship with danger and the joy
Of strong souls kindled into living flame
By one supreme desire, one high employ.

Let us draw closer in these narrower years,
Before us still the eternal visions spread;
We who outmastered death and all its fears
Are one great army still, living and dead.

F. G. S.

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure I accede to the request of Canon Scott to write a foreword to his book.

I first heard of my friend and comrade after the second battle of Ypres when he accompanied his beloved Canadians to Bethune after their glorious stand in that poisonous gap—which in my own mind he immortalised in verse:—

O England of our fathers, and England of our sons,
Above the roar of battling hosts, the thunder of the guns,
A mother's voice was calling us, we heard it oversea,
The blood which thou didst give us, is the blood we spill for thee.

Little did I think when I first saw him that he could possibly, at his time of life, bear the rough and tumble of the heaviest fighting in history, and come through with buoyancy of spirit younger men envied and older men recognized as the sign and fruit of self-forgetfulness and the inspiration and cheering of others.

Always in the thick of the fighting, bearing almost a charmed life, ignoring any suggestion that he should be posted to a softer job "further back," he held on to the very end.

The last time I saw him was in a hospital at Etaples badly wounded, yet cheery as ever—having done his duty nobly.

All the Canadians in France knew him, and his devotion and fearlessness were known all along the line, and his poems will, I am bold to prophesy, last longer in the ages to come than most of the histories of the war.

I feel sure that his book—if anything like himself—will interest and inspire all who read it.

LLEWELLYN H. GWYNNE.

PREFACE

It is with a feeling of great hesitation that I send out this account of my personal experiences in the Great War. As I read it over, I am dismayed at finding how feebly it suggests the bitterness and the greatness of the sacrifice of our men. As the book is written from an entirely personal point of view,

the use of the first personal pronoun is of course inevitable, but I trust that the narration of my experience has been used only as a lens through which the great and glorious deeds of our men may be seen by others. I have refrained, as far as possible, except where circumstances seemed to demand it, from mentioning the names of officers or the numbers of battalions.

I cannot let the book go out without thanking, for many acts of kindness, Lieut.-General Sir Edwin Alderson, K.C.B., Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Currie, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., and Major-General Sir Archibald Macdonell, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., who were each in turn Commanders of the First Canadian Division. In all the efforts the chaplains made for the welfare of the Division, they always had the backing of these true Christian Knights. Their kindness and consideration at all times were unbounded, and the degree of liberty which they allowed me was a privilege for which I cannot be too thankful, and which I trust I did not abuse.

If, by these faulty and inadequate reminiscences, dug out of memories which have blended together in emotions too deep and indefinable to be expressed in words, I have reproduced something of the atmosphere in which our glorious men played their part in the deliverance of the world, I shall consider my task not in vain.

May the ears of Canada never grow deaf to the plea of widows and orphans and our crippled men for care and support. May the eyes of Canada never be blind to that glorious light which shines upon our young national life from the deeds of those "Who counted not their lives dear unto themselves," and may the lips of Canada never be dumb to tell to future generations the tales of heroism which will kindle the imagination and fire the patriotism of children that are yet unborn.

The Great War as I Saw It

CHAPTER I.

HOW I GOT INTO THE WAR. *July to September, 1914.*

It happened on this wise. It was on the evening of the 31st of July, 1914, that I went down to a newspaper office in Quebec to stand amid the crowd and watch the bulletins which were posted up every now and then, and to hear the news of the war. One after another the reports were given, and at last there flashed upon the board the words, "General Hughes offers a force of twenty thousand men to England in case war is declared against Germany." I turned to a friend and said, "That means that I have got to go to the war." Cold shivers went up and down my spine as I thought of it, and my friend replied, "Of course it does not mean that you should go. You have a parish and duties at home." I said, "No. I am a Chaplain of the 8th Royal Rifles. I must volunteer, and if I am accepted, I will go." It was a queer sensation, because I had never been to war before and I did not know how I should be able to stand the shell fire. I had read in books of people whose minds were keen and brave, but whose hind legs persisted in running away under the sound of guns. Now I knew that an ordinary officer on running away under fire would get the sympathy of a large number of people, who would

say, "The poor fellow has got shell shock," and they would make allowance for him. But if a chaplain ran away, about six hundred men would say at once, "We have no more use for religion." So it was with very mingled feelings that I contemplated an expedition to the battle-fields of France, and I trusted that the difficulties of Europe would be settled without our intervention.

However, preparations for war went on. On Sunday, August 2nd, in the afternoon, I telephoned to Militia Headquarters and gave in my name as a volunteer for the Great War. When I went to church that evening and told the wardens that I was off to France, they were much surprised and disconcerted. When I was preaching at the service and looked down at the congregation, I had a queer feeling that some mysterious power was dragging me into a whirlpool, and the ordinary life around me and the things that were so dear to me had already begun to fade away.

On Tuesday, August the Fourth, war was declared, and the Expeditionary Force began to be mobilized in earnest. It is like recalling a horrible dream when I look back to those days of apprehension and dread. The world seemed suddenly to have gone mad. All civilization appeared to be tottering. The Japanese Prime Minister, on the night war was declared, said, "This is the end of Europe." In a sense his words were true. Already we see power shifted from nations in Europe to that great Empire which is in its youth, whose home is in Europe, but whose dominions are scattered over the wide world, and also to that new Empire of America, which came in to the war at the end with such determination and high resolve. The destinies of mankind are now in the hands of the English-speaking nations and France.

In those hot August days, a camp at Valcartier was prepared in a lovely valley surrounded by the old granite hills of the Laurentians, the oldest range of mountains in the world. The Canadian units began to collect, and the lines of white tents were laid out. On Saturday, August 22nd, at seven in the morning, the detachment of volunteers from Quebec marched off from the drill-shed to entrain for Valcartier. Our friends came to see us off and the band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me," in the traditional manner. On our arrival at Valcartier we marched over to the ground assigned to us, and the men set to work to put up the tents. I hope I am casting no slur upon the 8th Royal Rifles of Quebec, when I say that I think we were all pretty green in the matter of field experience. The South African veterans amongst us, both officers and men, saved the situation. But I know that the cooking arrangements rather "fell down", and I think a little bread and cheese, very late at night, was all we had to eat. We were lucky to get that. Little did we know then of the field kitchens, with their pipes smoking and dinners cooking, which later on used to follow up the battalions as they moved.

The camp at Valcartier was really a wonderful place. Rapidly the roads were laid out, the tents were run up, and from west and east and north and south men poured in. There was activity everywhere. Water was laid on, and the men got the privilege of taking shower-baths, beside the dusty roads. Bands played; pipers retired to the woods and practised unearthly music calculated to fire the breast of the Scotsman with a lust for blood. We had rifle practice on the marvellous ranges. We had sham battles in which the men engaged so intensely that on one occasion, when the enemy met, one over-eager soldier belaboured his opponent with the butt end of his rifle as though he were a real German, and the poor victim, who had not been taught to say "Kamarad", suffered grievous wounds and had to be taken away in an ambulance. Though many gales and tempests had blown round those ancient mountains, nothing had ever equalled the latent power in the hearts of the stalwart young Canadians who had come so swiftly and eagerly at the call of the Empire. It is astonishing how the war spirit grips one. In Valcartier began that splendid comradeship which spread out to all the divisions of the Canadian Corps, and which binds those who went to the great adventure in a brotherhood stronger than has ever been known before.

Valcartier was to me a weird experience. The tents were cold. The ground was very hard. I got it into my mind that a chaplain should live the same life as the private soldier, and should avoid all luxuries. So I tried to sleep at night under my blanket, making a little hole in the ground for my thigh bone to rest in. After lying awake for some nights under these conditions, I found that the privates, especially the old soldiers, had learnt the art of making themselves comfortable and were hunting for straw for beds. I saw the wisdom of this and got a Wolessley sleeping bag, which I afterwards lost when my billet was shelled at Ypres. Under this new arrangement I was able to get a little rest. A kind friend in Quebec provided fifty oil stoves for the use of the Quebec contingent and so we became quite comfortable.

The dominating spirit of the camp was General Hughes, who rode about with his aides-de-camp in great splendour like Napoleon. To me it seemed that his personality and his despotic rule hung like a dark shadow over the camp. He was especially interesting and terrible to us chaplains, because rumour had it that he did not believe in chaplains, and no one could find out whether he was going to take us or not. The chaplains in consequence were very polite when inadvertently they found themselves in his august presence. I was clad in a private's uniform, which was handed to me out of a box in the drill-shed the night before the 8th Royal Rifles left Quebec, and I was most punctilious in the matter of saluting General Hughes whenever we chanced to meet.

The day after we arrived at the camp was a Sunday. The weather looked dark and showery, but we were to hold our first church parade, and, as I was the senior chaplain in rank, I was ordered to take it over. We assembled about three thousand strong, on a little rise in the ground, and here the men were formed in a hollow square. Rain was threatening, but perhaps might have held off had it not been for the action of one of the members of my congregation, who in the rear ranks was overheard by my son to utter the prayer—"O Lord, have mercy in this hour, and send us now a gentle shower." The prayer of the young saint was answered immediately, the rain came down in torrents, the church parade was called off, and I went back to my tent to get dry.

Day after day passed and more men poured in. They were a splendid lot, full of life, energy and keen delight in the great enterprise. Visitors from the city thronged the camp in the afternoons and evenings. A cinema was opened, but was brought to a fiery end by the men, who said that the old man in charge of it never changed his films.

One of the most gruesome experiences I had was taking the funeral of a young fellow who had committed suicide. I shall never forget the dismal service which was held, for some reason or other, at ten o'clock at night. Rain was falling, and we marched off into the woods by the light of two smoky lanterns to the place selected as a military cemetery. To add to the weirdness of the scene two pipers played a dirge. In the dim light of the lanterns, with the dropping rain over head and the dripping trees around us, we laid the poor boy to rest. The whole scene made a lasting impression on those who were present.

Meanwhile the camp extended and improvements were made, and many changes occurred in the disposition of the units. At one time the Quebec men were joined with a Montreal unit, then they were taken and joined with a New Brunswick detachment and formed into a battalion. Of course we grew more military, and I had assigned to me a batman whom I shall call Stephenson. I selected him because of his piety—he was a theological student from Ontario. I found afterwards that it is unwise to select batmen for their piety. Stephenson was a failure as a batman. When some duty had been neglected by him and I was on the point of giving vent to that spirit of turbulent anger, which I soon found was one of the natural and necessary equipments of an officer, he would say, "Would you like me to recite Browning's 'Prospice'?" What could the enraged Saul do on such occasions but forgive,

throw down the javelin and listen to the music of the harping David? Stephenson was with me till I left Salisbury Plain for France. He nearly exterminated me once by setting a stone waterbottle to heat on my stove without unscrewing the stopper. I arrived in my tent quite late and seeing the thing on the stove quickly unscrewed it. The steam blew out with terrific force and filled the tent. A moment or two more and the bottle would have burst with disastrous consequences. When I told Stephenson of the enormity of his offence and that he might have been the cause of my death, and would have sent me to the grave covered with dishonour for having been killed by the bursting of a hot waterbottle—an unworthy end for one about to enter the greatest war the world has ever known—he only smiled faintly and asked me if I should like to hear him recite a poem.

News from overseas continued to be bad. Day after day brought us tidings of the German advance. The martial spirits amongst us were always afraid to hear that the war would be over before we got to England. I, but did not tell the people so, was afraid it wouldn't. I must confess I did not see in those days how a British force composed of men from farms, factories, offices and universities could get together in time to meet and overthrow the trained legions of Germany. It was certainly a period of anxious thought and deep foreboding, but I felt that I belonged to a race that has never been conquered. Above all, right and, therefore, God was on our side.

The scenery around Valcartier is very beautiful. It was a joy now and then to get a horse and ride away from the camp to where the Jacques Cartier river comes down from the mountains, and to dream of the old days when the world was at peace and we could enjoy the lovely prospects of nature, without the anxious care that now gnawed at our hearts. The place had been a favorite haunt of mine in the days gone by, when I used to take a book of poems and spend the whole day beside the river, reading and dozing and listening to the myriad small voices of the woods.

Still, the centre of interest now was the camp, with its turmoil and bustle and indefinite longing to be up and doing. The officer commanding my battalion had brought his own chaplain with him, and it was plainly evident that I was not wanted. This made it, I must confess, somewhat embarrassing. My tent, which was at the corner of the front line, was furnished only with my bed-roll and a box or two, and was not a particularly cheerful home. I used to feel rather lonely at times. Now and then I would go to Quebec for the day. On one occasion, when I had been feeling particularly seedy, I returned to camp at eleven o'clock at night. It was cold and rainy. I made my way from the station to my tent. In doing so I had to pass a Highland Battalion from Vancouver. When I came to their lines, to my dismay I was halted by a sentry with a fixed bayonet, who shouted in the darkness, "Who goes there?" I gave the answer, but instead of being satisfied with my reply, the wretched youth stood unmoved, with his bayonet about six inches from my body, causing me a most unpleasant sensation. He said I should have to come to the guardroom and be identified. In the meantime, another sentry appeared, also with a fixed bayonet, and said that I had to be identified. Little did I think that the whole thing was a game of the young rascals, and that they were beguiling the tedious moments of the sentry-go by pulling a chaplain's leg. They confessed it to me months afterwards in France. However, I was unsuspecting and had come submissive into the great war. I said that if they would remove their bayonets from propinquity to my person—because the sight of them was causing me a fresh attack of the pains that had racked me all day—I would go with them to the guardroom. At this they said, "Well, Sir, we'll let you pass. We'll take your word and say no more about it." So off I went to my dripping canvas home, hoping that the war would be brought to a speedy termination.

Every night I used to do what I called "parish visiting." I would go round among the tents, and sitting on the ground have a talk with the men. Very interesting and charming these talks were. I was much impressed with the miscellaneous interests and life histories of the men who had been so quickly drawn together. All were fast being shaken down into their places, and I think the great

lessons of unselfishness and the duty of pulling together were being stamped upon the lives that had hitherto been more or less at loose ends. I used to sit in the tents talking long after lights were out, not wishing to break the discussion of some interesting life problem. This frequently entailed upon me great difficulty in finding my way back to my tent, for the evenings were closing in rapidly and it was hard to thread one's way among the various ropes and pegs which kept the tents in position. On one occasion when going down the lines, I tripped over a rope. Up to that moment the tent had been in perfect silence, but, as though I had fired a magazine of high explosives, a torrent of profanity burst forth from the inhabitants at my misadventure. Of course the men inside did not know to whom they were talking, but I stood there with my blood curdling, wondering how far I was personally responsible for the language poured forth, and terrified lest anyone should look and find out who had disturbed their slumbers. I stole off into the darkness as quickly as I could, more than ever longing for a speedy termination of the great war, and resolving to be more careful in future about tripping over tent ropes.

We had church parades regularly now on Sundays and early celebrations of the Holy Communion for the various units. Several weeks had gone by and as yet we had no definite information from General Hughes as to which or how many chaplains would be accepted. It was very annoying. Some of us could not make satisfactory arrangements for our parishes, until there was a certainty in the matter. The question came to me as to whether I ought to go, now that the Quebec men had been merged into a battalion of which I was not to be the chaplain. One evening as I was going to town, I put the matter before my friend Colonel, now General, Turner. It was a lovely night. The moon was shining, and stretching far off into the valley were the rows of white tents with the dark mountains enclosing them around. We stood outside the farmhouse used as headquarters, which overlooked the camp. When I asked the Colonel whether, now that I was separated from my men, I ought to leave my parish and go, he said to me, "Look at those lines of tents and think of the men in them. How many of those men will ever come back? The best expert opinion reckons that this war will last at least two years. The wastage of human life in war is tremendous. The battalions have to be filled and refilled again and again. Don't decide in a hurry, but think over what I have told you." On the next evening when I returned from Quebec, I went to the Colonel and said, "I have thought the matter over and I am going."

The time was now drawing near for our departure and at last word was sent round that General Hughes wished to meet all the chaplains on the verandah of his bungalow. The time set was the cheerful hour of five a.m. I lay awake all night with a loud ticking alarm clock beside me, till about half an hour before the wretched thing was to go off. With great expedition I rose and shaved and making myself as smart as possible in the private's uniform, hurried off to the General's camp home. There the other chaplains were assembled, about twenty-five or thirty in all. We all felt very sleepy and very chilly as we waited with expectancy the utterance which was going to seal our fate. The General soon appeared in all the magnificence and power of his position. We rose and saluted. When he metaphorically told us to "stand easy", we all sat down. I do not know what the feelings of the others were, but I had an impression that we were rather an awkward squad, neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. The General gave us a heart to heart talk. He told us he was going to send us with "the boys." From his manner I inferred that he looked upon us a kind of auxiliary and quite dispensable sanitary section. I gathered that he did not want us to be very exacting as to the performance of religious duties by the men. Rather we were to go in and out amongst them, make friends of them and cheer them on their way. Above all we were to remember that because a man said "Damn", it did not mean necessarily that he was going to hell. At the conclusion of the address, we were allowed to ask questions, and one of our number unadvisedly asked if he would be allowed to carry a revolver. "No," said Sam with great firmness, "take a bottle of castor oil." We didn't dare to be amused at the incident in the presence of the Chief, but we had a good laugh over it when we got back to our tents.

Two Sundays before we left, the most remarkable church parade in the history of the division was held, at which fully fifteen thousand men were present. The Senior Chaplain asked me to preach. A large platform had been erected, on which the chaplains stood, and on the platform also were two signallers, whose duty it was to signal to the battalions and bands the numbers of the hymns. On the chairs in front of the platform were seated the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, the Princess Patricia, Sir Robert Borden, and other notables. Beyond them were gathered the men in battalions. At one side were the massed bands. It was a wonderful sight. The sun was shining. Autumn tints coloured the maple trees on the sides of the ancient mountains. Here was Canada quickening into national life and girding on the sword to take her place among the independent nations of the world. It had been my privilege, fifteen years before, to preach at the farewell service in Quebec Cathedral for the Canadian Contingent going to the South African war. It seemed to me then that never again should I have such an experience. Yet on that occasion there were only a thousand men present, and here were fifteen times that number. At that time the war was with a small and half-civilized nation in Africa, now the war was with the foremost nations of Europe. On that occasion I used the second personal pronoun "you", now I was privileged to use the first personal pronoun "we". Almost to the last I did not know what text to choose and trusted to the inspiration of the moment what to say. My mind was confused with the vastness of the outlook. At last the words came to me which are the very foundation stone of human endeavour and human progress, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." I do not know exactly what I said, and I do not suppose it mattered much, for it was hard to make oneself heard. I was content if the words of the text alone were audible. We sang that great hymn, "O God our help in ages past," which came into such prominence as an imperial anthem during the war. As we sang the words —

"Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame" —

I looked at the everlasting mountains around us, where the sound of our worship died away, and thought how they had watched and waited for this day to come, and how, in the ages that were to dawn upon Canadian life and expansion, they would stand as monuments of the consecration of Canada to the service of mankind.

Things began to move rapidly now. People from town told us that already a fleet of liners was waiting in the harbour, ready to carry overseas the thirty-three thousand men of the Canadian contingent.

At last the eventful day of our departure arrived. On September 28th, with several other units, the 14th Battalion, to which I had been attached, marched off to the entraining point. I took one last look at the great camp which had now become a place of such absorbing interest and I wondered if I should ever see again that huge amphitheatre with its encompassing mountain witnesses. The men were in high spirits and good humour prevailed.

We saw the three companies of Engineers moving off, each followed by those mysterious pontoons which followed them wherever they went and suggested the bridging of the Rhine and our advance to Berlin. Someone called out, "What are those boats?" and a voice replied, "That's the Canadian Navy." We had a pleasant trip in the train to Quebec, enlivened by jokes and songs. On our arrival at the docks, we were taken to the custom-house wharf and marched on board the fine Cunard liner "Andania", which now rests, her troubles over, at the bottom of the Irish Sea. On the vessel, besides half of the 14th Battalion, there was the 16th (Canadian Scottish) Battalion, chiefly from Vancouver, and the Signal Company. Thus we had a ship full to overflowing of some of the noblest young fellows to whom the world has given birth. So ended our war experience in Valcartier Camp.

Nearly five years passed before I saw that sacred spot again. It was in August 1919. The war was ended, peace had been signed, and the great force of brother knights had been dispersed. Little crosses by the highways and byways of France and Belgium now marked the resting-place of thousands of those whose eager hearts took flame among these autumn hills. As I motored past the deserted camp after sunset, my heart thrilled with strange memories and the sense of an abiding presence of something weird and ghostly. Here were the old roads, there were the vacant hutments. Here were the worn paths across the fields where the men had gone. The evening breeze whispered fitfully across the untrodden grass and one by one the strong mountains, as though fixing themselves more firmly in iron resolve, cast off the radiant hues of evening and stood out black and grim against the starlit sky.

CHAPTER II.

THE VOYAGE TO ENGLAND. *September 29th to October 18th, 1914.*

The "Andania" moved out to mid-stream and anchored off Cape Diamond. The harbour was full of liners, crowded with men in khaki. It was a great sensation to feel oneself at last merged into the great army life and no longer free to come and go. I looked at the City and saw the familiar outline of the Terrace and Château Frontenac and, over all, the Citadel, one of my favourite haunts in times past. A great gulf separated us now from the life we had known. We began to realize that the individual was submerged in the great flood of corporate life, and the words of the text came to me, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

The evening was spent in settling down to our new quarters in what was, especially after the camp at Valcartier, a luxurious home. Dinner at night became the regimental mess, and the saloon with its sumptuous furnishings made a fine setting for the nightly gathering of officers. We lay stationary all that night and on the next evening, Sept. the 29th, at six o'clock we weighed anchor and went at slow speed down the stream. Several other vessels had preceded us, the orders to move being sent by wireless. We passed the Terrace where cheer after cheer went up from the black line of spectators crowded against the railing. Our men climbed up into the rigging and their cheers went forth to the land that they were leaving. It was a glorious evening. The sun had set and the great golden light, fast deepening into crimson, burnt behind the northern hills and lit up the windows of the houses on the cliffs of Levis opposite. We moved down past the Custom House. We saw the St. Charles Valley and the Beauport shore, but ever our eyes turned to the grim outline of Cape Diamond and the city set upon the hill. Beside me on the upper deck stood a young officer. We were talking together and wondering if we should ever see that rock again. He never did. He and his only brother were killed in the war. We reached the end of the Island of Orleans, and looking back saw a deeper crimson flood the sky, till the purple mists of evening hid Quebec from our view.

We had a lovely sail down the St. Lawrence in superb weather and three days later entered the great harbour of Gaspé Basin. Here the green arms of the hills encompassed us, as though Canada were reluctant to let us go. Gaspé Basin has historical memories for Canada, for it was there that Wolfe assembled his fleet on his voyage to the capture of Quebec. We lay at anchor all day, and at night the moon came up and flooded the great water with light, against which stood out the black outline of thirty ships, so full of eager and vigorous life. About midnight I went on deck to contemplate the

scene. The night was calm and still. The vessels lay dark and silent with all lights screened. The effect was one of lonely grandeur. What was it going to mean to us? What did fate hold in store? Among those hills, the outline of which I could now but faintly see, were the lakes and salmon rivers in the heart of the great forests which make our Canadian wild life so fascinating. We were being torn from that life and sent headlong into the seething militarism of a decadent European feudalism. I was leaning on the rail looking at the track of moonlight, when a young lad came up to me and said, "Excuse me, Sir, but may I talk to you for a while? It is such a weird sight that it has got on my nerves." He was a young boy of seventeen who had come from Vancouver. Many times afterwards I met him in France and Belgium, when big things were being done in the war, and we talked together over that night in Gaspé Basin and the strange thoughts that crowded upon us then. He was not the only one in that great fleet of transports who felt the significance of the enterprise.

On Saturday afternoon we resumed our journey and steamed out of the narrows. Outside the bay the ships formed into a column of three abreast, making a line nine miles in length. Several cruisers, and later a battleship and battle cruiser, mounted guard over the expedition. Off Cape Race, the steamship "Florizel" joined us, bringing the Newfoundland troops. Our family party was now complete.

It was indeed a family party. On every ship we had friends. It seemed as if Canada herself were steaming across the ocean. Day after day, in perfect weather, keeping our relative positions in absolute order, we sped over the deep. There was none of the usual sense of loneliness which characterizes the ocean voyage. We looked at the line of vessels and we felt that one spirit and one determination quickened the whole fleet into individual life.

On board the "Andania" the spirit of the men was excellent. There was physical drill daily to keep them fit. There was the gymnasium for the officers. We had boxing matches for all, and sword dances also for the Highlanders. In the early morning at five-thirty, the pipers used to play reveille down the passages. Not being a Scotsman, the music always woke me up. At such moments I considered it my duty to try to understand the music of the pipes. But in the early hours of the morning I made what I thought were discoveries. First I found out that all pipe melodies have the same bass. Secondly I found out that all pipe melodies have the same treble. On one occasion the pipers left the security of the Highlanders' quarters and invaded the precincts of the 14th Battalion, who retaliated by turning the hose on them. A genuine battle between the contending factions was only averted by the diplomacy of the O.C.

I had made friends with the wireless operators on board the ship, and every night I used to go up to their cabin on the upper deck and they would give me reports of the news which had been flashed out to the leading cruiser. They told me of the continued German successes and of the fall of Antwerp. The news was not calculated to act as a soothing nightcap before going to bed. I was sworn to secrecy and so I did not let the men know what was happening at the front. I used to look round at the bright faces of the young officers in the saloon and think of all that those young fellows might have to endure before the world was saved. It gave everyone on board a special sacredness in my eyes, and one felt strangely inadequate and unworthy to be with them.

The men lived below decks and some of them were packed in pretty tightly. Had the weather been rough there would have been a good deal of suffering. During the voyage our supply of flour gave out, but as we had a lot of wheat on board, the men were set to grind it in a coffee mill. More than fifty per cent of the men, I found, were members of the Church of England, and so I determined to have a celebration of Holy Communion, for all who cared to attend, at five o'clock every morning. I always had a certain number present, and very delightful were these services at that early hour.

Outside on deck we could hear the tramp and orders of those engaged in physical drill, and inside the saloon where I had arranged the altar there knelt a small gathering of young fellows from various parts of Canada, who were pleased to find that the old Church was going with them on their strange pilgrimage. The well-known hymn—

"Eternal Father strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave"

had never appealed to me much in the past, but it took on a new meaning at our Sunday church parade, for we all felt that we were a rather vulnerable body in any determined attack that might be made upon us by the German navy. Now and then vessels would be sighted on the horizon and there was always much excitement and speculation as to what they might be. We could see the cruisers making off in the direction of the strangers and taking a survey of the ocean at long range.

One day a man on the "Royal George" fell overboard, and a boat was instantly lowered to pick him up. The whole fleet came to a standstill and all our glasses were turned towards the scene of rescue. Often in our battles when we saw the hideous slaughter of human beings, I have thought of the care for the individual life which stopped that great fleet in order to save one man.

Our destination, of course, was not known to us. Some thought we might go directly to France, others that we should land in England. When at last, skirting the south coast of Ireland, we got into the English Channel, we felt more than ever the reality of our adventure. I believe we were destined for Southampton; but rumour had it that a German submarine was waiting for us in the Channel, so we turned into the harbour of Plymouth. It was night when we arrived. A low cloud and mist hung over the dark choppy waves of the Channel. From the forts at Plymouth and from vessels in the harbour, long searchlights moved like the fingers of a great ghostly hand that longed to clutch at something. We saw the small patrol boats darting about in all directions and we felt with a secret thrill that we had got into that part of the world which was at war. We arrived at Plymouth on the evening of October 14th, our voyage having lasted more than a fortnight. Surely no expedition, ancient or modern, save that perhaps which Columbus led towards the undiscovered continent of his dreams, was ever fraught with greater significance to the world at large. We are still too close to the event to be able to measure its true import. Its real meaning was that the American continent with all its huge resources, its potential value in the ages to come, had entered upon the sphere of world politics, and ultimately would hold in its hands the sceptre of world dominion. Even the British thought that we had come merely to assist the Mother Country in her difficulties. Those who were at the helm in Canada, however, knew that we were not fighting for the security of the Mother Country only, but for the security of Canadian nationalism itself. Whatever the ages hold in store for us in this great and rich Dominion which stretches from sea to sea and from the river unto the world's end, depended upon our coming out victors in the great European struggle.

CHAPTER III.

ON SALISBURY PLAIN.

October 18th, 1914, to January 1st, 1915.

On Sunday the 18th, our men entrained and travelled to Patney, and from thence marched to Westdown South, Salisbury Plain. There tents had been prepared and we settled down to life in our

new English home. At first the situation was very pleasant. Around us on all sides spread the lines of tents. The weather was delightful. A ride over the mysterious plain was something never to be forgotten. The little villages around were lovely and quaint. The old town of Salisbury, with its wonderful Cathedral and memories of old England, threw the glamour of romance and chivalry over the new soldiers in the new crusade. But winter drew on, and such a winter it was. The rains descended, the floods came and the storms beat upon our tents, and the tents which were old and thin allowed a fine sprinkling of moisture to fall upon our faces. The green sward was soon trampled into deep and clinging mud. There was nothing for the men to do. Ammunition was short, there was little rifle practice. The weather was so bad that a route march meant a lot of wet soldiers with nowhere to dry their clothes upon their return. In some places the mud went over my long rubber boots. The gales of heaven swept over the plain unimpeded. Tents were blown down. On one particularly gloomy night, I met a chaplain friend of mine in the big Y.M.C.A. marquee. I said to him, "For goodness sake let us do something for the men. Let us have a sing-song." He agreed, and we stood in the middle of the marquee with our backs to the pole and began to sing a hymn. I do not know what it was. I started the air and was going on so beautifully that the men were beginning to be attracted and were coming around us. Suddenly my friend struck in with a high tenor note. Hardly had the sound gone forth when, like the fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of Joshua's trumpets, a mighty gale struck the building, and with a ripping sound the whole thing collapsed. In the rain and darkness we rushed to the assistance of the attendants and extinguished the lamps, which had been upset, while the men made their way to the counters and put the cigarettes and other dainties into their pockets, lest they should get wet. On another occasion, the Paymaster's tent blew away as he was paying off the battalion. Five shilling notes flew over the plain like white birds over the sea. The men quickly chased them and gathered them up, and on finding them stained with mud thought it unnecessary to return them. On another night the huge marquee where Harrod's ran the mess for a large number of officers, blew down just as we were going to dinner, and we had to forage in the various canteens for tinned salmon and packages of biscuits.

Still, in spite of all, the spirits of our men never failed. One night when a heavy rain had turned every hollow into a lake, and every gully into a rushing cataract, I went down to some tents on a lower level than my own. I waded through water nearly a foot deep and came to a tent from which I saw a faint light emerging. I looked inside and there with their backs to the pole stood some stalwart young Canadians. On an island in the tent, was a pile of blankets, on which burnt a solitary candle. "Hello, boys, how are you getting on?" "Fine, Sir, fine," was their ready response. "Well, boys, keep that spirit up," I said, "and we'll win the war."

At first we had no "wet" canteen where beer could be procured. The inns in the villages around became sources of great attraction to the men, and the publicans did their best to make what they could out of the well-paid Canadian troops. The maintenance of discipline under such circumstances was difficult. We were a civilian army, and our men had come over to do a gigantic task. Everyone knew that, when the hour for performance came, they would be ready, but till that hour came they were intolerant of restraint.

The English people did not understand us, and many of our men certainly gave them good reason to be doubtful. Rumour had it at one time that we were going to be taken out of the mud and quartered in Exeter. Then the rumour was that the Exeter people said, "If the Canadians are sent here, we'll all leave the town." I did not mind, I told the men I would make my billet in the Bishop's Palace.

The C.O. of one of the battalions was tempted to do what David did with such disastrous results, namely number the people. He called the roll of his battalion and found that four hundred and fifty men were absent without leave. But as I have said, we all knew that when the moment for big things

came, every man would be at his post and would do his bit.

Just before Christmas the 3rd Brigade were moved into huts at Lark Hill. They were certainly an improvement upon the tents, but they were draughty and leaky. From my window I could see, on the few occasions when the weather permitted it, the weird and ancient circles of Stonehenge.

The calm repose of those huge stones, which had watched unmoved the passing of human epochs, brought peace to the mind. They called to memory the lines;—

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

In order to give Christmas its religious significance, I asked permission of the Rector of Amesbury to use his church for a midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve. He gladly gave his consent and notice of the service was sent round to the units of the Brigade. In the thick fog the men gathered and marched down the road to the village, where the church windows threw a soft light into the mist that hung over the ancient burial ground. The church inside was bright and beautiful. The old arches and pillars and the little side chapels told of days gone by, when the worship of the holy nuns, who had their convent there, rose up to God day by day. The altar was vested in white and the candles shone out bright and fair. The organist had kindly consented to play the Christmas hymns, in which the men joined heartily. It was a service never to be forgotten, and as I told the men, in the short address I gave them, never before perhaps, in the history of that venerable fane, had it witnessed a more striking assembly. From a distance of nearly seven thousand miles some of them had come, and this was to be our last Christmas before we entered the life and death struggle of the nations. Row after row of men knelt to receive the Bread of Life, and it was a rare privilege to administer it to them. The fog was heavier on our return and some of us had great difficulty in finding our lines.

It seemed sometimes as if we had been forgotten by the War Office, but this was not the case. We had visits from the King, Lord Roberts and other high officials. All these were impressed with the physique and high spirits of our men.

The conditions under which we lived were certainly atrocious, and an outbreak of meningitis cast a gloom over the camp. It was met bravely and skilfully by our medical men, of whose self-sacrifice and devotion no praise is too high. The same is true of their conduct all through the war.

Our life on the Plain was certainly a puzzle to us. Why were we kept there? When were we going to leave? Were we not wanted in France? These were the questions we asked one another. I met an Imperial officer one day, who had just returned from the front. I asked him when we were going to train for the trenches. "Why" he said, "what better training could you have than you are getting here? If you can stand the life here, you can stand the life in France." I think he was right. That strange experience was just what we needed to inure us to hardship, and it left a stamp of resolution and efficiency on the First Division which it never lost.

CHAPTER IV.

OFF TO FRANCE.
January To March, 1915.

Towards the end of January, rumors became more frequent that our departure was close at hand, and we could see signs of the coming movement in many quarters. The disposition of the chaplains was still a matter of uncertainty. At last we were informed that only five chaplains were to proceed with the troops to France. This was the original number which the War Office had told us to bring from Canada. The news fell like a thunderbolt upon us, and we at once determined to get the order changed. The Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain and myself, by permission of the General, made a special journey to the War Office. The Chaplain-General received us, if not coldly, at least austere. We told him that we had come from Canada to be with the men and did not want to leave them. He replied by saying that the Canadians had been ordered by Lord Kitchener to bring only five chaplains with them, and they had brought thirty-one. He said, looking at me, "That is not military discipline; we must obey orders." I explained to him that since the Canadian Government was paying the chaplains the people thought it did not matter how many we had. Even this did not seem to convince him. "Besides", he said, "they tell me that of all the troops in England the Canadians are the most disorderly and undisciplined, and they have got thirty-one chaplains." "But", I replied, "you ought to see what they would have been like, if we had brought only five." We succeeded in our mission in so far that he promised to speak to Lord Kitchener that afternoon and see if the wild Canadians could not take more chaplains with them to France than were allotted to British Divisions. The result was that eleven of our chaplains were to be sent.

Early in February we were told that our Division was to go in a few days. In spite of the mud and discomfort we had taken root in Salisbury Plain. I remember looking with affection one night at the Cathedral bathed in moonlight, and at the quaint streets of the dear old town, over which hung the shadow of war. Could it be possible that England was about to be crushed under the heel of a foreign tyrant? If such were to be her fate, death on the battlefield would be easy to bear. What Briton could endure to live under the yoke or by the permission of a vulgar German autocrat?

On entering the mess one evening I was horrified to read in the orders that Canon Scott was to report immediately for duty to No. 2 General Hospital. It was a great blow to be torn from the men of the fighting forces. I at once began to think out a plan of campaign. I went over to the G.O.C. of my brigade, and told him that I was to report to No. 2 General Hospital. I said, with perfect truth, that I did not know where No. 2 General Hospital was, but I had determined to begin the hunt for it in France. I asked him if he would take me across with the Headquarters Staff, so that I might begin my search at the front. He had a twinkle in his eye as he told me that if I could get on board the transport, he would make no objection. I was delighted with the prospect of going over with the men.

When the time came to pack up, I was overwhelmed by the number of things that I had accumulated during the winter. I disposed of a lot of useless camp furniture, such as folding tables and collapsible chairs, and my faithful friend the oil stove. With a well-filled Wolseley kit-bag and a number of haversacks bursting with their contents, I was ready for the journey. On February 11th, on a lovely afternoon, I started off with the Headquarters Staff. We arrived at Avonmouth and made our way to the docks. It was delightful to think that I was going with the men. I had no batman and no real standing with the unit with which I was travelling. However, I did not let this worry me. I got a friend to carry my kit-bag, and then covering myself with haversacks, till I looked, as the men said, like a Christmas tree, I made my way to the ship with a broad grin of satisfaction on my face. As I went up the gangway so attired and looking exceedingly pleased with myself, my appearance excited the suspicion of the officer in command of the ship, who was watching the troops come on board. Mistaking the cause of my good spirits, he called a captain to him and said, "There is an officer coming on board who is drunk; go and ask him who he is." The captain accordingly came over and greeting me pleasantly said, "How do you do, Sir?" "Very well, thank you," I replied, smiling all the more. I was afraid he had come up to send me back. Having been a teetotaler for twenty-two years, I

knew nothing of the horrible suspicion under which I lay at the moment. The captain then said, "Who are you, Sir?" and I, thinking of my happy escape from army red tape, answered quite innocently, with a still broader grin, "I'm No. 2, General Hospital." This, of course confirmed the captain's worst suspicions. He went back to the O.C. of the ship. "Who does he say he is?" said the Colonel. "He says he is No. 2 General Hospital," the Captain replied. "Let him come on board" said the Colonel. He thought I was safer on board the ship than left behind in that condition on the wharf. With great delight I found all dangers had been passed and I was actually about to sail for France.

The boat which took us and the 3rd Artillery Brigade, was a small vessel called "The City of Chester." We were horribly crowded, so my bed had to be made on the table in the saloon. A doctor lay on the sofa at the side and several young officers slept on the floor. We had not been out many hours before a terrific gale blew up from the West, and we had to point our bow towards Canada. I told the men there was some satisfaction in that. We were exceedingly uncomfortable. My bed one night slid off the table on to the sleeping doctor and nearly crushed him. I squeezed out some wonderfully religious expressions from him in his state of partial unconsciousness. I replaced myself on the table, and then slid off on to the chairs on the other side. I finally found a happy and safe haven on the floor. On some of the other transports they fared even worse. My son, with a lot of other privates, was lying on the floor of the lowest deck in his boat, when a voice shouted down the gangway, "Lookout boys, there's a horse coming down." They cleared away just in time for a horse to land safely in the hold, having performed one of those miraculous feats which horses so often do without damage to themselves.

On the 15th of February we arrived off the west coast of France and disembarked at St. Nazaire. Our life now took on fresh interest. Everything about us was new and strange. As a Quebecker I felt quite at home in a French town. A good sleep in a comfortable hotel was a great refreshment after the voyage. In the afternoon of the following day we entrained for the front. I spread out my Wolesley sleeping bag on the straw in a box car in which there were several other officers. Our progress was slow, but it was a great thing to feel that we were travelling through France, that country of romance and chivalry. Our journey took more than two days, and we arrived at Hazebrouck one week after leaving Salisbury Plain. The town has since been badly wrecked, but then it was undamaged. The Brigadier lent me a horse and I rode with his staff over to Caestre where the brigade was to be billeted. In the same town were the 15th and 16th Battalions and the 3rd Field Ambulance. I had a room that night in the Château, a rather rambling modern house. The next morning I went out to find a billet for myself. I called on the Mayor and Mayoress, a nice old couple who not only gave me a comfortable room in their house, but insisted upon my accepting it free of charge. They also gave me breakfast in the kitchen downstairs. I was delighted to be so well housed and was going on my way rejoicing when I met an officer who told me that the Brigade Major wanted to see me in a hurry. I went over to his office and was addressed by him in a very military manner. He wanted to know why I was there and asked what unit I was attached to. I told him No. 2 General Hospital. He said, "Where is it?" "I don't know", I replied, "I came over to France to look for it." He said, "It is at Lavington on Salisbury Plain," and added, "You will have to report to General Alderson and get some attachment till the hospital comes over." His manner was so cold and businesslike that it was quite unnerving and I began to realize more than ever that I was in the Army. Accordingly that afternoon I walked over to the General's Headquarters, at Strazeele, some five miles away, and he attached me to the Brigade until my unit should come to France. I never knew when it did come to France, for I never asked. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" was my motto. I held on to my job at the front. But the threat which the Brigadier held over me, that if I went into the trenches or anywhere out of his immediate ken I should be sent back to No. 2 General Hospital, was something which weighed upon my spirits very heavily at times, and caused me to acquire great adroitness in the art of dodging. In fact, I made up my mind that three things had to be avoided if I wished to live

through the campaign—sentries, cesspools, and generals. They were all sources of special danger, as everyone who has been at the front can testify. Over and over again on my rambles in the dark, nothing has saved me from being stuck by a sentry but the white gleam of my clerical collar, which on this account I had frequently thought of painting with luminous paint. One night I stepped into a cesspool and had to sit on a chair while my batman pumped water over me almost as ill-savoured as the pool itself. On another occasion, when, against orders, I was going into the trenches in Ploegsteert, I saw the General and his staff coming down the road. Quick as thought, I cantered my horse into an orchard behind a farm house, where there was a battery of Imperials. The men were surprised, not to say alarmed, at the sudden appearance of a chaplain in their midst. When I told them, however, that I was dodging a general, they received me with the utmost kindness and sympathy. They had often done the same themselves, and offered me some light refreshments.

On the following Sunday we had our first church parade in the war zone. We were delighted during the service to hear in the distance the sound of guns and shells. As the war went on we preferred church parades when we could not hear guns and shells.

After a brief stay in Caestre the whole brigade marched off to Armentieres. Near Flêtre, the Army Commander, General Smith-Dorrien, stood by the roadside and took the salute as we passed. I went with the 15th Battalion, and, as I told the men, being a Canon, marched with the machine gun section. We went by the delightful old town of Bailleul. The fields were green. The hedges were beginning to show signs of spring life. The little villages were quaint and picturesque, but the pavé road was rough and tiring. Bailleul made a delightful break in the journey. The old Spanish town hall, with its tower, the fine old church and spire and the houses around the Grande Place, will always live in one's memory. The place is all a ruin now, but then it formed a pleasant home and meeting place for friends from many parts. We skirted the borders of Belgium and arrived at Armentieres in the afternoon. The place had been shelled and was partly deserted, but was still a populous town. I made my home with the Brigade transport in a large school. In the courtyard our horses and mules were picketed. I had never heard mules bray before and I had a good sample next morning of what they can do, for with the buildings around them the sound had an added force. The streets of Armentieres were well laid out and some of the private residences were very fine. It is astonishing how our camp life at Salisbury had made us love cities. Armentieres has since been destroyed and its church ruined. Many of us have pleasant memories of the town, and the cemetery there is the resting place of numbers of brave Canadians.

I ran across an imperial Chaplain there, whom I had met in England. He told me he had a sad duty to perform that night. It was to prepare for death three men who were to be shot at daybreak. He felt it very keenly, and I afterwards found from experience how bitter the duty was.

We were brought to Armentieres in order to be put into the trenches with some of the British units for instruction. On Wednesday evening, February the 24th, the men were marched off to the trenches for the first time and I went with a company of the 15th Battalion, who were to be attached to the Durham Light Infantry. I was warned to keep myself in the background as it was said that the chaplains were not allowed in the front line. The trenches were at Houplines to the east of Armentieres. We marched down the streets till we came to the edge of the town and there a guide met us and we went in single file across the field. We could see the German flare-lights and could hear the crack of rifles. It was intensely interesting, and the mystery of the war seemed to clear as we came nearer to the scene of action. The men went down into the narrow trench and I followed. I was welcomed by a very nice young captain whom I never heard of again till I saw the cross that marked his grave in the Salient. The trenches in those days were not what they afterwards became. Double rows of sandbags built like a wall were considered an adequate protection. I do not think there was

any real parados. The dugouts were on a level with the trench and were roofed with pieces of corrugated iron covered with two layers of sandbags. They were a strange contrast to the dugouts thirty feet deep, lined with wood, which we afterwards made for our trench homes.

I was immensely pleased at having at last got into the front line. Even if I were sent out I had at least seen the trenches. The captain brought me to his tiny dugout and told me that he and I could squeeze in there together for the night. He then asked me if I should like to see the trench, and took me with him on his rounds. By this time it was dark and rainy and very muddy. As we were going along the trench a tall officer, followed by another met us and exchanged a word with the captain. They then came up to me and the first one peered at me in the darkness and said in abrupt military fashion, "Who are you?" I thought my last hour had come, or at least I was going to be sent back. I told him I was a chaplain with the Canadians. "Did you come over with the men?" "Yes", I said. "Capital", he replied, "Won't you come and have lunch with me tomorrow?" "Where do you live?" I said. The other officer came up to my rescue at this moment and said, "The General's Headquarters are in such and such a place in Armentieres," "Good Heavens", I whispered in a low tone to the officer, "Is he a general?" "Yes" he said. "I hope my department was all that it ought to have been in the presence of a general," I replied. "It was excellent, Padré," he said, with a laugh. So I arranged to go and have luncheon with him two days afterwards, for I was to spend forty-eight hours in the trenches. The first officer turned out to be General Congreve, V.C., a most gallant man. He told me at luncheon that if he could press a button and blow the whole German nation into the air he would do it. I felt a little bit shocked then, because I did not know the Germans as I afterwards did. I spent nearly four years at the front hunting for that button.

The captain and I had very little room to move about in his dugout. I was very much impressed with the unostentatious way in which he said, "If you want to say your prayers, Padré, you can kneel over in that corner first, because there is only room for one at a time. I will say mine afterwards"—and he did. He was a Roman Catholic, and had lived in India, and was a very fine type of man. When I read the words two years afterwards on a cross in a cemetery near Poperinghe, "Of your charity pray for the soul of Major Harter, M.C.," I did it gladly and devoutly.

I had brought with me in a small pyx, the Blessed Sacrament, and the next morning I gave Communion to a number of the men. One young officer, a boy of eighteen, who had just left school to come to the front, asked me to have the service in his dugout. The men came in three or four at a time and knelt on the muddy floor. Every now and then we could hear the crack of a bullet overhead striking the sandbags. The officer was afterwards killed, and the great promise of his life was not fulfilled in this world.

There was a great deal of rifle fire in the trenches in those days. The captain told me the Canadians were adepts in getting rid of their ammunition and kept firing all night long. Further down the line were the "Queen's Own Westminsters." They were a splendid body of young men and received us very kindly. On my way over to them the next morning, I found in a lonely part of a trench a man who had taken off his shirt and was examining the seams of it with interest. I knew he was hunting for one of those insects which afterwards played no small part in the general discomfort of the Great War, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to learn privately what they looked like. So I took a magnifying glass out of my pocket and said, "Well, my boy, let me have a look for I too am interested in botany." He pointed to a seam in his shirt and said, "There, Sir, there is one." I was just going to examine it under the glass when, crack! a bullet hit the sandbags near-by, and he told me the trench was enfiladed. I said, "My dear boy, I think I will postpone this scientific research until we get to safer quarters, for if I am knocked out, the first question my congregation will ask will be, "What was our beloved pastor doing when he was hit?" If they hear that I was hunting in a man's shirt for

one of these insects, they will not think it a worthy ending to my life." He grinned, put on his shirt, and moved down the trench.

That afternoon a good many shells passed over our heads and of course the novelty of the thing made it most interesting. After a war experience of nearly four years, one is almost ashamed to look back upon those early days which were like war in a nursery. The hideous thing was then only in its infancy. Poison gas, liquid fire, trench mortars, hand grenades, machine guns, (except a very few) and tanks were then unknown. The human mind had not then made, as it afterward did, the sole object of its energy the destruction of human life. Yet with a deepening knowledge of the instruments of death has come, I trust, a more revolting sense of the horrors and futility of war. The romance and chivalry of the profession of arms has gone forever. Let us hope that in the years to come the human mind will bend all its energies to right the wrongs and avert the contentions that result in bloodshed.

On the following Sunday, we had a church parade in the square in Armentieres. Two or three men watched the sky with field glasses lest an enemy plane should come up. We had now finished our instruction in trench warfare and were going to take over part of the front line. We were marched off one afternoon to the village of Bac St. Maur, where we rested for the night. I had dinner with the officers of the 15th Battalion, and went out afterwards to a big factory at the end of the straggling brick village to see my son, whose battalion was quartered there. On returning I found the night was very dark, and every door and window in the long rows of houses was tightly closed. No lights were allowed in the town. Once more my faculty for losing my way asserted itself, and I could not tell which was the house where I had dined. It was to be my billet for the night. The whole place was silent, and I wandered up and down the long street. I met a few soldiers and when I asked if they could tell me where I had had dinner they naturally began to eye me with suspicion. At the same time it was no laughing matter. I had had a long walk in the afternoon and had the prospect of another on the following day. I was separated from my kit-bag and my safety razor, which always, at the front, constituted my home, and the night was beginning to get cold. Besides it was more or less damaging to one's character as a chaplain to be found wandering aimlessly about the streets at night asking where you had dined. My habits were not as well known to the men then as they were after a few years of war. In despair I went down the road behind the village, and there to my joy I saw a friendly light emerging from the door of a coach house. I went up to it and entered and found to my relief the guard of the 16th Battalion. They had a big fire in the chimney-place, and were smoking and making tea. It was then about one o'clock, and they were both surprised and amused at my plight, but gave me a very glad welcome and offered me a bed and blankets on the floor. I was just going to accept them when I asked if the blankets were "crummy". The men burst out laughing. "You bet your life they are, Sir," they cried. "Well, boys," I said, "I think that I prefer to spend the night walking about the village and trying to compose a poem." Once more I made my way down the dark street, examining closely every door and window. At last I found a crack of light which came from one of the houses. I knocked at the door and it was opened by an officer from Quebec, who had been engaged with some others in a quiet game of cards. He was amused at my homeless condition and kindly took me in and gave me a comfortable bed in his own room. On the next morning of course I was "ragged" tremendously on my disappearance during the night.

The next day we marched off to the village of Sailly-sur-Lys, which was to become our rear headquarters during our occupation of the trenches. The little place had been damaged by shells, but every available house was occupied. Our battalion moved up the country road and was dispersed among the farm houses and barns in the neighbourhood.

I made my home with some officers in a small and dirty farm house. The novelty of the situation,

however, gave it a certain charm for the time. We were crowded into two or three little rooms and lay on piles of straw. We were short of rations, but each officer contributed something from his private store. I had a few articles of tinned food with me and they proved to be of use. From that moment I determined never to be without a tin of bully beef in my haversack, and I formed the bully beef habit in the trenches which lasted till the end and always amused the men. The general cesspool and manure heap of the farm was, as usual, in the midst of the buildings, and was particularly unsavoury. A cow waded through it and the family hens fattened on it. Opposite our window in one of the buildings dwelt an enormous sow with a large litter of young ones. When any of the ladies of the family went to throw refuse on the manure heap, the old sow, driven by the pangs of hunger, would stand on her hind legs and poke her huge face out over the half door of her prison appealing in pig language for some of the discarded dainties. Often nothing would stop her squeals but a smart slap on her fat cheeks by the lady's tender hand. In the hayloft of the barn the men were quartered. Their candles made the place an exceedingly dangerous abode. There was only one small hole down which they could escape in case of fire. It is a wonder we did not have more fires in our billets than we did.

The trenches assigned to our Brigade were to the right of Fleurbaix. They were poorly constructed, but as the time went on were greatly improved by the labours of our men. The Brigadier assigned to me for my personal use a tiny mud-plastered cottage with thatched roof and a little garden in front. It was in the Rue du Bois, a road which ran parallel with the trenches about 800 yards behind them. I was very proud to have a home all to myself, and chalked on the door the word "Chaplain". In one room two piles of straw not only gave me a bed for myself but enabled me to give hospitality to any officer who needed a billet. Another room I fitted up as a chapel. An old box covered with the silk Union Jack and white cloth and adorned with two candles and cross served as an altar. There were no chairs to be had, but the plain white walls were not unsuited to the purpose to which the room was dedicated.

In this chapel I held several services. It was a fine sight to see a group of tall and stalwart young Highlanders present. Their heads almost reached to the low ceiling, and when they sang, the little building trembled with the sound.

Every night when there were any men to be buried, I used to receive notice from the front line, and after dark I would set out preceded by my batman, Murdoch MacDonald, a proper young Highlander, carrying a rifle with fixed bayonet on his shoulder. It made one feel very proud to go off down the dark road so attended. When we got to the place of burial I would hold a short service over the open graves in which the bodies were laid to rest. Our casualties were light then, but in those days we had not become accustomed to the loss of comrades and so we felt the toll of death very bitterly.

It made a great difference to me to have a house of my own. Previously I had found it most difficult to get any place in which to lay my head. On one occasion, I had obtained permission from a kind-hearted farmer's wife to rent one corner of the kitchen in her two-roomed house. It was on a Saturday night and when the family had retired to their room I spread my sleeping bag in the corner and went to bed. I got up when the family had gone to Mass in the morning. All through the day the kitchen was crowded, and I saw that if I went to bed that night I should not have the opportunity of getting up again until the family went to Mass on the following Sunday. So I paid the woman five francs for my lodging and started out in pursuit of another. I managed to find a room in another little farmhouse, somewhat larger and cleaner. My room was a small one and had an earth floor. The ceiling was so low that I could touch the beams with my head when I stood on my toes. But in it were two enormous double beds, a table and a chair. What more could one want? A large cupboard

full of straw furnished a billet for Murdoch and he was allowed to do my simple cooking on the family stove.

Small as my billet was, I was able on one occasion to take in and house three officers of the Leicesters, who arrived one night in preparation for the battle of Neuve Chapelle. I also stowed away a sergeant in the cupboard with Murdoch. My three guests were very hungry and very tired and enjoyed a good sleep in the ponderous beds. I saw a photo of one of the lads afterwards in the Roll of Honour page of the "Graphic," and I remembered the delightful talk I had had with him during his visit.

At that time we were all very much interested in a large fifteen-inch howitzer, which had been placed behind a farmhouse, fast crumbling into ruins. It was distant two fields from my abode. To our simple minds, it seemed that the war would soon come to an end when the Germans heard that such weapons were being turned against them. We were informed too, that three other guns of the same make and calibre were being brought to France. The gun was the invention of a retired admiral who lived in a farmhouse nearby and who, when it was loaded, fired it off by pressing an electric button. The officer in charge of the gun was very pleasant and several times took me in his car to interesting places. I went with him to Laventie on the day of the battle of Neuve Chapelle, and saw for the first time the effects of an attack and the wounded being brought back in ambulances.

There was one large barn not far off full of beautiful yellow straw which held several hundred men. I had a service in it one night. The atmosphere was smoky and mysterious, and the hundreds of little candles propped up on mess-tins over the straw, looked like a special illumination. A large heap of straw at the end of the barn served as a platform, and in lieu of an organ I had a mandolin player to start the hymns. The service went very well, the men joining in heartily.

The night before the battle of Neuve Chapelle, I went over to see the captain in charge of the big gun, and he showed me the orders for the next day, issued by the British General. He told me that at seven o'clock it would be "Hell let loose", all down the line. Next morning I woke up before seven, and blocked up my ears so that I should not be deafened by the noise of artillery. But for some reason or other the plans had been changed and I was quite disappointed that the Germans did not get the hammering it was intended to give them. We were on the left of the British line during the battle of Neuve Chapelle, and were not really in the fight. The British suffered very heavily and did not meet with the success which they had hoped for.

My son was wounded in this engagement and was sent out with the loss of an eye. On returning from seeing him put into a hospital train at Merville, I was held up for some hours in the darkness by the British Cavalry streaming past in a long line. I was delighted to see them for I thought we had broken through. On the next day to our great disappointment we saw them going back again.

Near Canadian Headquarters at Saily there was a large steam laundry which was used as a bath for our men. It was a godsend to them, for the scarcity of water made cleanliness difficult. The laundry during bath hours was a curious spectacle. Scores of large cauldrons of steaming water covered the floor. In each sat a man with only his head and shoulders showing, looking as if he were being boiled to death. In the mists of the heated atmosphere and in the dim light of candles, one was reminded of Doré's illustrations of Dante's Inferno. In one of them he represents a certain type of sinner as being tormented forever in boiling water.

We had now finished our time in this part of the line and the Division was ordered back for a rest. The General was troubled about my transportation as I had no horse, but I quoted my favourite text, "The Lord will provide." It made him quite angry when I quoted the text, and he told me that we

were engaged in a big war and could not take things so casually. When, however, he had seen me on various occasions picked up by stray motor cars and lorries and get to our destination before he did, he began to think there was more in the text than he had imagined. I was accused of helping Providence unduly by base subterfuges such as standing in the middle of a road and compelling the motor to stop until I got in. I considered that my being able to stop the car was really a part of the providing. In fact I found that, if one only had courage to stand long enough in the middle of the road without moving, almost any car, were it that of a private or a general, would come to a standstill. It was only a natural thing, when the car had stopped, to go to the occupants and say, "I know the Lord has sent you for the purpose of giving me a lift." It was quite a natural consequence of this for me to be taken in. One day at Estaires I tried to commandeer a fine car standing in the square, but desisted when I was informed by the driver that it was the private property of the Prince of Wales. I am sure that if the Prince had been there to hear the text, he would have driven me anywhere I wanted to go.

On the present occasion, I had not gone far down the road before a car picked me up and took me on my way—an incident which I narrated to the General afterwards with intense satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE THE STORM. *March to April, 1915.*

Our rest-time at Estaires at the end of March was a delightful period of good fellowship. The beautiful early spring was beginning to assert its power over nature. The grass was green. The trees and hedgerows were full of sap and the buds ready to burst into new life. As one walked down the roads in the bright sunshine, and smelt the fresh winds bearing the scent of springtime, an exquisite feeling of delight filled the soul. Birds were singing in the sky, and it was pitiful to think that any other thoughts but those of rapture at the joy of living should ever cross the mind.

A sergeant found me a comfortable billet in a house near the Church. A dear old man and his two venerable daughters were the only occupants. Like all the French people we met, their little home was to them a source of endless joy. Everything was bright and clean, and they took great pleasure in showing off its beauties. There was a large room with glass roof and sides, like a conservatory. On the wall was the fresco of a landscape, drawn by some strolling artist, which gave my hosts infinite delight. There was a river flowing out of some very green woods, with a brilliant blue sky overhead. We used to sit on chairs opposite and discuss the woodland scene, and I must say it brought back memories to me of many a Canadian brook and the charming home life of Canadian woods, from which, as it seemed then, we were likely to be cut off forever.

The Bishop of London paid a visit to our men, and addressed them from the steps of the Town Hall in the Grande Place. The officers and men were charmed with his personality.

It was a joy to me that we were to spend Easter at such a convenient place. On Good Friday afternoon we had a voluntary service in front of the Town Hall. It seemed very fitting that these men who had come in the spirit of self-sacrifice, should be invited to contemplate, for at least an hour, the great world sacrifice of Calvary. A table was brought out from an estaminet nearby and placed in front of the steps. I mounted on this and so was able to address the crowd which soon assembled

there. We sang some of the Good Friday hymns, "When I survey the wondrous Cross", and "Jesu, Lover of my Soul." There must have been several hundred present. I remember specially the faces of several who were themselves called upon within a few weeks to make the supreme sacrifice. Like almost all other religious services at the front, this one had to struggle with the exigencies of war. A stream of lorries at the side of the Grande Place and the noisy motor cycles of despatch riders made an accompaniment to the address which rendered both speaking and hearing difficult.

Easter Day rose bright and clear. I had a hall situated down a narrow lane, which had been used as a cinema. There was a platform at one end and facing it, rows of benches. On the platform I arranged the altar, with the silk Union Jack as a frontal and with cross and lighted candles for ornaments. It looked bright and church-like amid the sordid surroundings. We had several celebrations of the Holy Communion, the first being at six a.m. A large number of officers and men came to perform their Easter duties. A strange solemnity prevailed. It was the first Easter spent away from home; it was the last Easter that most of those gallant young souls spent on earth. The other chaplains had equally large attendances. We sang the Easter hymn at each service, and the music more than anything else carried us back to the days that were.

But our stay in Estaires was only for a time, and soon orders came that we were to move. On April 7th, a bright and lovely spring morning, the whole Division began its fateful journey to Ypres and marched off to Cassel, about thirty miles behind the Salient. The men were in good spirits, and by this time were becoming accustomed to the pavé roads. We passed through Caestre, where I saw my old friends, the Mayor and Mayoress. That afternoon I was taken by two British officers to the little hotel in Cassel for luncheon. The extensive view over the country from the windows reminded me of dear old Quebec. After luncheon my friends motored me to Ypres. The city at that time had not been heavily shelled, except the Cloth Hall and Cathedral. The shops around the square were still carrying on their business and people there were selling post-cards and other small articles. We went into the Cathedral, which had been badly damaged. The roof was more or less intact and the altar and pulpit in their places. I saw what an impressive place it must have been. The Cloth Hall had been burnt, but the beautiful stone façade was still undamaged. A fire engine and horses were quartered under the central tower. There was a quiet air of light and beauty in the quaint old buildings that suggested the mediaeval prosperity of the city. Behind the better class of houses there were the usual gardens, laid out with taste, and often containing fountains and rustic bridges. The French and the Belgians delighted in striving to make a landscape garden in the small area at their command.

I shall always be thankful that I had the opportunity of paying this visit to Ypres while it still retained vestiges of its former beauty. Dark and hideous dreams of drives on ambulances in the midnight hours haunt me now when the name of Ypres is mentioned. I hear the rattle of lorries and motorcycles and the tramp of horses on the cobblestones. The grim ruins on either side of the road stand out hard and sombre in the dim light of the starry sky. There is the passing of innumerable men and the danger of the traffic-crowded streets. But Ypres, as I saw it then, was full of beauty touched with the sadness of the coming ruin.

In the afternoon, I motored back to our brigade on the outskirts of Cassel. After dinner I started off to find my new billet. As usual I lost my way. I went off down the country roads. The farms were silent and dark. There was no one to tell me where my battalion was. I must have gone a long distance in the many detours I made. The country was still a place of mystery to me, and "The little owls that hoot and call" seemed to be the voice of the night itself. The roads were winding and lonely and the air was full of the pleasant odours of the spring fields. It was getting very late and I despaired of finding a roof under which to spend the night. I determined to walk back to the nearest village. As I had marched with the men that day all the way from Estaires, a distance of about twenty

miles, I was quite reasonably tired and anxious to get a bed. I got back to the main road which leads to St. Sylvestre. On approaching the little village I was halted by a British sentry who was mounting guard over a line of Army Service Corps lorries. I went on and encountered more sentries till I stood in the town itself and made my difficulty known to a soldier who was passing. I asked him if he knew where I could get a lodging for the night. He told me that some officers had their headquarters in the Curé's house, and that if I were to knock at the door, very probably I could find a room in which to stay. I went to the house which was pointed out to me and knocked. There was a light in a window upstairs so I knew that my knocking would be heard. Presently a voice called out from the hollow passage and asked me to open the door and come in. I did so, and in the dim light saw at the end of the hall a white figure which was barely distinguishable and which I took to be the individual who had spoken to me. Consequently I addressed my conversation to it. The shadowy form asked me what I wanted and I explained that I had lost my way and asked where the headquarters of my battalion were. The being replied that it did not know but invited me to come in and spend the night. At that moment somebody from the upstairs region came with an electric torch, and the light lit up the empty hall. To my surprise I found that I had been addressing my conversation to the life-sized statue of some saint which was standing on a pedestal at the foot of the stairs. I rather mystified my host by saying that I had been talking to the image in the hall. However, in spite of this, he asked me to come upstairs where he would give me a bed. By this time several of the British officers who occupied the upper flat had become interested in the arrival of the midnight visitor, and were looking over the bannisters. I can remember feeling that my only chance of receiving hospitality depended on my presenting a respectable appearance. I was on my best behaviour. It was greatly to my confusion, therefore, as I walked upstairs under the inspection of those of the upper flat, that I stumbled on the narrow steps. In order to reassure my would-be friends, I called out, "Don't be alarmed, I am a chaplain and a teetotaller". They burst out laughing and on my arrival at the top greeted me very heartily. I was taken into a long bedroom where there were five beds in a row, one of which was assigned to me. Not only was I given a bed, but one of their servants went and brought me a hot-cross bun and a glass of milk. In return for such wholehearted and magnificent hospitality, I sat on the edge of the bed and recited poems to my hosts, who at that hour of the morning were not averse to anything which might be conducive to sleep. On the next day I was made an honorary member of their mess. I should like to bear testimony here to the extraordinary cordiality and kind hospitality which was always shown to us by British officers.

Later on in the day, I found the 13th Battalion just a few miles outside Cassel at a place called Terdeghem. It was a quaint little village with an interesting church. I got a billet in a farmhouse. It was a curious building of brick and stood on the road where a little gate opened into a delightful garden, full of old-fashioned flowers. My room was reached by a flight of steps from the kitchen and was very comfortable. I disliked, however, the heavy fluffy bed. Murdoch MacDonald used to sleep in the kitchen.

There were some charming walks around Terdeghem. One which I liked to take led to a very old and picturesque chateau, surrounded by a moat. I was immensely impressed with the rows of high trees on which the rooks built their noisy cities. Sometimes a double line of these trees, like an avenue, would stretch across a field. Often, as I have walked home in the dark after parish visiting, I have stood between the long rows of trees and listened to the wind sighing through their bare branches and looked up at the stars that "were tangled in them". Then the dread mystery of war and fate and destruction would come over me. It was a relief to think how comfortable and unconcerned the rooks were in their nests with their children about them in bed. They had wings too wherewith to fly away and be at rest.

Cassel was used at that time by the French Army, so we were excluded from it unless we had a

special permit. It was a delightful old town, and from its commanding position on a rock has been used as a fortress more or less since the days of Julius Caesar. The Grand Place is delightful and quaint. From it, through various archways, one looks down upon the rich verdure of the fields that stretch far off into the distance.

We had a parade of our four battalions one day, when General Smith-Dorrien came to inspect us. The place chosen was a green slope not far from the entrance to the town. The General reviewed the men, and then gave a talk to the officers. As far as I can recollect, he was most sanguine about the speedy termination of the war. He told us that all we had to do was to keep worrying the Germans, and that the final crushing stroke would be given on the east by the Russians. He also told us that to us was assigned the place of honour on the extreme left of the British line next to the French Colonial troops. I overheard an irreverent officer near me say, "Damn the place of honour", and I thought of Sam Hughes and his warning about not objecting to swearing. The General, whom I had met before, asked me to walk with him up to his car and then said, "I have had reports about the Canadian Artillery, and I am delighted at their efficiency. I have also heard the best accounts of the Infantry, but do you think, in the event of a sudden onslaught by the Germans, that the Canadians will hold their ground? They are untried troops." I told him that I was sure that one thing the Canadians would do would be to hold on. Before a fortnight had passed, in the awful struggle near Langemarcke, the Canadians proved their ability to hold their ground.

Shortly after the General's visit we were ordered to move, and by some oversight on Murdoch MacDonald's part, my kit was not ready in time to be taken by the Brigade transport. In consequence, to my dismay, I saw the men march off from Terdeghem to parts unknown, and found myself seated on my kit by the wayside with no apparent hope of following. I administered a rebuke to Murdoch as sternly as was consistent with the position of a chaplain, and then asked him to see if he could find any sort of vehicle at all to carry my stuff off in the direction towards which the battalion had marched. I must say I felt very lonely and a "bit out of it", as I sat by the wayside wondering if I had lost the Brigade for good. In the meantime, Murdoch scoured the village for a horse and carriage. Suddenly, to my surprise, a despatch rider on a motorcycle came down the road and stopped and asked me if I knew where Canon Scott was. I said, "I'm the man", and he handed me a letter. It turned out to be one from General Smith-Dorrien, asking me to allow him to send a poem which I had written, called "On the Rue du Bois" to "The Times." It was such a kind friendly letter that at once it dispelled my sense of loneliness, and when Murdoch arrived and told me that there was not a horse in the place at my disposal, I replied that I did not mind so much now since I had the British General for a friend. I left Murdoch to guard my goods and chattels and went off myself down the road to the old Château and farmhouse. There I was lucky enough to obtain a cart with three wheels. It was an extremely long and heavily built vehicle and looked as if it dated from the 17th century. The horse that was put into it looked as if it had been born about the same period. The old man who held the solitary rein and sat over the third wheel under the bow looked to be of almost equal antiquity. It must have been about thirty feet from the tip of the old horse's nose to the end of the cart. However I was glad to get any means of transportation at all, so I followed the thing to the road where my kit was waiting, Murdoch MacDonald put all my worldly possessions on the equipage. They seemed to occupy very little room in the huge structure. Murdoch, shouldering his rifle, followed it, and I, rather ashamed of the grotesque appearance of my caravan, marched on as quickly as I could in front, hoping to escape the ridicule which I knew would be heaped upon me by all ranks of my beloved brigade. A man we met told us that the battalion had gone to Steenvoorde, so thither we made our way. On our arrival I was taken to the Château and kindly treated by the laird and his family, who allowed me to spread out my bed-roll on the dining room floor.

On the following morning an Imperial officer very kindly took me and my kit to Ypres. There at the

end of Yser Canal, I found a pleasant billet in a large house belonging to a Mr. Vandervyver, who, with his mother, gave me a kind reception and a most comfortably furnished room. Later on, the units of our brigade arrived and I marched up with the 14th Battalion to the village of Wieltje. Over it, though we knew it not, hung the gloom of impending tragedy. Around it now cluster memories of the bitter price in blood and anguish which we were soon called upon to pay for the overthrow of tyranny. It was a lovely spring evening when we arrived, and the men were able to sit down on the green grass and have their supper before going into the trenches by St. Julien. I walked back down that memorable road which two years later I travelled for the last time on my return from Paschendaele. The great sunset lit the sky with beautiful colours. The rows of trees along that fateful way were ready to burst into new life. The air was fresh and invigorating. To the south, lay the hill which is known to the world as Hill 60, afterwards the scene of such bitter fighting. Before me in the distance, soft and mellow in the evening light, rose the towers and spires of Ypres—Ypres! the very name sends a strange thrill through the heart. For all time, the word will stand as a symbol for brutal assaults and ruthless destruction on the one hand and heroic resolve and dogged resistance on the other. On any grim monument raised to the Demon of War, the sole word "YPRES" would be a sufficient and fitting inscription.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES. *April 22nd, 1915.*

Behind my house at Ypres there was an old-fashioned garden which was attended to very carefully by my landlady. A summerhouse gave a fine view of the waters of the Yser Canal, which was there quite wide. It was nice to see again a good-sized body of water, for the little streams often dignified by the name of rivers did not satisfy the Canadian ideas as to what rivers should be. A battalion was quartered in a large brick building several stories high on the east side of the canal. There was consequently much stir of life at that point, and from my summerhouse on the wall I could talk to the men passing by. My billet was filled with a lot of heavy furniture which was prized very highly by its owners. Madame told me that she had buried twelve valuable clocks in the garden in case of a German advance. She also told me that her grandfather had seen from the windows the British going to the battle of Waterloo. She had both a piano and a harmonium, and took great pleasure in playing some of the hymns in our Canadian hymn book. I was so comfortable that I hoped our residence at Ypres might be of long duration. At night, however, desultory shells fell into the city. We could hear them ripping along with a sound like a trolley on a track, and then there would be a fearful crash. One night when returning from Brigade Headquarters near Wieltje, I saw a magnificent display of fireworks to the South. I afterwards heard that it was the night the British attacked Hill 60.

On Sunday, the 18th of April, I had a service for the 15th Battalion in one of the stories of the brick building beside the canal. Something told me that big things were going to happen. I had a feeling that we were resting on the top of a volcano. At the end of the service I prepared for any sudden call to ministration on the battlefield by reserving the Blessed Sacrament.

On Monday some men had narrow escapes when a house was shelled and on the following day I went to the centre of the town with two officers to see the house which had been hit. They appeared to be in a hurry to get to the Square, so I went up one of the side streets to look at the damaged

house. In a cellar near by I found an old woman making lace. Her hunchback son was sitting beside her. While I was making a few purchases, we heard the ripping sound of an approaching shell. It grew louder, till at last a terrific crash told us that the monster had fallen not far off. At that moment a number of people crowded into an adjoining cellar, where they fell on their knees and began to say a litany. I stood at the door looking at them. It was a pitiful sight. There were one or two old men and some women, and some little children and a young girl who was in hysterics. They seemed so helpless, so defenceless against the rain of shells.

I went off down the street towards the Square where the last shell had fallen, and there on the corner I saw a large house absolutely crushed in. It had formerly been a club, for there were billiard tables in the upper room. The front wall had crashed down upon the pavement, and from the debris some men were digging out the body of an officer who had been standing there when the shell fell. His was the first terribly mangled body that I had ever seen. He was laid face downwards on a stretcher and borne away. At that moment a soldier came up and told me that one of the officers with whom I had entered the town about half an hour ago had been killed, and his body had been taken to a British ambulance in the city. I walked across the Square, and there I saw the stretcher-bearers carrying off some civilians who had been hit by splinters of the shell. In the hospital were many dead bodies and wounded men for there had been over one hundred casualties in the city that day. We had hardly arrived when once again we heard the ripping sound which had such a sinister meaning. Then followed a terrific explosion. The final and dreadful bombardment of Ypres had begun. At intervals of ten minutes the huge seventeen-inch shells fell, sounding the death knell of the beautiful old town.

On the next morning, the brother-in-law of the officer who had been killed called on me and asked me to go and see the Town Major and secure a piece of ground which might be used for the Canadian Cemetery. The Town Major gave us permission to mark off a plot in the new British cemetery. It was in an open field near the jail, known by the name of the Plain d'Amour, and by it was a branch canal. Our Headquarters ordered the Engineers to mark off the place, and that night we laid the body to rest.

The following morning was Thursday, the memorable 22nd of April. The day was bright and beautiful. After burying another man in the Canadian lot, I went off to have lunch and write some letters in my billet. In the afternoon one of the 16th Battalion came in and asked me to have a celebration of the Holy Communion on the following morning, as some of the men would like to attend. I asked him to stay to tea and amuse himself till I had finished my letters. While I was writing I heard the ripping sound of an approaching shell, quickly followed by a tremendous crash. Some building quite close by had evidently been struck. I put on my cap and went out, when the landlady followed me and said, "I hope you are not going into the town." "I am just going to see where the shell has struck", I replied, "and will come back immediately." I never saw her again. As I went up the street I saw the shell had hit a large building which had been used as a hospital. The smoke from the shell was still rolling up into the clear sky. Thinking my services might be needed in helping to remove the patients, I started off in the direction of the building. There I was joined by a stretcher-bearer and we went through the gate into the large garden where we saw the still smoking hole in the ground which the shell had made. I remember that, as I looked into it, I had the same sort of eerie feeling which I had experienced when looking down the crater of Vesuvius. There was something uncanny about the arrival of shells out of the clear sky. They seemed to be things supernatural. The holes made by the seventeen inch shells with which Ypres was assailed were monstrous in size. The engineers had measured one in a field; it was no less than thirty-nine feet across and fifteen feet deep. The stretcher-bearer who was with me said as he looked at this one, "You could put three ambulances into it." We had not contemplated the scene very long before once again there was the ripping sound and a huge explosion, and we found ourselves lying on the ground. Whether we had

thrown ourselves down or had been blown down I could not make out. We got up and the man went back to his ambulance and I went into the building to see if I could help in getting out the wounded. The place I entered was a large chapel and had been used as a ward. There were rows of neat beds on each side, but not a living soul was to be seen. It seemed so ghostly and mysterious that I called out, "Is anyone here?" There was no reply. I went down to the end of the chapel and from thence into a courtyard, where a Belgian told me that a number of people were in a cellar at the other end of a glass passage. I walked down the passage to go to the cellar, when once again there was the ominous ripping sound and a shell burst and all the glass was blown about my ears. An old man in a dazed condition came from the cellar at the end of the passage and told me that all the people had gone. I was helping him across the courtyard towards a gateway when a man came in from the street and took the old fellow on his back and carried him off. By the gateway was a room used as a guardroom. There I found a sentry with three or four Imperials. One of the lads had lost his nerve and was lying under a wooden bench. I tried to cheer them by telling them it was very unlikely that any more shells would come in our direction. I remembered reading in one of Marryatt's books that an officer in the Navy declared he had saved his life by always sticking his head into the hole in the ship which a cannon ball had made, as it was a million chances to one against another cannon ball striking that particular place. Still, at regular intervals, we heard the ripping sound and the huge explosion of a shell. Later on, two members of the 14th Battalion came in, and a woman and a little boy carrying milk. We did our best to restore the lady's courage and hoped that the bombardment would soon cease.

It was about seven p.m., when all of a sudden, we heard the roar of transports and the shouting of people in the street, and I went out to see what was the matter. To my horror I saw a battery of artillery galloping into the town. Civilians were rushing down the pavements on each side of the road, and had even filled the limbers. I called out to one of the drivers and asked him what it meant. "It is a general retreat", he shouted. "The Germans are on our heels." "Where are the infantry?" I called out. "They have all gone." That was one of the most awful moments in my life. I said to myself, "Has old England lost the War after all?" My mouth became suddenly dry as though filled with ashes. A young fellow on horseback stopped and, dismounting, very gallantly said, "Here, Sir, take my horse." "No thank you," I said, but I was grateful to him all the same for his self-sacrifice. I returned to the guardroom and told the sentries what had happened. The lady and the young boy disappeared and the men and I debated as to what we should do. The words, "The Germans are on our heels", were still ringing in my ears. I did not quite know what they signified. Whether they meant in military language that the Germans were ten miles away or were really round the next corner, I did not know, but I took the precaution of looking up the street before entering the gateway. On talking the matter over, the men and I thought it might be the part of discretion to make our way down past the Railway Station to the Vlamertinghe road, as none of us wanted to be taken prisoners. We therefore went down some side streets and crossed the bridge on the road that leads to Vlamertinghe. There I found an ammunition column hurrying out of the town, and the man riding one of the horses on a limber invited me to mount the other, which was saddled. It is so long, however, since I left the circus ring that I cannot mount a galloping horse unless I put my foot into the stirrup. So after two or three ineffectual attempts at a running mount, I climbed up into the limber and asked the driver if it was a general retreat. "No", he said, "I don't think so, only the Germans are close at hand and we were ordered to put the ammunition column further off." "Well", I said, "If it isn't a general retreat, I must go back to my lines or I shall be shot for desertion." I got off the limber and out of the crowd of people, and was making my way back, when I saw a car with a staff officer in it coming up in the direction of the City. I stopped the car and asked the officer if he would give me a ride back to Ypres. When I got in, I said to him quite innocently, "Is this a general retreat?" His nerves were evidently on edge, and he turned on me fiercely, saying, "Padré, never use such a word out here. That word must never be mentioned at the front." I replied, in excuse, that I had been told it

was a retreat by a battery that was coming back from the front. "Padré," he continued, "that word must never be used." I am not sure that he did not enforce his commands by some strong theological terms. "Padré, that word must never be used out here." "Well," I said, "this is the first war I have ever been at, and if I can arrange matters it is the last, but I promise you I will never use it again." Not the least flicker of a smile passed over his face. Of course, as time went on and I advanced in military knowledge, I came to know the way in which my question ought to have been phrased. Instead of saying, "Is this a general retreat?", I ought to have said, "Are we straightening the line?" or "Are we pinching the Salient?" We went on till we came to a general who was standing by the road waiting to "straighten the line". I got out of the car and asked him where I should go. He seemed to be in a great hurry and said gruffly, "You had better go back to your lines." I did not know where they were, but I determined to go in their direction. The general got into the car which turned round and made off towards Vlamertinghe, and I, after a long and envious look in his direction, continued my return to Ypres.

People were still pouring out of the City. I recrossed the bridge, and making my way towards the cemetery, met two men of one of our battalions who were going back. I handed them each a card with my address on it and asked them, in case of my being taken prisoner, to write and tell my family that I was in good health and that my kit was at Mr. Vandervyver's on the Quai. The short cut to my billet led past the quiet cemetery where our two comrades had been laid to rest. It seemed so peaceful that I could not help envying them that their race was won.

It was dark now, but a bright moon was shining and lit up the waters of the branch canal as I walked along the bank towards my home. The sound of firing at the front was continuous and showed that a great battle was raging. I went by the house where the C.O. of the 16th Battalion had had his headquarters as I passed that afternoon. It was now quite deserted and the windows in it and in the houses round the square were all shattered. Not a living thing could I see. I walked across to my billet and found the shutters of the house closed. On the table where my letters were, a smoky oil lamp was burning. Not a human being was there. I never felt so lonely in my life, and those words, "The Germans are on our heels", still kept ringing in my ears. I took the lamp and went upstairs to my room. I was determined that the Germans should not get possession of the photographs of my family. I put them in my pocket, and over my shoulder the pair of glasses which the Bishop and clergy of Quebec had given me on my departure. I also hung round my neck the pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament, then I went out on the street, not knowing what way to take. To my infinite delight, some men came marching up in the moonlight from the end of the canal. I recognized them as the 16th Battalion, Canadian Scottish, and I called out, "Where are you going, boys?" The reply came glad and cheerful. "We are going to reinforce the line, Sir, the Germans have broken through." "That's all right, boys", I said, "play the game. I will go with you." Never before was I more glad to meet human beings. The splendid battalion marched up through the streets towards St. Jean. The men wore their overcoats and full kits. I passed up and down the battalion talking to officers and men. As I was marching beside them, a sergeant called out to me, "Where are we going, Sir?" "That depends upon the lives you have led." A roar of laughter went up from the men. If I had known how near the truth my words were, I probably would not have said them. When we got to St. Jean, a sergeant told me that the 14th Battalion was holding the line. The news was received gladly, and the men were eager to go forward and share the glory of their comrades. Later on, as I was marching in front of the battalion a man of the 15th met us. He was in a state of great excitement, and said, "The men are poisoned, Sir, the Germans have turned on gas and our men are dying." I said to him very sternly, "Now, my boy, not another word about that here." "But it's true, Sir." "Well, that may be, but these men have got to go there all the same, and the gas may have gone before they arrive, so promise me not another word about the poison." He gave me his promise and when I met him a month afterwards in Bailleul he told me he had never said a word about the gas to any of the men