




PREFACE

The following record of my experiences during the Great War, (1914-1918) were taken from extracts of letters written by me to my Parents during my army service. It is entirely due to the interest and patience of my Mother, who carefully copied these extracts into a book as she received them, that the diary was retained. It would have been impossible to have written this account entirely from memory and to her I tender my loving gratitude.

The negatives of the photographs were periodically sent to my home from abroad but owing to enemy submarine activity, some were submerged before arriving at their destination, in consequence, a number of the photographs affixed herein are discoloured and stained.

This book must only be regarded as a record of events, for I have made not the slightest effort to ape literary ability.

I venture to hope that, in years to come, my Son may derive a certain amount of interest from its contents which portray the varied experiences of his Father, and which were written up solely for his pleasure.



(The following text was written during the 1920's. At this time the over use of comma's and apostrophe's was common practice thus you may find some of the book includes large paragraphs of text with little or no full stops).

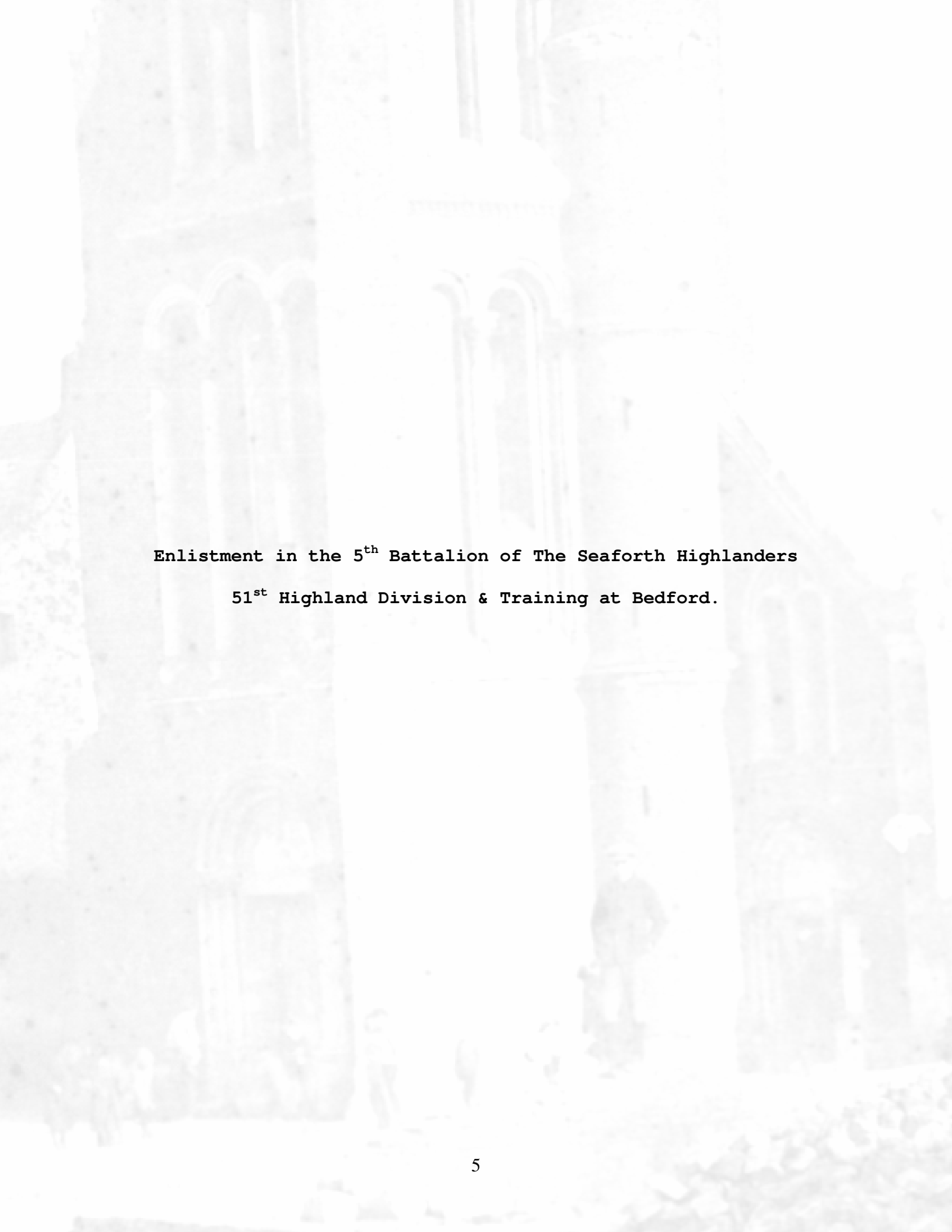


This book was originally written by
James Racine

Edited, restored and converted to digital format by
Nik Racine



The author - James Racine - in his highlanders uniform



**Enlistment in the 5th Battalion of The Seaforth Highlanders
51st Highland Division & Training at Bedford.**

AUGUST 1914.

I was spending my annual leave under canvas with the Guildford Congregational Y.M.C.A. and was sitting in my tent, when the news reached the camp that Great Britain had declared war upon Germany and her Allies. As I was a member of the St John Ambulance Brigade, the next day I returned to my office in Guildford and awaited further developments, for it was possible that my services would be required.

Whilst I sat in my office, I heard cheers and shouts and, looking outside, I saw many young fellows proceeding to the recruiting office to enlist in the army. They were full of enthusiasm and excitement and loudly singing and laughing.

That evening, I reported at the Police Station and was enrolled as a Special Constable, being informed that my duty would be to guard a certain railway bridge, at night, against the possibility of its being blown up by enemy spies.

I attended the office during the days and, throughout the nights, my friends and I took turns at sentry duty at the bridge. During the nights, train loads of troops and transports passed through en route for foreign parts and we all felt very thrilled.

My friend, Ernest Gyatt, and I had discussed offering our services to the Army and we decided to go to London the next day and enlist in a regiment. On Saturday, 12th September 1914, we arrived in London, strolled up Victoria Street, and found ourselves Buckingham Gate, outside the London Scottish Head Mere; we were informed that a certain number were required to complete the strength of the 5th Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders. After a short conversation, my friend and I decided to offer ourselves for service.

We were shown into the presence of the Medical Officer and, after taking off our clothes, were subjected to a medical examination and duly pronounced to be fit. Following the signing of the usual attestation forms and taking the oath, we were instructed to report again on Monday, in readiness to proceed to the battalion for training.

After spending the weekend at Guildford, we again presented ourselves at Buckingham Gate and, with other recruits (amid the cheers of the civilians), were marched to St Pancras Station, headed by the bagpipes; we entrained for Bedford where the Highland Division was undergoing intensive training in preparation for service overseas.



I left the London Scottish Headquarters, Buckingham Gate, to entrain for Bedford.
(I am marked by the arrow).

We reached our destination at about 5 p.m. and were marched to a field. Here we were divided into parties and, after a long halt, were billeted in various houses; in my billet I was accommodated in a nice bedroom. After being thus quartered, we returned to the field for tea, which consisted of bread, jam, and tea.

We thought that we were roughing it, after the comfortable home life of the past, but the recruits were good fellows and we were a merry crowd who entered into the spirit of things. The address of my billet was 190, Forest Hill Road, Bedford.

After a good nights sleep, we were awakened a 6 a.m, by the strains of the pipes and drums; tea was served in the field at 7 a.m. and drill took place until breakfast time. At 9 a.m. drill was continued until 1 p.m (dinner time), then resumed until 4 p.m.

I will describe the food we received. We were allowed no milk or butter and at breakfast, the tea was unsugared; it had a smokey flavour by reason of its preparation over a camp fire. The menu for the day was as follows -

Breakfast	- Tea (so called),
	- thick bread. fairly stale, and jam.
	- sometimes a rasher appeared by mistake.
Dinner	- Stew (well disguised)
Tea	- Bread and jam and tea.
Supper	- That left over from tea.

A redeeming feature was an ample supply even for the hungriest.

My sergeant was quite a good fellow, as friendly as he dared be, and quite willing to help us to the best of his ability.

We were without uniforms and looked strange when drilling in our civilian clothes; some men wore bowler hats and others caps and soft hats.

We constantly made mistakes in drill because the non-commissioned officers spoke such broad Scotch that we had difficulty in understanding their commands.

Many of the fellows were billeted in empty houses, which had not been occupied for years, and we commenced to rough it in preparation for sterner conditions.

A number of the Scottish troops had not volunteered for overseas service and, in consequence, their kilts had been taken from them and given to us and they were forced to wear tartan trousers; these troops were then sent back to the depot in Scotland.

The lady, with whom we were billeted, was very kind and offered to us the use of her drawing room which possessed quite a good piano. The fellows with whom I was quartered were of an educated class and we had good times together.

There were no sheets to the beds so, what with sleeping between blankets and the wearing of army shirts, we had a "ticklish" time'.

A large tent had been provided by the United Free Church of Scotland Mission, for the Use of the Seaforths, where writing materials were free and refreshments dispensed at reasonable prices. A platform had been erected and music and concerts were a nightly amusement act.

The usual programme of army training was carried out daily, thus. physical training before breakfast with running, hopping, etc., drill in the morning until dinner time and resumed in the afternoon; the evenings were usually free for the men to do as they pleased.

I was selected to play a football match "Recruits v. Efficients" of B. Company and, as was expected, it was a rough game but we managed to win.

It was amusing to see the Scotch fellows playing leapfrog in their kilts. They were a very hardy lot, a number of them having served in the Boer War. They did not appear to be very athletic but were very wirey. I think we could have beaten them at jumping etc., as they did not seem to be very active.

We had our meals standing, for the grass was too wet to sit upon. Then the bacon (if any) for breakfast was brought to us by an orderly, a struggle generally ensued and those not successful in the scramble had to go without. This little tussle took place when the bread was also issued.

One day another 150 recruits arrived and the battalion was brought to its full strength.

At the end of the first part week, we were paid the handsome sum of five shillings, which amount was soon spent on little extras such as food, cigarettes, etc.

In Bedford there was a small but compact little theatre, where pictures and music hall turns were provided, so my friend and I occasionally paid our sixpences and indulged in relaxation.

The battalion band consisted of about a dozen pipers with bagpipes, and drummers who, on the march, rendered considerable help to the men when they were tired, by playing lively Scotch airs and thus cheering them up and reviving their drooping spirits.

Bedford was the centre for the Scottish troops, which numbered some 25,000 men. These comprised infantry, artillery, Army Service Corps, Royal Engineers, Army Medical Corps, etc. so the town was crowded with troops

I duly joined my company as a trained man, having successfully completed my training as a recruit.

On Sundays we attended Church Parade, in a field, but I am afraid that many of the men indulged in sleep instead of enjoying (') the service. These services were usually conducted in such a manner that only those in the front could hear.

In the evenings, a roll call was held at 9.30 p.m. and names had to be answered.

When I became attached to the company, as a more or less efficient unit, I found the drills and duties more interesting.

One morning, the Major informed us that he had prepared a scheme which would last for five weeks. We were to commence training in a small way, progress gradually, and terminate with a three days route march. Nights would be spent out and the whole idea carried through as though governed by service conditions.

We started with drill, advancing and retiring in skirmishing order, using independent and rapid fire. The Major explained to us the why and wherefore of the operations and stated that he did not wish us to become mere machines but to understand the reason for the orders.

We had been lectured regarding inoculation against various diseases, by an injection made in the left arm and later in the left leg, to resist enteric and typhoid fever. My friend and I refused to be so treated as I then had no faith in the operation. The open air life suited me admirably and I never felt better in health or spirits.

Bedford was quite a nice town and the inhabitants most hospitable. A large building had been utilized as a place of recreation for the troops, and refreshments at popular prices were served by lady volunteers.

In the evenings, the river was lit by coloured electric lamps which were festooned along its banks, and a military band played; many people made this spot a rendezvous.

We became engaged upon the next phase of our training, in learning outpost work, which consisted putting out scouts, placing sentries over arms, pickets, etc; it was more interesting than the usual drill. We were marched over ploughed fields and had to throw ourselves down and take cover, and twice a week, night operations were carried out, which consisted of outpost duty etc; no smoking or talking was permitted.

The Major again unfolded to us his "great scheme" (as he termed it), of nine weeks; previously he had referred to it as a five weeks scheme. It was the topic of conversation amongst the men and suggested as an excuse for all our troubles. For instance, if we had some unpleasant task to carry out or possibly an extra hard spell of drill, the remark carried along the line in a whisper, was "grand scheme this, mon"; or, if the men were more impatient, "hell of a scheme this". If the food was not up to scratch, someone would remark - "all a part of the scheme".

The Scotch boys, I could see, were good fighters, although full of nonsense, but their slow obedience to orders aggravated the sergeants. On one occasion, an order to "form fours" was given by a sergeant but a man, who was fooling, did not hear the command, whereupon the indignant sergeant immediately said, in broad Scotch, "Fur Gawd's sake, mon, move". Naturally the rest of the company were amused.

One fault seemed to point to the fact that the non commissioned officers had been (in private life) friends of the men and, in consequence, the maintenance of discipline was rather difficult; the following was an instance.

The Scene. A field with men halted after a double march.
Private. "But it's warm, gie us a lee doon, Baub"
Sergeant. "Ye want a lee doon, au richt".
(Enter the major)
Sergeant. "Oop, chaps, yon's th' major".
Drill resumed.

October.

We progressed with our training, skirmished across ploughed fields, route marched, etc. We had not yet received our uniforms although we had constantly worried for them.

Our lieutenant was a very nice fellow who had been with the battalion for seventeen years and had risen from the ranks; he talked and smoked with the men and was most popular. The senior officers and the battalion sergeant-major were very different (being from the Regular army) and were officious; they regarded us as only amateur soldiers.

We had practices in trench digging and each man had to excavate, with pick and shovel, a piece of ground 3ft x 3ft x 6ft; we suffered from well blistered hands. On certain days we had fifteen mile route marches.

There were only seven more weeks in which to complete the scheme, then we were to be taken over by the War Office as efficient. Army shoes were provided, which were hard and needed breaking in, they were very heavy after the light civilian shoes we had so far worn. Uniforms were gradually issued and new rifles; we expected something definite would soon materialize. The training now included sham fights and the use of blank ammunition.

During some nights, we were marched for a distance of some five or more miles and, in the dark, ordered to dig trenches; no smoking or talking was allowed and the work was carried out as quietly as possible.

There were periodic "Brigade days"; the following was an example. The scheme was an imaginary attack on Bedford, with cavalry and artillery marching upon us from London, our Brigade had to repulse them.

One constantly heard the remark, from one or another of the men (especially on a very long route march or during an extra duty) - "A terrible war this, Mon", or a similar expression but in stronger language.

I duly received my kilt and tunic and only awaited the Glengarry and sporran; now I was nearly a fully dressed Highlander.

One day I attended a military funeral; the Gaelic wail of the pipes sounded very weird.

We were inspected by the King. The whole division which included Seaforths, Gordons, Camerons, Black Watch, Argylls, etc. numbering some 30,000 men, paraded and marched past with bayonets fixed. It poured with rain and we were all soaked to the skin.

On certain days we were marched to the rifle range which had been erected about four miles from Bedford and at times, were kept standing about in the pouring rain for the best part of an hour and then marched back again without firing a shot; this was a typical example of the sense of humour of our Divisional Commander.

I took part in a concert which was held in the Guild tent one evening and conclude that more efforts were more or less approved as I did not have to dodge any missiles!

We were ordered to parade at 11am to proceed to the rifle range. At 9am the alarm sounded and we threw our things into kit bags and paraded in full marching order; we were served with 120 rounds of ball ammunition per man.

After a preliminary parade for inspection, we stood from 9.45am until 5pm awaiting the arrival of the General. This caused no small amount of comment from the men, for it was a long time to be without food; however, this was another example of the way things were conducted. I presumed that we would soon receive orders to move, for during this alarm all the transports had been loaded and officers baggage placed on trolleys at the station. It was a false alarm, nevertheless, and we were dismissed to billets but we were prepared to move at a moments warning. The last battalion to leave Bedford only received two hours notice.



The General and Staff Officers.

Major General R. Bannatine-Allason, C.B. Commanding the Highland Division (second figure from the left) with General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B, D.S.O (on the extreme left) and Staff Officers at the inspection on Goldington Green, February 2nd, 1915.

November .

There were still no orders to entrain. As the weather had turned cold, church parades were no longer held in the field but we were marched to church; the parade ground was covered in liquid mud and we were forced to take our meals standing.

The companies were billeted in separate streets for sleeping purposes and the orderlies obtained dixies of tea and food from the parade ground after the cooks had done their worst. Each man, with his share, then sat on the pavement, his back to the railings, with legs plate between them. It was amusing to see a long line of men feeding in this manner; some mornings others were served on the pavement.

A large rifle range had now been constructed, which possessed thirty-two targets, so one half of a battalion was able to carry out firing practice; each company was allotted eight targets and, in consequence, tests were concluded more rapidly. Three thousand recruits proceeded to Ipswich to assist in digging some twenty-five miles of trenches; these were constructed at a place about eight miles from Ipswich. The fellows were welcome to the duty for not having yet sampled this form of training they, in their ignorance, departed with enthusiasm.

I took it easy one Sunday afternoon; we had orders to remain in billets in the evening whilst a number of the company were on picket duty, for we had to stand by case called upon for assistance.

When handing in my pass at the guardroom one night, I saw a struggle take place; six of the guard were struggling to get handcuffs on a man who had struck a sergeant. This man was quite an athlete, so it took some time to overpower him; he was a pretty hard case, having been drummed out of the Regular Army at an earlier date. He must have spent an unpleasant night with his hands handcuffed behind his back.

My billet was changed to 102, Hartington Street, and I shared a room with my friend Gyatt. The landlady, Mrs Stuart, was kindness itself and did everything possible for our comfort; her husband was a tailor and we kept him busy sewing on buttons and pressing our trousers (which we donned, on certain occasions, instead of the kilt).

My rations were now collected from the company orderly room each day and handed to the landlady to prepare and cook.

We were allowed, per day, one pound of meat, half a loaf of bread, an ounce of tea, two ounces of sugar, a small piece of butter, and three small potatoes. The landlady had three young daughters and many musical evenings with these good folks proved of great enjoyment to us.

Again my friend and I were requested, by the Medical Officer, to undergo inoculation but, notwithstanding very uncomplimentary remarks of the Adjutant who was also present, we refused; we were supported in this by ten others of the company.

I spent a weekends leave at my home with my parents and had a splendid time, with a nice bed to sleep in and plenty of good food. On my return journey, I travelled to Waterloo without my friend Gyatt (also on leave); he missed the train. I walked from Waterloo to St Pancras and London was in complete darkness, as a precaution against the possibility of an enemy attack from the air. Just as the train started from St Pancras, my friend dashed on to the platform.

All tickets had been collected and the carriage doors locked, as the train was a "non-stop" to Bedford. My friend sprinted madly along the platform and just managed to get his foot on the step and dive through the carriage window into our arms. We duly reached our destination and were informed, at the guardroom, that all those on leave had been recalled. Several men had left for Scotland and telegrams would await them on arrival instructing them to return at once; this was tough luck, for the rail fare to the north of Scotland, when no free voucher was issued, cost each man about three pounds.

After an inspection by the Colonel one morning, we started on a three days manoeuvre. We marched some twelve miles and finished up at a small village named Riseley, where we spent the night. We were quartered in a red bricked barn full of chaff which made quite comfortable beds for sleeping, although it got into our socks and pricked like needles. There were thirty or so of us sleeping in it and each man was issued with a blanket. Needless to say, the noise the fellows made prevented us from getting much sleep and many were walking about half the night, endeavouring to get warm.

Before we turned in, we thought we would walk into the village and get some tea, for our cooks had missed the way and gone to another village so that there was no prospect of anything being provided by them. My friend and I called at the private residence of a baker, by the name of Valentine, and were welcomed most heartily by the occupants; we were shown into a room in which a fine log fire was burning and a splendid tea was placed before us.

We stayed for an hour or so and finally left, with many hand shakes and wishes of good luck; we returned to the barn and slept until roused early the next morning.

After breakfast, the transport was packed and we moved off to another village across country. It was only a few miles away and we skirmished the distance, for we were supposed to be attacking a stronghold; we arrived at midday and had dinner in a field.

We halted close to a farm named Eastfield Farm and I amused myself by inspecting the various animals. After tea, we were engaged in a night attack and I spent the night in a stable, with eight others, and slept on a stone floor which we covered with straw obtained from a neighbouring rick but the men in the loft above would not let us sleep.

There was a trapdoor (or a piece of loose board) which they soon discovered and showered bran upon us below. The men on the ground floor hurled very uncomplimentary remarks, in true army language, at those responsible but, after a short while, straw and oil cakes rained down and waterbottles emptied over us. We thought this to be sufficient and a firey old Scotch corporal blew out the light, (a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle), took down his rifle and fixed the bayonet.

Next time the flap was raised, he thrust the bayonet through and, as the ceiling was low, a good length of steel must have penetrated into the loft above. It was a mystery to me that no man was hurt and this serves as an illustration of the recklessness of some of the men. We were not troubled further, for we found a workman who nailed down the flap.

The next morning, we commenced our march back to Bedford, a distance of some fifteen miles. When we passed through the village of Riseley again, we were given a cheer by the inhabitants who stood at their gates with plates of cakes. We arrived back at billets and the three days campaign was ended. We received, one evening, orders to pack our kitbags in readiness for immediate departure if, in the middle of the night, the alarm was sounded; whispers of entraining for Lowestoft were in the air. However, no alarm went and we slept in our beds as usual.

There was evidently something in the wind, for all leave was stopped and no passes were granted to even go into the town, I believe the excitement was due to the recent naval battles that had taken place and to the possibility of our being sent *to the* East coast to resist invasion; we had to stand by in our billets in case of the alarm being sounded.

The inoculation question was once more raised and the usual questions and answers forthcoming the Medical officer.

Medical officer.

"Have you been done?"

Answer.

"No, Sir."

Medical officer.

"Are you for foreign service?"

Answer.

"Yes, Sir".

Medical officer.

"Why haven't you been done?"

Answer.

"I object, Sir".

Medical officer.

"Then stay at home, you can't go abroad".

Answer.

"Very good, Sir; if you wont take me as I am, I'll stay at home"

Result - discomfiture of the M.o.

It seemed to be a case of wearing us down and I expected that we would give in later, for the sake of a quieter life.

December.

The training continued with the usual parades, skirmishes, etc; we were getting tired of the false alarms and of the many rumours which were constantly circulated. We were kept busy digging trenches and carrying out rifle firing practices on the range.

An epidemic of measles broke out amongst the troops and the first victim belonging to my company, as taken to hospital in a Red Cross wagon one afternoon.

Once again the alarm was sounded early one morning and we rushed to parade with kits packed and were served with ball, ammunition and iron rations. After standing about for some long time, the ammunition etc. was collected and we were dismissed to billets; we were all heartily sick of the many false alarms and beginning to disbelieve the call of the bugle.

Another Divisional Day as ordered and the Seaforths, Gordons, Black Watch, Argylls, etc, took part in a mock battle. Whilst passing one of the empty houses in which some of the Argylls were billeted, I saw the following wording displayed upon the gatepost "Better meddle wi' th' diel, than th' bairns o' Fa' kirk'

I experienced a harder time as the training progressed and my turn for guard came along. With five others I had to parade in full marching order commanded by a sergeant. We mounted guard over ammunition stores, prisoners, etc. each doing, in turn, two hours sentry duty with four hours rest; this duty lasted from. 9 am until 1.30 p.m. the next day.

On the 10th December 1914 (My birthday), the 7th Battalion of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders left for France and I presumed that it would not be long before we followed them.

We had, what was called, a discipline week; punishments were handed out for even the most trivial offences and all equipment had to be spotless. We were again informed that no Christmas leave would be granted and the men expressed their disappointment in the usual army language'.

Christmas Day.

In the morning we were paraded and drilled and in the afternoon, taken for a route march. Many of the men had celebrated the festive occasion and, in consequence, the column presented a concertina-like appearance, for the men swayed on their legs. I imagined that the reason for the march was to keep the men out of the public houses. There was much singing and all were in good spirits (in more ways than one).

The landlady of my billet had cooked a splendid Christmas spread for us and the landlord provided wine and cigars. We had a jolly time, playing games and singing songs round the piano. On Boxing Day, it poured with rain and we were excused all parades.*

Each day the training continued and increased in its severity.

On New Year's Eve a concert and dance was held in one of the local halls. Two of the pipers were present and I was a spectator of the sword dances and quadrilles.

A Scotchman as accused, by another, of being an Englishman. This was taken as an insult and a knife was at once drawn from a hocket; the attacker was seized and order restored. It is interesting to note, however, that the impulsive knife drawer attempted to attack another man the following day but he received a straight blow in the face which put him out of action for the time being; he exercised greater caution in the future.

After roll call, my friend and I strolled into Bedford to see out the Old Year. About 100 of my company were similarly engaged and we paraded the main street singing songs. My friend and I had a fellow on our shoulders, whilst some of the men had toy bagpipes and drums and formed themselves into a band. We proceeded along the main street in a long line, arm in arm and, when meeting a similar body going in the opposite direction, a charge took place and, after a break through had been accomplished, the march was resumed; midnight was the signal for a general joining of hands and the singing of Auld Lang Sync.

My friend and I returned to the billet at about 1 a.m., leaving the rest to carry on until daylight. Most of the men had indulged freely in drink and we carried one man back to his billet and dropped him on the kitchen floor; free fights were quite the order of the day.

The following evening the troops were entertained to a dinner and concert in all the available halls in the town; two of the pipers preceded my party when we marched away. A gentleman in Scotland had sent a cheque for six hundred pounds, towards the expenses and we had a splendid time.

Once again the toy bagpipes and drums were in evidence. It poured with rain but spirits were not dampened.

One evening, I had my first experience of police picket, which party consisted of a sergeant and six men; trouble was expected on account of the date being near to that of New Year's Eve. Our duties consisted of maintaining order in the town and arresting any men who were drunk and disorderly, or who, where apparent, were in the town without permission.

We had one particularly difficult man to deal with, for he reeled along the High Street and sang at the top of his voice. Twice he was advised to return to his billet but the third time, he swung round and hit one of the picket in the face. We carried him kicking and swearing through the main street, accompanied by the usual interested band of spectators; into the presence of the Police Inspector at the civil police station. Here he was released and dropped on the ground but immediately got up and struck the Inspector in the eye. He was thrown to the ground, searched, and finally deposited in a cell after his boots had been forcibly removed; we left him singing, swearing, and making as much disturbance as he possibly could.

There were now many cases of measles of which quite a number were fatal; military funerals were daily occurrences. There were seventeen bodies in the mortuary during one week. One patient was kept waiting an hour, on a stretcher, in the cold and died; another example of army treatment.

On a certain Sunday, seventeen London men broke bounds and went to London. In uniform, they would not have passed the military police at the station and so they carried their uniforms in suit cases and donned them during the journey.

Information reached the ear of the sergeant-major and, on their return, an escort awaited them and they were lodged in the guardroom under arrest. They were paraded before the Commanding Officer the next morning and duly punished. The Adjutant refused all leave in consequence of this business, which was most unfair to the remainder. On Monday, the Sergeant-major, with a special picket, caught another forty two who had absented themselves without permission.

Recently we had been engaged in severe field operations under the direction of General Sir Bruce Hamilton; he informed us that we would shortly proceed overseas. Later we were marched to the station and there, practiced entraining and, at the conclusion of these operations, were inspected by the Brigadier. We called him "Sporran-face" by reason of the artificial white beard he was reputed to have worn, his jaw having been shot away during the Boer War.

After taking part in another big field day, Sir Ian Hamilton inspected us and took the salute as we marched past.

The Camerons were under orders to leave on the 7th of the following month but nothing was said about the entraining of our battalion.

February.

Again we were marched to the rifle range and as the water was four feet deep in the butts, we had orders to remove our boots and socks and dig out the mud and enlarge the ditches so that the water would run away; this was a cold occupation.

At last my friend and I were inoculated. The figures (if correct) issued by the War Office, appeared to substantiate the statement made that such treatment 'was a preventative against fever'. I am afraid that the prospect of the two days sick leave, with the consequent absence from parades, materially helped us to consent to this 'operation'

We expected to go abroad within a month; all leave was hurried through. Several of Kitchener's New Army officers appeared one morning, for drill practice. They took it in turn to drill the company and, to us, the result was very humorous.

Recently our Lieutenant was promoted to the rank of Captain and, one day, we marched to a field for drill exercises; all ranks were tired of the false alarms and daily routine and impatient to receive orders to move. Our Captain was equally fed up and told us to lie down in the shade of the trees and keep out of sight, but be ready to jump up and resume drill at a given signal, should the Adjutant put in an appearance.

He strolled to a corner of the ground which commanded the approach to the field and, seeing a lady sitting on the gate, engaged her in conversation. After a little while, the lady said, "What are you supposed to be doing?".

He replied, "We are all fed up and instead of doing drill. I have told the men to lie down and keep out of sight; I am keeping a look out for the Adjutant, who is a blighter and would raise the very devil if he caught us". He continued, "I know you by sight but can't remember where I have met you". "Oh", replied the lady; "I am the Adjutant's wife but", she added, "Don't worry, I'm a sport". Needless to add, the Captain nearly swooned.

March.

I was granted four days leave at home. I had a splendid time and thoroughly enjoyed the good food, comfortable bed, and rest. A fellow I journeyed back with, said that he had made so many final farewells with his friends that he almost felt afraid to go home because people presumed that he was on his way to France ; the repeated false alarms were proving embarrassing to us all.

I lost a friend during one week. I parted from him in the evening, as usual, but he failed to put in an appearance at the early morning parade the following morning. He was found to be dead in bed and no cause was attributed as his name had never even figured on the sick list. He was a very nice quiet fellow and had enlisted at the same time as I had; his body was taken to London.

The Company was drawn up for inspection by the Medical officer; he simply walked between the ranks. What a farce.

I again changed my religion; when I first enlisted I attended the Church of England service, later Presbyterian, and finally I became a Wesleyan.

There were only half a dozen of us and on account of the small number, we were allowed to proceed unattended to the morning service and to sit amongst the civilian congregation at the church. It was a change to get away from the everlasting army atmosphere.

Bayonet fighting was a daily occupation and together with Swedish drill, we were put through it severely. A squad was formed into a ring, facing inwards, with the men about two paces apart with their hands behind their backs. A man was detailea to run round on the outside with a strap in his hand, which he dropped into the hands of one of the men in the ring who, in turn, immediately gave chase and endeavoured to catch the other man before he could complete the circle , and occupy the vacated place.

If he was successful in catching the running man, he hit him with the strap; the prospect of such punishment naturally provided an incentive for fleetness of foot. We spent periodical nights in trenches and resisted mock attacks at daybreak. The weather was bad and the tactics were not much appreciated by the men, who did not relish having to stand in trenches throughout the night in pouring rain. Some of these stretches of duty lasted for seventy-two hours and resulted in the weeding out of those men who were not In first class condition. The sick parade was much larger than hitherto.

Information was received that the whole Highland Division was to proceed abroad in the course of a week.

Transports were sold by auction and new ones supplied; all kit was subjected to careful inspection and we were issued with waterproof covers for our glengarries. The battalion stood by one night, orders to proceed to the east Coast having been anticipated. Daily we heard rumours that we were to move but no definite order was given. All surplus kit was handed into store and we were ready to leave at a moments notice.

My Brigade, which consisted of the 5th & 6th seaforth and two battalions of the Argyll Sutherlands, were to be the first to leave.

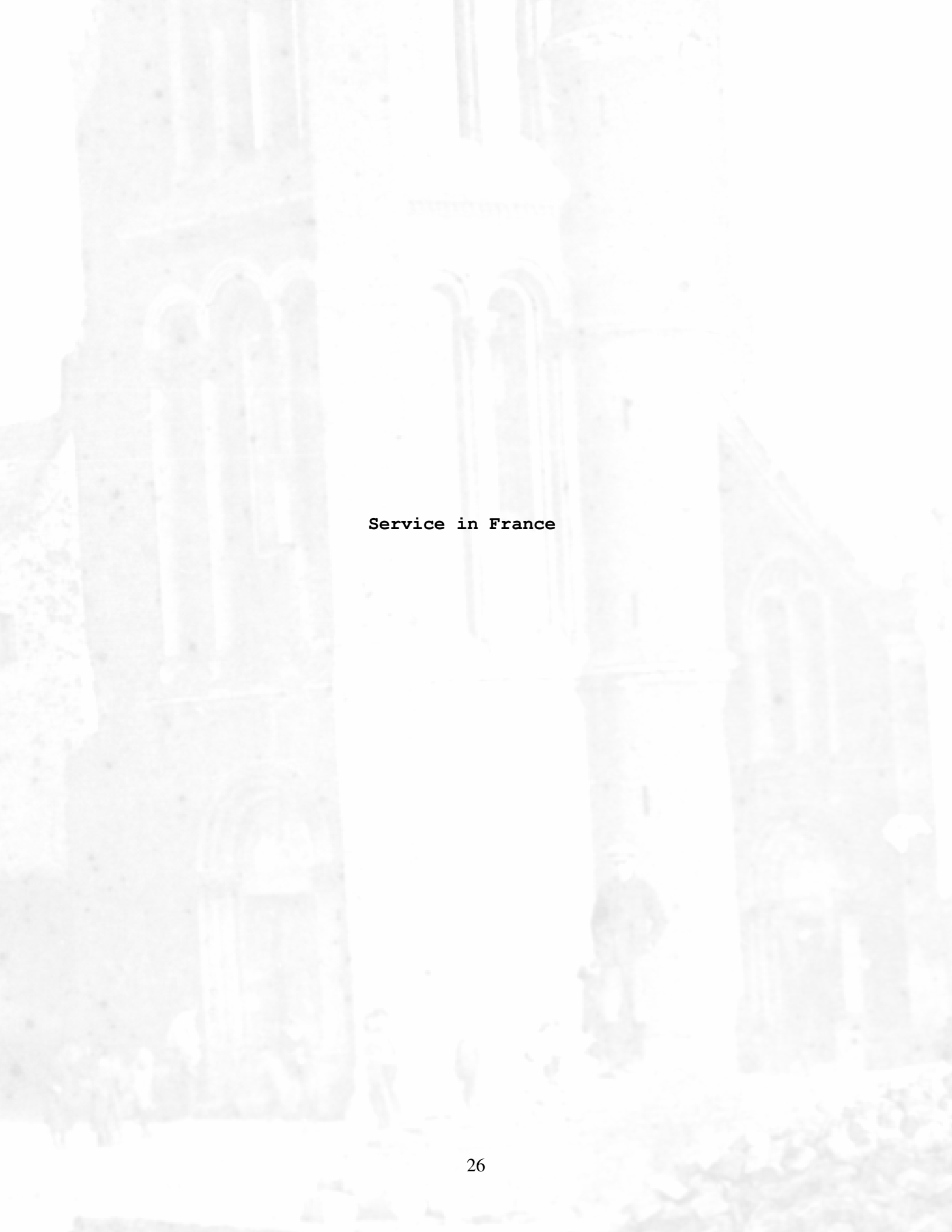
To complete the strength of the Division, (weakened by reason of a battalion of each the Camerons, Gordons, Seaforths and Argylls having already proceeded to France), there were battalions of Lancashire and Liverpool Irish troops attached. We were called the "International Division", being composed of English, Scotch and Irish Battalions.

At last the advance party left and we were to depart for a destination unknown, all was excitement. We received orders to parade in frill marching order next morning and marched to the station to entrain.

A wonderful reception was accorded us when we left Bedford. We marched through the High street, which was decked with flags, and all the inhabitants turned out and gave us a hearty send off; we felt quite the heroes of the day, with bands playing and songs sung, and tears were shed by some of the good folks who regretted our departure.

We entrained, proceeded to Dover, and embarked on cross-channel steamers, duly arriving at Boulogne. Some distance from the port our boat stopped her engine and we stood motionless whilst the searchlights from the French coast were directed upon us for a while.

We then proceeded into port and disembarked at about 11 p. m. We were marched a few miles to the top of a steep hill to the rest camp at Ostrohove, where we stayed the night under canvas.



Service in France

Now commenced the more serious part of the business, and the following day we entrained at Pont aux Briques for the line. We were packed into closed cattle trucks and spent the whole afternoon and most of the night bumped about and we wondered where we were to be finally deposited. The journey, during the night, seemed most weird and our feelings were decidedly mixed. We slid back one of the heavy truck doors and watched the flashes of the guns, although too far away for the reports to be heard. The men discussed what fate might have in store for them.

We arrived at the railhead at Calonne-sur-Lys, a few miles from the firing line as day broke and unloaded the transports by the light of flares. We then paraded and marched through the village and were billeted in barns. Isolated graves, evidence of earlier fighting made me wonder what the future had in store.

En route we passed Ghurkas on sentry duty and, to us, the Indian soldiers looked very weird, standing with their curved knives drawn.

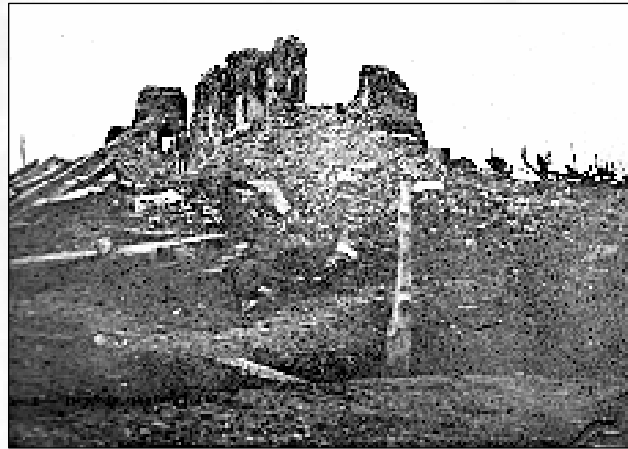
Only one letter a day was permitted for despatch by each man, for they had to be censored by the officers. This duty took a considerable amount of time.

The dinners consisted of stew, made with tinned meat but there was an ample supply; matches were difficult to obtain other than those of French manufacture which were sulphur tipped, difficult to light, and emitted strong sulphur fumes.

The following day we moved on a few miles to the town of Robecq and were again quartered in barns. We could hear the guns engaged in an incessant bombardment throughout the day and night, and streams of motor transports and ambulances passed through from the front line.

Nearby ran a canal in which we bathed daily, and several estaminets were open where we could sit in the evenings; a very much out of tune piano was appreciated by the men who passed the time in singing songs and generally making merry. The most important item to the men, was the arrival of the post; great excitement always prevailed at the prospect of a letter or a parcel of food from home.

The rumours that followed us to France were even more varied than those we had experienced in Bedford.



One was to the effect that our folks at home had heard that the battalion had been into action and had suffered heavy casualties; we had not even been into the firing line.

The reserve line of trenches, near here, was dug by French peasants who received three francs a day for their services.

I joined the ambulance section of the battalion and was called a "battalion stretcher-bearer". The duties were normally carried out by members of the battalion band, who had handed in their instruments, but one more man was required to complete the complement of sixteen, viz, four to each company, and I volunteered on account of past experience with the St John Ambulance. We each wore a white armlet bearing the letters "S.B." in red. We paraded daily for practice in bandaging, etc. Although classed as ambulance men, regulations necessitated our carrying rifles and ammunition like the rest of the men.

One day, my friend and I went to the top of the large Catholic church to get a view of the surrounding country and witnessed a fight in the air between some enemy and British aeroplanes. In the evening we visited a linseed oil factory.

As we were billeted only a few miles from the front line trenches, the cost of cigarettes, fruit, cakes, etc. was heavy and beyond the limited means of the men

May.

We rose very early and left for a destination some eighteen miles away. We proceeded in full marching order at a forced speed being allowed only short interval rests of a few minutes each. We passed through several villages that bore evidence of having been subjected to shellfire in the past, also the town of Merville.

We duly reached our destination a few miles behind the trenches, and were quartered in barns at a place named Strazeele. Dotted about were the graves of men who had fallen earlier in the war and small wooden crosses marked the spots. Many of the houses had been knocked down by enemy shellfire. The enemy occupied this district in October 1914 but had since been driven back.

In a field we found a large number of old horseshoes and evidently a mounted regiment had occupied the position. We amused ourselves by using them in games of quoits.

The mails followed us up and great excitement was experienced by those fortunate enough to be the recipients. Here we heard that the district was infested by enemy spies.

The following day, we attended (in full marching order) a church parade in an adjoining field. The booming of the guns could be heard and motor ambulances and transports continuously passed through.

A piece of muslin, with a chemically treated wad in its centre, was issued to each man. This was to be tied tightly over the nose and mouth in the event of an attack by poison gas. Occasionally we saw our patrolling aeroplanes overhead.

A battle progressed and, as we had not been able to reach the line in time to participate, mounted troops had been utilized as foot soldiers and sent into the trenches. We, therefore, stood by as a reserve body.

After two days at this place, an emergency order caused us to leave at once and we marched through the night, in pouring rain, to another sector some sixteen miles distant where the booming of the guns could once more be heard. We halted at 4 a.m, and slept under a hedge for an hour, the rain still pouring down. After a hurried drink of tea and a nibble at a biscuit we were paraded and marched into the village of La Couture nearby.

This village had badly suffered from enemy shellfire and scarcely a house remained intact. It was decided to billet my platoon in a house in the main street the roof of which was missing, as were all the windows and opposite stood a church which had also suffered.

Eleven of us had settled down in a room on the third floor and, as we felt exceedingly hungry, we threw off our kit and proceeded to revive ourselves with tinned beef and biscuits.

I had half opened a tin when I heard a terrific crash and, on looking through the aperture that had once been a window, saw in the light of a blinding flash that a large hole had appeared in the road.

We realised that this was to be our first experience of shellfire and immediately grabbed our kit, tore down the rickety staircase and made for a small field in rear. I had just got clear of the backyard, when a huge shell landed and exploded with a deafening crash, blowing half of the house and a lot of kit to pieces.

I threw myself into a partially dug trench at the end of the garden, and witnessed a steady bombardment of the village which lasted about half an hour. Houses and shops were blown into the air, for the shells were of very large calibre. The mails followed us up and great excitement was experienced by those fortunate enough to be the recipients. Here we heard that the district was infested by enemy spies.

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After the affair had died down the stretcher-bearers were kept busy attending to the wounded. Needless to say, our feelings were very mixed, for the whole business happened suddenly and without warning. We were told, by an antilleryman, that it was an act of madness to have ever billeted us in such a place, as the village was subjected daily to a bombardment lasting for about an hour.

We were immediately paraded and marched about a quarter of a mile to a field behind the church, here we camped, but we hadn't occupied that position for more than an hour, when we again came in for a shelling. Some of our artillery had their positions around the field and the enemy endeavoured to put the guns out of action by long range gunfire.

We scattered at once but shells burst all round and about the camping ground. Quite a number of men were hit. When things were quieter, we lay down for a night's rest.

The experience seemed to have upset the man lying next me, for he shook the whole night.

The following morning we were marched, through the village to another field just beyond, where we stayed for two or three days awaiting orders.

The first afternoon in our new position we were again shelled and one man who was in the act of undoing a parcel from home had his head taken off his shoulders by a shell which omitted to explode.

We were naturally getting tired of this perpetual shelling, especially in view of the fact that we had not yet even seen the trenches or a sign of the enemy; we had suffered casualties and seen nothing of the fighting.

In the next field there was a battery of 9.2 guns belonging to the Canadian Artillery and the noise of their discharge was very loud. These guns kept up their fire at intervals throughout the nights, and the ground shook with the concussion.

We were very tired and slept through it all.

I experienced a very disagreeable smell when I lay down to sleep, and after investigating, found that I had been resting on a mound the earth of which barely covered the remains of some enemy soldiers who had been hurriedly buried at an earlier date.

After two days under this periodic enemy shellfire the battalion received its orders to proceed to the trenches. The men paraded and moved off whilst I, with the rest of the battalion stretcher-bearers, reported to the Medical officer. We were to proceed independently. We loaded up the medical stores, stretchers, etc, and set off.

We had some four or five miles to march to the firing line and, as it was dark and the doctor did not seem to know the route, we were kept going for half the night and wandered about in full marching order with our rifles slung, trying to find the battalion.

In due course we found ourselves in a field not very far from what was obviously, the front line.

We deduced this by reason of the rocket lights that rose and fell ahead of us and the doctor told us to stay where we were whilst he went on to see how the land lay. He was absent for an hour, during which time shells frequently fell too close to us for our comfort and, being new to the situation we did not know quite what to do.

We had no notion where we were or in what direction to proceed. However, our Medical officer duly returned and informed us that we were some distance from the battalion which was on the left and that we were then near another regiment through taking the wrong direction. We set off again under his guidance and ultimately I reached my company occupying trenches at Richbourg-St-Vaat, just before dawn.

A Guards Battalion had been relieved by my battalion and two of the companies were holding a part of the line whilst two others occupied the reserve trench. In between the support trench was manned by Ghurkas of the Meerut Division from India.

That night was a bad one.

A terrific storm with thunder and lightning had not improved matters. When I reached my company all the men were standing to, with bayonets fixed, soaked to the skin. The enemy kept up a continuous bombardment with heavy shells and a German attack was expected at dawn. Soon after I had joined my company the Major dashed up and stated that the enemy were advancing. We felt that fate was not behaving as nicely as she might have done and that, for the first night in the line, conditions were not exactly as comfortable as could be.

However, we put up quite a good show and managed to persuade the enemy to return to his lines. He left a number of dead and wounded outside our trench and was unable to penetrate our defence. Our front line trenches had, until the previous day, been occupied by the enemy but they had been captured by the Brigade of guards. The slaughter had been very heavy, hundreds of bodies lay about behind the front line trench, left there when the enemy had retreated.

The stench of the battlefield was indescribable and during the nights that we occupied this small sector, we buried some eighteen hundred bodies by simply digging huge holes and, after placing them in, roughly covering them with earth. This work could only be carried out during the night, when we could not be seen, for throughout the day the enemy had snipers posted and it proved fatal to show oneself for a moment.

We were subjected to a heavy bombardment throughout the period we occupied the line and, as a stretcher bearer, my time was fully occupied with the casualties, bandaging the wounded and carrying them back to the dressing-station behind the line, or disposing of our dead.

For food, we had to rely upon the iron rations with which we had been provided before marching into the line. These consisted of biscuits and bully beef.

As the wind had been blowing away from our trenches we were not troubled by enemy gas attacks but we had been particularly annoyed by enemy snipers, who had been responsible for the deaths of several of the men. One sniper was duly located in a small ruin of a house between the enemy trench and our own.

The artillery were notified and we had the pleasure of seeing a shell land on the offender's position. Another sniper was disposed of by two ghurkas who undertook to silence him.

After dark they left their trench and in due course returned with the sniper's head. They had found him in a position between the trenches, in a tub which was buried in the ground.

The lid, covered with earth and in which beet appeared to be growing, had simply to be raised by the sniper whilst he fired his rifle. When lowered again, he was completely hidden from view.

The surrounding country looked most desolate. No house remained standing, the trees had all been smashed down by the shellfire and the mud and filth knee deep. During the night parties of men were engaged upon repairing the trench and removing enemy dead from the dugouts recently captured.

This work had to be carried out in the dark.

Not a glimmer of light dared be shown otherwise enemy machinegun and rifle fire immediately resulted and inevitable casualties were suffered. The enemy fired lights into the air in order to see whether any activity was apparent on our side, and if we were out in front of the trench engaged upon erecting barbed wire entanglements or other work, we had to remain perfectly still until the flare of the lights had passed away in order to escape notice.

I passed through one recently captured trench and saw many belts of enemy machine-gun ammunition, the bullets of the cartridges reversed. This was an inhuman practice for if hit by such a bullet, terrible injuries were inflicted.

During the daytime, our aeroplanes flew over the German line to note any sign of an impending counter attack. The machines were subjected to anti-aircraft gunfire but carried on with their job continuously.

Just before dawn one morning, after having occupied the trenches for a week or more, we were relieved by another battalion of the Brigade and marched back a few miles to the village of Locon. It was a relief to get away from all the mud and shellfire.

We were billeted in old barns, which had suffered a little from shellfire and when we reached our new quarters we were so worn out that we simply threw off our kit, dropped to the ground and immediately fell asleep.

Next morning we rose, breakfasted, thoroughly cleaned ourselves and our equipment and paraded for inspection. Our kit had to be perfectly clean and all metal work polished, although we had been up to our knees in mud only the previous night.

We were complimented by the Brigadier on the manner in which we had conducted ourselves during our first experience of real warfare.

The men washed their underclothes in a neighbouring stream and put them out to dry.

Whilst in the trenches we had all been troubled with lice and we took this first opportunity of ridding ourselves of these pests, if only for a short while.

We rested here for a day or two and then moved on to further quarters which, although situated some distance from the trenches, were subjected to enemy shellfire.

On such occasions we took cover in small dugouts with sandbagged roofs, each of which were only splinter proof and useless against a comparatively direct hit from a shell.

The shelters were named by their occupants and mine bore the name "Hotel Cecil" on a board outside.

Although we were supposed to be resting, in reality we were worked harder than would have been the case had we occupied the firing line.

Fatigue parties were at work day and night and, during the night, we were marched for miles to the trenches and kept at work digging communication trenches, burying dead, and erecting barbed wire entanglements etc. (often coming under shell and gun fire during these operations). We returned to the "resting place" about 5 am. dead tired and hungry. Generally, we had the added discomfort of pouring rain and deep mud to contend with, in point of fact occupying the trenches was preferred.

June.

Balmoral bonnets were supplied in place of the glengarries and we returned to occupy trenches at The Orchard, Festubert. Here, many dead were lying around and the stench was atrocious. The company had been shelled at intervals the whole way from billets and many times the men had to take cover and wait until things had quietened down. Dodging these bursts was simply a matter of luck.

The road was pitted with huge shellholes and two of the men were reputed to have sustained fractured ankles by slipping into them in the dark.

The distance from reserve to the front line was too far for a communication trench to be constructed and the enemy was ranged on all the roads and possible routes which he constantly shelled.

When near the front line advancing over open country, we had to stand still whenever the enemy fired his flare lights into the air. Signs of movement would have brought machinegun and rifle fire upon us.

That part of the line was extremely lively for the enemy fire which consisted of artillery, trench mortar, machinegun and rifle, kept up a more or less continuous bombardment. Added to this the trenches had been hurriedly repaired and in many places were not even bulletproof and possessed no dugouts.

As soon as we had settled down work commenced. Sandbags were filled and the construction of the trench proceeded. This work was done during the night but much of it was undone by the enemy shell fire during the day. He shelled the trench and knocked it in again.

Snipers were very active.

We were subjected to an intense bombardment and stood to to resist a German attack, which was again accompanied by a heavy storm with thunder and lightning.

Here I had rather a lucky escape; a large enemy shell landed on the top of the trench breastwork, opposite to me, but failed to explode. It remained in that position during the time we occupied that sector; we treated it with the greatest respect and left it severely alone lest it should explode.

We had many casualties throughout the bombardment and I was kept busy the whole day, and the following night attending to the wounded and burying the dead. I was particularly sorry for one man, he had had a leg blown off early that morning, when I had immediately placed a tourniquet on the stump to save him from bleeding to death.

Whilst doing that service, a huge shell had landed nearby and covered us with earth and stones.

As it had been quite impossible to leave the trench in daylight, owing to the terrific fire of the enemy, this man remained propped against the side of the trench until it was dark.

Another stretcher-bearer, and I then placed him on to a stretcher and set out for the dressing-station in the reserve line.

It was an unforgettable night; the whole ground had been ploughed into liquid mud by the continuous shell fire and every step we took with the stretcher caused us to sink in up to our knees. Added to this, the ground was strewn with bodies which we could not avoid in the dark. At intervals we had to lower the stretcher and lie in the mud to escape splinters from the big shells that exploded on our route.

The whole affair was like a nightmare for it took from 7 pm. until 5am. the next morning to carry the wounded man a distance of about a quarter of a mile. By the time we had reached the dressing-station, and handed him over to the Doctor, the tourniquet had been on his leg for forty-eight hours and he had been under shell fire the whole time.

My fellow stretcher-bearer and I were completely exhausted and threw ourselves to the ground for a rest before returning to the trench. The dressing-station on was full of wounded, waiting for the ambulances to come up after dark from the clearing station in the rear.

It was pitiful to watch the expressions on their faces as, in their helplessness, they heard the bursting of enemy shells in close proximity and wondered whether one would drop on the dressing station. I did not envy the Medical officer who had to carry out his duties under such awful conditions.

Whilst in this part of the line, we obtained water for washing and shaving purposes from shell holes which the rain had filled. I daily adjourned to one to carry out my toilet and it was situated behind the parados of the trench; the water, on which a green scum floated, was rank but had to serve its purpose for ablution requirements. The water receded, as the days passed, until one morning I discerned the body of a man at the bottom when I knelt down to wash; it occurred to me that the time had arrived when I should seek a more savoury position.

After a week of the foregoing conditions, we were relieved and then dropped back into the reserve trenches for a few days, and later were marched back to more rest billets a few miles behind the line.

We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity of cleansing ourselves of the mud and lice and opened our letters and parcels which had arrived and were with the transport section. We slept in dilapidated barns and, as one of the men was the possessor of a concertina, many sing songs took place.

The company returned to the trenches and, after six days of occupation under periodical heavy shellfire, in which we suffered many casualties, were warned that the following day we were to attack the Prussian Guards who were opposite. I occupied a small shelter which as constructed of sandbags. On the top, earth had been piled and, in this, a body had been buried so that the feet of the victim protruded over the doorway facing the shelter entrance. About four yards away was the grave of a fallen soldier with its rough wooden cross surmounted by a broken rifle and a clip of cartridges and so I had a pleasant outlook.

We understood that the French were to make a big attack on our right. It was realised that with the limited number of troops available it could not be hoped to even reach the enemy lines, especially as the attack was planned to take place at 2 pm, in broad daylight. Yet it was proposed to sacrifice a whole company of men as a feint in order to impress the enemy that an attack was to take place in our sector, thus prevent him from sending his reserves to the part of the line where the French were to 'take' the offensive.

It was a gloriously sunny day and, after two hours bombardment, "C" company was ordered over; the stretcher-bearers followed to render assistance to the wounded if practicable. Directly our bombardment had ceased, the enemy opened with his machine guns and swept the parapet of the trench and many men were wounded or killed as soon as their heads appeared above the top. The rest of us succeeded in advancing towards the enemy trench but the fire was so heavy, we only managed to proceed half the distance and were then forced to lie down and take any cover we could. The bombardment of our artillery had failed to destroy the enemy barbed wire entanglements.

The German artillery was directed upon us and every moment the ranks were being thinned all the officers had been killed or wounded and it was realised the impossibility of endeavouring to push further forward.

The only chance to survive was to keep under cover unseen in the hope of getting back to our own trench after dark; this we did.

Out of a full company, only twelve of us got back untouched and the senior one was made a sergeant. All the officers and non-commissioned officers had been killed or wounded. My fellow stretcher-bearer and I spent the whole night getting in the wounded and bandaging and conveying them to the dressing-station; we felt worn out and hungry.

The following day, it was decided to indulge in a similar experiment and that the men of "B" Company were to be the victims. Needless to say, when the men heard of the treat in store for them, they contemplated the order with many misgivings and viewed the idea as one of pure murder. They resented the thought of being sacrificed when they had no hope of even reaching the enemy trench. This company occupied the support line and once again I was to accompany the men when they made the attack.

At midday (after a bombardment lasting for an hour or so) the company proceeded up a communication trench to the jumping off place. This communication trench was only partially dug and we were subjected to a perfect hail of indirect machinegun bullets which kicked up the ground around us. The enemy also replied to our bombardment by sending over shrapnel shells both fast and furious.

We lay in the bottom of the trench for a few moments, endeavouring to get cover, and a shrapnel shell burst just above us and killed a sergeant and some men who were occupying a traverse of the trench but I, being at the end, just managed to escape; shrapnel bullets peppered the ground around us.

It was too hot a corner in which to remain and we jumped up and, in keeping ourselves as low as possible, were forced to walk over the bodies of our late comrades.

We reached the front trench and waited a few minutes for the order to go over the top.

A ditch ran at right angles to our front line and it had been decided that, at a given signal, we were to crawl along it in single file and, when at the end, to extend quickly, lie down and then rush the enemy trench. The whistle blew and we proceeded according to plan.

The Captain was leading and he called a halt as soon as he had reached the end of the ditch and then gave the order to stand up in readiness to extend. An enemy machinegun suddenly opened fire and this officer was shot through lung. He was a great favourite with the men and said "Cheer up boys, I'm glad it is neither of you. carry on and the best of luck". At that moment, a runner from the Colonel (who had been watching operations from the front line trench) passed up a message that the attack had been postponed and that we were to return to the trench.

The feelings of relief experienced by us all cannot be readily realised, for we knew that had we carried on with the attack, we would have been wiped out in a similar manner to "C" Company the previous day. We afterwards heard that our attack had been talked about for a week past, in the hope that information would reach the enemy and so keep him from transferring any of his reserves to resist the French attack which, was to take place on our right.

We were handicapped by the tremendous superiority of the enemy artillery, for he possessed an unlimited supply of shells of large calibre, whilst the number of shells was rationed to our guns. In consequence, we were subjected to intense bombardments and a telephone message to our artillery would only result in a limited number of rounds being fired in reply. When our artillery shelled the enemy, he was sure to reply with double the number of shells and, in the end, we came off second best. When we first entered the trenches, our artillery possessed old reconditioned guns which were unreliable; they occasionally fired shells into our own trenches by reason of their dropping short of their objective.

In due course, we were relieved and marched back to a small farm behind the line. We reached there in the early hours of the morning and found a field kitchen busily engaged in making tea. We were wet through, tired out and hungry, and the hot tea was a wonderful stimulant.

At dawn we resumed our march to a lovely spot some eight or nine miles back and with our ground sheets, we erected improvised tents in a small orchard situated in the centre of a copse of nut trees. It would be impossible to express the wonderful feeling of enjoyment we experienced in being transplanted to that lovely spot, with the sweet smell of honeysuckle and the singing of the birds, after the nerve wracking time we had just passed through.

The mails had accumulated and the usual excitement prevailed when the cry "the post is up" was carried from mouth to mouth. We gathered round the pile of letters and parcels and one sensed, more than ever, the brutality of war, for on turning over many of the parcels I noted that they were addressed to the poor fellows who had been killed. The personal element now crept in and was emphasised by the appearance of the homely writing of the addresses on the packages, writtenn by wives or parents.

Looking back upon our recent attacks, I realised the luck of the game and the narrow escape that had been constantly experienced, now we were resting in such perfect surroundings the feeling of safety and quietude was heavenly with no fear of heavy shells unexpectedly dropping around us. I recalled to mind my recent surroundings and pictured, in detail, the mud and filth and the hasty burial of the dead just outside the trench, with the places marked by simple rough crosses surmounted by broken rifles or parts of equipment belonging to the unfortunate men.

After resting for a few days, we received, whilst a heavy thunderstorm was once again in progress, the news that we were to move off the following day. We marched some ten miles to the town of staires, arriving about midnight. My company was quartered in a large factory containing spinning looms. The floor was a cobblestone one and not very comfortable to sleep upon but preferred to deep mud.

At an earlier date, the enemy had used these premises for a similar purpose.

During the following afternoon, my friend and I inspected the town and visited a large Catholic Church, which was a magnificent building and contained elaborately decorated altars and chapels. It was a hot afternoon and we later sat by the side of the river. Although this town was situated only a few miles behind the line it had not received much damage from shellfire, many of the shops were occupied and doing business.

On Sunday, we attended church parade in an adjoining field.

Later, we moved on to a new position and three companies of the battalion occupied a portion of the front line at Laventie, whilst my Company was placed in partially demolished houses and barns in reserve. This part was quiet, for shellfire was negligible, although rifle and machinegun fire were very active. We had been drafted to this quiet sector for a rest and to await for reinforcements of officers and men from England. Sleeping on the floor of the billets, at intervals we could hear bullets hitting the walls and passing through the laths and plaster; dust showered down upon us.

All the troops were eagerly awaiting the arrival in France of the New Army, recruited by Lord Kitchener, for it was anticipated that their appearance would mean a longer rest from the trenches and shorter spells on the line. We had heard so much about the formation of this New Army and had waited so long for it to appear that the men were becoming sceptical of its existence. For they thought that it was another rumour circulated to keep up the morale of the troops already fighting. The following conversation could be heard shouted, as one battalion passed another on the march, "Seen any of Kitcheners Army?". Reply, "oh, shut up, you know d-- well it is only a yarn and that there is no such thing". This army was to have been ready in May and even the enemy had shouted across - "Vere is dot Kitchener Army".

July.

We had been engaged in digging communication trenches. The reinforcements of officers and men arrived and were posted to the various companies. Our new officers were splendid men who had already served in France with the London Scottish and had been granted commissions.

The Engineer sappers had mined an enemy front line trench and, at midday, we stood to and ,waited for it to be fired. A terrific explosion took place and about seventy yards of trench was blown up; sandbags, pieces of timber, earth and stones, etc. were hurled into the air and our artillery opened with shrapnel shells. I couldn't help but feel a little sorry for its occupants.

The trenches were fairly close to each other in this sector and, at nights, the Germans could be heard singing. My company duly took its turn in the front line and, an hour before dawn each day, we had to stand for it was at this time (between the lights) that a surprise attack took place. Flare rockets from each side went up at intervals.

It was comparatively quiet throughout the day, with only occasional fire from the sentries. Enemy snipers were very active and it was dangerous to permit even a moment's exposure above the trench or the result, would be fatal. Several careless individuals were shot through the head. The weather was extremely warm and a change from the very wet time we had recently experienced. The flies were numerous and a nuisance. The sentries kept a lookout by using steel loopholes and periscopes.

There was a saying "that wherever the Highland Division is, so the shells follow". We understood the truth of this, for weeks past the sector had been quiet but we received orderd to "liven things up". Our artillery started the business and, of course, the enemy brought up his guns and retaliated. Trench mortar bombs were frequently sent over and, as the enemy projectiles were larger and more deadly than ours, we were not too cheery about the affair. During the day, enemy mortar bombs could be seen in the air; sentries were posted to warn us of the approach of these unwelcome visitors.

They were fired into the air to a great height and turned over and over on their way down to their objective; as soon as the cry "trench mortar" was heard, all eyes were turned to the sky and anxious efforts made to locate the objects, whilst speculation was indulged to their probable places of landing; we stood in readiness to run to right or left in an effort to dodge them. They landed with thuds and, in about a second, exploded with deafening crashes. Heads were kept low to avoid the flying splinters.

The duty of patrol work was not looked upon with any great amount of pleasure. Several of us were detailed to creep towards the enemy trench, under the guidance of an officer, get as close as possible in order to listen and endeavour to ascertain whether certain sectors were occupied by German troops and note any sign of special activity.

On occasions we would see an enemy patrol approaching our line bent on a similar errand and we lay down and remained quiet until it had passed. Patrols usually evaded one another if possible, because if they did happen to stumble upon one another in the dark and become engaged in a fight, possibly both patrols would be wiped out. We selected a large shell hole near the enemy barbed wire entanglements and lay there for about an hour. Previously to this a message was passed to the sentries in our front line to be careful when firing, to watch for our return and not mistake us for the enemy.

After a spell in this sector we were relieved and marched back through the town of Laventie, which had suffered severely from the shellfire and I came to rest in an old coachhouse. The following day we had a game of football in a field, whilst shells were bursting in the town. One Sunday I counted over a hundred heavy shells fired into and about the town by a long range enemy gun. The church was in complete ruins, only parts of the outside walls remained standing.

The first night we were "resting" we were formed into fatigue parties and marched back to the front line, each man carrying stores of some sort such as corrugated iron sheets, sandbags etc.

All the roads behind were periodically swept with enemy machinegun fire and, at one place, we had to lie down for nearly half an hour and take cover behind the ruins of a house until it was safe to hurry on. We had two fellows wounded in the ankle.

Other nights we were engaged in digging communication trenches. Each morning we were paraded for inspection and there was no excuse accepted for either mud on the uniform or rust on the rifle or bayonet; even the pleats of the kilts were examined by the officer.

This spell was equivalent to thirty days in the trenches; we were occupied in the reserve for six days, 'resting' for six days, back in the front line for six days and then six days in reserve again.

The fatigue work was carried out under intermittent machinegun and rifle fire which was often of a more exposed character than that of front line duty, especially in the case of the fixing of barbed wire entanglements out in front of the trench.

Whilst out 'resting', small parties of men were marched to an old mill where tubs had been installed. Each man enjoyed a nice hot bath, which was much appreciated as being the first experienced since arrival in France.

Afterwards we were supplied, in an upstairs room, with clean socks and shirts and our kilts were disinfected. An old trench, behind the front line, gave evidence of earlier fighting in the war. It had apparently been captured by the French from the Germans. I walked through it out of curiosity, and noted that it had been badly smashed during a bombardment and many half buried bodies lay about. I came upon a complete skeleton in a French uniform. A party of men were engaged in digging up some enemy remains in order to find the helmets, to clean up and sell as souvenirs for a few francs when they went on leave to the base. I watched for a time but the smell was so atrocious I left them to their occupation.

The enemy daily treated us to a shelling from a long range gun of an armoured train. The shells must have been of very large calibre, for when they exploded the noise was terrific and the ground shook.

When out of the line, orders were at times read out by a non-commissioned officer. One item that was always received in silence was the intimation that a certain man of a given regiment has been found guilty of cowardice and that the sentence of death had been duly carried out. We all knew the strain liable to be placed upon a man in the thick of a fight and could imagine the awful feelings that must have driven him to falter. It was a debatable point as to when a man could be accused of cowardice or whether he was simply suffering from broken nerve and not responsible for his actions. Reasoning the matter.

We realised that a man who hesitated at a critical moment or turned tail, might easily be instrumental in ruining an attack, for in war when mens nerves are strained to the utmost, a panic might easily develop and in consequence, immediate obeyance of orders was essential.

We had been amused by the descriptions appearing in the newspapers regarding life at the front. According to their reports we had been enjoying hot baths every time we left the trenches and were treated to concerts and shows behind the lines. So far we had only seen one delapidated piano in an estaminet. The splendid food was also alluded to; even when we were resting, we received, either stew or biscuits and tinned beef. Breakf'ast and tea consisted of one sixth of a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese, and one insignificant rasher of driedup bacon. For tea, we had one sixth of a loaf of bread with cheese and, sometimes a tin of jam was shared between a number of us.

It will, readily be appreciated that the parcels from home were shared, with their little unexpected titbits of tinned fruit, real loaves of bread, butter and possibly cigarettes, which delicacies were much appreciated.

The men serving at the base, miles from the fighting, were envied. They were able to enjoy good food and, no doubt the concerts and shows were arranged for their benefit. They must have been gifted with good imagination, for they appeared to be past masters in the art of retailing episodes of the firing line, although they had to rely upon the newspapers for their information and not personal experience.

Some of the men engaged behind the line were aware of their good fortune. One driver, attached to the Army Service Corps said that he wouldn't have been an infantryman for a pound a day.

The Royal Medical Corps unfortunately earned itself the title "Rob all my comrades", by reason of the disgraceful conduct of certain of its men in appropriating the souvenirs etc, of the wounded men in the hospitals and sending them to their homes.

Many wounded man recovered only to find that his souvenirs, which he had been cherishing for weeks past,

had been taken by some enterprising collector. It was rather irritating for this Corps to have earned such an, uncomplimentary nickname, which was only occasioned by the misdemeanour of a few callous wrongdoers.

One night, I sat in a dugout (which had a sack fixed across its doorway to prevent even a glimmer of light, from the stump of a candle, being seen by the enemy) trying to read an old newspaper.

The dugout was just large enough for me to crawl into and was dug into the side of the trench. Suddenly the cry "stretcher-bearers" reached my ear. I immediately grabbed my bag of bandages and stumbled out into the dark, just as my companion appeared. We picked up the stretcher and proceeded along the trench until stopped by a group of two or three men.

They informed us that a working party had been out in front of the trench and a machinegun had opened fire ending with one of them being shot dead.

The party had at once rushed into the trench and two stretcher-bearers had gone out to bring in the man. Whilst engaged upon this duty a machinegun had again opened fire one of the stretcher-bearers had been shot through the head and killed. As it now seemed fairly quiet we decided to go out and bring in the two bodies.

I realised that negotiating a stretcher would prove difficult and we decided to take a ground sheet.

We no sooner reached the spot when again the machinegun opened fire, we lay flat on the ground and took cover behind the bodies of our late companions whilst bullets struck the ground around and threw earth over us.

At the first lull in the fire we quickly rolled one man on to the sheet and, crawling on our stomach, dragged him into the trench. Dodging a second burst of fire, we returned and fetched in the second man in a similar manner. We examined them and found that had both been shot through the head and killed instantly. The next morning we laced them in their ground sheet and buried them.

In due course we were relieved by Indian troops and marched back about eight miles, through the town of Estaires, to the neighbourhood of another town and were quartered in a barn. We thoroughly enjoyed the rest from the firing line and I visited an aerodrome nearby and watched the return of our aeroplanes from observation work over the enemy lines. The wings of some of the machines had been riddled by bullets.

After two or three days we entrained and, after a fourteen hour journey, reached the Somme area. The transport was unloaded at a place named Corbie and we were marched to Pont Noyelle. Windows of houses were raised and the inhabitants gazed at us as we passed by in the dark of the night. We were now about fifteen miles from the front line and speculated at what kind of sector we would be called upon to hold. The following day we were inspected by the General Commanding the Third Army.

On the top of a hill near the village, I visited the monument which had been erected to commemorate the Franco-German war of 1370. I entered into conversation with two aged inhabitants of the village and they I informed me that the Uhlans had visited that part in the early days of the war and they remembered the Germans being there during the 1870 war; bullet marks in the door of their house were pointed out in confirmation.

Two days later, we commenced on a fifteen miles march towards the front line and, during the journey, the field kitchens prepared food for us to have during one of the short rests.

We duly passed through the town of Albert, and noted that it had badly suffered from shell fire, sections were in complete ruins. The large cathedral had each day been subjected to heavy artillery fire and the large figure of the Madonna and Child, at the top of the steeple, leant over at rightangles. This figure was expected to fall at any moment and a superstition existed amongst the French troops to the effect that once it did fall, the war would end. The town was shelled throughout the day and night and transports and men were, at times, unsuccessful in dodging the salvos of shells; casualties were numerous.

We came to rest in the village of Autuille which is situated at the foot of a hill just behind the line. We were the first division of British troops to relieve the Trench on the Somme.

The sector was extraordinarily quiet, especially in comparison with Festubert and, although the village was in such close proximity to the front line trench, it had been very slightly damaged. Several estaminets still dispensed their refreshments.

Here we found large dugouts and the French troop had evidently believed in comfort, for they had constructed beds, made from struts and covered with wire netting which were very comfortable. They had also constructed rustic tables and chairs. In an old house I found a very much out of tune piano and accompanied a mixture of French and British troops in a singsong. The French troops gave us a hearty welcome and informed us that the sector was extremely quiet and that only eight light shells a day were fired into the village. They were sent over in pairs at the following times 11 am, 2 p.m., 4 p.m., and 8 p.m., and the French artillery replied similarly.

At the times stated, the trench troops had gone into the dugouts, whilst the shells burst, and returned to the estaminets at the conclusion of the comic bombardment.

We thought this to be an extraordinary way of carrying on war but were prepared to enjoy our improved surroundings. We were also informed that, previous to our arrival, the enemy had shouted across to the French that they were being relieved by Scottish troops and the French had ridiculed the idea. The secret intelligence of the enemy was extraordinary and he seemed to know, in detail, the movements of our troops.

The brigadier made a statement that 'I have the boys to liven things up'. We presumed that a quiet future could not be anticipated.

At night, in our dugouts, we were annoyed by a pest of mosquitos attracted by the swampy district; also hordes of rats. We had ratting expeditions and, armed with wooden clubs, exterminated as many as possible. These rats were very large and scampered about during the night, sometimes running over the face of a sleeper.

They made an annoying noise and fought for food and often eatables left in a pocket would cause a tunic to be gnawed through.

We later occupied the front line trench and our artillery, having moved into position, commenced to range upon the enemy trenches.

At dawn on the first day, we found on our barbed wire entanglements, a piece of paper on which was a written request that two or three of our men would, at a given time, proceed half way across no mans land and meet a similar number of Germans in order to exchange periodicals and souvenirs, as the French had been accustomed to do.

After a consultation, our interpreter and two men agreed and, at noon, met the enemy halfway; the heads of the troops on each side were above the parapets and no firing took place. Later, when we left the trenches, we were paraded before the Commanding Officer and severely reprimanded. He stated that 'it was impossible to fight a man with one hand and give him chocolates with the other'. We were given to understand that any similar action in the future would be severely dealt with.

As our artillery became more active, that of the enemy also increased and, one day, the enemy fired a mine under our trench.

It had been incorrectly laid and simply gave us a shake up and knocked in a stretch of trench so the casualties were only slight. As things started to liven up the village suffered and the houses were gradually razed to the ground.

A part of Kitcheners New Army had now arrived in France and batches were sent into the line for instruction. Although the village had not suffered very much so far, I was amused by the remark of one of the newcomers - 'By gum, they've given it to this place'; the damage was nothing as compared with villages we had previously occupied.



Le portail de la Basilique (Albert, the Somme)



Le clocher de Notre-Damn de Brebieres (Albert, The Somme)

The Question followed,- 'Is it quiet here?'. At that moment a battery of our guns opened fire to the speaker's consternation, who asked - "What's that?"; I put his mind at rest by informing him that the noise was from our own artillery. The approach to the village was through a dense wood and a party of the newcomers passed that way. They were uneasy concerning the flashes and explosions in the wood and relieved when told that they were only caused by our guns. I sympathised with them in their perplexity for I remembered so well my own feelings when I received my first initiation.

The enemy troops had been relieved and, once again, we had the Prussian Guards in front of us. They had followed us down from Festubert. We knew that before long old conditions would return, in the livening process desired by the Brigadier.

August.

We were engaged upon digging communication trenches in readiness for greater activity in the future. It poured with rain and we were up to our knees in chalky water.

After two weeks in the line, we were marched back to a village named Martinsart where we slept in barns during a spell of duty in reserve. Periodically at night, alarms brought us to parade in readiness to move off. These were, however, false and ordered for practice. We were timed to turn out in a few minutes.

A friend of mine, one night, placed a piece of paper over his face in order to keep away mosquitos. This paper had contained a cake from home and still had crumbs adhering to it. He was awakened by a rat coming on to his face to feed.

We marched a few miles on one occasion and were detailed to dig dug outs for the artillery (much to the disgust of the men).

A week's rest being ended, we returned to the front-line. This time in front of the village of Aveluy. The trenches were cut in chalk and when it rained the water presented the appearance of milk as it flowed along; we looked like a lot of millars. The dugouts were quite comfortable and the sector was fairly quiet. The enemy only fired small shells, nicknamed by the men 'Cheeky Charlies', 'Pip squeaks' or 'Wiz-bangs'.

The larger shells, when fired at a long range, could be heard approaching by their deep whistle, which got louder and louder as they came nearer and seemed to lumber through the air and were called 'Weary Willies', 'Jack Johnsons' or 'Coal Boxes'; the last named by reason of the huge columns of black smoke that trailed skyward after they had exploded.

Whilst the French occupied the sector, they had only roughly buried some bodies in the parados of the trench and portions were protruding through the side in one place, a body was buried on the roof of a small dugout.

Our field kitchens were situated about a mile to the rear and with them was one belonging to the new Kitchener Army, attached for instructional purposes.

The cook in charge visited us in the firing line, to look round. He was a humourous individual and kept us amused. He informed us that when the first shell burst near his cooker, he had jumped nearly eighteen feet into the air. He had been a member of Fred Karno's Company and had acted in a sketch called "The Mummung Birds" (which I had seen in London), with Charlie Chaplin.

We were daily shelled but our casualties were light. More thunderstorms occurred and the trenches were deep in water and we waded in thick chalky mud.

On one occasion, instead of using the communications trench, one of the men decided to proceed from the supports to reserve over the open country. He was seen by our much loved (') Adjutant, who ordered him into the trench and said, 'We don't mind you being killed, it's the damned nuisance of having to bury you that annoys us'.

That spell in the line finished, we were relieved and marched back to the village of Millencourt, for a "rest". We were informed that we were to remain in the sector during the Winter and the usual round of trench digging, carrying up stores, etc. kept us busy for a few days and then we moved to another village Bouzinourt. We were again quartered in barns.

We returned to the front line at La Boisselle, only fifteen yards separated the enemy trench from our own. It had been comparatively quiet and the Germans and men had exchanged souvenirs by simply tossing them from one trench to the other.

One day, however, one of men shouted out "I'm sending over a present, Fritz". Instead of throwing a souvenir, he threw a live bomb.

From that time onwards, the place was a little hell to occupy and each side periodically exchanged huge trench mortar bombs throughout the day and night and, added to that, mining and counter-mining took place. As soon as the trench was built up, it was smashed down again.

It became impossible for either the enemy or ourselves to occupy that part of the trench during the day but at night, sentries had to crawl out to watch and listen. The slightest sound caused the enemy to open fire with his trench mortars and casualties mounted up quickly whilst we held this part.

The sentries were relieved every half an hour and glad they were to rejoin their company, for they never knew during their turn of duty, when a bomb might blow them to pieces. The trench and dugouts were smashed flat and it was useless to repair them.

Our artillery had, by then, become exceedingly expert and were supported with guns of a large calibre and a more plentiful supply of ammunition.

On one occasion, the enemy had troubled us with rather large number of his heavy mortar bombs, thus causing considerable damage, and our artillery was telephoned to reply and silence them. We were instructed to withdraw from the front trench to the support line, and a battery of our artillery opened fire with very large shells. I looked over the top of the trench and watched them exploding on the enemy trench, blowing a timber and sandbags into the air. The result was apparently satisfactory, for we had a rest from the bombs.

A deep winding communication trench followed its way to the front line; this we appreciated after being used to taking a chance over flat open country.

I had been kept busy with casualties. One night, when a traverse of the trench was occupied by three of the New Army who had come up for instruction, an enemy mortar bomb landed amongst them. I hurried to their assistance and found the trench completely knocked in and the men partially buried.

It was pitch dark and I was handicapped by being unable to show even a glimmer of light, or a machinegun would have immediately opened fire upon that part of the trench which now had a big gap in it. Groping in the mud, I discovered that one man had been killed but that the others were living.

The two survivors I managed to drag into a small dugout nearby and after carefully screening the doorway with sacks, lit a candle stump and proceeded to render all assistance possible.

One man had a leg blown away and the other was peppered all over with small wounds. The former, after attention was taken to the dressing station but the latter died in my arms. I felt particularly sorry for the poor fellows because it was their first visit to the line and they had only been in the trench for about hour. Added to those casualties were eleven men of the Engineers who were gassed whilst engaged in digging a mine.

We spent six days in the line and were then relieved by a battalion of the New Army and marched back to Helencourt a few miles behind the line. Here we were paraded in a field and inspected by Lord Kitchener.

After four days of fatigue work digging trench behind the town of Albert, etc. we returned to the front line at Aveluy. In addition to the usual incidents three items of interest occurred.

The Brigadier made a tour of inspection of the front line. This particular sector was quiet, which would no doubt account for the appearance of the General and his Staff, for they generally kept well to the rear when any activity was evidenced. The General passed along the trench, halted, and having enquiry as to whether it was safe to look over the gingerly hoisted himself on to the firing step, looked over the top and took a hurried glance at the enemy trench opposite.

He stepped down into the trench not having been fired upon during the moment he had looked over the top, informed the Captain of my company that as it was so quiet, it was possible that the Germans were not occupying their front trench and that, as a test a tunic and cap were to be placed on a rifle and held just above the top of the trench, whilst he continued his inspection of the sector. Upon his return, we would examine the tunic and, if found to be riddled could be safely assumed that the enemy had not forgotten the war and gone home.

We knew quite well that the enemy occupied his trench in an exceedingly efficient manner, by reason of the rapid fire to which we had been subjected.

However, as soon as the General had passed on and the tunic and cap had been exposed as ordered the Captain whispered hurried instructions to several of the men to open fire on the tunic with their rifles; when the staff returned, ample evidence was afforded of the activity of the enemy. The Captain knew perfectly well that, had the clothing by some unforeseen chance not been bullet ridden, parties would have been detailed to go over to the enemy trench after dark and investigate.

None of us were exactly excited at the prospect.

Whilst in this part of the line, small parties of men, under a non-commissioned officer, were allowed to go back behind the reserve line, where a number of tubs had been utilized for baths at a partially demolished brewery.

My turn, with others, came along and about half a dozen set off and in due course, halted at the corner of a road to await the arrival of the corporal who had been delayed. The Brigadier appeared on the scene and the following dialogue took place..

Brigadier -

"Well, you men, and what are you doing?"

Answer -

"We have received permission to go back for a bath, Sir, and are awaiting the corporal".

Brigadier -

"Baths, eh. jolly good idea". "Tell, whilst we're here, let's have a rifle inspection".

(general, consternation amongst us, for we had just left the trenches which were deep in mud). We "port arms" for inspection and stood in readiness for the ordeal. The Brigadier squinted down the barrel of the first man's rifle and the conversation was resumed

Brigadier -

"Bit dirty, isn't it?"

Answer -

"Yes, Sir" (he passed-to the next)

Brigadier -

"You've got a short rifle of the Regular Army pattern; where did you get it?"

Answer -

"I have just returned from hospital, Sir, and it was issued to me. When I left to return to my battalion".

Brigadier -

"Can you do anything with it?"

Answer -

"I haven't tried yet, Sir. I only rejoined the battalion last night".

Brigadier -

"Haven't tried it yet?". "My boy, if I had a new rifle, I'd go straight up to the front trench and fire some rounds to see how I got on".

(he passed to. the next man)

Brigadier -

"This is a dirty one, isn't it?". "Where did you say you were going?"

Answer -

"Back to get a hot bath, Sir".

(on to next man)

Brigadier -

"Just move the bolt backwards and forwards".

(this was done and a rasping noise was the result)

Brigadier -

"Bit rusty, isn't it?. You say that you are going back for hot baths; well, my boys, if I were you, I should get into some hot water and have a good wash and, if you take my tip, you'll take your rifles in with you and give them a good soaping as well"

The General was quite a dear old man and very human.

Fourteen British aeroplanes passed over in formation, on a bombing expedition, and all the men in the trench sent up a loud cheer, which apparently disturbed the Germans and conveyed to them the impression that we were about to attack, for they immediately lined their trench and opened a heavy fire with rifle machineguns. We kept low in the trench and smiled.

The colonel, on learning of the incident, issued an order that we were to again cheer at the same time on the following day, and that our artillery would immediately plaster the enemy trench with shrapnel shells as soon as he manned it and opened fire.

We did as ordered but the enemy was not to be caught the same way twice, so he did not take any notice of our cheering and consequently, the artillery swept his trench whilst doubtless he was well under cover tucked away in his dugouts.

At dawn, on one occasion we saw a flag on our barbed wire entanglements in front of the trench. Apparently during the night some enterprising German had crawled across and fixed it. The previous day, a draft of new officers had arrived and one young fellow who looked about nineteen years of age, was most interested in the flag and annoyed at the temerity of the enemy in placing it there which could only be looked upon as an insult to the British Army.

He stated his determination to go out after dark and bring it in. The old campaigners viewed the whole business with distrust and strongly advised the officer to be very careful. Acting upon advice, he set off after dark with a sergeant and one man armed with a ball of string with the intention of tying the string to the flag, returning to the trench whilst unwinding the ball and then hauling in the offending object. When he reached his objective however, he unfortunately appeared to lose his head and instead of carrying out the arrangement, took hold of the flag and dragged it out of the ground. An enemy bomb had been attached and it exploded and killed the officer and wounded the sergeant and man.

An enemy machinegun which had been trained on the spot, also opened fire.

One afternoon, when the war was behaving itself and things were pretty quiet I was sitting in a small dugout with my companion, Geordie Adams, and I thought it would be rather amusing to pass the time by writing a few lines about certain men of the platoon. The following rather painful effort ensued -

*About the 5th Seaforths,
I'm going to write,
Of platoon No.8., the boys who can fight. I'm
not in the slightest a poet I know, But we're
not downhearted, as these verses will show.*

Geordie Adams, the wag, must be placed at the top,
For his jokes and good humour are best of the lot,
And when there's hard work to be done, you must
know, His funny remarks keep us all on the go.

Then there's old Billy Butler, a good hearted chap,
A better could never be found on the map, but
he loses his things, it's remarkable quite,
And a jolly good thing that his head is on
tight.

Hatfield, the O.T.C. man of renown,
(An English chappie from old London Town),
his weakness well known for an argument heated,
And a great disapproval of being defeated.

Of old Billy Steward, theme must be a mention,
(I think he would like to retire on a pension).
He doesn't seem pleased with the way we are treated;
Perhaps though his views better not be repeated.

Duncan Thompson, the bomber, I musn't forget,
(He hasn't done much in the bombing line yet),
Of his weakness for love yarns, he'd better take heed
And not keep on asking for novels to read.

Now tall Private Humphrey, (nicknamed as "The Spider"),
Shuns cheap cigarettes, like the brand of "Rough Rider",
He's a nut, there's no doubt, of the very first order
And gives all the "howwid wuff" chaps the cold shoulder.

Of his bosom pall Luff, I've a few words too say,
(A very nice fellow in every way),
But rust on his rifle gave cause for reflection
And earned for all, extra rifle inspection.

Now Lance Corporal Narrower, (known always as
"sandy") In every lark is sure to be handy
Such being the case, it's a pretty sure crook,
For his bosom chum Mickie you've not far to look.

Hunter's a comic, there is no evasion,
He gets in a "mist" on every occasion.
The items that interest fellows the most,
Are the jolly big parcels he gets in the post.

*Cracknel and Miller are two fellows fine
Who love each other with love devine
But a sad feud exists between the two messes
For each one better food than the other professes*

*Now Couper's the boy who cuts the barbed wire
(When "out", he sets the whole village on fire)
And oft in the distance, 'tis a most common thing,
To hear his deep voice and loud laughter ring.*

*A few of the boys I have mentioned here,
And the rest - well they're all of them of good
So anxious their bit for old England to do
To fight for their dear folks (the home slackers too)*

*Our battalion is one of the best of the lot
(Although the others would say we are not),
Being favoured, it causes them many regrets
And we're given the name of 'The Brigadier's Pets'*

*We're known by the English battalions as "jocks",
(The boys who will make the Huns pull up their socks)
We give them rounds rapid, at times unawares,
Being nervous, they light the whole front up with flares*

*I think that enough of this rubbish I've written
(With the phrasing, I know, you can never be smitten)
But it's rather a joke and it's something to do
So I trust it may prove some amusement to you.*

We were relieved and moved back to our 'resting place' at Helencourt for a few days. A German aeroplane flew over and we expected to be bombed but from behind a cloud, a British machine appeared and we witnessed a thrilling fight. Suddenly a wing of the enemy plane crumpled up and the machine burst into flames and crashed to earth nearby; we all cheered heartily.

October.

We returned to the line and occupied the reserve trenches at the village of Autuille where we originally took over from the French. We were detailed, in turn, for fatigue work in the front line trench, digging a listening sap.

A tunnel was dug under the parapet and a trench which extended for about fifty feet was made at rightangles to the front line trench. During the night it was the duty of two sentries to sit at the end of the sap and watch and listen. On one occasion, whilst two men were on duty but not on the alert, they were surprised by the sudden appearance the head of a German over the top and a revolver pointed at them.

They were told, in a whisper, to surrender and come out of the sap and over to the enemy lines. One of the sentries was a Glasgow miner who didn't appear to know the meaning of the word fear; he grabbed a bomb and, without waiting to pull out its safety pin, suddenly hurled it at his enemy and, striking him between the eyes, stunned him. The victim was dragged into the sap and along the trench to the front line and duly transported to the rear as a prisoner.

In my dugout, in reserve, we converted an old biscuit tin (by perforating the sides with a bayonet) into quite a good brazier and, with the aid of coke thieved from the cooks, made a good fire on which we boiled water in our messtins and made cocoa. Another draft of men arrived from Scotland and battalion was nearly at its full strength again.

Whilst out on rest again at Henencourt, I was excused the usual fatigue work because, during the last period in the trenches, I had upset a tin of boiling tea over my leg and taken the skin off my shin. I received the Doctors exemption from duty. The battalion was engaged upon a route march and I was envied my burnt leg by the rest on account of my missing the parade.

That evening we enjoyed an impromptu concert at which the Brigadier and other officers attended. A rough platform had been erected and I accompanied the items on a piano which had been obtained from a large chateau nearby.

The Brigadier made a speech and handed out the usual 'soft soap'. In the chateau resided a French Countess and the house was used as Headquarters by the Staff

One of the officers of the battalion was very clever at writing up words of a topical nature for songs.

During a previous inspection by the Colonel, he discovered that one of the glass eye pieces of the gas mask (called smoke helmet) belonging to a man named Mackay was cracked and he drew the Company Commander's attention to the seriousness of a man going into a gas attack with a leaky helmet which would probably prove fatal to the wearer. The following song was written and sung by an officer -

*The army Corps sent out a note, battalion commanders
to warn, their men, that on any and every pretext
Or for any excuse in this world or the next, The smoke
helmet must never be torn.*

*And the days rolled placidly by, until at inspection
one morn, When the Colonel discovered that Private Mackay
Had broken the window that covered his eye, And the
front of his helmet was torn.*

*The C.O. for his subaltern sent, who was standing and
looking forlorn, He said, "Half of your men are
improperly dressed And one has a beard reaching down
to his chest. Whilst another's smoke helmet is
torn".*

*From Brigade to Division it went, and General Headquarters
made mourn, And the Master of Ordnance made an
indent, And a hundred and twenty smoke helmets were
sent, For the one that Mackay had torn.*

The setting up of a Divisional Concert Party was considered at that time, so that battalions out on rest could have amusement behind the lines. Whilst "resting" we could hear a heavy bombardment taking place in the line and imagined some poor devils going through it.

We had a concert each evening and one night following an enjoyable show, we had no sooner got to sleep in our barn than the alarm went and a scramble took place to get into our kit and parade.

It was, however, another false alarm which had been ordered by the General. After he had timed our turn out we went back to sleep.

The latest innovation was a battalion canteen, where eatables, cigarettes, etc. could be obtained at reasonable prices.

I heard of the Zeppelin raid and its visit to Guildford and most relieved to learn that none of the folks at home had suffered.

We returned to the firing line in Aveluy Wood but nothing of special interest occurred. A small light railway ran up to the reserve and fatigue parties were detailed from the front trench to collect the rations and mails. On one occasion we were at the railhead unloading and the enemy suddenly opened with shrapnel.

The ground was deep in mud and we made frantic dives for cover and remained there until the shelling ended. I dived under the small iron railway truck and lay there. When things had quietened down we stood up and I had to laugh; we looked such sketches and were plastered from head to foot with mud.

The next time we returned to the line, we occupied trenches at Thiepval, where we were about seventy yards from the enemy. My company relieved another of the 6th Argylls who were most nerve wracked and spoke in whispers. We were informed that the sector was a particularly hot one and that, throughout the day and night, the enemy fired Mininwerfer projectiles into the front trench. These missiles were about the size of a dustbin and weighed about two hundred pounds, each being filled with high explosive.

In order that the discharge of the gun might not be heard, the enemy fired his machineguns at the same time. The missiles were fired into the air to a great height and could be seen turning over and over on their way down and when they struck the ground with a thud and exploded, the noise was terrific and the concussion, enormous.

The Company of Argylls had had a very bad time and suffered a great many casualties. The trench was flattened out in parts and had to be vacated until it was rebuilt.

When we took up our position we found the trench and the dugouts smashed flat and, on the tree stumps, pieces of kilts could be seen fluttering (the sole remains of some of the men who had been blown up).

Whilst occupying this part we kept extremely quiet so that the enemy would not be certain that the trench was actually occupied. We had rather a rough time. Periodically we were subjected to the missiles but our casualties were lighter than those suffered by our predecessors. Once or twice we had to dig out men who were buried in their dugouts.

On Lord Kitcheners birthday, we set up a loud cheer and so annoyed the enemy that he plastered our front with trench mortar bombs and shells of all sizes.

The Germans shouted across, in English, each time that a salvo fell around us - "*What do you think of those?*".

When things had quietened down, we again caused annoyance by singing "*Rule Britannia*" and once more the enemy shelled us. At the end, we gave a loud cheer and our artillery was telephoned to reply.

They plastered the German trench with large shells and each time a salvo went over, the men shouted out "*What do you think of those, Fritz?*" We heard a whistle blown in the enemy line, which was the call for stretcher-bearers, and knew that some of our shells had been effective.

At dawn one morning, we were amazed to see a non commissioned officer of the enemy pacing the distance between the British and German saps. One of our sentries fired and the offender fell. Later, a German shouted across "*What have you done. with our Sergeant major?*".

The questioner was promptly informed "*He's na plus, finis'*". After many uncomplimentary remarks being exchanged, the enemy artillery opened on us and the argument terminated. In view of the action of the sergeant major who might have been planning a bombing raid, we kept a sharp look out that night but nothing happened.

A bombing raid on the enemy trench was arranged and we duly set off with pockets filled with bombs. I also carried a large bag of bandages.

The party crept across no man's land and lay down close to the German barbed wire entanglements. Men with wire cutters silently cut a small path to enable us to pass through and, at a given signal, the trench was rushed and bombs were thrown.

We jumped into the trench and proceeded along it, throwing bombs into the dugouts. We returned to our trench without losing a man.

'Resting' once more, we were engaged on the usual fatigue work. The first day we were inspected by the Major. This took place in the pouring rain and when it was over we had to dry our things. We were transported, in motor lorries, to a neighbouring village and engaged upon road mending. Batteries of our guns in position near the side of the road, opened fire over our heads.

Back in the front line again, we returned to Thiepval and spent another period under the fire of the Mininwerfer missiles, suffering several casualties. Several men were bit by enemy snipers. The communication trenches were deep in mud and my dugout leaked water everywhere. When we left the line we were covered in mud and looked sorry sights and it was nice to get back for a few days rest and have a clean up. We had several concerts and at one, the following amusing song was sung.

The Seaforths Lament.

*We are but little Seaforths meek,
We earn but seven bob a week;
the more we do, the more we may,
It makes no difference to our pay.*

*We dig by day, we dig by night,
Of pick and spade we hate the sight,
But when our luck we dare to curse,
We're told that things will get much worse.*

*There is one thing we do believe
That we're entitled to some. leave.
It's strange that we should be so nursed,
We'll get our old age pensions first.*

*Our hours per day are twenty four,
We thank the Lord there are no more,
For if there were, we certainly
Would work another two or three.*

*When from the trenches we proceed
We are inspected at great speed
And to the Major's great disgust,
He cannot find a speck of rust.*

*Obedience is our one watch word
And not a murmur will be heard.
If ordered to the charge, we trust,
You will not see our heels for dust.*

(sung to the hymn tune - "We are but little Children Weak".)

Once more we, returned to the trenches at Thiepval and endured another spell of usual routine. We experienced various kinds of weather and our week's occupation ended with snow that melted and ran in rivers.

At dawn one morning, we had a party of men working out in front of the trench repairing the barbed wire entanglements. An enemy machinegun opened and killed and wounded several.

I was kept busy bandaging and carrying the wounded down a communication trench which was knee deep in liquid mud. The winter seemed to be settling in and it was presumed that no offensive could be attempted until the Spring.

An unpleasant incident occurred whilst we were occupying this sector. A man who had been with us since we had landed in France, shot and killed himself in the dugout. The experiences and conditions had been too much for him and had preyed upon his mind.

A long period in the front line completed, we were relieved and marched to reserve for six days. I was ordered to report to the Adjutant, for my papers had come from England regarding the granting to me of a commission in the Hampshire Regiment.

These papers had to be signed by the Adjutant and then forwarded to the Brigadier for signature. The Adjutant was a sneering individual and liked by nobody and our conversation was similar to the following -

Adjutant -

"And so you want a commission do you?"

Answer -

"Yes, Sir".

Adjutant -

"I suppose you think you are just the right sort of person to hold one".

Answer -

"Yes, Sir".

Adjutant -

"Of course, you feel fully capable of leading a body of men in an attack".

Answer -

"Yes, Sir".

Adjutant -

"Alright, I'll sign your papers but you are a damned fool; in two or three days after you reach France again, you'll be dead".

I had to say "yes" in answer to his questions, otherwise he would not have signed my papers but his sarcasm made me want to hit out. I had now to wait for a further interview, by appointment, with the Brigadier.

For the last time in France, I returned to the trenches at Thiepval and, after two weeks in the front line, my company dropped back into the reserve trench which was situated about fifty yards in rear. The Mininwerfer projectiles came right over the front trench on to the light dugouts we were occupying and again casualties mounted up.

I was ordered one evening to proceed on foot, with another man named Cameron, back to headquarters some miles behind the lines to be interviewed by the Brigadier concerning the commissions we were hoping to be granted. I was duly ushered before this awe inspiring person to be interrogated, and the following conversation then took place.

Brigadier -

"I have before me, for signature, your paper regarding the granting to you of a commission in the Hampshire Regiment. I see that your name is Racine; are you, by any chance, a descendant of the celebrated French dramatist of that name?".

Answer -

"Yes, Sir; I have the family tree at my home".

Brigadier -

"That is most interesting; I am a great lover of his works and have read them all".

Whereupon he entertained me with a long description of works and finally ended by saying, "Well, my boy, I'll be pleased to sign your papers and wish you the best of luck. When you join this English battalion, be sure to show them just how we have trained you in a Scottish Regiment. I was greatly relieved to find that his interest in my name had entirely driven from his mind the thoughts of questioning me on map reading and other matters.

Several fellows had been interrogated and, as their knowledge had not been great, they had been returned to their battalion to read up the subjects in preparation for a further interview. I wandered back to my company in the trenches and that it was only a matter of time before I would be recalled to England to take up my commission. Now I had got so far in the matter, I experienced more nervousness than I had before known.

I had the fear of possibly being hit whilst knowing that any day might see me on the way home. There were three of us awaiting orders to proceed to England and we weathered the period until the battalion was relieved, six days later, with the exception of one man. He was sniped whilst on sentry duty at the head of a sap, the very day that the battalion was relieved. I realised the poor fellow's misfortune, for we were to have left the trenches in a few hours. I had the task of carrying him for burial and my nervousness increased.

We were duly relieved and marched back to the village of Bouzincourt and placed under canvas. Snow covered the ground and we found it rather cold.

That evening, two or three of the men went to the estaminet for some drinks but found a large card in the window bearing the words "Reserved for Royal Engineers". This roused the anger of the men, who forced their way inside and a fight with some of the Royal Engineers who resented the intrusion took place. An officer was called and two of our men were arrested and lodged in the guardroom. The remainder rushed off to the barn where we quartered and told us of the incident.

All the men were furious to think that after weeks in the front line, they should be debarred from entering the estaminet by a handful of Engineers. About forty of us set off at a run for the guardroom.

We stopped a short distance from the sentry and asked to see the officer. He came out and we requested the release of the two prisoners but he refused. We threatened to rush the guardroom and the sentry presented his rifle at us but, having just left the firing line where bullets were numerous the men did not worry. The party was getting dangerous and ultimately the officer decided to take the line of least resistance, so freed the prisoners on condition that they immediately returned to their billet.

After this incident, the card was removed from the estaminet window and the men granted admittance.

On Christmas Day, two or three of us clubbed together and, after a certain amount of trouble, secured a goose which we had roasted. The Colonel's wife had sent out a current loaf for each man and we also received a half of a Christmas pudding each which had been provided by some fund. A bottle of French wine completed a nice dinner. On Boxing Day we had a church parade in the morning and a route march in the afternoon. A new order warned us to on no account mention when we occupied or left the trenches. In comparative safety, we listened to the guns booming forth and sympathised with the men who had taken our place in the trenches.

After two or three days in this village, we were marched back through Senlis to another village where the battalion was to remain for a time whilst being refitted.

January 1916

I received orders to proceed to England with a new friend named Cameron who was also waiting to return and take up a commission in the Hampshire Regiment. We visited all our friends in their respective barns to say goodbye and were wished the best of luck. I shook hands with my Guildford friend, Ernest Gyatt, who had enlisted with me. It was the last time that I saw him, for he was killed soon afterwards.

At dawn, the following morning, we set off on an army ammunition wagon to the railway station at Mericourt, a number of miles away. We entrained for Havre, duly boarded a boat at that port and reached Southampton the next morning.

I had handed in my rifle and equipment before leaving the battalion and such odds and ends as souvenirs etc. I carried over my shoulder in a sandbag.

I was in a delapidated condition (half of my shirt was missing) and longed for a hot bath. I walked up to my Aunt's house in Cavendish Grove, Southampton, and was welcomed with opened arms. A hot bath was immediately prepared and I lay and soaked and enjoyed myself; my part shirt had been removed and consigned to the dustbin and another, belonging to my cousin, placed my disposal.

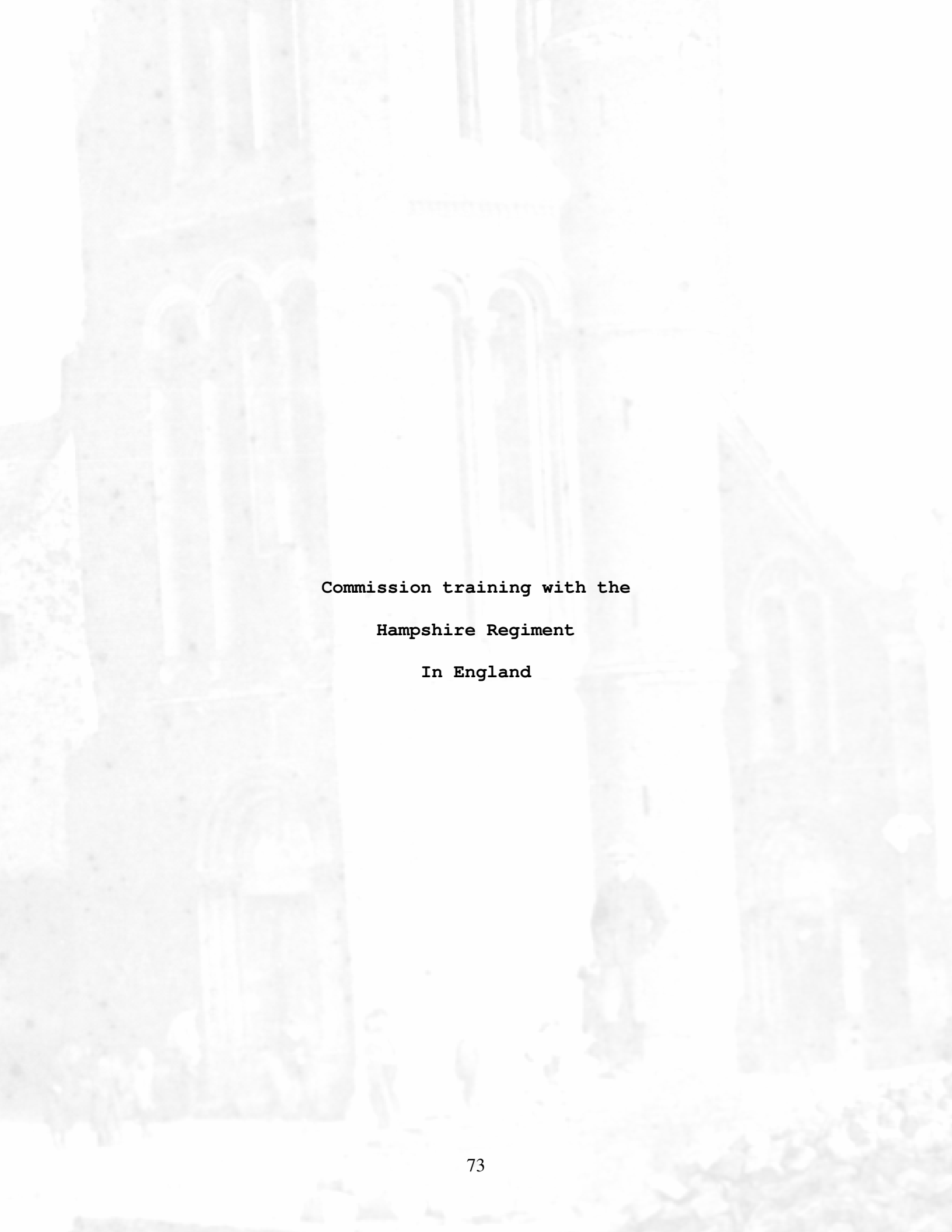
My feelings were extraordinary, as I sat down to tea in a comfortable drawing room, after months of danger amid mud and filth. The extreme quietness seemed uncanny and I felt as if I had been transported into another world.

I longed to see my Parents, so I entrained for Guildford. Whilst stopped at one station (my head was out of the carriage window and I was drinking in old familiar scenes), some ladies further up the train beckoned me into their compartment. The condition of my uniform made it apparent that I had just crossed from France.

I was subjected to numerous questions regarding life in the trenches, and I rather regretted having accepted their invitation to join them.

In due course I reached home and experienced most wonderful feeling of contentment on being with my Parents again. I was grateful that I had come through without a scratch, when so many of my friends had been killed.

After a good night's sleep, in a comfortable bed, I rose, breakfasted and proceeded to London to report at the War Office. I was granted two weeks leave in which to obtain my new uniform, and much I made of that time in visiting my many friends and enjoying myself before once again coming under army discipline.



Commission training with the
Hampshire Regiment
In England



January 1916.

I met my friend Cameron at Waterloo and we travelled to Bournemouth together and joined, as 2nd Lieutenants, the 2/5th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment. This was a draft finding unit for the battalions of the Regiment which were either stationed in India or were on active service in France and Mesopotamia.

After we had reported to the Adjutant, we were billeted in a large house at 4, Vale Road, Boscombe, occupied by the Misses Andrews, three maiden ladies. They made us thoroughly at home.

During the following week or two, we drilled, skirmished, route marched, etc. Each day a fresh batch of raw recruits arrived to be licked into shape. We soon settled down with our brother officers and were treated with a certain amount of respect. We were the only ones who had seen active service. Bournemouth we liked immensely and many jolly times were spent in the town. The Westover was a large roller skating rink and we often met there and indulged in exercise.

February.

Cameron and I were detailed to proceed to Hertford Barracks for a course of instruction to last about a month. After reporting to the Adjutant, we were allotted an empty room in a house in the barrack square. We erected our camp beds and washstands and settled ourselves down. An orderly was detailed to each four officers and he was responsible for the cleanliness of their kit, etc.

It was an officers' course of instruction and the instructors were Regular officers from the Guards. They were holy terrors, (which was putting it mildly), and viewed with contempt the officers they supervised, being ready at every opportunity to wreath their sarcasm upon us. The fact was constantly impressed upon us that we could never hope to become capable army officers as we were only civilians in disguise and not professional soldiers as they were.

For drill purposes, we were placed in the care of a sergeant-major of the Coldstream Guards, who, although polite and differential to the officers under instruction, interspersed his orders with chatty little remarks such as - "Lift up your feet, Gentlemen; this is not a dancing class", when we were marking time.

We rose at 6 a.m., paraded at 7 a.m, and were put through our paces. The restrictions were unbelievable and the decided efforts to discipline us, very severe. We were kept at work throughout the whole day and, at night we attended lectures and had notes to write up. The daily routine was as follows -

7a.m. - parade and drill until breakfast time.
9.30a.m. - lectures
1p. m. - lunch
2.30p.m. - more lectures
5p.m. - tea
5.30p.m. - more lectures
7 p.m. - dinner
8 p. m. - lectures again

and then the writing up of notes until nearly midnight.

The course had the reputation of being one of the hardest in England and I well believed it. The Colonel stated that we had three years work to master in four weeks.

Some of the officers who took the previous course, fainted when on parade, for night operations sometimes lasted until 2 a.m. and notes then had to be written up. In consequence of the hard work we had scarcely any free time for leisure but, one Saturday afternoon, I decided to have a change and so explored the town.

Hertford seemed to have been a target for the Zeppelins, bombs had been dropped on the town and many buildings had suffered but were now boarded up; some of the houses had been burned to the ground.

One night the Zepps. passed over but did not drop ay bombs; all the inhabitants seemed very nervous and if a glimmer of light appeared from behind a blind of a house, action was immediately taken to rectify the matter and at night the town was in complete darkness.

Our instruction in attack was completed and that of defence commenced. We were taken into ploughed fields and lectured in the pouring rain. In turn, officers assumed command of the remainder, under the eagle eye of the Major, and issued orders which had to be executed.

We each possessed maps of the district by which we worked. After a lecture on billeting, we were marched to a village a few miles distant, to try our hand at it.

There were lectures on Military Law and many other subjects, so that we had a hazy idea of everything and knew nothing thoroughly. We each had a pile of text books but no time in which to digest their content properly.

We were informed that several officers engaged upon the previous courses had failed in the final examination and been returned to their battalions with adverse reports.

Extra duties were frequently given for the most trivial offences; the following was an example. Whilst making an attack, one officer, in order to avoid having to throw himself down in a puddle of water, moved out of his line of advance and selected a dry spot. The Major noticed the manoeuvre, with the result that the officer in question was given extra duty.

Another officer, wearing a long service ribbon, ordered his section to "cease fire" at the wrong moment. He too was given extra duty. It will be realised that the Major was loved by all. Extra duty meant a lecture or other work after the rest had finished.

On a route march during a previous course, one officer, whilst marching at ease, sang a song which may have been applicable to the Major. The Major evidently thought that the cap fitted, for he took the whole parade out for a long night attack and ordered an early parade the following morning.

Most of the officers were angry at the severity of the discipline and muttered threats of ragging certain of the autocrats.

The last lecture of the day usually commenced at 9 p.m. and after that we had pages and pages of notes to write up regarding the whole day's work. This kept us busy until midnight or the early hours of the morning.

We finished at midday on Saturday, unless unfortunate enough to have earned "extra duty", and were allowed time off until early parade Monday morning.

I decided to go to Bedford and visit my old billet. The good folk were delighted to see me and I talked with several of the occupants of the other billets. They were anxious to hear of the fate of the Seaforths who had been quartered with them before going to France. Late on Sunday evening, I returned to the barracks and resumed. After the final lectures on Administration and Organization, etc., we entered, with considerable misgiving, for the numerous examinations. In due course a list of those who had passed, with the number of marks allotted, was posted on the board. Much to my surprise I was placed fairly high, although heaven alone knows how it was achieved. Quite a number of officers failed to secure the minimum number of qualifying marks and were returned to their battalions with adverse reports.

March

I rejoined the Regiment at Bournemouth for a week or two and was then detailed to attend another use of instruction in musketry and the Lewis gun at Hayling Island. I was billeted in a large house named 'The Towers' which was situated right on the sea front. In the grounds were tennis courts and I had some splendid games in the evenings. At the bottom of the garden a summerhouse had been erected in which was a rustic table also chairs. This commanded a clear view out to sea and I often sat there in the evenings and wrote up my notes.

This course lasted for four weeks and although we had to cram and write up copious notes, I had a far more comfortable time than I experienced during the Hertford course.

I was in possession of a motor cycle and spent the weekends at Southampton.

The course duly ended and, after the results of the examinations had been posted, I returned to Bournemouth and joined the battalion.

Recruits continued to arrive and were gradually knocked into shape by the sergeants. We were taken for long route marches and participated in field days, trench digging, etc., which continued for a few weeks.

The battalion then received orders to proceed to Romsey where we were placed under canvas; battalions of the Wilts, Dorsets, etc. were with us.

Training was resumed and drafts made efficient for despatch to the battalions on service. I had to attend an examination in drill and general field work and managed to pass the tests.

Next I was sent to Salisbury Plain for musketry and, after firing my course and passing out as a "first class shot", was kept at the camp as an officer in charge of butts. For the next week or two I was responsible for the registering of the targets and the return of the firing tests carried out by the men from the various Battalions.

In due course I returned to Romsey and decided to take up signalling. This included the morse code, operated by electric buzzers, flags, lamps, heliographs etc. Also the laying of field telephones. After dark we sent and received messages in morse by lamp.

Each Sunday the battalion attended Church parade and those of Church of England denomination held their services in Romsey Abbey.

I was detailed as officer in charge of the small body of nonconformists and marched my party independently to their chapel.

Many evenings and weekends I spent in Southampton. I had disposed of my motor cycle (expecting to be detailed at any moment to be sent overseas) and had acquired an ordinary push cycle. Several times, at night, I returned to Romsey after an enjoyable time, being compelled to ride on the rim of the wheel owing to punctures.

During these rides I was dismount and listgen to the nightingales singing in the trees.

I returned to camp on one occasion, and saw the searchlights being operated in the Portsmouth area. It transpired that a Zeppelin had visited the town and dropped bombs but no serious damage was done.

The training proceeded day by day and drafts were periodically sent overseas. I awaited my movement orders.

On returning to camp one evening I found a note from Adjutant lying on my camp bed. It informed me that I had been detailed to proceed somewhere east. I was granted a few days leave, in which time to procure tropical kit, so I returned to my home and spent a pleasant holiday.


I returned to Romsey and after a short period, received orders to leave. I was placed in charge of a draft consisting of two officers and two hundred men.

October

Several kit inspections followed and, after the transport had been loaded, we marched in the rain and headed by the band to Romsey station. We entrained for Devonport. The inhabitants gave us a good send off. We travelled throughout the night, stopping at Exeter at 4am where the Mayoress and friends dispensed tea, cakes and cigarettes to the men. We reached Devonport at 6.30am and embarked on the S.S. 'Orontes' (Orient Line).

I had several hundred pounds in cash which had been handed to me by the Adjutant before leaving with which to pay the men. I was thankful to have it safely placed in the safe in the pursers office.

The two officers in the draft were exceedingly nice fellows. One was Cameron who came with me to the battalion from France. The other was named Vize (a musical comedy actor). Cameron and I shared a comfortable cabin together. We found out that our ultimate destination was to be India, but that owing to the submarine menace, the route would follow the coastline the whole way until we reached South Africa and not via the Suez canal.



**Voyage to South Africa
and service in South Africa.**

We experienced a bad storm whilst crossing the Bay of Biscay and I was very seasick and wished that the boat would go to the bottom.

The transport that left Devonport previous to ours was torpedoed.

During the many days that followed, we kept ourselves amused by either playing deck games such as tennis, cricket, quoits, etc. or reading books. There was a good library aboard and I read the books by W.W.Jacobs which I found to be most amusing.

Each morning the troops were paraded for physical drill and roll call. During the nights, the portholes of the ship, which had all been blackened, were kept closed so that no light could betray us to an enemy submarine; we had each been issued with a lifebelt, which had to be constantly in our possession although not actually worn. The officers and men were allotted boat, stations and periodically, a bell was sounded and the ship's siren blown to signal the alarm; the men had to at once don their lifebelts and parade at their respective boat stations on deck. Sometimes the alarm went during the night and we had to hurriedly dress, don lifebelts, and scramble up on to deck; we never knew when an enemy submarine might put in an appearance, so when the alarm I sounded, a general rush took place.

The food was excellent and we sat down to meals in a comfortable dining room. Breakfast was served at 8.30 am, beef tea taken on deck at 11.30 am., lunch at 1 pm, tea at 4 p.m. , and dinner at 7 p.m.

Being out of sight of land, with nothing but a huge expanse of water to gaze at day after day, it became a little monotonous but it was certainly much preferred to the trenches of France.

On Sunday mornings, a short service was held in the well of the ship. The remainder of the day was spent in games etc.

We had proceeded for some two thousand miles before we saw the first tramp steamer going in the opposite direction; this was quite an item of interest.

Some afternoons, sports were arranged for the men and races held on deck; the officers subscribed money for prizes. A sweepstake, on the mileage travelled by the boat, was held each day; the distance was generally in the neighbourhood of three hundred miles.

On the eve of crossing the line, the following notice appeared on the ship's board -

H. M. T. "Orontes".

*KNOW YE, ALL YE WHOP IT MAY CONCERN - That I, neptune,
- King of ye High Seas -*

Hearing ye good Ship "Orontes" carrieth many strangers through my Dominions, know ye that I, on the third day of November, at three in the afternoon, with my Wife Aphrodite and Court, my Doctor and Barber, will board the aforesaid ship to perform ye ancient Rites of Enrolment of these strangers to ye Ancient Order of Salts - Drowning such as, in the opinion of my Court, are not fit for such Honour.

Given under my hand and seal this second day of November, in the year of our lord, one thousand, nine hundred and sixteen.

The following day at the time stated, Neptune appeared (with his Court), dressed in the appropriate costumes. He was pulled round the deck in an improvised chariot, preceeded by a "band" consisting of a cornet and a triangle. A large sail had been prepared in the shape of a bath (in the well of the ship), and a platform was erected, upon which Neptune and his Court gathered; the water in the bath was about three feet deep.

The names of the several officers, who had to undergo the initiation, had been posted on the notice board and the men, numbering some hundreds, were grouped around to witness the fun of their officers being ducked. The officers, each in turn, were presented to Neptune and he handed them on to the Barber (who possessed a bucket of white lather and an enormous razor about three feet long) and he sat each victim in a chair, lathered the whole of his face with the aid of a whitewash brush, and proceeded to shave him; the doctor then administered mustard pills.

The victim, who was fully dressed in drill uniform, was then grabbed and thrown head over heels into the bath, where some of Neptune's attendants were going to receive him, and ducked three times; even the ships officers, in their nicely starched drill uniforms, were subjected to the ceremony. Of course, the men were delighted and cheered madly.

I thoroughly enjoyed the fun, which I witnessed from the top deck - being under the impression that I was safe at that distance. Apparently, however, some of my men drew Neptune's attention to me, for in a short time I was seized by several of the attendants and carried down companion ways and along corridors, struggling madly, until finally deposited on the platfc before Neptune. I was fully dressed in my uniform but shaved, doctored and thrown into the bath, much to the keen enjoyment of the men of my draft. Following my initiation, I was presented with a printed certificate which stated as follows -



In the evening, a concert was given and I had to contribute three or four songs.

On Guy Fawkes Day, the stokers made an effigy of the Kaiser and carried it round the deck; it was then strung up at the yard arm and the officers peppered it with bullets from their revolvers.

Once a week I held a parade of the men and paid them. The money in my care gradually diminished.

On one of these occasions, when I was sitting at the table surrounded by money, the alarm sounded and everybody dashed on to deck wondering whether it was a genuine one. I stayed and gathered up the money, for I had no wish to return and find it depleted, should the alarm prove to be false.

One of any occupations was the censoring of the mens letters, which at times proved to be most amusing; one wrote that we had encountered enemy submarines. Some of the experiences depicted by the men were weird and wonderful. The further we progressed on our voyage, the warmer it became and we assumed our uniforms of drill and kept the electric fans in our cabins going the whole time.

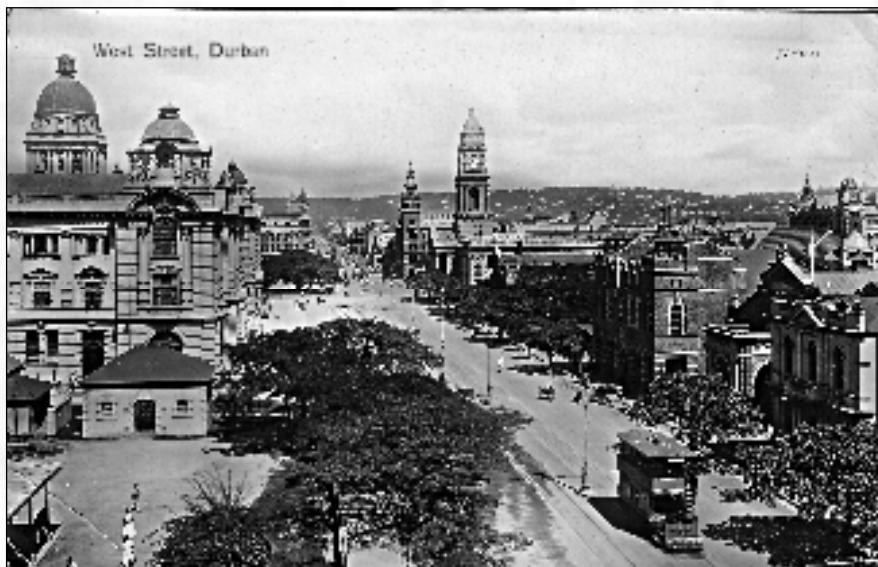
At dawn, after three weeks at sea, we sailed into Table Bay and had our first sight of land; Table Mountain presented a wonderful appearance, being outlined against a most glorious sunrise. As we proceeded across the bay, we were gradually able to discern houses at the foot of the mountain and, later, to see the town itself; we berthed at about 7 a.m. and breakfasted on board.

The troops were then inspected and taken ashore at Cape Town, dismissed, and instructed to parade again on the quay at 3 p.m., thus giving them six hours ashore whilst the boat coaled.

My brother officers and I walked into the town and, after exploring Cecil Rhodes Gardens and other places of interest, chartered a taxi and drove to the fashionable place named Muizenburg, about thirty miles distant; we ran into an army waggon en route but only slightly damaged the car. We passed several Kaffir kraals and duly reached our destination; an hour and a half soon passed in this delightful place, which was crowded with people. The weather was perfect and resembled a hot day in Summer in England; the sky was without a cloud. A lovely bay with mountains surrounding it, provided excellent surf riding for the many bathers and, after partaking of a tea of strawberries and cream, we returned to Cape Town and lunched in a café. Later we visited the many splendid shops and made sundry purchases. It seemed strange to mix with so many black people.



Gardiner street, Durban



West street, Durban

We returned to the quay, boarded the boat and steamed away about 4.30 p.m. A number of people had assembled and they gave us a cheer as we left.

We passed fairly close to the coast and left the Cape of Good Hope behind us.

The daily routine was resumed, with games etc., and we witnessed several forest fires which were taking place on the main land.

We passed Port Elisabeth and New London and ultimately reached Durban at about 3 a.m. one day.

The previous evening, we had a final dinner on board and many healths were toasted.

We paraded and marched to a rest camp on the sea front and were placed under canvas. It took the whole of the morning to get my draft of two hundred men settled and I afterwards strolled into the town for lunch. Durban was a splendid place and its buildings magnificent. Each morning we bathed in the enclosure provided on the beach which was surrounded by a barred iron grill about eight feet high; the bay was infested with sharks and precaution was necessary.

Opposite, on the other side of the bay, was a point called The Bluff, with a lighthouse at the top. There was a whaling station on the point and whales could be seen drawn up on the slipways; daily we could see the whalers in the bay and hear the noise of discharge of the harpoon guns.

It was refreshing to see all the shops lit up and the promenade festooned with coloured electric lamps, after the darkness of England. There were two theatres and several cinemas, and I could have enjoyed a freer time had I been unattached to the camp, as were some officers; having the responsibility of the draft, there was always some duty to be attended to, such as the daily signing of passes for the men to go into the town, paying them, etc.

When we left England, I had only been supplied with sufficient money to pay the men during the shorter route to South Africa, via the Suez Canal, and as we come all the way round the coast, I had a very small balance in hand. Soon as the men found themselves in Durban, they at once applied for money to spend and I had to seek out the Base Paymaster and requisition for cash, which was handed to me in Kruger money.

Certain calculations had then to be entered into when paying the men, for some received this money whilst others, English currency. I wondered what would happen when we arrived in India with a balance of Kruger money in hand for this money would not be accepted either on board or in India.

We thoroughly enjoyed the hot climate and spent happy days playing tennis and exploring. The inhabitants were exceedingly hospitable and many men were invited to the houses and entertained; I became very friendly with a lady and her daughter and spent some pleasant evenings at their residence.

Two evenings after we had arrived, an officer and I went to the "Criterion Theatre", where a revue called "The Million Dollar Girl" was being performed. At the interval, he and I sent round our cards on which the following was written - "Would the ladies please take pity upon two lonely officers who were miles away from home, and would be grateful for their company to supper".

At the end of the performance, two lady members of the cast joined us at a neighbouring hotel for supper.

During our stay in Durban, we became acquainted with the members of the Company and, each morning, bathed with them.

In the afternoons, we would sometimes hire a motor boat take the girls across to The Bluff for tea, returning in time for their appearance at the theatre in the evening. Several evenings, after their performance, we adjourned to a hotel where we danced the best part of the night; I was in demand and spent most of the time at the piano playing dance music.


On several occasions, we dined at the Royal Hotel; this hotel was accepted as being the one of Durban.

The buildings of the town were particularly attractive, especially that of the Post Office and the Town Hall, which were magnificent structures; the Zoological Gardens were most interesting. Electric tramcars ran to most parts and, in the evenings, crowds of theatre goers were seen in their cool silk clothes.

After a week or so in glorious surroundings, we marched to the docks and embarked aboard the s.s. "Aregon", one of the boats of the Royal Mail Line. By lunch time all the men were quartered and a number of civilians, who gathered to see them off, amused themselves by throwing up oranges to the troops who were leaning over deck rail.

Information was received that the boat would not sail until midnight at the earliest, and officers only were granted permission to go ashore until 10 p.m.

The men felt disappointed at being refused leave and amused themselves, each time an officer went down the gangway, by chanting in unison - "We don't want to go ashore; we wouldn't if we had the chance".



**Voyage from South Africa
and service in India**

In due course the "Aregon" left and we resumed the daily routine, playing games on deck, etc. The days slipped along and, in crossing the Indian Ocean, less restriction was enforced regarding the showing of lights from portholes etc., owing to the submarine menace being discounted.

December.

At night, we witnessed the most glorious sunsets imaginable, such as are only seen in the East. The sun appeared to disappear behind the horizon like a ball of fire and rays of light reflected all the most wonderful colours. To add to the charm, the sea had scarcely a ripple upon it and schools of porpoises and flying fish could be seen.

It was very hot and I wore a white shirt with open neck, sleeves rolled, white drill trousers and a pith helmet; the perspiration ran from me in streams and I disliked wearing a stiff collar when dressed for dinner.

One evening, whilst sitting at dinner, I saw the steward standing close to the Captains table; our eyes met and we recognised one another. I had met him many years before at Southampton and knew his Father, a captain of a Royal Mail boat, and his brothers; after dinner, we renewed acquaintance and many evenings I visited him in his cabin and chatted.

On the eve of our arrival in India, I was standing on deck when one of the ship's officers turned to me said -

"sniff"; I did so.

"Smell anything", he asked.

"Yes". I replied; "A kind of musty smell".

"That's India" he said; "We can always smell it some hours before sighted and we shall be there soon".

Early in the morning, we reached Bombay and after breakfast, I went ashore and, after a search, managed to locate the Paymaster and requisitioned more money with which to pay the men; this time I received Indian currency, rupees, etc.

On my return to the boat, I found an Officer from the Hampshire Battalion waiting to conduct us to Secunderabad, our new station.

I paraded the men and we entrained, travelling for two days and nights, breaking our journey at Poona, Wadi, etc. for meals. We ultimately reached our destination. The battalion band was awaiting us and we marched to Gough Barracks.

The men were handed over to the sergeant-major and my brother officers. Cameron, Vize, and I were duly allotted quarters; we each had were kept moving by natives, to cause a current of air to pass through the rooms.

Parades commenced at 6.30 a.m., physical drill until 8 a.m., and drill etc. from 9 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. The men were then finished for the day, unless detailed for guard in the evening, but the officers had to attend the orderly Room at 12.15 p.m. for a few minutes each day; Thursday was a holiday and no parades were held.

We had lunch at 1 p.m. and at all meals ray butler stood behind my chair and attended to my needs. Each afternoon we lay on our beds, under mosquito nets, and endeavoured to sleep whilst perspiring profusely. At 4 p.m. tea and biscuits were brought to us and as by then the temperature had become more bearable, we often played tennis on the hard courts until the bugle sounded the call to dress.

We then returned to our bungalows, where hot baths were ready and mess kits, consisting of starched white drill cut-away short coats and tight trousers which fastened with straps under patent leather Wellington boots, a red cummerbund and a white-shirt with stiff winged collar and a black dress bow were laid out in readiness to be placed upon us by our butlers.

As soon as the bugle sounded the officers call to mess, we left our bungalows, preceded by the butlers who carried lighted hurrican lamps and kept a look out lest we should step on snakes.

Etiquette was strictly observed and the officers gathered in the ante-room sipping appetisers, awaiting the arrival of the Colonel. The Mess President would then, when informed by the Mess Sergeant, approach the Colonel and address him with the words "Dinner is served, Sir".

The Colonel would then proceed to the dining room, followed by the rest of the officers in their order of seniority, who stood by their chairs and waited for the Colonel to be seated before following his example; the meal then proceeded.

The Mess President sat at one end of the table and the Orderly Officer the other. Following dessert the wine would be passed round and glasses charged, whereupon the Mess President would rise and address the Orderly Officer in the following words - "Mr Vice, The King"; he, in turn, would rise and say, "Gentlemen, The King". All officers would then rise to their feet and, with glasses charged and raised, toast the King. On guest nights, the table was prettily decorated with festoons of flowers and the regimental silver plate utilized.

The battalion band played on the lawn throughout dinner. And, during the toast to the King, the National Anthem was played. The native butlers, in their long white drill coats and trousers with turbans and regimental cummerbunds added to the picturesqueness of the scene.

Nobody was permitted to smoke until the Colonel had lit up, or allowed to leave the table until he had risen or special permission had been granted. The only officer not in mess kit was the Orderly Officer; he had other regimental duties to perform after dinner. The discipline and etiquette were most strictly observed and on one occasion, a junior officer, who was talking to a neighbour, inadvertently rested his elbow on the table which caused the Colonel to remark.- "Mr, as you are apparently tired, I think you had better withdraw during dinner".

After dinner, many of the officers adjourned to the card or billiard rooms. Dinner was looked upon as a parade and officers had to obtain special permission to absent themselves; punctuality was insisted upon and woe betide a late arrival; he would be subjected to a most scathing lecture by the Colonel.

On Sundays, supper was served, instead of dinner, and civilian evening dress was worn instead of mess kit.

As soon as daily parades were over, officers were allowed to change into civilian clothes; in the mornings I went horse riding.

Life in India was one of luxury and native servants were engaged to perform even the smallest services. For example, if I sat in my bungalow and wanted an article which was lying at the other side of the room, or a cigarette lighted, a call would bring a servant to my aide to attend immediately to my needs.

The natives of the district seemed to go in fear of the white man and looked upon the British Officer as a big white Sahib. For instance, one evening I heard a frightful din going on outside my bungalow at the back; went out and found about thirty natives arguing and fighting. I shouted a few words to them and they ceased their altercations and faded away immediately.

I found the native part of Secunderabad deserted and walked through it without meeting a single person. All the shops and houses had been boarded up, for the natives had fled to the fields and erected rush huts live in. Plague was ravishing and, on some days, deaths were numerous and funerals an every day occurrence. According to official figures, a hundred and fifty deaths a day took place in the large city of Hyderabad situated a few miles distant.

The nights were rather strange at first; Jackals prowled in packs and set up their weird wailing howl, whilst the frogs in the swamps croaked in chorus. Not far distant, panthers were in evidence and, on one occasion, a man-eating tiger caused considerable consternation at a nearby village, by appropriating some of the residents and making off.

The draft had been inspected several times by various officers in high command. One incident rather amused me. Colonel Day, of the big engineering firm Day Summers & Co, inspected the draft soon after its arrival; he cross examined each man regarding his town of residence, profession, etc. and coming to one man, a conversation similar to the following took place -

Colonel. "Where is your home?"

Man "Southampton, Sir".

Colonel. "What is your profession?"

Man. "Engineer, Sir".

Colonel. "Some little tin-pot firm, I suppose?"

Ian. "Day Summers, Sir".
(temporary collapse of the Colonel).

After a search in Secunderabad, I managed to discover the only respectable piano, which was a Broadwood Grand. I came to terms with the shopkeeper regarding the hire of it, and it was delivered and placed in my bungalow. My friend Vize (the musical comedy actor) and I spent many enjoyable musical evenings.

Football matches were arranged and each platoon had its own team, which entered into competition; I was delighted to find that my platoon team were the winners of most matches.

On Christmas Day, in accordance with custom, I found about a dozen and a half black servants waiting for me outside of the bungalow; they each had a wreath of flowers which they solemnly placed over my head to rest around my neck, and murmured expressions of salutations. Needless to add, the primary object of the display was the anticipated Christmas Box, which in all, depleted my bank balance to the tune of about two pounds ten shillings; my butler had quite an elaborately iced cake made for me.

One day, whilst playing in a football match, officers vs sergeants, I came to grief. The pitch was a gravel one and, in falling, I slid along the ground and tore my leg on a flint; after the match, I proceeded to the hospital and had my leg dressed. In the East a wound invariably turns septic and my accident kept me hobbling about on two sticks for a fortnight. At the end of that period it became worse and a swelling appeared in my groin. I had to attend twice daily at the hospital for hot fomentations to be applied, and felt a little nervous because a brother officer was occupying a bed with a similar trouble and had had a lump in the groin removed.

Happily, however, in my case this was not necessary and the leg healed and the lump disappeared; I was excused all duty for nearly a month and went for drives into the country.

My butler, who spoke quite good English, each day read battalion orders and informed me of any special duty for which I might be detailed on the following day.

One evening, after dinner, I said, as usual - "Anything special in orders, Tamby?"; he replied, "Yes; Master has go to Rawal Pindi on a course". "Alright". I answered, "Arrange everything". Without my giving any detailed instructions, he ascertained the time the train left, my compartment, had my baggage packed and placed on a conveyance which waited outside the bungalow the following morning, and arranged everything.

January 1916.

I duly entrained, with my servant, and started on the long journey to Rawal Pindi; this entailed some days and nights of travelling. I had a nice compartment to myself, which possessed a comfortable couch bed and fittings. Periodically, throughout the day, the train stopped at a station for a length of time sufficient to enable lunch to be taken; this usually consisted of curried rice and chicken and my servant joined me and administered to my wants.

The first part of the journey was accomplished on the Nizam of Hyderabad state Railway; After we had stopped for lunch at a station on the first day I discovered, when about a quarter of a mile on the resumed journey, that I had left my pith helmet behind; I pulled the communication cord and brought the train to a standstill. Consternation took place amongst the train officials and the guard came along and remonstrated with me; I informed him that I was a British officer and had done what I considered necessary. The argument immediately terminated and I sent my servant back to the station for my helmet.

I would not have liked to have taken such a course on the railways in England.

I found the journey most interesting, as I was enabled to obtain a good idea of the country. We stopped for a time at Lahore and I walked into the town on a tour of inspection. The final part of the journey was very spectacular, when passing over the mountains.

In due course, I reached my destination and was driven to Flashman's Hotel, Rawal Pindi, where I was to be placed under canvas; on account of the hotel being full, I was placed under canvas nearby.

The following morning, I reported to the Adjutant of the School for instruction and settled down to another course of musketry. As I had already passed my examination on a similar course at Hayling Island, I did not have to unduly exert myself. We commenced at 8.30 a.m. and continued until 2.30 p.m. Parades and lectures had then finished but the usual copious notes required to be written up.

In the afternoons, I played tennis on the hard court at the Rawal Pindi Club; sometimes, in the evenings, most exclusive dances were held.

The town was divided, more or less, into two parts; one was composed of Europeans and natives, whilst the other, the native part, entirely of natives. The latter was placed out of bounds to the troops, as the appearance of Europeans was rather resented in that quarter; it was a common sight to see camels and bullock drawn carts.

The weather was rather cold; snow had fallen and lay thickly.

The final days of the course were given up to examinations and the results were duly published. On account of my former course, I was fortunate enough to receive a "distinguished" for the rifle and Lewis gun examinations. The course comprised officers from regiments from all parts of India, including Ghurkas, UK etc. and I struck up a friendship with a subaltern of the Devonshire Regiment; we decided to break our return journey and do a bit of prospecting.

Before leaving Rawal Pindi, on one or two occasions I visited, in civilian clothes, the large bazaar in the native quarter of the town and obtained some snapshots. I was greeted with many glances which did not make me feel too much at home, for I did not meet a white man. At times it occurred to me that if one or two of the inhabitants suddenly decided to haul me into a house, stick a knife into my ribs, and rob me of my belongings, I would not be traced.

My servant packed the baggage and my new friend and I entrained and proceeded to Delhi, where we arrived at 2 a.m. on a Sunday. We drove to the fashionable hotel called "The Maiden Hotel" and tumbled into bed. After breakfast, we set out to explore;

unfortunately it was a wet day but we chartered a conveyance and drove to Friday Mosque and, after inspecting some ivory work in a neighbouring shop, went on to see the Kashmiri Gate.

This gate still bore the cannon ball marks made during the Indian mutiny. We finished our tour by visiting a cinema show and then entrained for Agra, arriving there at 7 a.m.

We drove to Laurie Hotel and rested for the night. The following day, we engaged a guide and visited the large fort. We spent the morning inspecting the wonderful marble and mosaics in the palaces and mosques. In the afternoon we visited one of the wonders of the world, the Taj Mahal.

This was constructed of white marble and inlaid stones and was built by an Indian Prince, Shah Bran, in memory of his favourite wife. The work of building was spread over twenty years and more than twenty thousand men were continuously employed upon it during that time. In the centre was a tomb surrounded by marvellously carved and fretworked screens of most delicate workmanship.

We had to remove our boots before entering and were provided with rush slippers. A priest intoned a note which took twenty five seconds to gradually die away; for this service he expected half a rupee.

We then proceeded to the tomb of Etmaduddaula, which is situated opposite to the Taj Mahal and on the other side of the river Jamna. This was a finely carved marble tomb erected by a Father in memory of his Daughter. Next we inspected a carpet factory and saw the natives making wonderful Indian carpets by hand.

After dinner at the hotel, we joined several other officers in a musical evening and I had to officiate at the piano.

The following day, I boarded the mail train and, in due course, reached Secunderabad.

I found that the battalion was under canvas some miles away, undergoing certain tests; the greater part of this training I missed whilst on the course. I joined them in the evening and was allotted a bell tent.

On entering this, to my surprise, I was greeted by a cobra snake about five feet long and made way for it to pass out and disappear down a hole at the entrance to the tent. I sent a man to obtain boiling water from the cooks and stood over the hole with a tent post which had an iron projection.

The boiling water arrived and was poured down the hole and, as soon as the snake's head appeared hissing above the ground, I drove the pole through it and pinned it down. Natives watched the affair from a good distance, for they seemed afraid of snakes. I kept an anxious look out for its mate, for it was said, that it might possibly come along to investigate the absence of its partner. When snakes were killed, the men usually skinned them and made them into belts.

The tests being ended, we returned to Gough Barracks and settled down again. I became possessed of two small monkeys, which slept in a box in a tree at the rear of the bungalow; they answered to the names of "Orace" and "Bert". One of them spent a considerable part of his existence perched upon my shoulder, with his arms round my neck; he enjoyed looking into the looking-glass whilst I was shaving and seemed to rather appreciate the flavour of the shaving soap, which he scraped from my chin, and tubes of tooth paste were constantly being destroyed.

In the barracks we had our own mineral water plant and various fruit drinks were made and sold to the men at cost price. Close to the barracks was a rifle range, where the men carried out their firing practices.

Early one morning, the Brigade carried out an attack on a system of trenches; I had to smile, because the whole business was performed in a manner as little like the real thing as it was possible to imagine; neither the Staff nor the troops had seen active service which, no doubt, accounted for their extraordinary ideas on the subject.

Whilst playing in another match, Officers vs. Sergeants, I once more came to grief on the hard ground. This time I fell on my hands, which doubled up under me. I suffered agony for a bit and had to attend hospital for "X" ray treatment; it was feared that I had fractured both wrists but, luckily, they were only severely sprained. For some time I went about with both arms in slings and later, had to attend at hospital for massage treatment. For the second time I was excused all parades.

The battalion proceeded on three days brigade work, fighting rearguard actions and sleeping out and, as it was now very hot, (over a hundred degrees in the shade), I was lucky to escape this part of the training. I remained behind as officer in charge of the barracks.

Before my accident, I had commenced a course of instruction under the supervision of an Indian Major of the 7th Lancers, and I was looking forward to resuming as soon as I had recovered the use of my wrists.

At intervals, my turn as Orderly Officer came round and the duties kept me occupied throughout the day. At 11 a.m. I attended Orderly Room and received orders, then I inspected the large white stone bungalows in which the men were quartered, seeing that they were swept out and perfectly clean, with the beds correctly rolled back, etc. During the nights, the bolts were removed from the rifles and the men slept with them beneath their pillows; a rifle without its bolt was useless. All the cookhouses, mineral water factory, etc. had then to be inspected and the issue of rations supervised.

At 1 p.m. the food was fetched by orderlies from the cookhouses and the sky appeared to be black, by reason of the number of hawks flying round in circles, ready to swoop down on any unguarded piece of meat. I saw, on more than one occasion, an unsuspecting man walk along with a plate of meat and hawk swoop down and, in the space of a moment, carry off a titbit.

At 6 p.m. the new guard had to be inspected and sentries posted round the barracks; they had to be visited twice during the night and, as the distance between the posts covered some miles, I performed the duty on a push cycle and took with me a thick stick, lest attacked by

peck of snarling jackals. I enjoyed the marvellous Indian nights which, from the brightness of the moon, were like days; the sky was wonderfully clear and the brilliance of the stars made them appear to almost stand out from the sky. Then I returned to my bungalow and passed inside, I was greeted with "good night, Sahib" by the aged native night-watchman.

The battalion received orders to entrain for Bombay for the Brigade was to embark for service elsewhere. We did not know where we were being sent but presumed that we were to be placed on garrison work; the officers were allowed to take 800 pounds of kit, whereas if proceeding active service, the weight was reduced to 35 pounds.

The transport was loaded and the battalion was temporarily placed under canvas and vacated the barracks for a new regiment to occupy. Rumours were current to the effect that we were to proceed to Egypt to liberate other regiments for duty in Salonica. The move was postponed but, one morning, orders were received and at midnight we entrained.

and left Secunderabad for Bombay. All rifles were handed in, for they were the property of the Indian Government. I was Orderly Officer and had plenty to do. My native servant accompanied me as far as Bombay and shed tears at the prospect of parting from me; this I took as quite a compliment.

We duly arrived at the port on a Sunday and the officers arranged to spend the night in Bombay. After lunch, we explored the town and attended a revue at the Excelsior Theatre in the evening. Leaving this I ran into a Guildford fellow named May, a man I had years before; he had occupied a post in India for the past ten years and it was strange to meet a familiar face. We chatted over old times.

The following day, we rose early, proceeded to the docks, and embarked on the s.s. "Egra", of the British Indian Steam Navigation Line (tonnage about 5,000 tons) and anchored in the harbour. There we rode for several days and the officers were permitted to go ashore daily and I had several enjoyable drives in Bombay and neighbourhood.

We were allowed ashore in two parties daily; one from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and the other, 2 p.m. until 10 p.m. We believed that we were ultimately to leave in a convoy because seven similar boats were riding at anchor and battleships were in attendance; it was understood that an armed enemy raider was at large.

One of the men reported sick on board and died in a short while; we did not view the tragedy as a good omen in our fresh adventure.

A government Rick on fire. The battalion was detailed to extinguish the fire. It took three days and nights.





Voyage from India
and service in Egypt and Palestine.

We were very comfortably quartered aboard; the food was excellent and the band played during dinner each evening. A cabin was allotted to each three officers and Cameron, Vize and I were together again.

We left in a convoy and were escorted by destroyers. The usual parades and amusements took place daily, physical drill, false alarms, concerts, etc. We passed schools of porpoises and flying fish and saw an occasional shark.

I took my turn as officer of the watch and during the duty I had, throughout the night, to visit at intervals the thirteen sentries and keep a special look out for sign of fire breaking out aboard.

One special incident occurred during the voyage. A rumour became current that there was a young French lady aboard, who had been seen promenading on deck late in the evenings, and it was understood that the Captain of the boat had, when in port, taken pity on the damsel and had undertaken to give her a passage to Egypt, allotting to her a cabin on the strict understanding that complete secrecy was to be observed or he would get into serious trouble for taking her aboard a transport ship.

The First mate and an officer of one battalion, succeeded in gaining admittance to the lady's cabin and were apparently badly smitten; they gave her many presents of chocolates and cigarettes as they vied one another in the endeavour to capture her attentions; she only spoke broken English and had difficulty in understanding them.

This went on for some time but, in due course, a letter from the lady appeared on the notice board, thanking the officers for their kind attentions and for the many presents received, whilst expressing at the same time her regret that she could no longer see them; she requested that they would refrain from visiting her.

A concert was held on deck that evening and the lady duly appeared on the arm of the Captain and occupied a chair in the front row. We were all naturally most interested to see her and agreed that she was a particularly pretty girl, extremely well dressed and of the true Parisian type. She sat and listened to the concert and smoked cigarettes and ate chocolates.

At the interval, the bomb exploded. The Captain rose to his feet and made a speech and informed us that as we should soon be making port, an explanation was imperative. As we knew, it was by now common talk regarding the presence of the lady aboard and in order to save himself from getting into trouble through incorrect information reaching the ears of his seniors, he would request the lady to remove her hair.

We were astounded to find that one of the officers had brought aboard a complete make-up and that all had been completely taken in, with the exception of the Captain and another officer; they had assisted in the deception. After the concert, the "lady" again donned her wig and promenaded the deck.

The officer was a young man of about nineteen years of age and was dressed with every care as to detail, wearing a silk dress and stockings and patent shoes. He spoke with quite a fascinating broken accent and smoked cigarettes in a long holder. Strange as it may appear, this officer sat next to me in the dining saloon each day and when I spoke to him in his disguise, I hadn't faintest suspicion; even when I knew the truth, I could scarcely believe my own eyes and ears, for he had studied every little mannerism of a girl.

The "lady's" two admirers received the exposure with very mixed feelings and had to endure many digs and chaffs but found it best to take the matter in a sporting way.

Aden was reached and the ship anchored in the harbour. I was asleep in my bunk but awakened by the dreaded cry "man overboard"; I pushed my head through a porthole and just discerned a man struggling in the water.

Several lifebelts had been flung to him and he was surrounded by them but, unfortunately, he could not swim. Another man jumped from the deck above and supported the drowning man whilst a boat was lowered.

We felt very anxious because thereabouts the sea was infested with sharks but fortunately the two men were safely hauled aboard and none the worse for their ducking.

The man who had fallen in had been asleep in one of the lifeboats on the top deck and, in turning over, had rolled over the side and plunged down into the sea.

We spent one day at that port and I went ashore, had a look round, and witnessed a strenuous football match taking place between the crews of two naval ships.

The following day we resumed our journey through the Red Sea to Suez.

We unloaded the transport, paraded the men on the quay and entrained. The men were packed into open trucks and the officers into goods wagons; we set off on a three hour journey into the desert and were placed under canvas. It was extremely hot during the day but cool at night and there was nothing to look at but sand.

Each day we were taken for a long route march across the desert; sinking into the sand at each step made the going extremely hard. My Company Commander and I were detailed to make a map of the surrounding country and went forth each morning armed with compass. Now we were on active service, officers kit had been reduced to the minimum weight and the balance packed and sent to our private bankers to hold pending further instructions.

Each morning I went for a gallop across the desert on a horse borrowed from the lines. On one occasion, we came in for a sand storm which we could see approaching in the distance. It came nearer and nearer, and finally we were in the thick of it. A hot gale blew (the temperature was 120 degrees in the shade) and the sand stung the face; it was impossible to open the eye. We kept in our tents but a sudden heavier burst brought all the tents down. I managed to secure a hurrican lamp which I lighted and crawled out of the tent to try and find out how the men were faring.

As soon as I stood up, the gale blew out even the hurrican lamp, my-eyes filled and my face was stung by the sand. I crawled back under the collapsed tent and lay there until the storm had passed over, perspiring profusely the whole time.

In due course, I again crept out and found that all the tents had been blown down, many of the articles had been scattered across the desert, and tents and belongings buried in the sand; we had to set to and dig them out.

Many things were completely lost and for days afterwards we had sand in everything even our food.

After a period in this place, we went on again and I was detailed to attend a course of instruction in the Lewis gun at Zeitoun, a twenty minute electric car ride from Cairo. My kit was packed and my servant and I duly reached the school, where we were quartered in huts made from rush matting.

I proposed to have an easy time in view of the fact that I had previously attended courses of a similar nature.

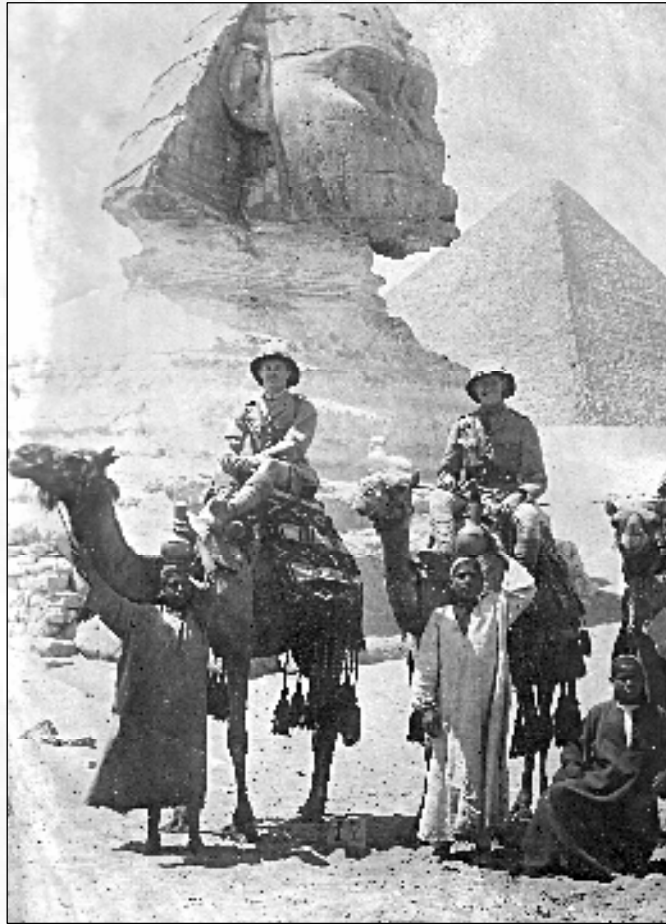
Cairo was a fine town, with plenty of amusement and splendid shops, and I spent many very enjoyable times, dining at Shepherd's Hotel and attending cinemas etc.

Two officers and I, one day, proceeded to Cairo the intention of visiting the Pyramids; we chartered camels and, accompanied by guides, duly reached them. The best known group was that of Gizeh, which contained eleven in number and the largest one, that of Cheops, was 450 feet in height and contained over 80 millions of cubic feet of masonry.

They were constructed some 3,700 years B.C. Limestone was the chief material used but large blocks of granite, each weighing five or six tons, formed the outer casing. In all cases, the four triangular sides were so placed as to face the four points of the compass.

An intricate passage was left, during the raising of each pyramid, leading to the central chamber.

They had square bases which tapered upwards to apexes.



We entered the Pyramid of Cheops and the steep approaches inside were slopes of polished stone in which niches, allowing just sufficient room for the toe, had been cut; the width of the "stairway" was only about two feet and it rose at an acute angle between the walls which were formed by the huge stones. Our guide led and we joined hands.

In line, we worked our way up the first "stairway" until we found ourselves in the Queen's Chamber, which contained an empty stone sarcophagus.

The whole procedure was carried out in pitch darkness and when in the chamber, our guide lit a piece of magnesium tape and we took a hurried look round. Crossing the chamber, we came upon another steep "stairway" and again we ascended in the dark, joined hand in hand and clambered up sideways, until we reached the King's Chamber which was situated about half way up the pyramid.

Another piece of magnesium tape was ignited and we once again took a hurried look round and found another empty sarcophagus. Needless to add, each time a light was forthcoming, the guide expected to be suitably paid. The pyramid was ventilated by huge shafts which had been instituted by the positioning of the blocks of stone.

After a little while, we negotiated the steep descents and found ourselves in the open air again but were temporarily blinded by the glare of the sun striking down upon the sand, after being in pitch darkness.

Close to the Cheops pyramid was the fashionable Yena House Hotel, where we adjourned and revived ourselves with refreshing drinks.

We then returned to the pyramid and viewed the Sphinx which was situated close by. This was an immense figure exceeding 170 feet in length and 100 feet in height, hewn out of rock. The body and paws were those of a lion and the face and breast those of a woman. The shifting sands of the desert periodically covered it and it was necessary to clear them away at intervals.

Nearby, we went below ground into some catacombs which consisted of caves or passages used in ancient times as burying places. On both sides of the passages, recesses were made in which bodies had been interred.

The inhabitants of Cairo were most cosmopolitan and consisted of Egyptians, Greeks, French, Italians, Arabs, etc and most of the people spoke several languages. Near the school was an amusement park named Luna Park, which contained a mountain railway, water chute, helter-skelter, puzzle houses, etc. etc. and we spent many happy evenings there and, on one occasion, met a nice Italian family and spent some pleasing times at their residence.

Sundays were very much like week days; the shops were open and theatres and cinemas were in full swing. On one Sunday I went to a theatre but as the performance was conducted in French, I didn't appreciate it much. The wording of the cinema films was shown in three languages. French, English and Arabic; I enjoyed those performances because I could understand them a little better.

We visited the Zoological Gardens in Cairo, which were nicely laid out and most interesting.

The Egyptian women wore the yasmak, which covered the face to the eyes; the men mostly wore European clothes with a red fez. There were hundreds of donkeys for hire, for this was one of the customary methods of conveyance; several of us hired steeds and indulged in races and, on more than one occasion, I was shot over a donkey's head into the sand when the native running behind applied his stick too vigorously, thus causing my steed to suddenly stop as a protest.

Near to the school was a noted tree and well called "The Virgin's Tree" and "The Virgin's Well". It was reputed that the Virgin Mary had leant against the tree and drank from the well during her flight to Cairo with the infant Christ, at the time of the extermination of the first borns by Herod. An English church stood nearby and it contained some magnificent frescos.

The course completed, I entrained and rejoined the battalion on the desert. It was exceedingly hot and the flies were a great nuisance. We were issued with tinted glasses, for it was reputed that it was possible to contract sunstroke through the eyes by reason of the glare of the sun striking up from the sand.

We left this place and marched for several miles, leaving at 2.30 a.m. in order to make the most of the coolest part of the day. We stayed the night at a small place and continued the next day until we arrived at another camp; here we spent the rest of the day and night by the side of the canal. We enjoyed some splendid bathing.

Whilst on these marches, I had a somewhat strenuous time; I was Lewis gun officer and responsible for the guns and drums of ammunition which were being carried by mules that had not been broken in thoroughly. Each mule carried a gun on one side and drums of ammunition the other.

Eight of them followed the battalion on the march and, at intervals, one of them would become restive, kick up its heels, throw off the gun and ammunition drums, and dash off across the desert; some of the others would then follow the example set. We had to chase, capture, and load them up again; in the meantime, the battalion had continued on its way and got a long distance ahead of us and we had to hurry to catch up with the main body and, in the terrific heat, rejoined them in a condition of exhaustion.

This undesirable form of exercise occurred on several occasions and was the cause of fluent army expressions; we perspired profusely.

In the evening, we entrained in open cattle trucks and travelled throughout the night until we arrived at El Arish. The smuts from the engine made us in an awful mess, all our kit was covered with blacks and we looked like a lot of miners; we were placed under canvas.

In turn, outpost duty at night had to be undertaken; I took my platoon some distance from the camp and occupied a prepared trench. Our duty was to challenge anyone approaching the camp and to guard against a surprise by wandering tribes, etc.

Although not such of a horseman, I used daily to take a ride over the desert. One day, I begged a horse from the lines and requested a quiet one, knowing full well my limited capability. I was given a fine big horse but as soon as I had mounted, the fun commenced. I just managed to retain my seat but the horse reared, got the bit in its mouth, and set off at a full gallop across the sand. I had no say in the matter but managed to sit tight until it had tired; I afterwards learned that the Colonel had forbidden the Signals Officer to ride the horse, as he didn't want that officer's neck broken. I considered I had been very lucky in not coming to grief.

We had splendid sea bathing near the camp but had to keep a look out for sharks. We were placed on a restricted allowance of drinking water, one waterbottle full a day which was always warm; we buried our waterbottles in the sand in an endeavour to keep the water as cool as possible.

Hundreds of camels were utilized for bringing up the water in large tanks, which were placed one on each side of their backs; they were led by Arabs.

The food was more of the active service variety, with the inevitable stew etc.

After a period in this place, we moved on to Ismalia for a time. It was a charming spot where we enjoyed more excellent bathing; a splendid club enabled us to spend comfortable evenings.

I was detailed for another course; this time in Musketry and Bayonet Fighting; my servant packed by kit and we entrained and duly found ourselves back at the Zeitoun School once more. The course lasted for three weeks and the usual lectures were attended, then the consequent writing up of notes occupied my time.

I renewed my acquaintance with Cairo, Luna Park, and the many amusements, and visited the Italian family who had been so hospitable on the previous occasion. There were three girls and two brothers and they spoke English fairly well.

On one occasion, an Egyptian friend was present (a middle aged man); he was a hypnotist and soon placed the oldest girl under influence and made her write several things. He expressed the opinion that he could hypnotise me and, with my permission, he commenced. He had the most penetrating eyes which seemed to bore into one and I began to feel myself going off, with my cheeks twitching. I mustered all my strength of will and managed to hold out against his influence and felt rather uncomfortable. He informed me that he could not carry out the experiment if I willed myself against him but that if I would relax for a moment, he would send me off; I declined with thanks.

I obtained a "distinguished" for the course, (more by luck than judgement), packed up, entrained in an open railway truck and, after being bumped about for a day or two, reached the rail head at Bela; I had ascertained that, during my absence, the battalion. had moved into the trenches in front of Gaza.

I tramped up as far as the transport, which was picketed in a gully some distance behind the line, and duly joined my company in the trenches.

When I arrived, the Turks were shelling the firing line with 5.9 shells and it seemed like old times to be under fire again.

The front line consisted of built up breast works, constructed of sandbags filled with sand, and we were situated in the part of the line that ran down the side of a cliff into the sea; the barbed wire entanglements extended into the sea. The front line itself was just beneath the crest of a small hill and the enemy could not be seen from there.

In consequence, strong posts had been constructed, at intervals, on the tops of small hills. These were connected to the front line by communication trenches. These strong posts were each held by one platoon for forty eight hours before being relieved. From the posts, Gaza could be seen and the Turkish trenches of defence; we had only two lines of trenches, front line and reserve.

The heat was great and nothing but sand could be seen on our right and sea on our left; anchored off the coast, in rear, were several monitors which shelled the Turkish defences at intervals.

I settled down to the new life and found things far more comfortable than those experienced in France. The enemy only subjected us to periodical shellfire and when quiet, conditions were quite pleasant as compared with the incessant shelling in France, with the additional inconvenience of the mud and filth.

One discomfort was the rationing of water and we were allowed one waterbottle full per day; after dark, this was brought up to the reserve line by camels led by natives. The main supply was conveyed to the rail head in huge tank railway trucks and was then transferred to the tanks carried by the camels. By the time it reached us, it was tepid; as before, we buried our waterbottles in the sand to keep the water as cool as possible.

Aeroplanes were seen overhead during the day, sometimes our own and, at other times, those of the enemy. On one occasion, an enemy plane flew over our trench and performed several loops and stunts, notwithstanding the fire of our anti-aircraft guns.

I imagined that the ancient battles in those parts had been of a less noisy character than the one we now engaged in and felt that a few Samsons would have been of assistance in pushing over the defences of Gaza.

My application for transfer to the Royal Flying Corps was placed before the Commanding Officer; he signed the necessary papers and forwarded them through the usual channels. In due course they were accepted by Brigade and Division (75th) and I was prepared to wait for an indefinite period before being duly summoned to the Royal Flying Corps.

The construction of breast works, necessitating the filling of sandbags, was not welcomed by the men who had to work in such heat. As we were in a sector so close to the sea, parties were allowed daily to go down to the beach and bathe. This was most enjoyable further along the coast, we could just discern the Turks engaged upon a similar occupation. Occasionally the bathers on both sides were subjected to a shelling by shrapnel shells and then a general stampede for cover took place.

A number of men were wounded whilst bathing; we had to keep a look out for sharks and, once or twice, had to leave the water rather hurriedly. It seemed far worse to be shelled when without clothes, for one felt absolutely helpless and, curiously enough, much more confidence was experienced when fully dressed.

I was detailed to carry out a small bombing raid and to take over a dozen men to the enemy lines after dark. I worked out a plan and several evenings, after dark, I set off across no man's land to spy out the ground and to select the safest route by utilizing any dead patches which dipped down and so afforded a certain amount of cover from machinegun fire. On these expeditions, I approached the Turkish trenches as near as possible but must confess that it was not an occupation that I would have selected for the sake of amusement.

The idea had been that of the Battalion Commander but by the time I had got the scheme in readiness, word came through that Brigade would not sanction the raid and so it was cancelled.

We were subjected to quite a lot of shelling by "Wiz-bangs" (18 pounder shells), which were projectiles from small field guns.

The shells were of great velocity, with a low trajectory, and no warning was given of their approach; the wizz and the explosion were practically simultaneous (hence the name "wizz-bang").

They had a happy knack of arriving when least expected and caused a certain amount of amusement at times. My sergeant often entertained me by saying, "I don't like them there how-do-you-dos, Sir".

Once an orderly, carrying up a dixie of tea, scorned the use of the communication trench and derided those who utilized it but the unexpected quick arrival of a "wizz-bang", which passed him with its rushing wizz to explode beyond, somewhat upset his equilibrium and he dropped the dixie and gazed around in astonishment. The expression on his face made the rest of the fellows roar with laughter.

At times a group of men, when standing together, would be surprised by the sudden arrival of one of these projectiles and a rush for cover would take place much to the amusement of onlookers; the remarks passed varied with the humour, or otherwise, of the occasion.

Whilst on duty, with my platoon, in a strong post out in front of our trench, the following incident occurred. Although it was against orders for the officer to sleep during the night, I had come to a comfortable agreement with my sergeant that, in turn, we should retire for an hour or two.

I had just dropped to sleep, when I was awakened with the request that I would go and investigate the appearance of a number of Turks grouped in no man's land. I went along to the sentry, who had made the report, and after looking over the parapet for a time, was forced to confess my inability to discern any sign of the enemy. I realised that the men were just from India and had not experienced active service so supposed that it was simply a case of jumpy nerves.

I reassured the sentries and told them to keep a good look out, whilst I returned to my sleep, giving orders to the sergeant that I was to be roused in the event of further activity presenting itself.

I had no sooner got to sleep again, however, than I was once more awakened and back to the sentries I went; they assured me that there was a party of the enemy standing on the crest of a hillock and I took a look through my field glasses.

It was a moonlight night and at the white sand could just be seen a group of men. I wondered whether we were to be treated to a bomb raid. At that moment the telephone in the dugout rang and I answered it; a commander of a battery of our artillery rang up to test the line and a conversation similar to the following, took place.

Battery Commander.

"Things quiet up there?"

Myself.

"Oh yes, nothing much doing. I am investigating a small body of the enemy gathered in front".

Battery Commander.

"Turks out in front?" "Let me send over a six inch shell or two"

Myself.

"No thanks; it's not worth while"

Battery Commander.

"Oh do, there's a sport; I'm longing for a bit of practice".

Myself.

"No; we can manage alright".

Battery Commander.

"Just one; let me know where it lands. Give me the position the enemy".

The Artillery usually remained quiet throughout the nights, unless a special show was in progress, and I wondered how our troops in the front line would feel if heavy shells passed over their heads to the enemy. The post I occupied possessed machineguns but orders had been issued that they were only to be fired when absolutely necessary, as it was desired that the enemy should be kept ignorant of the strength of the post.

I wondered whether the present circumstances could be termed "absolutely necessary" and so warrant the use of the machineguns.

Coupled with the foregoing was the insistant pleading of the Battery Commander to be allowed to fire his guns and so I succumbed to his request.

Myself.

"The enemy is grouped on a ridge just in front of us; you can fire one round if you like."

Battery Commander.

"Splendid; I know the spot. Tell your chaps to keep low and (we kept low and presently a heavy shell passed over our heads and landed out in front with a terrific crash, which echoed through the silent night; it dropped, however, to the right of the group of men)"

Battery Commander.

"How was that?"

Myself.

"Too far right".

Battery Commander.

"How much?"

Myself.

"Two degrees".

Battery Commander.

"Stand by; I'm going to send another".
(we waited and presently another shell went over which, according to the sentry, landed right on the group).

Battery Commander.

"How's that?"

Myself.

"O.K.; it landed right on the party"

Battery Commander.

"Good; anything more wanted?"

Myself.

"No, thanks".

Battery Commander.

"Cheerio".

Myself.

"Night night".

The phone bell then started to ring again most energetically and the Company Commander spoke from the front line as follows

Company Commander

"What on earth is happening out there; are you alright?"

Myself.

"Oh, yes; everything if quite OK".

Company Commander

"What is all the shelling about?"

Myself.

"We had a bunch of larks out in front and as the artillery had rung up to test the line, and were so keen on firing a round or two, I reluctantly consented".

Company Commander

"Well, all the men in the front line are standing to with fixed bayonets in case of an attack".

Myself.

"Everything is quite quiet now; I'll let you know if anything occurs. Better send the army back to bed again, Good night".

I must confess that I quite expected to be hauled over the coals, by the Commanding Officer, for playing about with the war but realised the natural restlessness of the inexperienced troops behind and conscious of the extreme difference between my present experience and the past ones in France, where shells had been fired more or less continuously throughout the days and nights.

I was surprised, however, not to hear another word of the affair.

On another occasion, whilst on duty in an advanced post, we were surprised at dawn by intense rifle and machinegun fire being opened upon us and wondered whether an attack was to take place.

We lay low and waited but when things had died down we perceived, on looking over the parapet, that two larks were lying in a piece of dead ground, not far from the post; they waved white flags and signalled us not to fire.

Two men crawled out, whilst the rest covered them with their rifles, and brought in the Turks who were badly wounded. They had apparently become tired of the war and had decided to give themselves up as prisoners but their own people, seeing the intention, had opened fire to prevent them being captured alive. We put them on to stretchers and, after providing them cigarettes, they were carried back.

Whilst in this sector, I came in for a rather unpleasant task. During my inspection of the sentries in the front line during one night, I came upon a man who had apparently fallen asleep at his post.

As sentries responsible for the safety of the rest, who were sleeping, any man so caught, if reported, would be courtmartialled. If found guilty, would be liable to be shot as a penalty. I realised the seriousness of the matter but could not bring myself to be responsible for the consequences resulting from the man's possible courtmartial.

I quickly retraced my steps until I had regained the traverse of the trench, picked up a large stone, and threw it in the direction of the sleeping man; I then walked back to him, making plenty of noise, and found him awake. "Everything quiet, sentry?", I asked. "Yes, Sir", he replied.

I whereupon chatted for a while and told him the importance of keeping on the alert. I had placed myself in an awkward position, for I dared not allow it to become known that I had found a sentry asleep and not reported the matter or I, myself, would have been due for a courtmartial, even the man was not to know that I had awakened him.

I received the following letter from my late butler in Secunderabad, which interested and amused me -

30. 3. 1917. Trimulgherry.

Respected Sir,

With due respect and humble submission approach to your kind consideration hoping to meet success. That is I left Master in Bombay straight, come to my home. I could not get any job yet and also no any regiment comes yet only that 13th Combined Depot only in here at present. I send by post the photos for your Mother address here with enclosed my testimonials in type writing because that you gave me it is when I folding it it is make dirt. So that your honour kindly put your initial and return to my address here with enclosed the receipt for the 3 photos and oblige. 2/5th Hants Butlers are all waiting for the jobs -

Lieut Vise, Sahib, Lieut Brocklehurst, Sahib, Lieut. Racine, Sahib, Abdull Butler and Babo Butler and Thumbie, give their best salaams and respects for their Masters. Please send me the replay Sir. I am waiting for it and oblige.

Kathavarayan
Thumbie Butler
Residing in R.H.A, Followers Line,
New Building,
Trimulgherry. Deccan

The routine continued day by day and a raid on the Turkish trenches was planned. This expedition was placed in the hands of another officer and myself (by reason of our previous experience) and we were to conduct the operation, taking with us three other officers and two hundred non-commissioned officers and men. I was selected to share the responsibility and we carefully mapped out a plan of campaign.

The raiding party was sent back a short distance behind the front line and camped on the beach for a week, where an exact replica of the Turkish positions (obtained from aerial photographs), was dug. Daily practices in assault were carried out and each man made familiar with the part he was to take in the attack, so that in the darkness of the night he would be able to proceed without hesitation to his objective.

Whilst undergoing this work of preparation, I had dug a small crevice in the foot of the cliff and so made a comfortable little dugout on the seashore, where I sat and either wrote letters, read, or gazed out to sea, whilst the perspiration perpetually trickled down my face. My uniform consisted of a khaki shirt (with rolled sleeves), trill shorts, putties and boots, and a pith helmet, together with a Sam brown belt carrying a revolver with pouch of ammunition, a haversack and waterbottle.

I spent the best part of one day in my little dugout in the cliff but went out for some dinner with my brother officers in the evening. On my return, I was surprised to find that the cliff had subsided and all my belongings buried.

I realised that I had had a lucky escape and detailed a party of men to dig out my things, which duty took quite a long time.

Two days before the raid, the party carried out a "dress rehearsal".

At 11 p.m. we formed up and proceeded in the darkness, half way across no man's land, took up our positions, and then returned to reserve again. One of the officers, after writing his Will, handed it to another to hold in case he should be unlucky enough not to get back safely from the raid.

The actual day of the attack arrived. We were to storm a stronghold named Sea Post, after artillery preparation. To the left, and just in front, was nother small enemy post named Sugar Loaf; this had to be silenced by a small party of men whilst the remainder advanced upon Sea Post. On the right was a ridge called Umbrella Hill. The raiding party was divided into two main bodies, one I commanded whilst the other was supervised by my partner in the scheme. Our wrist watches had been synchronised with those of the officers of the artillery and every detail was considered. We knew that the Turks were celebrating their Ramadan (a Mahomedan fast) and hoped to catch them unprepared.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, which only the occasional discharge of a rifle disturbed, and at 10.30 p.m. we left our trenches and proceeded half way across no man's land, took up our positions and awaited the time to attack; zero hour was 11 p.m.

The signal for the commencement of the artillery bombardment was to be ten rounds rapid field gun fire directed upon Sugar Loaf, to start at 10.50 p.m. As soon as positions had been taken up, with the men kneeling in the sand in readiness for the command to advance, I stood up and, on consulting the luminous dial of my watch, found that we had ten minutes to go before the fun was to commence.

I faced our own lines and was struck by the wonder of the night with its peacefulness. The ten minute wait seemed endless but, in due course, the battery of field guns opened fire on Sugar Loaf and immediately the rest of the hundreds of guns in the sector, of various sizes, joined in the bombardment and wherever I looked, I could see innumerable flashes behind our lines as the guns continuously fired their salvos; a perfectly quiet night was soon turned into one of fury and all the terrific fire was directed upon Umbrella Hill, on our right, as a feint.

This hurrican of shells rained down for ten minutes and then switched round on to Sea Pont, our objective, and we commenced our advance. The small party on our left flank proceeded diagonally, and silenced the occupants of Sugar Loaf, whilst we continued until we again halted some distance from the Turkish stronghold.

The bombardment had finished and lifted on to the enemy reserve line to prevent him from sending up his reinforcements.

Directly the bombardment had lifted, the men equipped with wirecutters ran forward and cut passages in the enemy entanglements for us to pass through. The noise of the bursting shells had been terrific and we had had to shout into one anothers ears to be heard; We found our way by picking up our bearings as the enemy trenches revealed themselves to us by the flashes of the exploding shells.

A number of our shells dropped short of their objectives and exploded behind us; this did not improve matters. When we passed through the wire entanglements, we found several of the enemy lying dead; they had Hurriedly retired from Sugar Loaf and been caught in our barrage. We very soon occupied the stronghold and did considerable damage to the occupants and threw bombs into all the dugouts; many of the enemy surrendered and were grouped together outside the trench in readiness to accompany us on our return journey.

I carried a pick shaft in one hand and a loaded revolver in the other; my pockets were filled with bombs. I stood on the top of the enemy trench, directing operations, whilst the men disposed of the occupants in the authorised manner.

We met with very little opposition from the Turks; we had previously received instructions not to bring back more than about a dozen prisoners but to exterminate as many as possible during the short time we were to remain in the enemy trenches.

Most of them had been driven into the dugouts by the bombardement and our men went up and down the trenches throwing bombs amongst them. It was an absolute slaughter and I hadn't the heart to take an active part in it. I wandered into one dugout and collected one or two souvenirs to take back.

During the raid, I experienced one of the narrowest escapes of my war service. I was standing on the top of the Turkish trench, directing operations, when on turning round, I saw one of the enemy a few paces away with his rifle presented at me; I was so surprised that I simply stood still and waited.

A sharp click indicated that the trigger had been pressed but either the rifle had not been loaded or the cartridge a faulty one, for no bullet greeted me, much to my relief. Had the rifle fired, my opponent could not have missed me at such short distance. One of my men standing nearby, immediately rushed forward and effectively dealt with the situation.

After a stay of fifteen minutes, three star shells were fired from our front line trench, as a signal for us to return. As prearranged, I ordered a party of some twenty men, with rifles loaded, to line the top of the front Turkish trench to form a cover party to protect the remainder as they passed back with the prisoners and a captured machinegun.

As soon as the main body had passed through and were nearly back to our trenches, I assembled the men and, after checking the number to ensure no man being left behind, we started on the return journey, utilizing all the dead ground possible in order to avoid the heavy machinegun fire which had now opened from the enemy flanks.

we duly reached the safety of our front line and sheltered from a heavy counter-bombardment from the enemy artillery. The prisoners were conducted to the rear and placed in a barbed entanglement enclosure which had been prepared for their reception. The following day, I had to write a long and detailed account for submission to Brigade.

(At a later date, a Turkish officer was captured and a document found on him stated that the losses sustained by the enemy during the raid amounted to some sixty in number.)

During the next few days a special look out was exercised, as it was considered probable that the enemy would favour us with a raid in retaliation but we were left alone.

We lapsed into the usual trench routine, with the periodical shelling and usual fatigue work, and I was amused by the receipt of a further letter from my late servant in India, which read as follows:

30th May 1917 - Trimulgherry, India.

Most Honoured Sir, -

I most humbly and respectfully beg to submit this following few lines to your kind consideration. That I am received your kind letter of the 25th May and had very much glad about heard your news, when I leave the Master since then I was in unemployment. The new Regiment are not come yet, here are very difficult to get job. The other butlers are same as me, I am very sorry about masters are in trench of Egypt. I myself praying and worshiping the God all day and night for war are finishing soonly, if masters come away without any wound and sick, by grace of God I shall be glad, and but your obedient myself was in very dangerous ill for the fever and headache about last three weeks now I am little better by grace of God and of master, if I not get any gobs in here, I wish to go to (Bombay) for employment, Sir. Kindly tell my saladins to Vize Shab. Cameron Shab. and to Bracketlet Shab.

Sir pleasly if you give answer to my humble letter I shall give ever feel thankfull to your honour.

Your most humble and obedient servant
Thamby Kathavaroyan. Butler
R.H.A. Family Line
New Building.
Trimulgherry. India.

I still awaited orders to proceed to the Royal Flying Corps and was impatient to gain fresh experiences.

As our recent raid had been so successful, it was decided that a party of the Bedford Regiment, holding the line on our right, would carry out a similar one on he enemy trenches at Umbrella Hill.

On the night of the attack, I occupied a dugout in the reserve line and settled myself down to await the result of the undertaking. Our artillery opened a heavy bombardment on the enemy trenches and the raiders went over.

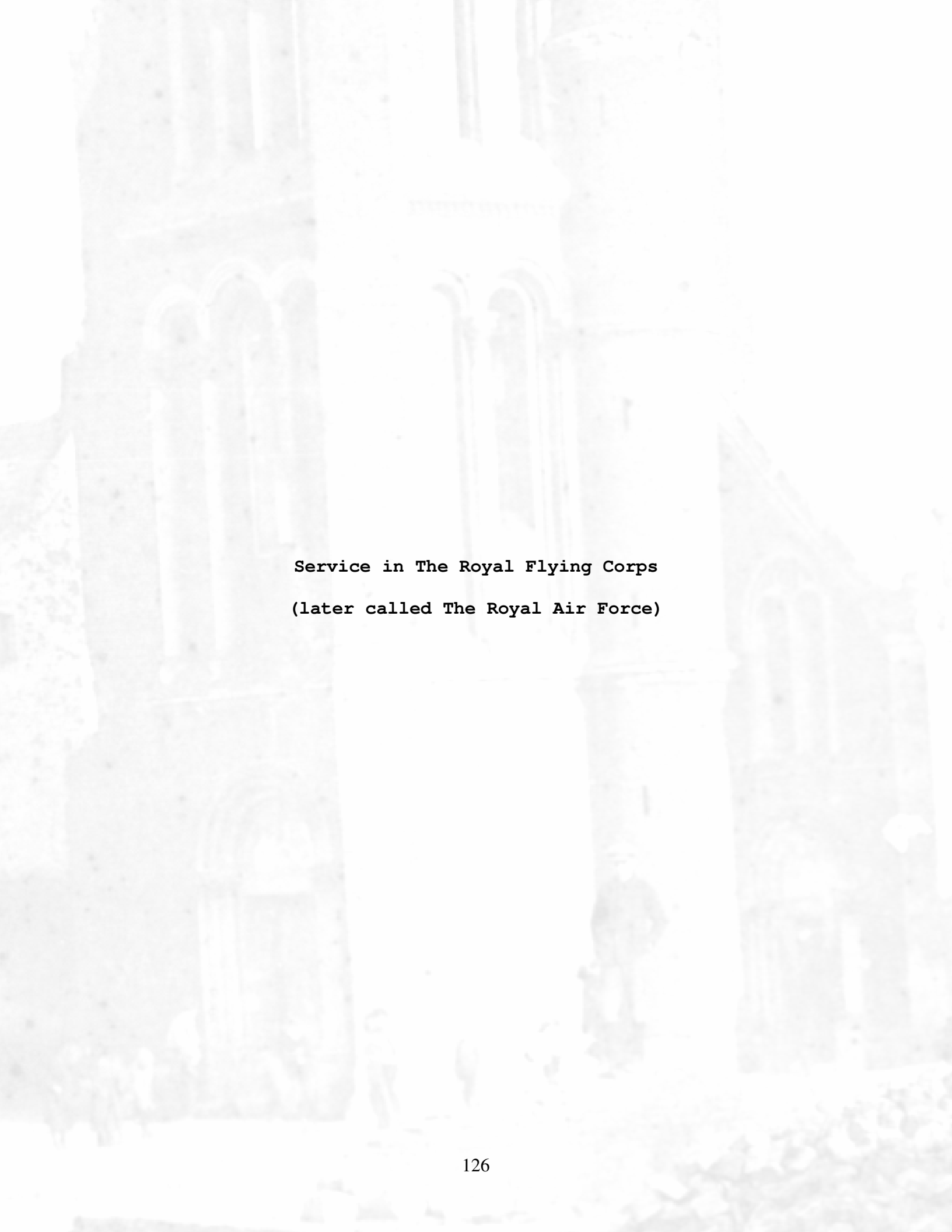
Unfortunately the enemy was on the alert this time and opened a very heavy fire upon the attackers, who suffered heavy casualties and had to retire.

When they again reached their own trench, they ran into a barrage of enemy 5.9 shells, which caused severe havoc and I kept in my dugout whilst intense continuous artillery and machinegun fire progressed. The following morning, I witnessed the distressing result, for a burial party was at work disposing of the remains which literally had to be shovelled into a huge hole.

I readily realised the good fortune that had attended our raid, in comparison with the one attempted the previous evening.

In a few days time, I received orders to report the training school of the Royal Flying Corps at Cairo. I visited my brother officers to say goodbye and bade farewell to the Adjutant, who congratulated me upon the success of the recent raid and informed me that my name had been submitted to Divisional Headquarters for mention in despatches.

I proceeded to the reserve where a horse, which had been sent up from the transport lines, awaited me; I mounted and rode across the desert to Bela; the railhead, here I entrained and journeyed to Cairo and reported to the Adjutant of the school and settled myself down in my new quarters, obtaining many notebooks in readiness to commence my new studies.



**Service in The Royal Flying Corps
(later called The Royal Air Force)**

August

A room in the barracks was allotted me, together with another officer, where I enjoyed the peace and quietude after the trench routine, with its periodical shelling and occasional trips across no man's land. j

We were kept pretty busy on the course, which lasted for a month. The hours of duty were, - 6.30 a.m. to 7 a.m., 8.30 a.m. to 12 p.m., 2.45 p.m. to 4 p.m. , 5.15 p.m. to 7 p.m. and after dinner, the usual copious notes to be written up.

The following subjects were taken -

Rigging - How to rig an aeroplane, i.e. the different struts and wood used, various bracing wires and how to true up the planes to their correct angles of incidence etc.

Engines - Three different models to be known in detail

Wireless - including sending and receiving in morse.

Theory of Flight.

Maps.

Artillery Co-operation - a big subject.

Bombs - their construction etc.

Bomb Dropping.

Aerial Photography.

Machine-guns. - their mechanism, stoppages, etc.

A few miles distant, at Heliopolis, was a training squadron and throughout the day Maurice Farman machines passed over the school and I realised that if I were successful in passing this theoretical course, I would be similarly engaged; I endeavoured to picture my feelings when I took to the air for the first time.

The course was of the usual hectic type, with years of study to be mastered in four weeks but at the completion I managed to pass the eight examinations and was duly posted to No. 21 Squadron for instruction in the practice side of the business.

I reported on a Sunday and received instructions to parade at 4 a.m. the following morning, for my maiden flight. I must confess that when I took my seat in the machine at dawn, I felt a bit dubious and wondered how I would feel in the air. The machine was fitted with dual control and I sat in front of my instructor.

The machine was taken to a height of two or three thousand feet and after a short while, during which period we passed over the Pyramids and the Nile, the instructor asked me how I felt and instructed me to take control and fly straight; keep the machine from either rising or falling and, at the same time, steer a straight course.

Under his direction I carried out my first lesson satisfactorily and my instructor again took control of the machine and landed.



The author in flight uniform

My lesson for that day was finished and after the other pupils had been put through their paces, the machines were housed in their hangars and, under the supervision of the mechanics, we thoroughly cleaned the planes and tested the cross bracing wires, tightening them when necessary.

A magazine was run by the Squadron, which proved to be quite amusing. Everyone who crashed had a piece of poetry written about him and consequent chaffing resulted. The following are specimens -

*"Seaweed" had a pet machine
Which no one else might fly,
And everywhere that Seaweed went,
He kept that Bristol nigh.
He took her for a flight one day,
Yes, right above the ground;
He climbed her several thousand feet
And flew her round and round.
And all went well, 'till came the time,
For him to wander home
He brought her humming down again
Into the aerodrome.
Then what a sorry sight is seen,
Upon her nose she's standing,
The which may well explain the term.,
A perfect Seaweed landing.*

(Note - An officer named Seaweed was an offender. Bristol was the name of a two-seater fighter).

*A certain young pilot named Skinner,
At flying was quite a beginner
For he thought aeroplanes
Could be made to leap drains
'Till he found his mistake out, the sinner.*

*Captain Riddle, R.F.C.,
Trying to land a Bumble Bee,
Broke an undercarriage Vee
First he blamed the E.L.C.,
Failed, he blamed the landing "T"
That a dreadful liar he.
O.C. Squadron said, "Let's see,
That's the tenth machine that he
Has destroyed so foolishly;
I shall recommend that he
Be transferred to the A,S.G".
The moral of this tale is plain
Speak the truth and shame the devil
If you're sunnoned to explain,
Always do so on the level.*

(note - Vee - shape of undercarriage.
E.L.C. - Egyptian Labour Corps.
A.S.C. - Army Service Corps.)

The following day, at dawn, I again took the air and was instructed in doing right and left hand turns and began to feel more comfortable. I experienced a strong inclination, when the machine was banked at an angle, to keep myself perpendicular instead of leaning with the plane. I was held into my seat by a belt about eight inches in width. After the lesson, I took my part in cleaning the machines.

I next received tuition in taking off and gliding down and landing.

Two or three days later, my instructor took me up and demonstrated how to take off and land. As soon as we had regained earth, he said, "How do you feel?"; I replied, "Not too bad". "Well", he resumed, "I'm going to get out; take the machine up and do a circuit and landing".

I was unprepared for such a command, as I was by no means confident of my ability to handle the machine for I had only received two hours instruction in all. However, I gave a ghastly apology of a smile, swallowed hard, and said "Y-es".

I gave a last desperate look round and taxied the machine across the aerodrome to the corner in readiness to take off into the wind; when in possession of the entire machine, I sat for a few moments with the engine ticking over, feeling desperately inefficient and not too optimistic when my eye lit upon the large motor ambulance standing by. Its motor running, it appeared to be gloating over the prospect of an early opportunity to dash across the aerodrome. Purely for the purpose of gathering up any of the pupils who might litter up the place by depositing themselves upon the aerodrome in an unauthorised manner.

I opened the throttle, the machine gathered speed and, after a short run, left the ground. A quick glance round enabled me to see a group of persons interested in my welfare and I climbed steadily until my instrument registered a thousand feet.

I looked over at the aerodrome longingly and felt rather overwhelmed by the knowledge that I was entirely dependant upon my own efforts to get down safely. After carrying on for a bit, I again looked over the side and suffered a jar when I couldn't see the aerodrome; in a mild panic I searched and was relieved, shortly afterwards, to find it still there and realised that it had simply-been covered by the lower plane of the machine.

I was by this time getting some distance from home and rapidly approaching the Pyramids, so decided that I must venture upon a careful turn and get back to the aerodrome. I speculated as to the result of my first landing and whether a crash would result; however, during my instruction in landing, I had noted that if the machine passed over a certain house, situated behind the landing ground, at a height of five hundred feet, with the engine shut off, the plane would glide down and land in the correct place; a lower altitude would cause me to undershoot, whilst a higher altitude would not get me into the aerodrome at all.

Bearing this in mind, I consulted my instrument and found that I was fifteen hundred feet up, so I throttled back the engine and glided down to five hundred feet. By that time I was off my course so, opening up the engine again, I decided to make another turn.

Just enough bank and rudder and I was on my way again but in effecting the turn, although I was correctly over the house, I had somehow managed to get up to a thousand feet again.

Another circuit of the aerodrome took place and once more I shut off to glide down. I was filled with excitement, for I could see that this time I would arrive over the house at the correct height but I rejoiced too soon. Just as I was about to glide down and land, an instructor's machine turned in front of me and I was put off and forced to make yet another circuit.

Each time I went round some calculation proved to be faulty and I became more and more panic stricken, resulting in the fact that instead of making one

circuit-and landing as instructed, I was up for the best part of an hour and trying so hard to effect a landing.

Nasty thoughts of petrol running out etc. passed through my mind and I almost wished that I had joined the Tank Corps instead. However, in due course I managed to pass over the house at the correct height and, in consequence, made quite a good landing and taxied the machine to its hangar.

I passed the motor ambulance, with its attendants, and could almost picture fiendish expressions of disappointment at the faces of the men, as if they felt that they had been deliberately cheated out of their duty.

I stepped out of the machine and felt rather proud of myself but the guilt on the gingerbread was rather taken off when I realised that I would have a similar ordeal to face on the following day. One other fellow and I were the first pupils to take solo flights, for we had only received two hours instruction in the air.

A number of the pupils crashed on their first sole flights, generally in landing. It was amusing to watch the fellows make bad landings and to see the machines crumple up; the instructors words of comment were quite an education. It was extraordinary the number of machines that crashed whilst the occupants only received a shaking.



Maurice Farman (Shorthorn). Engine - 70h.p. Renault.
Cruising speed - 45 mph. A specimen of the authors first machine

I saw one machine get out of control and crash amongst some huts from a height of about two hundred feet.

The ambulance reached the scene just in time for its attendants to witness a head and shoulders emerge from the wreckage and, finally, for a pupil to step out and air his views very strongly concerning the art of flying. Some of the landings were interesting to watch. When badly judged, the wheels of the machine would hit the ground and the impact would send it into the air to a height of eight or ten feet and after a series of bounces, which gradually lessened in height, the machine would finally come to rest with possibly only the minor damage of a broken cross-bracing wire.

The pupil would then taxi the machine to the hangar and endeavour to slink away before coming under the eagle eye of his instructor but such an endeavour was usually fruitless., or the offender was invariably discovered and informed, in "useful" language, little points to be observed in flying, especially in the art of landing a machine. During breakfast, various experiences were exchanged.

As the days passed, I became more confident and suffered no setbacks. One morning, whilst I was in the air, a ground mist suddenly came up and I completely lost my bearings and could not see the aerodrome. I came down as low as possible and suffered a shock when a minaret suddenly loomed before me.

I made a sudden turn and climbed as quickly as possible; luckily, the mist cleared after a time and I was again able to discern the landing ground where flares had been placed for guidance. I landed and found that all the other machines had witnessed the approach of the mist and come down; I did not feel too happy over the business and was glad to be back on the ground.

I spent many happy evenings at Heliopolis Hotel where cinema shows took place in the grounds. It was most pleasant to be able to sit in the open at small tables and watch the pictures whilst sipping cooling drinks. In due course, I completed the requisite number of hours flight on the Maurice Farman machine and was posted to another squadron at Aboukir, a few miles from Alexandria, for instruction in other machines.

I reported to the adjutant and was instructed to attend at No.22 Squadron the following day for training in flying Avro machines. I was quartered with other officers, in a hut situated on the fringe of the aerodrome. There were two or three training squadrons at Aboukir and a hundred or so officers were undergoing instruction. A huge stone built mess was provided in which we took our meals and a large lounge which possessed a piano added to our comfort.

Flying commenced at dawn and continued until about 11 a.m; the heat then being severe, flying was discontinued until 4 p.m., for conditions in the air made flying very bumpy and unsafe for beginners.

The following morning, I reported to my flight commander and was taken up for my first lesson in the new machine, which was extremely light and answered to its controls immediately; a far more delicate machine which necessitated light handling of its controls. After practice, I took my part in cleaning the machines with hot water and soap; for the lubricating oil had splashed the wings and fuselages.

Aboukir was situated on the coast and the aerodrome adjoined the beach. The railway ran from Alexandria through the depot and special military passes were issued to enable us to pass the control post which was manned by an officer, non-commissioned officer and men.

In the evening, I went into Alexandria and was pleased with the town which possessed theatres, cinemas, and a nice skating rink. I preferred the town to Cairo.

The following day my tuition progressed until, one day, a somewhat heated altercation took place between my instructor (a captain) and myself. I must mention that this instructor was much disliked by reason of his officiousness and when in the air, he rarely gave instruction, in right hand turns, as he disliked them on account of the tendency of the machine to drop its nose through the torque of the propeller drawing it down.

We had just landed, after a circuit, and although the machine was fitted with dual controls, yet I was conscious of the fact that I had not been allowed freedom of manoeuvre, for he kept a most rigid check on all my movements. I felt that I had taken no part in the flight and a conversation, similar to the following, took place -

Instructor.

"Well, you can take the machine up, alone"

Myself.

"I don't feel confident yet"

Instructor.

"What do you mean; you have just complete the circuit and landed the machine yourself."

Myself.

"I did no such thing"

Instructor.

"Get out of the machine and come to my orderly room"

The conversation was then resumed in the Orderly Room.

Instructor.

"And so you refuse to go up?"

Myself.

"Yes; I'm not going to break my neck for you or anybody else"

Instructor.

"What do you mean?"

Myself.

"You have never let me have complete control of the machine but have flown it yourself".

Instructor.

"You carried out the flight entirely on your own"

Myself.

"I suppose I executed the steep turns over the hangars, which got us into the aerodrome well, all I can say is that the machine is a remarkable one, for all the time those turns were taking place and the machine was gliding down to land, you state that you were not taking any part in the evolutions and feeling that I was only a passenger, I had removed my hands and feet from the controls and so apparently neither of us was flying the machine. It would, therefore, appear that no pilot is necessary for this type of machine, since it apparently takes off, flies round, and lands itself".

Instructor.

"I'll give you another chance. We will do another circuit and landing tomorrow and if you don't then go alone, I shall report the matter to the Squadron Commander".

Myself.

"If I do then feel-confident., I will undertake a solo flight".

The following morning he allowed me to fly the machine without interfering too much and I agreed to take up the plane alone and managed a flight of forty minutes and accomplished a good landing.

In the evenings, I generally adjourned to the roller skating rink in Alexandria and spent many enjoyable times.

I progressed fairly well with my flying of this particular machine, until one morning I received a setback. I took off and flew straight until my instrument denoted that I had reached a height of six hundred feet and then decided to make my first turn.

Whilst steeply banked, the spring of an inlet valve of the engine broke and a flash of flame came from the engine, which was a rotary one called the "Gnome" and reputed to possess a weakness because the inlet valve springs often broke and the danger of fire could not be ignored. The trouble occurred, in this instance, whilst the machine was in the middle of a steeply banked turn and flying speed was lost; before I had an opportunity to rectify things, the machine plunged down in a spinning nosedive.

I gathered speed quickly as the earth appeared to rush towards me; the spinning of the plane intensified and some Arabs on camels, who were passing along the fringe of the aerodrome, appeared to be wizzing round in circles.

I grasped the sides of the fuselage set my teeth, and prepared to await the crash into the ground; I became more and more confused and the rapid spinning made me feel extremely sick and giddy and a hazy mist appeared before my eyes.

I seemed to be falling for hours but curiously enough, no thoughts of being killed entered my head, although I vaguely wondered what sort of condition the machine and I would be in after we had embraced mother earth. I must have become only semi-conscious, for I was brought back to reality by a terrific bump and a scrunch of breaking wood.

I opened my eyes and found myself surrounded by wreckage and sat for a moment, contemplating the situation. My first thought was that I had arrived apparently unhurt; I endeavoured to get out of the remains but found that my legs were fixed and interlaced in broken struts I managed to force the struts apart and crawled out on my hands and knees.

I lit a cigarette and surveyed my latest effort and noted that the machine was smashed to pieces, the engine partly buried in the ground, and the petrol tank in a collapsed state; the petrol had spread itself over a large area of ground and I was puzzled, to understand why it hadn't caught fire.

I had crashed behind a small hillock on the fringe of the aerodrome and could not be seen from the hangars where the rest of the pupils, not flying, had hastened and closed their eyes so that they would not witness an accident which could apparently, only result in a fatality.

In the midst of my preoccupation I was disturbed by the appearance of a mechanic who suddenly rounded the hillock and looked agape at me with a white face. I asked him if he was any good at puzzles and if so to put the pieces surrounding me together again.

A scamper of feet proclaimed the arrival of the Flight Commander, and others, who shouted out - "Are you alright?". I answered in the affirmative and apologised for the destruction of the machine. He consigned the plane to perdition and said that as long as I was safe, the machine could go to blazes. I suggested I be loaned another so that I could go up again but, with a smile, he refused. A motor ambulance and doctor had now arrived and I was requested to lie on a stretcher and be conveyed to the dressing station.

I was emphatic in my refusal to take a ride in so depressing a vehicle and stated that I required no medical attention.

It was thereupon pointed out that my lip and knee were badly cut whilst my arm was bruised from wrist to shoulder and was turning green and yellow; I had not noticed the damages during the excitement.

I consented to go to the dressing station on a motor tender and had my minor injuries dressed; I then proceeded to the mess where I enjoyed a stiff drink and entertained the fellows with popular tunes on the piano. I was afterwards informed that my escape had been miraculous and that nobody had expected me to survive such a crash; every cylinder in the engine of the machine had been smashed and the body was a total wreck.



For the next few days I was excused flying duty and occupied my time in attending practice in artillery co-operation, wireless, etc., reporting at intervals to the Medical Officer for dressings and attention. On being questioned by him as to how I felt generally, I informed him that I was fairly fit but that the noise of the machines passing over my hut in some curious manner, seemed to get on my nerves in no uncertain fashion.

He stated that, in the circumstances this was quite understandable and suggested that a short spell in hospital, away from present surroundings, would soon put me right. I agreed, and after collecting my kit, was taken by motor ambulance to Ras-el-tin Hospital in Alexandria, where I stayed for two weeks.



The first person I met in hospital, strangely enough, was Dr Ives who had lived near to me in Southampton and whom I had known.

After the usual greetings, he naturally desired to know the reason for my being there and when I informed him that I had recently crashed from a height of six hundred feet; he instructed me to lie on the bed whilst he overhauled me, after which he told me that there couldn't be much wrong with my heart since it showed no apparent ill effects of overstrain, the only thing not normal being my pulse which was rather more rapid than it should have been.

Another coincidence, he informed me, was the fact that the bed I was to occupy had only that morning been vacated by Lieutenant Stevenson, another Southampton man and a brother officer from my late regiment whom I had left at Gaza when transferred to the Royal Flying Corps.

The hospital, which was a part of Ras-el-tin Palace, was a most comfortable one and possessed quite a nice dining room and lounge. The food was excellent and at dinner we were allowed alcoholic drinks.

I soon settled down to enjoy two weeks of rest and each day I spent in Alexandria seeing the sights. We had to be back in hospital for seven o'clock dinner, which proved to be a handicap as we were prevented, thereby, from attending evening performances of the theatres and cinemas.

The time passed most enjoyably and, in due course, I returned to Aboukir feeling quite refreshed and eager to continue flying.

I was, however, unable to resume until I was passed as fit by a medical board and so had to fill in the time by attending lectures and practices on the ground. After some days, I duly presented myself before a board for inspection and after being overhauled and questioned, was informed that I would be required to attend a further inspection at a later date before resuming flying.

My studies on the ground were resumed and as the board would not be called upon to meet again for a week or two, I was instructed to proceed to Heliopolis again and report to the Adjutant of the School of Aerial Gunnery. I packed my kit and duly commenced this new course, which consisted of practical firing tests with Vickers and Lewis guns. A musketry range was situated quite close to the aerodrome and duly we carried out our tests.

One one occasion, I was standing and waiting for my turn for gun practice when, looking into the air, I discerned a machine performing various evolutions at a height of about two thousand feet. I was interested in the various stunts and horrified when a wing became detached as the machine came out of a loop into a steep dive. The machine burst into flares and the pilot, who jumped out, turned over and over in a cartwheel fashion as he fell to earth.

All firing practice stopped as we witnessed the tragedy and heard the roar of the flames as the machine hurtled earthwards. A gloom fell upon us, for we were all budding pilots and the incident impressed upon us at least one calamity to be feared, viz. fire in the air.

Our exercises completed, we returned to the aerodrome where the machine had hit the ground and found that the propeller was still burning and the metal of the engine in a molten state. We learned that an experienced pilot had come down from the line to fetch the machine and that he had taken it up to test it before flying it back. It transpired that this particular class of machine was a Martinside, which possessed a tail of frail structure, and the officer had, contrary to orders, looped; in consequence, the tail had twisted off.

I learned the lesson and vowed that I would not, in the future, endeavour to carry out stunts in any machine whose specifications precluded such evolutions.

Daily we were taken up in machines as observers in order to carry out gun practice. On those occasions I occupied the passenger seat in front and, armed with drums of Lewis gun ammunition, was flown at a height of a few hundred feet to the ground targets situated on the desert; we dived on the targets whilst I carried out the firing tests. Part II. of the course was that of aerial fighting.

Once again I was taken up in the passenger seat but this time, was armed with a camera.

This was a Lewis gun fitted with a roll of photographic film,, instead of an ammunition drum, and possessing the usual wind vane sights used in the air; another pupil was similarly situated in a second each and, at a height of some two thousand feet, we manoeuvred around each other for a favourable position and fired our guns; each time the trigger was pressed, a photograph was taken. After landing, the films were developed and the results of the tests proclaimed.

Effectively firing a gun at another machine in the air, was not such a simple matter as would at appear. T speed of travelling, the angle of flight, and allowances for aiming in front so as to hit an opposing machine,"all had to be taken into consideration". However, I satisfactorily passed my various tests and once again returned to Aboukir, where I continued ground practices for a few days and, after successfully fulfilling the requirements of the Medical Board, was allowed to continue my flying instruction in the Avro, which machine had previously been, the cause of my crash.

One morning, I again reported to the much loved Flight Commander, whose expression, on seeing me, seemed to bear that of extreme disappointment at my having survived from the recent speedy return to earth from the air. After a few cheerful remarks, he said that he would take me up for a circuit and landing and then I could go alone and finish my time of this particular class of machine.

Only those who have crashed from a height would realise the extremely uncomfortable feeling that can arise at the prospect of having to again take the air in a similar machine and as I had only a half an hour to do to complete my time, I was anxious to carry out a flight and pass on to the next squadron. I duly took off, on a hot day, and quickly realised that conditions in the air were decidedly bumpy and, added to that, I had the additional difficulty of having to land over the hangars and just clear them in order to get into the aerodrome; this was occasioned by reason of the direction in which the wind was blowing.

I quickly rose to a height of six hundred feet and wondered whether I would experience engine trouble, as I did not desire a repetition of the previous mishap. With great trepidation I banked and took the first turn which, with relief, I negotiated safely and, on consulting my watch, I found that I had exactly half an hour to while away and decided that the period would not be exceeded if I could help it.

Having successfully staggered round the circuit and finding that only three minutes were now to elapse, I decided to glide down and land. As already explained, this type of machine possessed a rotary engine which was fed by the regulation of the flow of petrol and it had to be "buzzed" whilst gliding down by periodically moving forward the ignition lever and so keep the propeller ticking over and the engine from choking.

I glided down and when just over the roof of the hangar, the engine, to my intense dismay and annoyance, suddenly opened out again although switched off and before I knew where I was, the machine again rose and I was forced to make another circuit.

Two or three times this occurred and each time I endeavoured to land, the engine started off again on its own. I began to think that a deliberate effort on the part of Fate was in progress to prevent my getting down safely and I was afraid, in my inexperience, to cut off the petrol supply in case I should misjudge my glide into the aerodrome, undershoot, and be unable to put on the engine again.

As I got more anxious each circuit I was forced to make, so my flying became more erratic and the handling of the machine less confident but in due course the engine behaved itself just long enough for me to glide down and land at the opposite end of the aerodrome to the hangars and the engine immediately stopped. I thankfully got out of the machine, lit a cigarette, and heaved a sigh of relief.

I consulted my watch and found that I had been in the air for about an hour. I decided once and for all to finish with that class of machine and vowed that I would have nothing further to do with it. If practicable, I would have kicked it round the aerodrome.

My "friend", the Flight Commander, had apparently seen me land and as the engine was stopped and I could not taxi the machine to its hangar, he strolled across and I prepared myself for a pleasant reception. The conversation was similar to the following -

Instructor.

"Well, you're down then; taxi in the machine"

Myself.

"No fear; you can taxi it in yourself".

Instructor.

"what's the idea?"

Myself.

"I've finished with the rotten thing; the switch is short-circuiting and I had the devil's own trouble to get down"

Instructor.

"Why didn't you cut off your petrol?"

Myself.

"I dared not in case I should undershoot the aerodrome; if I had, and been unable to put on the engine again, I would have crashed into the hangars".

Instructor.

"Oh, alright; turn the propeller and start the engine and I'll taxi it and will see you in the Orderly Room.

(later in the Orderly Room)

Instructor.

"Well, you've finished your time on these machines and I've signed your papers. You will now be transferred to No.23 Squadron for flying practice on other machines; however, you'll break your neck in a very short while".

Myself.

"I'm delighted to shake the dust of this Flight off my feet and if I do break my neck, you won't have to worry about it"

My hatred for this type of machine was by now confirmed and I looked forward to the transfer with great eagerness.

The following morning, I reported to the new squadron, where I was to fly BE2C. and BE2E. machines (British Experimental). I progressed admirably and found not the slightest difficulty in manipulating these machines.

Flying commenced at dawn each day and continued until 11 a.m. when it finished until recommencement at 4 p.m. and continued until dark. Several of the pupils had been unable to master flying and, in consequence, were now training as Observers. Periodically my turn as Squadron Orderly Officer came along and the duties were similar of those of the Infantry but with the addition of inspecting the hangars to ensure that they were securely locked at night; I had to transfer my camp bed to the Orderly room and sleep there, and inspect the sentries between the hours of 1 a.m. and 3 a.m.

Splendid weather was now enjoyed which resembled the hot Summer days in England. Around the aerodromes were many date palms and the dates hung in large clusters at the tops, well out of reach; we were supplied with luscious specimens for dessert at practically each meal.

On very windy days, no flying was permitted as it would prove risky to inexperienced pilots; handling a machine under such conditions was uncomfortable, for it was tossed about like a boat on a choppy sea. On these occasions, studies were confined to ground work.

One morning, I carried out a cross country test. I was given a position on a map and instructed to fly across country, find a certain railway station, make a sketch of it from the air and put in all the points of military importance viz. number and kind of trains, whether under steam, direction pointing, passenger or goods, closed-or open, empty or full, etc.

The depot now possessed its own cinema, which portrayed the latest films which were hired in Alexandria, and the men enjoyed good performances which were changed twice weekly,

at a charge just sufficient to cover expenses. As the forming of an orchestra was out of the question, I was approached and deputed to improvise on a piano for about two hours and a half at each performance.

December.

I received a copy of the Gazette and thereby learned that I could now hoist another pip on my shoulder and carry the rank of Lieutenant.

Most evenings, when not playing at the cinema, I spent in Alexandria, either attending shows or, exercising myself on the roller skating rink.

It was difficult to realise the reported shortage of food in England, for all the shops in Alexandria possessed an abundance of everything.

I was very pleased indeed to receive a cablegram from my parents expressing good wishes for my birthday.

A further cross country flight to another aerodrome took place and another officer and I set off together but I lost sight of him as soon as we were in the air. I successfully reached my destination just in time for breakfast and after replenishing the inner man and having a chat with some old friends, I flew back to the aerodrome and so completed another test.

Some time elapsed and there was no sign of the return of the other officer and so two instructors set off in machines loaded with cans of petrol to search for the missing machine.

In due course they returned with the wanderer and it transpired that the pupil pilot had missed his way and continued across the desert until forced to land near a small village through his petrol running out; the machine was duly replenished with petrol and flown to the aerodrome.

On one occasion, whilst in Alexandria, I visited the Records Office with a view to ascertaining how my late battalion was faring at Gaza and was grieved to learn that both my friends, Cameron and Vize, had been killed.

These were the two officers who had accompanied me to India with the draft and Cameron had served with me in France. Added to this, I was informed that in a recent advance my platoon (commanded by the Sergeant since I had left) had been deputed to assault a strong post and had been wiped out. I realised that had I remained with the battalion that I would have been in charge of the platoon and probably have come to grief with the rest.

Lieutenant Stevenson, whose bed I had occupied when placed in the care of Dr Ives in Ras-el-tin Hospital, had also been killed.

At the depot we had periodical visits from Regimental Concert Parties, whose performances were excellent and the casts often included peace time professional artists. One party was named "The Defaulters".

I visited, in hospital, an officer from my late battalion and he gave me particulars regarding poor Cameron's fate. It transpired that one of the men in his company had been wounded and Cameron went out to bandage him and whilst occupied, an enemy machinegun suddenly opened fire and riddled him with bullets.

I concluded the altitude test which necessitated flying the machine to a height of ten thousand feet, switching off the engine and spiralling down and landing.

It was very cold in the early mornings and during the nights and when flying at those times, we donned lined leather coats and gloves and wore sheeps wool lined boots.

One morning, at. about 8 a.m., whilst in my hut I heard the noise of a crash just outside. I called to my companion and we rushed outside and found a machine blazing. The heat from it was terrific and we could not get very close; we frantically threw sand over it and finally managed to get the flames sufficiently under control to drag out the pupil who was so terribly burnt that he died almost immediately.

He was a fellow named Perry and had nose dived into the ground from a height of only about a hundred feet. I was about to make a flight in a similar machine and did not feel too cheery after witnessing the tragedy.

Curiously enough, exactly two weeks later another man also named Perry, met with a fatal accident.

Daily, the machines were piled up on the aerodrome, some of the accidents being fatal whilst others were only minor ones, such as were caused by faulty landings, etc. On one occasion, a fellow fell out of, his machine and it could only be surmised that he had looped and omitted to do up his safety belt.

Another pupil landed on the roof of a hangar, in which the engine of the machine buried its nose and remained in nearly a perpendicular position; the pilot was unhurt.

The first day that I reported at Aboukir, I witnessed a disturbing calamity which, at that time, did not enhance my idea of aviation. A machine, containing an instructor and pupil, took off from the aerodrome and collided with another plane carrying two men; after the machines had become interlocked, they crashed to the ground. Three of the occupants were killed and the remaining one badly knocked about; one of the victims had travelled down with me from Gaza to join the Flying Corps.

On Christmas Eve, two friends and I visited the Alhambra Theatre in Alexandria and enjoyed a really fine performance by an English touring party called "The Scamps".

On Christmas Day, a brother officer and I visited an Italian family by the name of Castravelli. The good folks consisting of Father, Mother and Daughters, had prepared A splendid time for us and a real Xmas spread was placed before us. We enjoyed games and music and after tea, the family and we set out for another house where a large family party was in progress and a further Christmas dinner had been provided for our reception, including wines etc. After a real festive time, my brother officer and I left at about midnight and returned to the aerodrome by taxi.

On Boxing Day I, stayed in camp and improvised on the piano in the evening during the cinema performance. Flying practices were carried out on Christmas but, fortunately, it poured with rain on Christmas and Boxing Days and flying orders were cancelled.

Turning over in my mind previous Christmasses, I realised that 1914 I had spent in Bedford, 1915 in France, 1916 in India and now, 1917 in Egypt.

My next tests were successfully passed. I had to fly in formation with other machines and then carry out the photography test. The latter was rather difficult to a novice, as he had all his work cut out to fly the machine without the added difficulty of taking photographs. A map was handed to the pupil upon which were marked twelve points which were situated miles apart. He had to fly by the map, pick out each point and, as it was located, photograph it from a height of about a thousand feet. A camera was loaded with plates and fixed to the machine and the pulling of a string dropped each plate after a photograph was taken, and set the shutter in readiness for the next exposure.

Fixed perpendicularly to the outside of the fuselage was a long metal tube, through which the pilot sighted and it possessed cross wires at each end.

The machine had to be flown over the position to be photographed and the pilot looking down the tube, waited until the cross wires were in line with the object; the string of the camera was pulled and the photograph taken. Care had to be observed that the machine was flown directly into the wind, otherwise in approaching the object, drift was experienced and instead of the plane passing right over, it would leave the object on its flank.

Generally several attempts had to be made before the sights of the tube could be brought into direct line with the object and the novice often allowed his machine to turn or bank whilst concentrated upon his test. He thereby found it impossible to photograph the object.

The next test was that of bomb dropping.

This was carried, out by means of a camera obscure, in which the instructors sat and watched the course of the machine undergoing the test. The pilot, once again flying dead into wind, utilized his bomb sight which had been adjusted to requirements, height, wind velocity, speed of machine, etc. having been taken into consideration.

Then over the camera obscura the pilot wirelessly down a letter "T" (a dash in morse), and after five seconds, sent another "T"; the instructors were then able to denote whether a bomb would have dropped on the object. I had to have two attempts at this test before passing satisfactorily.

In my spare time, I often wandered about the coast and, on occasions, found old coins and pieces of pottery.

We received the disturbing information that all our Christmas mails had gone to the bottom of the sea as the ship on which they were being conveyed had been torpedoed.

Having now flown these types of machines for some hours, I was quite confident in their manipulation and rarely went up without taking a passenger with me who was anxious to joyride. Many officers and cadets who were commencing their training as pilots, were only too eager to go up. On one day I had good fun. A Canadian officer, who had not yet been in the air, had boasted that he could not be in any way disturbed by any evolutions that might be made.

Hearing of this, I casually asked him if he would care to go up with me for a short flit. He readily consented and I took off and rose to about two thousand feet; I shut off the engine and turned to my passenger and enquired whether his safety belt was securely fastened.

To my surprise, he looked at me with a rather uncertain expression and replied that he was safely strapped in. I put on the engine again, dived steeply and looped. Resuming straight flying, I stalled and allowed the machine to go into a spinning nosedive. I again glanced at my passenger's expression and noticed that he had turned a bit white and looked by no means comfortable.

After doing a few cartwheels in succession, I glided down and landed. We stepped from the machine and I noticed that the Canadian looked none too confident; he did not again venture the remark that he could not be disturbed by stunt flying.

The final test was duly carried out, that of Artillery Co-operation. A short distance from the depot a dummy battery of guns was stationed and at a position in the far corner of the aerodrome, was an object upon which imaginary artillery fire was to be directed. These positions were marked on the map carried by the pilot undergoing the test. All messages were carried out in code and sent from the air by wireless in morse.

As soon as the machine had reached its requisite height, when the pilot had located the target, he wirelessed to the battery, whilst flying towards it "Are you receiving my signals?" and waited for a ground signal to be exposed in answer.

These ground strips were made of white linen and positioned to represent various letters viz. "L2" might mean "Yes" or "K", "No"- and so forth. Under service conditions, a pilot when patrolling a certain sector of the front, would possibly spot a target (such as a battery of guns, moving troops, etc.) upon which he desired to direct suitable artillery fire. Each of the batteries of our artillery possessed its own code calling up sign, e.g. 60 pounder battery might be "B.E.", a six inch howitzer battery, "R.N.", etc. and according to the type of gun it was desired to engage, so the pilot would utilise the necessary code letters to call up the requisite battery.

In addition to this, each machine had its code number so that the battery would know the flight carrying out the shoot. As soon as the pilot had received the signal that his own signals were being received, he wirelessed the position of the target, which he had worked out from his map, and this message he repeated and followed it up with the coded question - "Are you ready to fire?". An example of the routine is as follows (fictitious code letters are used) -

Machine	Battery Code	Message
A.B.1	R.N.	Are you receiving my signals B.

Answer - ground strip, letter "L2" - Yes

Machine	Battery Code	Message
A.B.1	R.N.	Position of target P64L39

This last message is repeated and followed by
"Are you ready to fire?" - "M"

The complete message - AB1RNP64L39M
Battery answer - L.

The shoot then commenced. The pilot flew towards the battery and wirelessly the order to fire, turned and flew towards the target to observe the burst of the exploding shell. His next duty was to send down the correction, preceding this with the code prefixes. For the purpose of such correction, an imaginary clock face was, drawn round the target, with twelve o'clock due North, calculated by reference to the machine's compass.

Imaginary circles were pictured at various distances from the centre, viz. first ring 50 yards, second one, a hundred yards, third two hundred and fifty yards, etc and called A., B. and C, etc; the position of a bursting shell was calculated thereby. For instance, a shell exploding fifty yards North of the target would receive a correction 12A, or if to the east, 3A, and a pilot sending a complete correction, including code prefixes, would transmit AB1RNL2A.

When the burst had been observed, the pilot turned the machine, flew towards the battery whilst the correction was wirelessly, and repeated the order to fire; this continued until a direct hit was obtained.

At times, the pilot was called upon to carry out a shoot with two batteries upon different targets, which duty was by no means an easy one; the bursts of two lots of shells had to be observed and corrections sent down with the code prefixes of the various batteries being utilized. During such operations, the pilot was generally subjected to anti-aircraft fire from enemy guns and in addition, had to be prepared to resist an attack by enemy machines.

My test, under practice conditions, having been successfully passed, I was now transferred for experience in flying R.E.8. machines (Reconnaissance Experimental), which when

loaded, weighed about two tons. I liked these planes and took every opportunity of flying them, especially in the evenings when, with a passenger, I would often ascend and witness the setting of the sun. Flying in the evening, when the sun was going down, was ideal; all was peace in the air and not a bump disturbed the flight which resembled the gliding of a boat on a lake.

I continued my flying of these machines for several days and, on one occasion, received instructions to take up the Squadron Photographer to a height of 12,000 feet so that he could photograph the depot. This he did and an enlargement brought out every little detail, which spoke volumes for the wonderful camera lens.

About this time, I heard of the death of Lieutenant Beddy, who left the Hampshire Regiment at Gaza in order to transfer to the Flying Corps; he had been killed in a crash. His transfer took place at the same time as my own and his demise rather forcibly brought home to me the fact that any connection with me seemed to have fatal results, for Gyatt who joined the Seaforths with me and proceeded to France, was dead, whilst both Cameron and Vize, the officers who accompanied me in India to join the Hampshire Regiment, had also been killed.

I now completed my training and awaited notification that I was considered to be a qualified pilot and could have the much coveted wings sewn upon my tunic. Usually a newly qualified pilot was allowed several weeks flying at the base in order to gain further experience before being posted to a service squadron.

One morning, much to my consternation, an orderly approached me and stated that my presence was required in the Orderly Room. I rather wondered how or when I had transgressed and hurried into the presence of the Squadron Commander, where a conversation similar to the following took place -

Commander.

"I want you to hurriedly pack your kit and proceed to No.14 Squadron which is on service in Palestine. I am very pleased with your reports and as several casualties have recently occurred, I am eager you catch a train which leaves in two hours time".

Myself.

"But I haven't received my wings"

Commander.

"Never mind. I'll sign your pass out certificate and you can sew your wings on your tunic when you get in the train".

To be perfectly candid, I rather wished that I not progressed in my flying quite so satisfactorily, for I had rather hoped to have had a few weeks extra experience before taking an active part with a service squadron.

However, having no say in the matter, I duly boarded the train and whilst happily sewing on my wings, dubiously pondered on the likely results upon the war by the entry of my humble self, suffering from no inconsiderable inferiority complex in so far as this particular branch of the service was concerned; in other words, what would my future squadron think of my efforts?.

I broke my journey at Kantara, slept the night at the Y.M.C.A quarters and, the following day, attended a performance in a rough and ready cinema. Resuming my journey, I found it most interesting, for since I had left Gaza, our troops had advanced into Palestine; the railway had been laid and I passed through Gaza and over the actual ground where I had taken part in the successful raid upon the Turkish trenches.

I was disappointed in Gaza itself but liked the country further on. I duly arrived at Ramleh and reported at Wing Headquarters, stayed for lunch and continued the journey by motor tender to No.14 Squadron. I was enabled to enjoy luscious oranges obtained from the orange groves nearby.

The aerodrome was situated near to the Mount of Olives and not very many miles from Jerusalem. The personnel were quartered in bell tents which each possessed an electric light, the current for which was generated by the motor workshop lorry. A large tent was used as a mess and lounge and arrangements were comfortable; a gramophone played merrily as I entered and pilots and observers sat around, either talking or reading and sipping drinks.

I very soon made myself at home and found the Squadron Commander and the rest of the fellows excellent companions who greeted me in a most encouraging manner.

The machines used were of the B.E. and R.E.8. types, which I considered would cause me little difficulty in handling, as I had enjoyed flying them under training conditions.

Things were very quiet on the front, for the advance had been completed for the time being and the Squadron had lapsed into its ordinary routine work of artillery co-operation, photography, and occasional bombing expeditions. Certain duties of flying were allotted and when performed, pilots and observers travelled, in turn, on the motor tender to Jerusalem, for relaxation and to make purchases.

As this Squadron was known as a bombing and reconnaissance one, it was not expected to engage enemy aircraft in fights, for the machines were heavy, slow, and not constructed for quick manoeuvre; other squadrons of swift single seater scouts protected our machines from surprise whilst engaged upon their duties.

I soon settled down in my new surroundings and made some good friends.

Until fairly recently, the enemy had exercised superiority in the air by possessing machines far more efficient and speedy in manoeuvre than ours and, in consequence, our losses had been rather disturbing, for whenever one of our planes had flown over the enemy lines on observation work, it had been attacked and when the pilot had managed to get back to the aerodrome without being shot down he considered himself fortunate; in such cases, he had to put up a running fight.

A squadron situated near to us recently became possessed of a number of up-to-date Bristol two-seater fighters, which each possessed a 350 h.p. Rolls-Royce engine. These machines were very speedy and capable of quick manoeuvre and one of the pilots (with an observer) decided to set a trap for an enemy machine.

It must be explained that this type of machine somewhat resembled that of the slow B.B, type, when in the air, and as the enemy had no knowledge of our recent welcome acquisition of the fast Bristol, the pilot took off and throttled back the engine sufficiently to permit the machine to fly level at its slowest speed.

He flew up and down over the lines and, sure enough, an enemy two-seater "Albatros" soon spotted him and, thinking that another slow B.E. was to be an easy victim, flew in the direction of the British machine with a view to diving upon it and shooting it down in flames.

The pilot of the Bristol saw the enemy coming but did not deviate from his course and so allowed him to approach as near as possible compatib with safety. He then opened his engine to its fullest, dived, looped, and completed a circle which brought him on to the tail of his enemy and in an admirable position for opening fire. The enemy pilot and observer were amazed, they had no idea that such an efficient machine operated on the front and they did their utmost to shake the pursuer off their tail by executing every manoeuvre known to them, but without avail.

The pilot of the Bristol made no attempt to open fire with his machineguns but was content to enjoy the discomfiture of his enemy who, now thoroughly scared, shut off his engine, glided down, landed on our aerodrome, and surrendered without even putting up a fight. The Bristol landed by its side and the pilot censured the enemy, in very strong language, for not having the courage to make any show of a fight. The captured machine was duly flown back to Cairo by one of our pilots.

The daily duties consisted, for the time being, of reconnaissance and photography, and the hours of flying were not heavy as no advance was taking place. A pilot was not called upon to do more than three hour flight a day and the machines took their turn, the first one taking off just as dawn was breaking.

It was a wonderful sight to see the sun rise whilst engaged upon these early patrols.

When a reconnaissance flight commenced at 4.30 a.m., the pilot was back and had landed on the aerodrome by 7.30 a.m., and after writing his report, during the quiet times, was finished for the day unless an unforeseen further duty was ordered. On these occasions, some pilots when awakened by their batmen and handed early morning cups of tea, would don cardigans and leather flying coats over their pyjamas, pull on their long flying boots, carry out the patrol flight, and then return to bed.

When taking off, the machines had to rise to two thousand feet before leaving the aerodrome and climb as they passed over the high hills in enemy country; on the tops of the hills were posted machineguns which could prove troublesome.

One of the machines, whilst returning from a patrol, encountered a thick mist and, in descending to find direction, collided with the top of the Mount of Olives and the plane wrecked and both pilot and observer killed.

On certain days, when it had poured with rain, considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the machines to rise from the sticky aerodrome and after taking the longest run permitted by the size of the aerodrome, they had to be literally heaved off the ground.

Nothing of special interest occurred and the daily routine flights over the Jerusalem district and the enemy country took place.

I had unfortunately only been with the Squadron for a week or two when I contracted a rather bad attack of Psoriasis of the scalp and, upon consulting the Squadron medical officer, whom I had asked to supply me with suitable ointment, was informed that his limited medical supplies would not permit him to complete treatment of the complaint.

In consequence I would have to be sent down the line. I expressed my unwillingness to leave and stated that I would prefer to leave the matter over; however, presumably, he spoke to the Squadron Commander about the matter and he, in turn,

summoned me to his tent and after a chat, strongly advised me not to neglect the trouble but to go down the line and receive expert attention.

The present service conditions experienced, in comparison with those of an infantry officer in the line, presented an extraordinary difference, in as much as the latter's daily routine was a matter of grim warfare only, whereas the former's conditions afforded considerable opportunities for relaxation and something approaching more comfortable amenities of existence. Once again I packed my kit and duly reported at a field hospital a few miles from the aerodrome. Here I stayed for one night and the next day left, in a hospital train, with my head covered in ointment and enveloped in bandages. I travelled for a considerable number of miles until I reached El Arish and there entered the Military Hospital.

This time my head was lathered and shaved, more ointment applied and further bandages. I stayed here for several days during which time I enjoyed several concert party performances and as no progress was evidenced, I again packed and was despatched by train to Kwatara where I entered another hospital. Once again my head was shaved and a different treatment tried but no improvement was achieved.

Kantara was a huge depot and swarmed with troops proceeding to and from the line. Whilst wandering around, I chanced upon an old Guildford friend named May, who had been a Special Constable with me in the early part of the war.

Curious to relate, although throughout the war I only encountered two Guildfordian friends, one was this fellow and the other his brother whom I met when leaving a theatre in Bombay. We were naturally delighted to see one another and had several chats over old times.

He was serving as a noncommissioned officer in the Army Service Corps.

Whilst in hospital, I was nicknamed "Baldy", through my head having been shaved. We had quite good times and played games; I became quite expert at Ping-pong and other "strenuous" games and indulged in further dissipation by having my breakfast brought to me in bed.

In the afternoons I generally hid myself to the Y.H.C.A which possessed a lounge and I passed the time in piano playing, reading, etc; by this time I was thoroughly enjoying the war.

After a few days, it was decided that I must go down to a base hospital and so once again I entrained and finally found myself back in Ras-el-tin Hospital in Alexandria and occupied the same ward as I did on the occasion of my crash.

As I had been on the move for some time, my letters from home had followed me around and accumulated and one day I received twenty-three.

I remained at this hospital for some time and a certain amount of progress took place, although in my own opinion I was not sure that the treatment given was correct. Sufficient to say, I became bored with the existence which was only lightened by a visit of inspection by H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, who walked in the gardens and chatted with us.

As an improvement had taken place with regard to my head trouble, I prevailed upon the Doctor to supply me with a pot of ointment and to permit me to return to Aboukir for instructions to rejoin my squadron in Palestine. As soon as I had returned and reported to the Depot Medical Officer, he examined me and insisted that as a cure had not been effected, that I must return to Alexandria to another hospital where he would arrange for me to come under the care of a specialist.

I was becoming heartily sick of being experimented upon but had no option other than to again pack and be conveyed by ambulance car to this new hospital; fortunately I soon recovered under expert treatment. This hospital was known as No.19 General Hospital.

I again returned to Abopakir, where I awaited Headquarter's permission to resume flying, which was to be of a graduated kind by reason of my lack of practice whilst in hospital for the past weeks. I duly received orders from the Squadron Commander to resume flying in R.E.8 machines and informed that I would shortly be required to act in the capacity of Instructor in the Air with these machines.

I was definite in my expressions of unwillingness to act in that capacity and told him that I would much prefer to return to my Squadron in Palestine.

It was most enjoyable to be once again in the air, after the long rest. Since I had left the depot a great deal of fear regarding the flying of R.E.8. machines had been occasioned amongst pupils, I was given to understand, by reason of the fact that one or two fellows had been killed whilst attempting solo flights and, in consequence, a general feeling of nervousness had arisen and lack of confidence, which resulted in accidents, mostly of a minor character and caused by faulty landings which resulted in undercarriages being telescoped.

At times all the machines were crashed and flying could not be resumed until repairs had been carried out and those pupils responsible for the damages were ordered to assist the mechanics in their restoration work as a punishment.

As the days went on I witnessed the results of several fatal accidents.

Having once again become infused with confidence in the air, I enjoyed daily joy rides, taking with me each time a passenger, until finally I received orders to report to the Flight Commander of a Flight stationed at Aboukir and known as "The Submarine Flight" newly formed.

Recently two large boats, (one of which was the "Aregon" on which I had voyaged from South Africa to India), had been torpedoed a few miles out from Alexandria and as an important personage in the Flying Corps (or Royal Air Force as now known) had been submerged in the sea for over an hour before being rescued, he had immediately caused the flight to come into being as soon as he had landed.

I reported to the flight Commander, Captain Laing, M.C., and was introduced to other pilots - Lieutenants Vincer, Woods, Harper, Thompson and Blackmore; I shared a tent with the latter officer and we became fast friends and stayed together until the Armistice.

I learned that our duties were to fly to the harbour in Alexandria and, in conjunction with the Navy, escort incoming and outgoing convoys of ships at times stated over the phone in code.

The duration of these flights lasted something over three hours each and we were rarely required to do more than one per day. (On one occasion to escort two convoys, I was up for three and a half hours, returned to the aerodrome, took another machine and completed a further length of time of similar duration).

I became convinced that that under existing conditions the War was quite passable and felt that my present occupation would suit me admirably until the cessation of hostilities! All the members of the flight were splendid fellows and we were a happy party.

Our patrol work was carried out on land machines and we wore lifesaving coats to keep us afloat in the event of the machines being forced to come down in the sea through engine trouble. To each machine, before flight, was fitted a 112 pound bomb, which could be dropped either to explode upon impact or act as a depth charge by having a delay action of a few seconds to allow it to sink before exploding.

The routine was as follows. A telephone call from a branch of the Navy would state AZOBSmile11.30 - meaning that an outgoing convoy was to be met at a buoy situated five miles out to sea from Alexandria, and escorted through a certain channel which had previously been swept by minesweepers to ensure that no mines had been laid by an enemy submarine, for a distance of about thirty miles out to sea. Two pilots would then be detailed to take up their machines in time to fly to Alexandria Harbour (some miles away) and so be at the rendezvous at the correct time.

As soon as the machines were in the air, aerals were unwound from the revolving drums, and allowed to trail behind, being kept, down by lead weights. Messages - "Are you receiving my signals" (sent with the usual code prefixes etc.) having been answered by the depot wireless station with the ground letter "K" (meaning "Yes")", the machines left to perform their work.

Flying along the coastline, they duly appeared over the harbour and once again the coded question "Are you receiving my signals?" was wirelessly down to a naval motor boat, whose duty it was to escort in rear of the convoy for as long as the machines were present, to receive the wireless reports. The required answer - "K" - having been displayed on the motor boat deck, the convoy set off to sea whilst the two aeroplanes flew up and down, one on each side, and the pilots kept a keen look out for any sign of enemy submarines. The machines did not carry observers and in each of the passenger seats an additional petrol tank had been installed to permit them to remain in the air for something over three hours at a stretch.

When this convoy had proceeded for some thirty miles seaward, one of the machines signalled to the other that it was time to return to the aerodrome by firing coloured Verrey lights from a pistol. Each pilot then wirelessly "C.I." (which meant "going home") to the naval motor boat.

During these escort duties, pilots subconsciously listened for any sign of irregularity in the running of their engines and periodically consulted their instruments for any sign of a miss in the engine which would be registered by a swing of the pointer. On the other hand, when the engine ran consistently; any sign of trouble would cause the pilot to wireless at once "C.I." and turn for the aerodrome.

These flights, being carried out at the low height of about five hundred feet and for a distance of some thirty miles out to sea, necessitated careful attention to the engine, for the machines were not constructed in order to land on water but were primarily for use on land. Precaution against coming down in the sea had to be exercised.

Prior to my joining the flight, a machine had to land in the sea and the pilot was drowned. Before landing on the aerodrome, after duty, the long aerial had to be rolled back on to its drum by hand. This operation took some little time and, on occasion, a pilot would forget and all spectators standing on the fringe of the aerodrome would duck their heads to avoid the lead weight at the end.

Naturally the aerial was torn away when landing and a new one had to be installed. Caution had to be exercised in letting out the aerial when flying, to prevent the drum from rotating too quickly, otherwise the jolt at the end would tear it off and the pilot would be compelled to land to have a further one fitted.

Many of the flights were timed to take place at 11.30 a.m. and lasted until about 2.30 p.m.; I had a locker fitted to my machine in which I stored sandwiches and drinks in order to appease the inner man on those occasions.

We had our own little aerodrome and were quartered comfortably two to a large tent on its fringe; the machines were housed in a large hangar.

I hired a piano in Alexandria and had it placed in my tent; we enjoyed many sing songs and musical evenings. We also possessed a good gramophone with plenty of records.

I now sat at the Staff table in the mess and enjoyed the use of the private lounge and hard tennis courts; daily we played tennis and life was ideal, except for the fact that pupils training with the various squadrons periodically crashed on our aerodrome or nearly landed on our tents.

We were accepted as honorary members of the Sultan Hussein Club, Mohammid Ali Club and Union Club in Alexandria; the former two were most exclusive and I spent many enjoyable times watching the members, who were most cosmopolitan and comprised Frenchmen, Italians, Greeks, Egyptians, etc, gambling with cards for huge stakes. When in Alexandria, I usually took meals at one or other of these Clubs.

Periodical turns of duty as Flight Orderly Officer had to be undertaken and on these occasions the officer on duty was instructed to sleep in his clothes at night in the Orderly Room (a converted large aeroplane case) to be in readiness to take the air if informed by telephone of the appearance of a Zeppelin. A visit by an enemy airship was deemed possible however, we were never troubled by such visitors.

Some nights we were ordered to fly over the town of Alexandria for the purpose of reporting any over exposure of naked lights, which might act as a guide in the event of hostile aircraft paying a visit.

During a day escort, I experienced a bad attack of sickness and after carrying on valiantly for two hours, was forced to wireless down that I was returning to the aerodrome. I was a considerable number of miles out at sea at the time and conditions in the air were very bumpy and only those who have experienced bad seasickness would appreciate my feelings of complete disinterestedness in life, with an only desire to be relieved of all responsibility at any cost.

I simply flew for home with my head over the side, caring little what the machine did and, in consequence, it performed several minor evolutions on its own when freed from my restraining guidance, with the result that I had to muster sufficient interest and intelligence to correct it. The journey was a nightmare, likewise the glide into the aerodrome, but I managed to make a presentable landing, more by luck than judgement.

I just had sufficient strength to crawl to my tent, throw myself on my bed and lie there whilst the universe returned to a steady condition and the haze removed itself from my eyes.

I must have been out of condition and did not fly again for a couple of days until I had by then fully recovered.

I now became acquainted with several families in Alexandria and so was never at a loose end for somewhere to go in my spare time. Some of these people met us in the afternoons, at the Sporting Club, and we played many games of tennis on the hard courts.

The depot possessed a Concert Party called the "Canopics" and I fulfilled the part of pianist. Several evenings during the week we visited, by motor tender, the various large camps in and around Alexandria and gave shows. On certain occasions we performed at the Alhambra Theatre to packed houses, the audience comprising civilians and military. The latter included members of the Higher Staff.

We possessed two kinds of costume dress, that of the pierrot and the other, a white mess kit with the short cut away coat.

I derived great pleasure from this new hobby, which took up quite a lot of time in the learning of new items, rehearsing, actual performances, etc.

One day, whilst on patrol work, my engine suddenly stopped without any preliminary warning. I hurriedly glanced around for a possible place to alight and as I was not far from land, decided to try and get down without receiving a ducking. I glided towards the coast and just managed to have sufficient height to enable me to do a flat landing in a salt lake adjoining the beach at a place called Mex near Alexandria.

As soon as the machine alighted, it sank in over the wheel axles in salt. I had landed close to a camp of a British West Indian Regiment and the Colonel invited me to dinner whilst a number of his men were detailed to salvage the machine from the salt lake and convey it to the hard ground of the camp. I turned the machine into the wind and roped it down, phoned to my Flight Commander to send a motor tender with the Flight Sergeant to effect the necessary repairs, and adjourned to the mess to be supplied with many drinks by the officers who had been interested in my forced landing.

We spent a most convivial evening together and I borrowed a cardigan and a scarf from the Colonel; during my flight I had only worn a shirt, shorts, stockings, white canvas shoes and; the usual life saving coat, together with a leather flying helmet and goggles.

The magneto trouble was soon remedied and the machine flown back to the aerodrome early next morning.

On several occasions, during escort duty, the machines instrument indicated that the engine showed signs of unreliability and hurried efforts were at once made to get back to the aerodrome before serious trouble developed.

For the next few months I was engaged upon this work and spent my spare time in either playing at the depot cinema, taking part in concert party work, or amusing myself in Alexandria.

Occasionally I took up a pupil for instruction in the air.

Whilst at Aboukir, I met a fellow whose home was in Winchester but he had been in business at Guildford for some years. His name was Alexander and he was an extremely nice fellow who had, before the War, been a member of a Guildford Football Club in which I figured and we had played together on many occasions. He had come to the depot, as a cadet, to train to be a pilot.

We were delighted to meet again and enjoyed several pleasant evenings together; at the end of the day he would wander across to my tent for a chat and a smoke. He was a very steady chap and, in conversation, impressed upon me the fact that he intended to take no more liberties in the air than would be necessitated by his training, for he realised that many accidents had occurred through the carelessness or over-confidence of pilots.

In view of this, it will be realised that I suffered a considerable shock, on returning to the aerodrome at a late hour one evening, when I learnt that a fatal accident had occurred and that my friend had been one of the victims.

It transpired that whilst he had been engaged in the practice of formation flying with other machines, that another pupil (who was flying a single seater scout machine) had manoeuvred around the formation and, in a spirit of mischief, dived upon the tail of that of my friend with the intention of getting as near as possible; he had misjudged the distance and collided in mid air.

The two machines had become interlocked and had crashed into the sea from a height of several thousand feet. The body of the pilot of the scout machine was found but that of my friend was missing for several days before being washed ashore. Notwithstanding his intended carefullness, his death had been caused by the foolishness of another.

My chum Blackmore duly celebrated a birthday, and, after installing a quantity of drinks in the tent, invited several friends to spend the evening. The piano was kept going and songs and choruses sung until dawn.

When at last the party broke up, I came in for an unusual experience which rather annoyed me. Most the time the fellows wined rather freely and one of the members of the Flight had taken exception to a personal remark made to him by the Flight Commander.

This pilot had also partaken of drink rather in excess of that warranted by his capacity and, in consequence, when I got him on to his bed in the tent, the trouble commenced. He commented freely and in strong language his opinion of the Flight Commander and, as a remedy, desired his immediate extinction. Fumbling amongst his kit, he produced a service revolver which he loaded with ammunition, got to his feet and staggered towards the tent entrance.

I called to another officer and together we threw ourselves upon him and, after a struggle, wrestled the revolver away; this manoeuvre caused the unkindly gentleman to consign us to perdition. For some time I had to watch over the offender whilst he, finding his means of opportunity for bringing about the demise of the Flight Commander frustrated, conceived the notion that mankind was definitely plotting against him and decided that his own appearance on earth was superfluous so that his sudden decease was essential.

With this decision firmly fixed in his mind, at intervals he rose from his bed and dashed out of the tent and across the aerodrome, with the intention of throwing himself into the sea to commit suicide.

On, each occasion I tore after him and, after a struggle, managed to get him back to his tent. After a few chases I began to tire of the business and am afraid that I rather debated in mind whether I would let him throw himself into the sea and risk the chance of the ducking to set him right; in any case, I would be able to get to bed for a much desired sleep.

However I kept guard over him until he ultimately went to sleep amid the Flight Commander never knew of his narrow escape.

This same officer was due to fly his machine on escort work in the morning and accompany, the Flight Commander (Who was to fly another machine) but when he awoke, the effects of the night had not worn off and he muttered threats of ramming the Flight Commander's machine so that they both crashed to earth; we managed to keep him out of the way and another pilot deputised for him.

When, at a later date, I informed the offender of the occurrence, he professed entire ignorance of the matter and that he had not the slightest recollection but added that he was not surprised; insanity was in his family and his Mother had been consigned to an asylum.

One evening I returned to the depot at about midnight and, on entering my tent, found several visitors drinking and talking in an atmosphere reeking of tobacco smoke. After the usual greetings I disrobed and got into bed and soon after getting to sleep, I was roughly roused and requested to take office at the piano. I am afraid that I was rather irritable in my replies and settled down to resume my broken sleep; the fun then started.

Up to this time proceedings had been quietly conducted but things, began to warm up, for several of the guests contracted a playful desire to give vent to their general elation by hurling empty bottles through the air. I kept low in bed and hoped for the best while, at intervals, a bottle would sail over my head, pass, through the tent opening and crash to pieces against the side of the orderly room hut.

This little pleasantry proceeded for some while and until the ammunition had become exhausted; during the lull, I ventured to raise my head but quickly lowered it again when I saw a fellow raise a hurrican lamp above his head and, after whirling it aloft, released it and allowed it to sail gracefully over my head, pass through the tent opening, and shatter itself outside.

Peace reigned once more and I continued my sleep whilst those of the rest who possessed motor cycles, amused themselves by racing about the aerodrome.

Early the next morning a curious spectacle presented itself, for the guests of the night before were deposited about the aerodrome in sleep and one slumberer had even lodged himself in sagging top of a square tent.

The days followed each other and brought with them the usual routine work, with periodical relaxation, until we were warned that the whole Flight was to be transferred to Port Said and, in due course, the hangars and tents were struck and, with the rest of the stores, packed and loaded in readiness to be transported by rail.

At an early hour we flew in formation from Aboukir to Port Said, each machine carrying a mechanic as a passenger, and followed the coastline the whole way. We reached our destination in something under two hours and, shutting off our engines, glided down to our new aerodrome. Here I experienced my second crash, fortunately of a minor character. When nearing the ground I noticed that an electric cable, supported by high poles, suddenly appear in my line of descent.

I pulled up the nose of the machine in an effort to rise over it but in so doing, lost flying speed and the machine sank like a lift and pancaked on the aerodrome. The undercarriage was telescoped, a wing, damaged, and the propellor shattered; luckily my passenger, occupying the front seat, suffered no injury. The machine was repaired in a day.

Adjourning to the mess, I met the officers of the Kite Balloon Section, with whom we were from now onwards to co-operate. We were attached to No.209 Squadron, which comprised seaplanes and captive balloons. The aerodrome, which was situated on the opposite side of the canal to Port Said, was small and lay by the side of the sea; not far distant the seaplanes were stationed. Pending the arrival of our tents from Aboukir, we stayed for a few days at The Marina Palace Hotel which overlooked the canal.

The first day of arrival, after a general look round, I decided to visit a large Armenian Refugee Camp situated about two miles away and set off, with another officer, for this purpose. When about half way to our destination, we chanced to look back towards the aerodrome and were curious to witness two of our machines taking to the air but, concluded that the pilots were simply carrying out testing work.

Returning to the aerodrome in the evening, we were informed that an outgoing convoy had been attacked by an enemy submarine; three of the ships had been sunk whilst the remainder had turned and scurried back to port and safety.

This attack had been carried out insight of land and the ships had been sunk in shallow water; their funnels and masts could be seen above water. The machines had been ordered into the air to search for the submarine but no sign of the enemy was evidenced.

As our bombs had not arrived from the previous base, the only action that could have been taken would have been to wireless back to Navy House information to assist the naval ships.

In due course our stores and tents arrived and we settled-down to resume our escort work; this was carried out in conjunction with the seaplanes and balloons. Two seaplanes escorted a convoy for an hour or two and until relieved by two of the land machines; a captive balloon, anchored to a trawler, also accompanied the convoys and Japanese destroyer were at times in attendance.

To visit Part Said, we had to charter a native boatman to row us across the canal. Situated close to the aerodrome was a large building belonging to the Suez Canal Authorities, which had been converted into a hospital and was staffed by Australian nurses; dances were sometimes held there.

We were very disappointed in Port Said which was dirty and uninteresting after Alexandria. It certainly boasted two or three fine hotels which included the Eastern Exchange, Casino Palace, Marina Palace, etc. and one or other of these supplied us with relaxation

in the form of a game of billiards or a dinner and dance.

As time progressed, I became acquainted with several of the civilian residents and spent some pleasant musical evenings in convivial company.

A certain amount of excitement prevailed when huge cases arrived which contained new and up-to-date machines to be assembled and flown by the Flight. These were D.H.9 machines (de Haviland).

I applied for a weeks leave which I decided to spend in Alexandria. Luckily the previous evening to the day my leave was to commence. A Bristol fighter had been flown over from Aboukir and as it was to return the next morning, I packed my kit and accompanied the pilot. He was glad to have the company of a passenger. The flight took little over an hour and was far more pleasant travelling than would have been the case had I undertaken the several hours railway journey.

Sitting muffled in my British warm and flying at a height of about five thousand feet, I felt so cold that my teeth chattered and I began to wish that I had garbed myself in leather flying wings.

We appeared over the aerodrome at Aboukir and, without warning, the pilot commenced a few stunts, finally putting the machine into a spinning nosedive. I experienced considerable difficulty in retaining my seat in the machine, for I was not strapped in by the use of a safety belt. I felt myself sliding up the side of the fuselage and wondered when I would be hurled out.

I grasped the sides with both hands and held on tightly. The thought passed through my mind that if a bad loop followed, I would stand an excellent chance of falling out. As soon as the pilot had straightened the machine after the spin, I slapped him on the back and yelled to him not to loop, at the same time pointing to my waist to indicate that I was not wearing the safety belt. He nodded in answer and we glided down and landed.

I proceeded by train to Alexandria and, after booking my room at the Majestic Hotel, settled down to enjoy a good leave by visiting my civilian friends and attending various, entertainments. Two amusing incidents occurred during the week.

The usual iniquitous system of tipping existed and a departing guest from a hotel always found a long line of expectant servants to see him off.

I overheard a discussion on this subject taking place by some officers staying at the hotel and a Major laid a wager that he would leave the hotel the following morning without once tipping; he won his bet in the following manner. After his kit had been packed, he rang for the "boots" to convey it to a waiting taxi, at the same time requesting that the servants be sent to his room. They entered, full of expectation, and the Major left the room on some pretext and, closing the door, locked them in.

Taking the key with him, he proceeded to the waiting taxi and, after seating himself, instructed the "boots", to fetch a case which he stated he had left on his dressing table, and handed him the key of the room wherein the servants were locked. As soon as the "boots" had departed upon his errand, the Major drove away.

Returning to my room one evening, I was surprised to see a number of empty bottles and used glasses lying around; I rang for a servant and had them removed.

This happened on two occasions and then I called for my bill on leaving, I was astounded to notice the rather large amount charged for drinks and, as I had partaken of no meals at the hotel, other than breakfast, I concluded that a mistake had arisen. After an altercation with the head waiter, I called for the Manager and demanded an explanation.

I was promptly informed that my brother, a Captain, had called on two occasions, with friends, and had told the Manager that I was quite, aware of the situation and that drinks were to be provided in my room and charged to my account. I had difficulty in impressing upon the

Manager the fact that I had no brother and duly left after flatly declining to pay the extra amount.

At a later date, I ran into a friend named Hunter (with whom I had shared a hut at Aboukir at an earlier date) and he, with a smile, asked how I had enjoyed my stay at the Majestic Hotel. I challenged him regarding the drinks and he confessed, with glee, that he had entered the hotel with some other fellows, looked down the list of residents in the book, and posed as my brother; the result had been apparently entirely satisfactory in his opinion.

At the termination of my leave, I returned to Port Said and resumed duty.

I was detailed, with my friend Blackmore, to take charge of a firing party and had to supervise a military funeral and the burial of two deceased patients from the Australian Hospital.

On one occasion, a party of Australian soldiers desired to be rowed across the canal but the native boatman, usually suspicious of Australians, at first refused to bring his boat to the side. He later decided to do so but by this time the soldiers were angry at the hesitation showed and immediately they were able to set their hands upon the boatman, they threw him into the canal, rowed the boat across and made their victim swim behind.

I was amused, one day, by the expression on the face of a native driver when he returned to his conveyance and found that, during his absence, some Australians had taken out the horse and reharnessed it in the reversed position, with its tail between the front of the shafts.

Once or twice, whilst engaged upon convoy work, the engine of my machine showed signs of giving out but each time I managed to get back to the aerodrome safely. On one occasion, when in the air and it was raining hard, I saw below me and to the left, a storm in progress. As I gained height I passed through the clouds into glorious sunshine and could see vivid lightning playing in the clouds below.

To the left, a huge water spout appeared to extent from the sea to the clouds.

Various rumours had reached our ears concerning the cessation of hostilities and at five minutes to eleven in the morning of the 11th November 1918, no confirmation had come through and I was sitting in my machine, with bomb attached and the engine ticking over, in readiness to take to the air on convoy work at 11 a.m. Just as I was about to leave the ground, a messenger hurried across the aerodrome and informed me that instructions had been received by telephone from the Squadron Commander that the Armistice was to commence at 11 a.m. and that all flying was cancelled.

At that moment all the ships in the port proclaimed the glad tidings by blowing their hooters and everybody dashed around cheering and shaking hands.

My machine was wheeled back to its hangar and, with two or three other officers, I took the Fight tender and drove it up and down the road whilst the other officers fired coloured Verey lights from pistols. We then chartered a boat and were rowed across the canal to Port Said, where we mingled with the excited inhabitants. In the evening troops paraded the streets singing popular songs, laughing and joking.

From now onwards, very few duties were performed but we occasionally flew to neighbouring aerodromes and visited friends for a drink and chat.

The names of those who had served in the East for more than twelve months had to be submitted for transfer to home establishment and we patiently awaited orders to embark.

I was ordered to sit at a court of enquiry with two other officers, to investigate the crashing of a seaplane into a breakwater. Each morning a motor launch picked me up and conveyed me to headquarters where the enquiry took place. This went on for several days and we had to examine the statements of witnesses and finally submit our findings.

The days passed and on Christmas Eve I celebrated by visiting some French friends where I spent a jolly time and returned to camp at about 3 a.m. On Christmas morning, the officers of the Balloon Section and my Flight challenged an equal number of noncommissioned officers and men to a fancy dress football match. I made myself up to resemble an Arab and my friend Blackmore was dressed as an Arab girl.

At a previous date, a golf course had been laid out around the aerodrome and during the afternoon we played several rounds. At 6 p.m. came the event of the day - the Christmas dinner; a splendid spread with plenty of champagne was provided and many toasts were drunk, the most popular one being "to those at home".

Adjourning to the ante-room, we had a sing-song and a mock band, consisting of various improvised instruments and conducted by an individual with a burnt cork moustache and wearing a military cap caused much amusement.

Boxing day morning I went to Port Said to do some shopping and, in the afternoon, sports for the men were held on the aerodrome. Many civilian friends were invited and given tea. In the evening a concert was held in the mens large hut, where a well lit stage had been erected and painted scenery and a drop curtain provided. As usual, I was called upon to officiate at the piano. So terminated the festive occasion.

I still awaited orders to entrain for Alexandria to embark for home and on one occasion actually took my seat in the train but was recalled to camp by a messenger who informed me that a mistake had been made.

January 1919

On New Years Eve I was invited to the house of some friends and assisted in singing out the Old Year, returning to camp at about 4 a.m.

I did very little flying and only went up occasionally to keep in my hand. The formation of a Concert Party was discussed and I was approached to carry the idea into operation.

Now and then our civilian friends from Port Said visited us and took tea in our tent.

On these occasions a general tidying up took place, so much so that for some time afterwards we could not find our things and it seemed much handier to have our possessions scattered about the tent.

In due course I received orders to report to the Squadron office and embarked at Port Said on s.s. "Kaiser-I-Hind" (P & O line) for home. The ship carried a large number of nurses and, in consequence, all cabin accommodation was taken and the officers had to sleep on their camp beds between decks. We reached Marseilles and were placed in an encampment of huts for a week.

When we landed in France the ground was covered in snow and, in the mornings, ice had to be broken in order to get water for washing purposes. I nearly shivered myself to pieces after spending three years in the East.

During the stay in this town, I amused myself by exploring and attending theatre shows.

We continued our journey across France by hospital train and had comfortable bunks in which to sleep but the weather was very cold. We reached Cherbourg and embarked on a cross-channel steamer, arriving at Southampton on the 1st February.

Here I telegraphed to my parents and proceeded by fast train to London and from there, by another to Guildford. I thoroughly enjoyed the journey and feasted my eyes upon old familiar sights, anticipating with enjoyment my return home after the years spent abroad. As I walked up the road in my home town my feelings became more indescribable and it would be impossible to portray my condition of mind at the reunion with my parents.

We sat until late talking and, after a wonderful nights rest, I rose with the realisation that the war was over and that soon I would be my own master. I breakfasted and proceeded to London, where I reported at The Air Ministry, and was allowed two weeks leave.

This period passed very quickly in visiting my many friends and enjoying myself and I wrote for an extension which was, however, refused.

I again reported at The Air Ministry and was informed that I had been posted to a squadron in England. I again applied for an extension of leave, which was once more refused, and in consequence of this, I stated my desire to become demobilised which; after some discussion, was granted.

I proceeded to another room and received my papers of discharge and was permitted to wear my uniform for one more month and to receive pay during that period.

So my experiences in the war ended. I enlisted on the 12th September 1914 and finally discarded my uniform on the 9th March 1919.

