

FROM YPRES TO LOOS

WITH THE NORTHUMBERLAND HUSSARS



DIARY AND LETTERS
OF THE LATE
FRANK LEONARD CUNNINGHAM
1914-1915

HEROES
of Chiswick

PREFACE

My son, Frank Leonard, was born at 1, Walker Street, Edinburgh, on May 29th, 1887, and was therefore in his twenty-ninth year when he died. When he was only a few months old we left Edinburgh and went to Plymouth, where we lived for eight or nine years. From 1897 to 1902 we lived at Penzance, and during the latter part of that time my son was at Plymouth College. Although never much interested in cricket or football, he was athletic and fond of outdoor life. At Penzance he became a very good swimmer, and when he went to school at Plymouth distinguished himself by winning every race open to juniors in the aquatic sports. In 1902 we left Cornwall and came to live in London, and in October, 1904, my son entered University College, London, as a student in the Engineering Department. In 1907 he obtained the Diploma of the College in Engineering, with good certificates, and in January, 1908, commenced his apprenticeship to Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. at the Elswick Works, Newcastle-on-Tyne. In January, 1909, he joined the Northumberland Hussars, and the following extracts from his diary of that year record his first experiences as a member of the Regiment.

January 26th—Tuesday.

I went up to the Drill Hall this evening and joined the Yeomanry (Northumberland Hussars). My chief objection to it was the four years' service under the new scheme instead of three, but I have made up my mind to risk going abroad during this time.

March 5th—Friday.

This evening I went to Newburn to shoot against Newburn Steel Works R.C. We took tram from the Toll Bar, Scotswood Road, to Scotswood, and then walked. It was raining most of the time, but we managed to beat them by 175 to 172. Each team has eight men, of whom only six are counted, and each man fires eight shots, of which the first is not counted. I only made 28 out of 35.

March 16th—Tuesday.

This evening I fired another second team match "at home," and again we won by three points. It was against the Highbridge R.C. This time I made 32, which was 63 on the decimal counting. It turned out to be the highest score of the evening, and so I won a silver spoon, which is awarded to the best scorer by the Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs at all matches in this league.

March 17th—Wednesday.

I went up the Drill Hall to-night and had my first ride. It was the last of the evening, and consequently a short one, for which I was not sorry. I did not come off, but it was all I could do to stick on.

May 2nd—Sunday.

There was a church parade of the N.H.Y. to-day. It was the first time I had been out in uniform since I was at school, so I felt a bit self-conscious, especially in such a conspicuous get-up. We fell in at 10 a.m. and marched down to the Cathedral. After the service we marched up to the War Memorial, lined up in front of it, and while the band played a "Memorial Hymn" the Adjutant laid a wreath beneath the list of names of the Northumberland Hussars who fell in the South African War.

While at University College my son had been engaged with others, under the direction of Professor Cormack, in an experimental investigation on the Endurance of Metals, and he was part author of a paper on this subject which was published in the Proceedings of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, to which he was admitted as a Graduate Member. After his apprenticeship he obtained employment in different branches of engineering in various important firms—for example, Messrs. Thornycroft at Southampton, and Vickers, Ltd., at Westminster, in whose drawing office he spent a year. He executed a commission for Mr. Alfred Mosely, C.M.G., to go to St. Helena

and prepare plans for an engineering plant in the island. When the war broke out he was in the service of the Vacuum Oil Company in the Glasgow district, his duties being to inspect the machinery at the mines and works in the neighbourhood which the company were under contract to supply with oil. He had been selected by this company for a more important and more highly paid post in Johannesburg, South Africa, and had every reason to look forward to a useful and successful career in his profession. He was our only child, and was unmarried.

J. T. CUNNINGHAM.

DIARY AND LETTERS OF

F. L. CUNNINGHAM

PRIVATE No. 319, "A" SQUADRON,
NORTHUMBERLAND HUSSARS YEOMANRY

7th DIVISION

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

August 5th, 1914—Wednesday.

Received mobilisation orders 2.0 p.m. in Glasgow, and got to Newcastle 11.0 p.m. Found "A" Squadron at Gosforth Park, where arrived midnight and went on guard at once. Next night been in bed half an hour when turned out to fetch horses from Forth Bank. Truck of six from Cryston Bank; rode back. Kept one I rode, bay mare, called her Bessie.

"A" Squadron, North'd Hussars Yeo.,
Gosforth Park, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

MY DEAR MATER,

August 6th, 1914.

Fancy them putting the wrong address on the mobilisation orders like that. The orders were for August 5th, 10.0 a.m., and I got them in Glasgow at 2.30 p.m. that day. However, I got to Newcastle at 11.0 p.m. last night and found the headquarters of "A" Squadron had been shifted to Gosforth racecourse, where I joined them about midnight. This is an ideal place for our purpose, plenty of good accommodation for men and horses. We are sleeping in beds, and it is much like camp, only better. There is no definite news yet as to our future movements, but we are likely to be here a week, and it is said we may stay here all the time. We have just got to "wait and see." We are engaged in getting horses, equipment and so on. I will write more at a future time.

I hope you are not anxious about anything.

The firm gave us notice on Wednesday morning that all men joining their units would have their jobs kept open for them on their return, so that is all right.

"A" Squadron N.H.Y.,
Gosforth Park, Newcastle.

MY DEAR MATER,

August 11th, 1914.

I don't think you quite understand my position yet. This regiment was put under the Imperial Service scheme two years ago, and that stands for always, but it is certain that they will not send us to the front except under such extreme necessity that even you would not wish me to stay. I cannot and shall not do any more volunteering, and the absence of any necessity to do so is rather a comfort. If the original plan of putting me in the Navy had come off I should certainly be in the thick of it, and if I were free, duty would point to my putting in for one of the commissions in the regulars, for which they are asking for men. Our (N.H.Y.) only real chance of fighting is in the event of a raid on the East Coast, but there are rumours of our being sent to India or Egypt to take the place of a crack regiment from those parts. I hardly believe there is any truth in this idea, but if it did happen it would be an end to any possibility of our having any fighting. So I don't think you have anything to worry about.

This place is fine; I doubt if any other troops are as comfortable. We have all our horses in the loose boxes intended for the racehorses, and we have spring-mattress beds, as cosy as can be, but we get no leave.

When I got my orders they had all my addresses for the last four years on them, and I thought they had been chasing round, as they were late. I got them at 2.0 p.m. on Wednesday and arrived in Newcastle at 11.0 p.m. On Saturday, just after we were in bed, the "boot and saddle" sounded. We had to turn out in a hurry, dress and saddle up in the dark, with full equipment, and an emergency ration was handed out. We were told that three large steamers had been sighted off Hartlepool at dusk, and they had refused to answer the coastguards' signal, and we must stand by for further messages. In about a quarter of an hour we were told to unsaddle and go to bed, but to be ready at a moment's notice. It turned out afterwards, however, that it was only a test alarm for all the troops in the neighbourhood.

We have very decent horses. My own is very quiet and generally suitable. Some are rather young and few have been drilled before, but the few days' drill we have had has already put them into the way of it. We are well up to strength now. All the men have turned up, myself from Glasgow, some from London, Southampton, and one from Devonport, and nearly all the men who have left during the last few years are coming back to the Colours, while we could recruit the regiment again in a day or two if necessary.

August 8th—Saturday night.

"Boot and saddle" sounded just after "Lights out," and had to turn out ready for expected start. Test alarm.

After fortnight turned into tents near racecourse. After about a month regiment accepted for active service. On Sunday evening, five weeks and a bit after mobilisation, we entrained for Lyndhurst, Hants, and found ourselves attached to 7th Division. "A" Squadron broken up, and each troop attached to different unit. No. 1 Troop, 20th Infantry Brigade; No. 2 Troop, 21st Infantry Brigade; No. 3 Troop, Divisional Headquarters; No. 4 Troop (ourselves), 22nd Infantry Brigade.

October 4th—Sunday.

Have had swords dished out about three or four days, and have been trying to master elements of sword drill. This afternoon were out drilling and had massed for regimental drill when cheering started in front. Word passed that marching orders had been received. Returned to camp forthwith and started packing. Things quiet in evening; managed to get bath and supper at Stag Hotel for last time. Returned at 9.0 p.m., found wagons being loaded and orders to start at 4.0 a.m., *réveille* 3.0 a.m.

October 5th.

Fortunate in having fine moonlight to turn out in, but very cold. Rode to Southampton Docks and embarked; sailed about 3.0 p.m. Fine weather and fairly comfortable, but very much crowded down below.

October 6th.

Landed at Zeebrugge this morning and waited on quay nearly all day while transport unloaded. About 5.0 p.m. moved off through Blankenberghe to Bruges. Most enthusiastic reception by populace. Entered Bruges in dark, people thronging streets and giving cigars, tobacco, coffee, beer, etc., and asking for badges as souvenirs. Picketed in field and billeted in school.

October 7th—Wednesday.

Left regiment and went off with 22nd Brigade to Oostcamp, where we were billeted in private houses. Our half troop was in house of two ladies, Whilems, and we were very comfortable.

October 8th.

Brigade retired to-day, No. 4 acting as rear guard. Went through Bruges and Oudenburg to place near Ostend, where we billeted in pub. I was on guard.

October 9th.

Went to Ostend and waited in neighbourhood of station to entrain. Arrived about 8.0 a.m., and waited 17 hours by roadside.

October 10th.

Entrained at 3.0 a.m. for Ghent, where we arrived about 8.0 a.m. Good sleep in train. After quick breakfast in station yard, Brigade took up headquarters a few miles to south, at Mierlebeke Station, near line of trenches to east of station. Patrolled neighbourhood. At night linked horses on roadside near Headquarters. Intermittent artillery fire all night and heavy musketry twice; had to stand to horses good time. Peasants leaving homes. Slept (?) hour or two at roadside, d—d cold. In morning went to orchard near trenches, now all quiet, and had good day's rest. In evening Brigade retired; 9.0 p.m. marched back through Ghent.

October 12th.

Marched all night and reached Hansbeke 8.0 a.m. After few hours' rest in orchard left for Thielt, where we arrived after dark. Billeted in convent and had a comfortable night.

October 13th.

Troops brought down a German aeroplane with rifle fire this morning. Trekged to Roulers, where we billeted horses in school playground and ourselves in baker's shop opposite.

October 14th.

Trekged to Ypres to-day; horses rather tired, and had to walk nearly all the way. Rained a good deal. Billeted near open space in west of town.

October 15th.

Now in fighting area. Patrolled neighbourhood of Dickebusch, but saw nothing. In evening billeted in east end of town.

October 16th.

Being on guard to-night, third relief, I was up at 11.30 last night, réveille at 2.0 a.m. We turned out at 4.0 a.m. and marched in great silence till daylight. Headquarters shifted to Zonnebeke. No. 4 patrolled round Bedlure, but saw no Germans. Troops entrenching all round.

October 17th—Saturday.

Horses kept saddled all night, but at 8.0 a.m. off-saddled and had day's rest. Received first batch letters from home, but only one for me, which was addressed Lyndhurst, October 5th. Billeted again in convent school at Zonnebeke. First time we have used same billets two nights running.

October 18th—Sunday.

Patrol this morning, through Moorslede. Chased after another patrol by sound of firing and found riderless horse which Life

Guards claimed. Afterwards formed post at Slypskapelle. People very kind and gave us plenty of food and smokes. Returned to billet at Becclare.

October 19th—Monday.

Bessie lame to-day and I went with transport. Brisk action going on to-day in front, along road from Moorslede to Dadi-zeele; R.W.F. and Warwicks lost a good many. Retired to Zonnebeke and old billet for night. Roads crowded with refugees from battle area. No. 4 had been well in sight of battle, but had not suffered.

October 20th—Tuesday.

Patrolled to Passchendaele this morning and returned to Zonnebeke. Action along road east of Zonnebeke, heavy artillery fire. Stray shells and sometimes rifle bullets round our lines. Took horses to farm on left to avoid fire. Returned in evening, but found field still exposed to rifle fire, so linked in school yard and had same billet.

October 21st—Wednesday.

Battle still continues. Took horses to farm about a mile or two in rear, where we found plenty of hay, oats, potatoes and butter. No army rations available. Returned to school at Zonnebeke after dark. Heavy firing all round. We hear that Germans are making progress, in spite of heavy losses.

October 22nd—Thursday.

Turned out of Zonnebeke at midnight to farm well in rear. At daylight reported to Headquarters, now at Esternest. In morning had to round up remaining civilians from farms. Afterwards joined regiment and proceeded to racecourse in woods south of Zonnebeke. Dismounted and took part in action with infantry in trenches. Plenty of shell, machine-gun and rifle fire. First line retired in evening. Mr. Laing and Bowie injured, also Mr. Johnson. Returned to Headquarters after dark; saw many farms in flames.

October 23rd—Friday.

Turned out at about 5.0 this morning. Took up position near Zonnebeke to cover retreat of infantry through that place. Could see great holes in church spire. Came back to Headquarters soon after for a quiet day. A good many stray shells came over our farm, and Campbell got shrapnel bullet in arm. Two Headquarters' grooms also hit pretty badly. Battle continues without much change apparent. In evening had to form outposts to look out for snipers all night.

Postcard.

October 23rd, 1914.

Received your letter of 14th inst. to-day. Many thanks. We are having a pretty good time in general, but had Mr. Laing and two men wounded yesterday. No fatalities in No. 4. I am well and fit. Was very interested in all your news; please write again. Please tell Gov. I hope he enjoyed his trip and should have liked to see him before leaving. Excuse blunt style, but am in a hurry. The grub here is better than at Lyndhurst. Please tell your Antwerp people that we are much impressed by the kind treatment we are receiving from all Belgians.

[The "Antwerp people" mentioned in the above were a Belgian gentleman and his wife who had fled to England as refugees just before the taking of Antwerp and were staying in our house at my wife's invitation when I returned from Australia. The message is an example of my son's thoughtful kindness. I was in Australia when the war began, having left England on July 3rd as a member of the party of the British Association which went to hold the annual meeting there at the invitation of the Commonwealth and State Governments. I did not arrive in England on my return till October 17th, so that I never saw my son again.—J. T. C.]

October 24th—Saturday.

Coming in from posts at dawn we had to search neighbouring woods and then a welcome brekker. French troops had retaken

Zonnebeke during night, and we returned to farm west of this place and remained in cover. Heavy artillery fire all day. After dark moved to new position of 22nd Brigade Headquarters at a château place at Gheluvelt.

October 25th—Sunday.

This morning we tied our horses to trees in park and off-saddled. Had a quiet, restful day. We got a packet of letters, and in afternoon army tobacco and cigarettes were dished out. Our room in house now taken up by infantry and we had to sleep by our horses in the open. Poured with rain. At about 10.0 p.m. a tot of rum was served round.

October 26th—Monday.

We moved at dawn to a place (Gheluvelt) a little further east—viz., 6-7 km. from Ypres on the Ypres-Menin road—at a pub called *In T'Hantangi*, having first been shelled out of a place still further east. . . . Returned in evening to our château in wood. Again slept in open, but weather finer.

October 27th—Tuesday.

Spent quiet day in woods of château and at dusk moved to new headquarters at Klein Zillebeke. Slept in hedge among horses.

October 28th—Wednesday.

For first time we were allowed to sleep till dawn instead of usual 4.30 or earlier. Put horses in wood and had quiet day. Found barn to sleep in this night.

October 29th—Thursday.

Formed reconnoitring patrols towards Zandwoorde this morning and spent afternoon behind farms on road near by. Shell fire pretty hot at times. At dusk went to new Headquarters in farm quite close to Zandwoorde, which latter place was practically in ruins.

October 30th—Friday.

This farm only just behind trenches and soon got pretty hot. Got transport away at dawn and took horses behind farm buildings, but still had continual shrapnel, lyddite and rifle fire. One of General's horses killed. Then told to take horses farther away. Retired by threes across country. Eventually about a dozen of us met at old Headquarters at Klein Zillebeke, but Sergeant Irwin and a few others did not turn up. In evening met Captain Barker, who took us up to Headquarters, now in another farm also just behind trenches. Slept in baccy-drying shed, but I was on guard. Corporal H. Brown now in charge.

October 31st—Saturday.

At dawn took horses behind plantation a little in rear, but as shells became pretty frequent we moved to farm still further back until we were joined by Brown, Smith, and Batey, who had remained with staff horses in Headquarters. Could see latter place being shelled incessantly; farm where General Lawford was, was last building left standing. Afterwards saw Staff retire to woods behind, where shells were also falling thick, and afterwards heard that Captain Barker was killed here. Then our farm was shelled, and we had to gallop for it with "Jack Johnsons" following us up. Whole countryside misty with smoke. Retired through Zillebeke, which place was in an awful mess. A battery of 18-pounders passed us and five minutes later last gun came along with one driver and two horses, all wounded, the horses propping each other up and the leaders' traces trailing behind, blood dripping from man's face. Heard that Germans had broken through and we were in general retreat. Started to find our transport, but heard that 1st and 2nd Divisions had swung across and caught Germans in trap. Retreat not continued, so decided to await return of our wagons. Billeted ourselves on the Menin Road, Ypres, where we were before, Harry Brown displaying great abilities as leader.

November 1st—Sunday.

Took advantage of circumstances to rest ourselves and horses as much as possible. Found transport about midday and rejoined Sergeant Irwin and rest in afternoon in open space near prison in Ypres, where we spent first night in the town. This Sunday was specially dedicated to the dead by the people of Ypres. . . .

November 2nd—Monday.

Soon after midnight a German shell landed right in middle of our square, killing two horses and one man. We saddled up and were ready to move, but after about six or eight shells in the town the firing ceased and we went to sleep again. Spent morning about Ypres and in evening moved off to field near Dickebusch and kipped ourselves in open with Headquarter wagons.

November 3rd—Tuesday.

Remained at Dickebusch, awaiting further orders from General. Communications with Headquarters maintained through Lieutenant Dawson, A.V.C., of 22nd Brigade. Made ourselves billet in cart-shed and got most of our meals in *estaminet* next to field, especially in bad weather. Hear that Ypres is frequently shelled and that three of ours, Staff-Sergeant Stephenson and Troopers Thwaites and Metcalf, were killed by J.J.'s in their billets at night. Kept in mind of battle by French batteries in neighbourhood and troops passing. Thus spent several days until

November 8th—Sunday.

Were "in bed," when at about 10.0 p.m. we had to turn out and saddle up, as Brigade was moving. Trekped to Locre and arrived about midnight.

November 9th—Monday.

Slept in parlour of private house, the horses being linked in field. Weather very dull. Moved off at about 9.0 a.m. for Bailleul in France. There we picketed in field near 22nd Headquarters and billeted on straw in empty house.

November 10th.

Received orders to-day to rejoin regiment temporarily at Meteren, on other side of Bailleul. Had to put down line for horses and generally humbug about, like camp. Got new officer, Mr. Studd. Billeted in barn that had had a shrapnel burst just over roof. Draughty, also wet, but afterwards got better accommodation in other end of building. This is rest camp. Sound of artillery quite faint. We do squadron drill in mornings and foot drill in afternoons, with fatigues at any time. Réveille at 6.30 now.

November 14th—Saturday.

Marching orders to-day. Turned out with a good deal of commotion at 7.15 a.m. Bad weather. Stopped at farm in Rue de Bruges, near Bac St. Maur, to water and rest horses. Found ourselves settled here for the time. Slept with No. 1 Troop in farm other side of railway. Stayed until

November 16th—Monday.

Moved to new quarters at Petit Mortier, where the regiment is to stay for winter quarters. Slept at first in barn, not bad sleep, but dark quarters. After first few days got ourselves billeted in cottages. H. B.'s Section made ourselves very nice kip in loft of a cottage kept by a cobbler. During this time we had a severe frost and suffered a good deal from cold. The roads were too slippery for the horses and we had to exercise in ploughed fields.

November 17th—Tuesday.

Heard to-day that Lord Roberts had died of pleurisy resulting from chill caught on Mt. Hemmel, near Dickebusch.

November 19th—Thursday.

No. 4 left at 7.0 a.m. this morning for patrol duty near Fleurbaix. Cold weather, snowing most of afternoon. We had dinner at No. 2 Troop's billet. Finished day's work at 7.0 p.m., looking very picturesque with snow-covered equipment.

November 26th—Thursday.

Left our comfortable billets to-day for pastures new. Headquarters of regiment not moving, but No. 4 and certain other troops detailed for patrol work night and day. Half troop, including H. B.'s section with Sergeant Irwin, left at farm of one Baron about half-way between Saily and Laventie (Rue de Saures) and other half-troop under Sergeant Thompson at a farm in the Rue de Bruges near our old billet. Patrols arranged so that the day patrol does the double area, so that there is one patrol from each half-troop in daytime and two each night.

November 28th, 1914.

MY DEAR MATER,

I received a parcel from you to-day, containing matches, cigarettes, handkerchiefs and a towel, also a letter. Very many thanks. Also please thank the Gov. for his letter, which I received a few days ago; I will address my next letter to him.

We are now patrolling an area in the rear of the lines and have a very decent billet in a farm, sort of winter quarters. We are having a fairly decent time; in fact, we get the post so regularly now that I can hardly carry my correspondence in my head.

The Censor does not permit recent military details, and I have hitherto kept away from the subject in case the letters were destroyed. The letters that have appeared in the papers we have often read in papers sent to our chaps, but in some cases the writers seem to have had a better idea of the picturesque than the truth. I understand that we can mention things that are too ancient history to matter without their being censored, so I will try to describe our early adventures.

We went through Bruges after landing, and our reception by the people both here and in other towns was absolutely regal. The streets were thronged like the Lord Mayor's Show Day with all sorts and conditions, shouting "*Vivent les Anglais!*" etc., and shoving presents and drinks into our hands. The former varied; sometimes some old fellow would shove a handful of cigars into one's cap and sometimes a poor woman would force one to take half a dozen matches out of a box (of which

probably only one or two could be persuaded to strike!). The latter ranged from beer and coffee to soda water. In fact, the whole time we were in Belgium we could hardly get people to take money for anything.

From Bruges we marched to Ostend and then entrained for the neighbourhood of Purday's old haunts. Here our men took over some trenches and our troop had to patrol round all day. At night we linked our horses at the roadside near Headquarters and got some tea. Soon afterwards there was heavy rifle fire from the trenches and we had to stand by the horses for some hours, although they did not make as much fuss as we expected. We lay down for a couple of hours by the roadside, but it was too cold to sleep much, and five hours in a crowded train was all the sleep we had had the previous night. In the morning all was quiet and we went to an orchard and tied our horses to separate trees, unsaddled and rested them all day, while we spent the time washing our feet and titivating ourselves. At 5.0 p.m. we had to saddle up again, and we heard that the Brigade was moving and we were to be left behind in case it was necessary to fight a rearguard action. However, at about 8.0 p.m. we moved off, too, and marched all night. It was very funny to see men fall asleep in their saddles and the horses, no longer checked, walk on through the troop until someone woke up the rider and made him get back to his place. At about 6.0 a.m. we got to a village and took our horses to an orchard as before. We made ourselves a good brekker and intended to go to sleep, but we had not been there three hours before we had to saddle up and move off again. We marched until some hours after sunset, when we got to Thielt pretty tired and were billeted in a convent school. At this time, whether we moved by day or night, there was always a German aeroplane overhead first thing the next morning, and at Thielt one came over flying rather low. The infantry opened fire and brought him down in a few minutes, one occupant being killed and the other wounded and captured. The noise of rifle fire from a whole company or so is not unlike the noise of riveters in a big boiler shop. We have seen several aeroplanes brought down by rifle fire, but never by artillery, though we have heard

of it being done. From Thielt we marched to Roulers, billeted the night in a baker's shop, with our horses in a school playground opposite. Next day (réveille at 4.30 a.m.) we marched to—well, our centre for operations, where we took our place with the Allies' armies on the line of resistance.

We heard that the retirement from — had been a great move, that we had been followed up by a force of Germans many times more numerous than ourselves, and that on the first day we covered forty-five miles in eighteen hours marching, which is considered exceptionally good for a whole division with transport and everything.

We now advanced a little in the direction we came from, and our chaps had to do the ordinary cavalry patrol work. We succeeded in locating the enemy on certain occasions and sometimes exchanged shots, but were very lucky, as two horses in another troop were all we lost at this time. However, I must tell you more another time. This has taken some days to write, it is now December 2nd.

I got your letter of 27 ult. to-night. Many thanks and for the programmes. I was particularly interested in the Gov.'s joining the H.D.C. Fancy him at his age! But no doubt he will do as well as the younger ones if he can avoid giving the S.M.'s a piece of his mind.

I hope you are putting some more candles in the next parcel. One can buy none here and hardly even paraffin. I wonder if your generosity would run to thirty mince pies for Christmas? That would enable me to dish out one each to the lads.

I am your affectionate son,
FRANK.

December 1st—Tuesday.

Turned out in hurry in drill order at mid-day to-day. Had to guard road ends for passage of the King, M. le Président, the Prince of Wales, General Joffre, etc.

December 4th—Friday.

Bessie had been let down in coming over from Petit Mortier

and cut her knee all to pieces. To-day she had to be shot, and we buried her in a field behind the farm.

December 6th—Sunday.

Company of G.G.'s billeted in same farm now, and there was some trouble about the officers wanting our room. We had to take small room.

N.H.Y. Quarters,
7th Division.

MY DEAR AUNT JESSIE,

December 7th, 1914.

You will have read General French's Despatch, which appeared in the papers of November 30th, and in doing so you have a history of our own doings, as we were in those operations. By far the worst time was that day that French mentions, October 31st, when we watched from our positions the headquarters being shelled to pieces until the orderlies came and told us to take the horses to better cover. The farm where the General and his Staff were was the last building in the neighbourhood left standing, and one of the orderlies told us how the General was writing despatches in the front room while all the houses round were blazing, when a shell came through the roof and burst in the room above, blowing out the windows and bringing most of the ceiling down on top of him; after which he had his table moved to the back room and went on writing. Before we retired we saw the three remaining members of the Staff come down from the farm to a wood, and we heard afterwards that the Brigade Captain was killed by shrapnel immediately after, and the Brigade Major was shot by a sniper next day, so the General was the sole survivor, though if ever a man took risks he did.

December 9th—Wednesday.

Several men away to-day searching for snipers in farms, etc.

On the Saturday was in batch sent to Estaires to load wagon with clinkers, and we had quite a picnic. Bought a wrist watch for fifteen francs.

December 13th—Sunday.

Fetched back to troop by Sergeant Irwin to-day and got hearty welcome. During absence billet had been shifted to little cottage across the road for six of us—namely H. Brown, Stan. Marchal, Jos. Potts, Arthur Elliot, Ernest Pigg, and myself, the idea being that there would be no further trouble with officers wanting our rooms. The other six—Sergeant Irwin, MacDonald, T. D. Smith, Barney Jaques, Anty Hall, and Norman Baty—have taken up their abode in cottage just over the railway.

N.H.Y. Quarters.

December 14th, 1914.

MY DEAR PATER,

Very many thanks for the last parcel and the Mater's letter, which arrived a few days ago. By the way, please don't send me any more tea, as this is the one commodity which we are never short of. Aunt Jessie sent me a parcel the other day, including a tin of cocoa, which makes a pleasant change, though we are usually able to vary our drink by having some local coffee from the natives when we require it. I am quite well off for socks at present, but I should like another pair of pants, long ones, as the army issue is a bit delayed. (Has since arrived, so no hurry.) The candles and matches are very useful, as often we cannot get paraffin for our lamp. I should also be glad of some smoking mixture now and again, but in general we are rather lucky as regards smokes, though what you send is always welcome. I enjoyed the "Cosmo specials" very much. Anyway, many thanks for the things you send, including the papers. *Punch*, in particular, is much appreciated.

Some of our officers and N.C.O.'s are getting a few days' leave, but there is no possibility of the privates getting any at present.

I forget whether I told you that poor Bessie had to be shot about a week ago. She would never have been any more good, and we buried her deeply at the back of our farm. The mount I have now is a big, loose-limbed animal, more a gun-horse than trooper, but strong and quite useful. He has a G. on his forehead, so I call him George.

I will try to continue the account of our adventures from the point where I left off in my last letter to the Mater. All our doings were in connection with the operations mentioned in Sir J. French's dispatch, which appeared in the newspapers on November 30th, so I think they are pretty safe from the Censor now.

The "masterly retirement" over, we moved out to capture our allotted positions in the line of the Allied armies. This was the only typical Division cavalry work we did, when we rode ahead of the Brigade to report on the state of the country. It was distinctly risky work, but we were lucky in never being ambushed or anything of that sort, though one troop had to bolt for it on a certain occasion, and had two horses shot.

One morning we were scouting round and heard rifle fire. We charged off at full gallop over ploughed fields, hedges, and ditches in the direction of it, but found nothing except a horse alone, evidently a German officer's charger. We were just thinking that it would make a good remount for one of us when some Life Guards came up, and explained that as they had emptied the saddle they claimed the horse. We never found the rider. Another time Harry Brown's section, including myself, were left as an outpost, in a village where some Uhlans had spent the previous night. The rest of the troop pushed on and the natives told them that some Germans were in a certain house. Our chaps dismounted, crept up, and opened fire, the Germans replying. Soon after a naval motor car came up with a one-pounder quick-firer and put a shell right through the cottage, whereupon the Germans bolted. The car followed up, but there were some more Germans in a mill down the road, and the car came back with the two men in the back of it dead. Our fellows had a look through the cottage and found two German bicycles with equipment, which they brought back. We saw no Germans from our post in the village, but the priest came out after morning service and gave us a bottle of jolly good wine, and some people came from the houses and gave us hot rabbit pie for dinner. The Belgians were ever good sorts, but that little village is probably razed to the ground by now.

When the big battle became general there was really very

little cavalry work, as the armies were in touch practically all the time. We used to stay as near Headquarters as possible, and certain men rode as orderlies to the General, and sometimes men would be sent as orderlies to other Staff officers, and occasionally we would go out on patrol. We had, of course, long periods merely waiting, and we had to shift in the daytime to keep the horses under cover, and at night we had to move with Headquarters. One time we had the saddles off the horses for three hours in eight days, and often we couldn't take our own equipment off for days. Sometimes when we had unsaddled and got settled, we would have to turn out at two or three in the morning and saddle up for dear life in the dark and muck, often with wet saddlery, and move off to pastures new. It was this uncertainty which constituted the chief drawback at this time. But we have had, more or less, the same trouble all along.

Although we spent a good deal of time doing nothing it was difficult to write much, when one was just messing about beside one's horse in the middle of a field or some such place expecting to move at any minute. Sometimes we put in the time making ourselves an extra good stew (if we could obtain the materials), but more than once we had to tip it into the ditch when it was just ready, and put the dixies on the cart in a hurry.

As we did not have occasion to advance over a fresh battlefield we did not see the worst horrors of war, but, of course, dead horses and burnt-out homesteads were the ordinary features of the landscape in the battle area, and there was usually more than one blazing farmhouse to illuminate our way "home" at night. We slept in all sorts of places, sometimes in the open, but we generally managed to find a barn or some sort of shelter if it was raining hard.

There seems to have been some controversy as to whether we or the London Scottish were the first in action, but as you know we have it. It was on October 22nd we had our first real bout. "No. 4" rejoined the regiment first thing in the morning, and we all went to a place that seemed to be a race-course in the middle of a wood. We waited some time in reserve, and then we had to advance dismounted through the

wood, across some ploughed fields and through some more woods. There was a pretty brisk fire, rifle and artillery, and we got down into a little drainage ditch at the far edge of the wood (we had no tools for trenching), and we had to hold on until they could bring up regular infantry and dig trenches behind us. There were two machine-guns hidden in some scrub about three hundred yards in front, and we afterwards heard there were two thousand German cyclists, too. Every few minutes we got two shrapnels overhead (more or less), two on our right, and then two together in the woods behind, while the machine-guns swept up and down our ditch in the intervals. By the way, the Germans have a highly systematised method of attack, which consists chiefly in bringing numerous machine-guns as close as possible under cover of artillery fire. Fortunately, on this occasion, they never quite found us, though the bullets were chipping off bits of bark just over us, and the shells were felling whole trees in the woods behind. They also plugged in a good few "coal-boxes," but also without much effect. We blazed away at the place where the machine-guns seemed to be, but we never saw a German all day. After about five hours a company of infantry came alongside of us and soon afterwards we retired. Mr. Laing was hit in the knee just before retiring and trooper Bowie got a rifle bullet through his arm at about the same time. The infantry also retired to another position a few minutes after us.

The woods were in an awful mess from the constant shelling, and some of the "coal-boxes" had dug holes in the fields nearly big enough to bury a horse in. However, we got back to our horses at last and left the infantry to carry on through the night.

The next day we were in a farm near Headquarters again, when we got a few shrapnel over and Trooper Pete Campbell got a piece of one through his arm while fetching water for his horse. As you know, this is all our casualties up to date, and we have been jolly lucky. Mr. Laing is getting on all right, and I understand the others are too, but we don't hear much from them. Water has been one of our troubles, especially at about the time of which I am writing; we would sometimes walk a

mile or more from one farm to another to get a bucket for one's horse. When one did get it it was not very clean even in appearance. All the farms in this part of the world have complicated manure-preserving schemes, and they don't worry much about separating them from the water supply. The authorities don't encourage beer-drinking; anyway, there was none in the devastated area, and it takes a bit to do with just tea morning and night, but I don't think I have drunk water half a dozen times since I landed here. At present we can make tea at midday and sometimes we can get a glass of beer too, so we are all right. This is December 16th. I am finishing this letter, for I am afraid it won't pass the Censor at all if I write any more. Please thank Aunt Jessie for her last parcel, received yesterday. With best love to the Mater, yourself, and my other relatives.—I am,

Your affectionate son,
FRANK L. CUNNINGHAM.

December 16th—Wednesday.

Sergeant Irwin gone to hospital with ulcer on eyeball.

December 17th—Thursday.

Sergeant Irwin been sent to base—Merville; so H. Brown now in charge of our half troop.

December 18th—Friday.

Orders brought by ration cart at about 4.30 to saddle up, pack transport, and report to officers' billet in full marching order by 5.15. Great scramble, but arrived before other half troop. Were taken to Fleurbaix to stand in reserve while big attack was made. Picketed in field, one man to four horses, while the others slept in barn with the officers and officers' horses. Attack not successful; great loss of life (800), but no counter-attack.

December 20th—Sunday.

Scots Guards arrived in our billet to-day from trenches. One man who with ten others was actually in German trenches for

nine hours, had an Iron Cross and other things which he had taken off a German officer.

December 24th—Thursday.

Had a jollification to-night to celebrate occasion. Sergeant Mills of G.G.'s gun section joined us.

December 25th—Friday.

Had a very good Christmas dinner to-day with the aid of local purchases, parcels from home, and army rations. Menu: Turtle soup, roast loin of pork, with potatoes, apple sauce and onions, Christmas pudding, with rum sauce, biscuits, tea, etc. We have so many parcels just now that there is considerable risk of indigestion in trying to eat the things quickly enough.

December 27th—Sunday.

Have heard that Major Backhouse has left the Regiment. Much regretted. (Returned month later.) The S.G.'s are back again from the trenches, and tell amusing tales of unofficial armistice on Christmas Day and two following days. Officers and men of both sides coming out of trenches in daytime and conversing and joking half way. Both say they will not be the first to fire.

December 28th—Monday.

Young Mac.'s twenty-first birthday to-day.

December 29th—Tuesday.

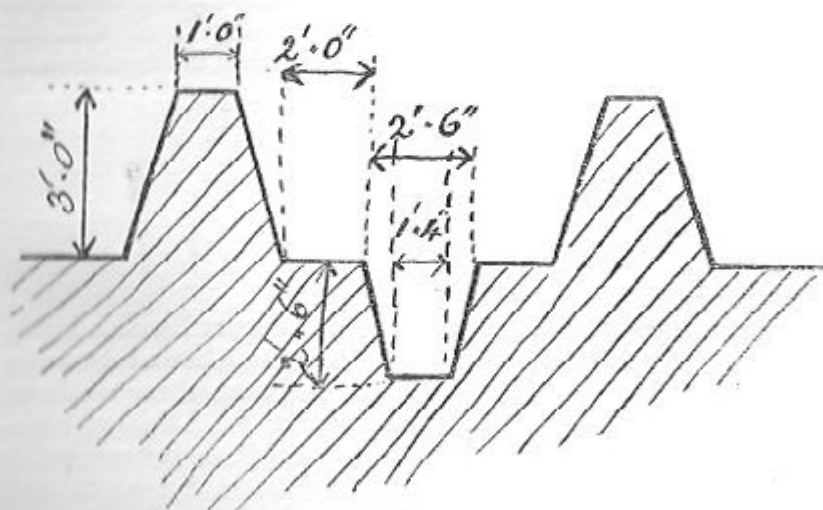
Bowie returned to the troop to-day and is up at Smith's billet. He has been at Rouen. Was kicked in stomach after recovering from wound, and since finally cured has been three weeks at cavalry dépôt. This day I went down to 7th Division bath-house, and had good bath. Infantry go in fifties, but we, being detached troop, were allowed in cloak-room for coats and haircutting upstairs. Place is a laundry, bath in tubs, drawing own hot water in pails from steam-heated vats. Fresh water for each man, and generally very good for active service.

December 31st—Thursday.

Were going to celebrate New Year this evening with bottle of wine I bought in Estaires yesterday, but in afternoon were turned out for trench digging. Had to walk about six miles and dig communication trench. Weather was decent, and digging was not bad fun, but last quarter of mile walk over the wet and trampled ploughed fields was real punishment and tired us out for the walk home. S. M. and I had new boots on and got blistered feet. Mud was over boot tops, sometimes knee deep. Got finished before 9.0 p.m., and reached our billets about 10.30. Found Dave of the transport cart playing cards with Pigg and Bowie, and such as had the energy went on with the "celebrating."

January 1st, 1915—Friday.

More trenching this evening, but this time we rode up to about a mile from the place. Had to heighten parapet to the following dimensions:



Heard that armistice ends at midnight, and consequently trench to be finished to-night.

January 6th—Wednesday.

Three interesting things to-day. First, Mr. Laing has returned and visited us. He will take over the troop from Mr. Studd to-morrow. Secondly, two shells passed almost over our billet and burst 500 or 600 yards behind. Thirdly, while I was up at Railway Cottage getting the pocket of my British Warm sewn up by Gabrielle, a train passed. Consisted of engine and guard's van, lighted; Frenchmen on board, and caused some excitement, as nobody expected it, nor were the gates closed.

January 7th—Thursday.

Baty has been complaining of bad lungs lately; is afraid of return of pleurisy. Doctor saw him to-day, and has ordered him away to-morrow. When on early morning patrol this morning—1.30–7.30 a.m.—found that road from Rouge Debout across the field batteries had been struck by shells, there being two big holes; rather dangerous for riding in dark.

January 8th and 9th.

Others all left for trench digging again to-night, at 10.0 p.m., but those on patrol, including myself, did not go. They only returned at 5.0 a.m.

N.H.Y. Quarters.

MY DEAR MATER,

January 9th, 1915.

In taking my reference to "our General" as being General Rawlinson you are not correct. You may remember, perhaps, from Lyndhurst that "A" Squadron was divided up, and the troops attached to various infantry brigades, and it is our Brigadier-General that I refer to, though I don't expect I should be allowed to do so by name.

[Troop 4 was attached, as mentioned at the commencement of the Diary, to the 22nd Infantry Brigade, which was under the command of Brigadier-General S. T. B. Lawford, and consisted of the 2nd Queen's, 2nd Royal Warwicks, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers, and 1st South Staffs Regiment.—J. T. C.]

I am not quite sure how much of our early adventures I have already told you, but I don't think I said anything about our last round in the Ypres scrap. We had been for some time at the usual game of sleeping with Headquarters at night, and doing odd jobs, and dodging shells in between whiles during the day, and (presumably as the situation grew more desperate) the Headquarters were always getting closer to the trenches.

On October 29th we had been doing some reconnoitring patrols, and after dark went up through Zandwoorde, which was almost in the firing line, and had been shelled to ruins, to a farm only a few hundred yards from the trenches. This was about the dirtiest place we have struck yet, which is saying something. The horses were in a byre up to the knees in muck, and we made ourselves straw shakedown in the stables, leaving the best places for the wounded that were always coming in. As the only road out lay through Zandwoorde, we had to have brekker early, and get the transport away before dawn. We got a pretty brisk fire as soon as it was daylight, and had to take the horses behind the buildings, but, even so, one of the General's horses was shot, and one of ours stunned for about ten minutes by a piece of shrapnel. One of the "Black Marias" was near enough to muck up all our equipment with dirt. At last the General, cool as ever, came strolling out and wondered whether the horses could be taken anywhere safer. There were many only too willing to try; so we were ordered to get away in threes across country, and we didn't waste much time on the way. The appointed rendezvous was under a worse fire than ever, so we went further on, and only about a dozen succeeded in finding each other again, with Harry Brown the only N.C.O. Towards evening we were in some difficulty as to how to put ourselves under orders again, but we met the Staff Captain and he took us by a long route to the new Headquarters in a farm near our last night's kip, and even closer to the firing line. We slept in a baccy-drying shelter, and the General sent his car to fetch rations through the night. Before daylight we were ordered to take the horses behind a wood to the rear, but after an hour or two the German artillery began searching this wood, so we moved back to a farm, whence we

could see the Headquarters being shelled incessantly. The building where the General was, was the last one in the neighbourhood left standing, while all the others were blazing. It was here, as I think I told Aunt Jessie, that a shell brought down the ceiling on top of the General while he was writing. The men out here are mostly fatalists, and if there is anything in the doctrine I should think our General was born to be drowned or something like that.

At last we saw the three remaining members of the Staff come down into the wood, and afterwards heard that the aforementioned Captain was killed by shrapnel just as he got there. By this time the whole country side was misty with smoke, and soon after they began shelling our farm, so, as we had no particular orders, we scooted. We couldn't find any more cover, until after we passed the Division Headquarters, who were in dug-outs at the roadside, but at last we stopped at a farm, where we thought we were almost out of the action altogether, only to be cleared out in an hour's time by rifle fire.

As we despaired of finding our Headquarters again, we thought we had better report to our own transport, so as to be there if any orders came through, so we moved off in that direction. On enquiry, we were told that the Germans had broken through, and that there was a general retreat, and that our transport was already five miles the other side of Ypres. When we came to the road we saw a battery of field artillery retiring, and about five minutes afterwards the last gun came by just with two horses and one driver, the horses wounded in the legs, leaning over, and propping each other up with the leaders' traces trailing on the ground behind, while the man was bleeding from a gash in the face. I reckon he deserved something for bringing that gun back, when he could just as easily have left it, and nobody would have known. We next passed through Zillebeke, and that place was in an awful mess. It wasn't totally destroyed like Zandvoorde, but, being still occupied made it seem worse. There were shell holes in the roads which almost stopped traffic, ruined houses still in use as military stores, a wrecked motor car in the gutter, officers and orderlies going about their biz., but the blood-soaked

remains of a late artillery driver lay across the doorway of a sometime pub. untouched. Later we heard that the retreat had been all bluff, that the Divisions on either side of us had swung across and caught the Germans in a trap. Anyway the retirement was stopped, and as it was now dark we decided to await the return of our transport in Ypres. We put our horses in a field where they could graze, and had a good sleep ourselves on the floor of a pub. Next morning, as we had neither rations nor orders, we made the best of a bad job, and went foraging for ourselves. After about a fortnight in the devastated battle area, to go into real shops and buy practically whatever one wanted was just like fairyland, and we shall all remember the breakfast of pork chops and hot rolls that we had that morning for many a long day. Later we rejoined the stragglers and the transport on the other side of Ypres, and heard that the Brigade Major had been shot by a sniper right through the heart at short range. This left the General sole survivor of his Staff.

He was a fine chap, the Brigade Major, like the General, tall and thin and cool—the picture of a soldier. It was he who as a nipper sat for that picture of Millais' *Bubbles*, which the Pears' Soap people bought.

We stayed a few days in the Prison Square at Ypres, and one night a shell came over and burst right in the middle of the square, which was packed with transport; it killed one man and two horses. It came near enough to our billet to fetch the window out. We turned out and saddled up, but after about half a dozen shells the bombardment stopped, so we went to sleep again. This was the beginning of the bombardment of Ypres, which was continued a long time after we left; from all accounts one would not buy many pork chops there now.

January 13th—Wednesday.

Scots Guards now in our billet, and they had a concert in the big barn, to which we went; talent very mixed, but some very good.

January 15th—Friday.

S.G.'s had a boxing competition to-night, and there was some very good boxing. The two Murrays and Sweeny entered for our lot, and Tom Murray won the light-weights.

January 17th—Sunday.

Turned out in full-marching order at 10.0 a.m. to-day to rejoin regiment. "A" Squadron is being reformed, and Captain Burrell will take over command. Billeted in farm near our first billet, but not nearly so comfortable as that we have just left. Whole troop in loft without windows, only doors, very cold. Horses under cover, but not good accommodation.

January 18th—Monday.

Cold morning; out about two hours exercising horses in snow and sleet. T. D. Smith, who left us about two days ago to take up his commission, has got leave, and came round to-night to say good-bye, as he goes to-morrow.

January 19th—Tuesday.

Went off this morning for twenty-four hours' guard on the standing patrol at Sailly. Much more comfortable than ordinary duty except for not getting night's sleep. Were all turned out at 11.30 p.m. to take three prisoners to the office: R.A.M.C. men returning from Estaires slightly drunk.

January 20th—Wednesday.

Returned from guard this morning. Another trip to the trenches this evening, digging; weather damp, but not much rain.

January 21st—Thursday.

Wet day again. Horses out last night not exercised, but cleaning saddlery, etc. Went into Steinwerk this evening; left my watch to be repaired, and went to pictures. Latter, got up by some rich officer, were in a school room; not bad for change.

January 22nd—Friday.

Fine day, with slight frost. Exercising horses over roads flooded in many places. Once went about a mile and half with inch to foot of water on road. Potts of No. 2 and a farrier went away on leave to-day. Hear that twelve men are to go from the regiment per week, but choice is to be by chance and not seniority, worse luck.

January 23rd—Saturday.

Meeting to-day on subject of leave. After prolonged discussion arranged that order will be by seniority (Regimental numbers), corporals to take chance with troopers, but there may be exceptions. Went to Steinwerk again this evening; also to pictures.

MY DEAR MATER,

Chez Nous,
January 23rd, 1915.

. . . . Please excuse me for not writing oftener, but we have exchanged billets and have less facilities for clerical work now. By the way, the regulations are becoming stricter. We are not allowed to put even our regimental address on our letters.

Our old patrol job was not bad. There were ten men on the post to keep two men always on the roads, and we worked in six-hour turns. This sometimes involved turning out at 1.30 a.m., but there was the great advantage that we were billeted in smaller parties, our ten (one N.C.O.) being in two little peasants' cottages. Also we were constantly in touch with the Regulars, and were well up in all the news.

We have now returned to the regimental Headquarters, about four miles away, and the squadron has been reformed. Our troop is billeted in the loft of a farm, with no fire and no windows, except the doors, so we have to keep busy or shiver; but we get on well enough, though we sometimes get "fed up" on wet days. Fortunately we have all our horses under cover, which is a great advantage.

We have had a good deal of rain lately, but to-day has been fine, and somewhat frosty. The country where we are now is

flatter than the Fens. There are no floods of any extent, but along the river bank the fields are submerged and the rest is waterlogged. The roads have the metalled parts rather narrow, with an equal breadth of path (now churned to mud of unknown depth by the wagon and artillery wheels) and then a spacious ditch on each side so that when a road is flooded it makes a considerable breadth of water. To-day we had a long and pleasant ride, exercising horses, and the roads were flooded in many places; once we went for a mile or perhaps two, with from an inch to a foot of water over the crown of the road. Looking back it gave one the profane impression that the regiment was marching on the middle of a river. Also there was a certain amount of excitement in keeping to the track, knowing there was deep water on either side. We have a good deal of amusement now. For example, to-day there was a squadron football match, which our squadron won, and the officers had a couple of the right sort of dogs out looking for hares, which are very abundant.

[Two passages here obliterated by Censor.]

We were rather excited to hear about the two raids, and are duly sympathetic with the people who were killed; otherwise we cannot resist a certain feeling of fiendish glee that the people in England should have something to help them to realise that there is a war going on. Of course, out here neither event would be anything more than the ordinary incidents of a quiet day. It is ages since I saw a church which was anything more than a stone skeleton full of debris. There is a little town of about 8,000 inhabitants that we used to ride through every few days on patrol, and which was evidently a pretty, residential place. Now the church is the usual wreck (the Germans tried for weeks to bring the tower down, but without success), and all one side of the High Street is a mass of builders' material. The part left standing, however, shows best the effects of shell fire. There are holes in the courtyard of the church that one could bury a wagon in, and in some places one sees the whole front of a house blown out. Among the houses that "escaped" was a draper's shop where we had some acquaintance with the lady, as she used to come

to sleep at the house next our billet at one time. Once or twice we went and had coffee with her in the parlour, with shrapnel holes in the ceiling, the glass gone from the pictures; and she showed us bales and bales of stock ruined with bullet and shell holes, while all the portable articles had been looted by the Germans when they passed through. The husband had taken the horses and what he could away; the daughter slept in the house near us and went to her mother in the daytime, while the old lady stayed all the time to try and keep the home going, although even then it was not unusual to have a shell within 500 yards or so of the house.

The people here are very much hardened to the war; many are still living in houses almost within rifle shot of trenches, while others are working farms with artillery in their back gardens. When we were at our old billet there was a battery of field artillery in a farm about a quarter of a mile away, and one time they began firing furiously at 11.0 p.m., pumping rapid. That must have woke those farmers up a bit; it did us anyway. We heard that they had news of 2,000 German reinforcements coming up and got right among them.

January 24th—Sunday.

Church parade this morning near Headquarters.

January 25th—Monday.

Exercising horses this morning, and wrestling on horseback this afternoon for four men per troop, of which I was one. Pocock leaves at 5.30 to-night for his leave, dated January 26th to February 1st.

January 26th—Tuesday.

Marching order at 1.0 a.m. this morning, shifting billets. Moved regimentally to a farm of one Madame Delaval, Vieren, Rue de Quinnelet, Quartier de l'Épinette, about two miles or so from Estaires. Reason of moving, to get out of 6th Division area. New billet better than last, though of same kind. This farm is all brick with tiled roof and comparatively modern.

Horses still under cover in stables formerly occupied by artillery.

January 28th—Thursday.

Hard frost to-day, and all feel cold. Several fellows are getting billets in cottages again, so place will be plenty large enough for remainder.

January 29th—Friday.

Pay is now fortnightly, but to-night I was late and got none. Had a walk into Estaires. Harry Brown left on leave to-night. He has been made Sergeant, which will take effect on his return.

January 30th—Saturday.

Very frosty morning; roads too slippery for riding. Parade in full marching order, leading horses, and had inspection for deficiencies. New draft of fifty men arrived from England; four came to No. 4.

January 31st—Sunday.

On guard (Sailly Bridge) to-day, under Corporal Carrick.

February 1st—Monday.

Coming off guard this morning missed parade. Route march this afternoon about an hour. Graham left to-night on leave.

February 2nd—Tuesday.

Pocock returned from leave this morning, arrived last night, but could not find billet, so stayed with Northants Yeomanry.

February 5th—Friday.

Harry Brown came back to-night. Jos. Potts took his horse to meet him at Steinwerke station.

MY DEAR WINNIE,

Chez Nous,

February 5th, 1915.

. . . . We heard about Hicks' Music-hall Party coming out to give entertainments at the front, but also that they never got further than Boulogne. I wonder what did happen to them. One hears an abundance of rumours out here, but they are seldom correct.

As before mentioned, we have been having a quiet time lately, the infantry and artillery doing all the scrapping between them; in fact, there is quite a decent cannonade going on in the distance as I write, but we are well out of it. We are now in a much more modern farm than the average in this district—all brick with a tiled roof, but it is on the usual principle: a big midden with the house, barns, and byres forming a quadrangle round it. I'm afraid all these farms would give our sanitary inspectors a bad shock. The people are very decent; the eldest son is with the army; the second, aged seventeen, runs the farm; and the old lady and the eldest daughter do all the work and look after the six other nippers and four refugee kids. The daughter is a bit of a contrast to the London girls; she is as strong as a horse, and from her first milking at 5.0 a.m. she is working hard to the last milking at 9.0 p.m., and then says she is "*jamais fatiguée*."

They have a queer way of making butter here; the churn is driven by a wheel like a water-wheel, but worked by a dog running inside it. All the dogs here have to work hard for their living, and then they seldom get any meat.

We have quite a good messroom in this billet, and the loft we sleep in is quite weather-proof, but we often spend the evening in the farm kitchen. I am writing this in the cook-house, and the boys are wanting the room to make cocoa, so I must quit. *Bon soir, petite, sois sage.*

February 6th—Saturday.

Réveille 5.30 to-day and parade 7.15; going up to sling dirt again. Worked on redoubt a long way behind trenches,

filling up some trenches dug in wrong place, and sand-bagging the parapets. Lunch of bully and biscuit; also beer at farm near by. Got back about 4.0 p.m.

February 7th—Sunday.

Réveille 5.30 and dirt-slinging again to-day on same old redoubt.

February 8th—Monday.

Réveille 5.30, etc. To-day we went with horses and all to a place in front of where we used to leave the horses at night on our earlier excursions, and to left—in fact, about a mile in front of Fleurbaix. Building redoubts and breastworks of cut sods and earth. There was a battery about half a mile behind to the right, which exchanged a good many shots with the Germans, the shells passing quite close. Some of the farms near had been destroyed by engineers taking woodwork for the trenches, while others equally near, say 2,000 yards, to the trenches were still occupied by the whole family—men, women, and children. Asked one girl if she was not afraid to remain so close to the trenches, and she said she had no fear while the soldiers were there. She had more confidence than I should have. Got back to billet between 4.0 and 5.0 p.m. George Graham came back to-night.

February 9th—Tuesday.

The half of the troop who did not go digging yesterday went up this morning. We others went exercising; long ride, over fifteen miles, trotting nearly all the way. When we returned two more men per troop were wanted for digging and Dierick and I had to go. Party under charge of Mr. Laing, went to a place different from others, to right, thickening parapet of another earthwork. Raining nearly all the time. Got back about 6.0 or 7.0 p.m. Both going and coming we had to go by Estaires, as the Saily Bridge is being altered into a draw-bridge to allow of resumption of traffic on the Lys.

February 10th—Wednesday.

Dierick and I got a day off digging at last, but a party from the troop went up.

February 11th—Thursday.

Up digging again to-day, at same place as yesterday. Had lunch of fried potatoes and coffee at farm near field. No shells, but one or two aeroplane scares.

February 12th—Friday.

Party, not including self, for trenches this morning, but order was cancelled at last minute. All troop to turn out for exercise at 9.0 a.m., but this was also cancelled in favour of cleaning tack. Orders for trenches at 3.45—I was not among the party—which returned at about 2.0 a.m. next day.

February 13th—Saturday.

Went up digging with half troop this evening; same time as yesterday. Were on left. Put horses in field on far side of Fleurbaix, and then had long walk. Were working a few yards behind our trenches, but all was quiet.

Chez Nous,

February 13th, 1915.

MY DEAR MATER,

Very many thanks for the nice letters from you and the Gov., and also for the last two parcels. . . .

I have been trying to write to you for several days, but we have been kept very busy lately; nothing dangerous, but just work. I am very sorry if I have not acknowledged all the nice things I have received with such completeness; but it is surprising, if I do not get the chance to write immediately, how difficult it is to remember just which of my possessions are the latest arrivals. Several fellows say they have not received parcels that have been sent, but so far as I know all mine have come through safely. . . .

The leave was stopped the other day, or rather reduced to two men from the regiment at a time, which is practically the same thing. It has now been restored to the twelve men basis, but reduced to five days. I should not put much hope in my turn coming, but, in any case, it will take some weeks yet, although I am easily in the list.

We have been very busy lately digging trenches and making fortifications of all sorts. We, of course, do the actual navvying, but many of the points in design, etc., are very interesting. One of the most extraordinary things to me is to find farms almost within rifle shot of the trenches still inhabited and worked by the whole family—men, women and children—who seem no more disturbed by an artillery duel going on right over their heads than a cockney is by a motor 'bus. I asked one girl if she were not afraid to stay so near the firing line, with night attacks, and all sorts of things, frequently happening, but she said, "*Je n'ai pas peur avec tous les soldats Anglais ici.*" Personally I am glad our billet is on the other side of the Lys. . . .

From all accounts the weather is worse at home than here; in fact, we have not had a bad winter, taking it all round. To-day it is blowing a gale, which is quite a rare occurrence in these parts.

I was very much interested in the Gov.'s account of his exploits. I have forgotten the little semaphore I ever knew, as we never use it. There are no regimental signallers now, the matter being entirely in the hands of the Signal Section R.E. Suppose there was an invasion, however, would the H.D.C. be recognised as soldiers?

February 14th—Sunday.

Similar party (not me) trenching to-night. Very wet weather and were fired on coming up road.

February 15th—Monday.

On guard to-day, standing patrol with Corporal Pocock. Party went to trenches, but returned at once owing to wet. On account of last night's guard did not parade till 10.5, and first relief started 11.30.

February 16th—Tuesday.

Got back from guard at about 1.0 to-day. Was warned for trenches to-night, but order for trenching cancelled altogether. Packing up to move to-morrow.

February 17th and following.

Troop moved at 9.30 to-day to another area about two miles away. Having no horse, I was left behind to load transport. Arrived about 1.30, and found myself included in party going to man trenches for four days. Got necessary kit and paraded 2.45. It appears that the Germans are expected to attack line on left near Fleurbaix, and our regiment is to take over a section of trenches on extreme right of 7th Division from Grenadier Guards, in order that they may be used to stiffen the left. We are to supply 100 men at a time and should do four days in and eight out. We went through Sailly and straight up past Rouge Debout, and then a few yards right from next big pub. Arrived immediately after dark and took over from G.G.'s. Bottom of trenches boarded, but many drain holes, in which most of us stepped more than once, right over tops of gum boots with which we were provided. German trenches at 450 yards range. Germans who were in when we came were a quiet lot, only fired when we did, but on second night they were relieved by a more pugnacious set. These frequently fired, and in day-time our look-outs were continuously sniped by men apparently hiding in ground between trenches. We had to stand to arms every evening from dusk till ration parties returned. Rations drawn from road a quarter of a mile behind trenches; very heavy ground, usually two trips. Farm here still inhabited, and used to get coffee at it. Difficult to get enough drinking water to trenches; often thirsty. Through night eight sentries per section, supposed to be relieved every hour, but so many fatigues, sometimes five hours. Listening and wandering patrols (1½ hours each relief) sent out all night to guard against surprise. Often in front of parapet, thickening and repairing same. In daytime one sentry per section relieved hourly. To avoid exposing heads too often we had periscopes about two feet long fitted on parapet. Also busy doing such improvements to trench as could be done without exposure. On second day a man called White, of Morpeth troop, was shot by a bullet glancing off his rifle barrel while he was cleaning it. Killed instantly. During the days we were in we made new dug-outs for sleeping in.

February 21st—Sunday.

Were relieved at about 7.0 p.m. to-night by more N.H.Y.'s, and retired to billets in wagons. Arrived about 11.0 p.m. Now billeted in cottages, two or four in each. Had some trouble to get fixed up.

February 22nd—Monday.

Exercising horses this morning, and had nice bath at headquarters in afternoon. I have Murray's and Primble's horses to look after, so the four days' rest is likely to be pretty busy.

February 23rd—Tuesday.

Had a sleep in this morning on strength of seeing doctor for cough. He gave me some pills for it. Cleaning kit this afternoon. Have now got billet with Frater, quite comfy, bed in fact. Bois d'Estaires.

February 25th—Thursday.

Third party for trenches away to-night with Sergeant Brown. One man (Syd. Bates) of our party had to go too, owing to insufficient men. I was lucky not to be included, as I should have been had Fenwick not gone, and F. has been parading sick for weeks.

MY DEAR PATER,

February 25th, 1915.

I have received the box of mince pies and scones from the mater, and Winnie's letter; also your letter and newspapers (three packets), for all of which many thanks.

All leave is stopped after March 1st, and I hope to get this letter posted by the last man who goes. My turn was second on the list, but what with corporals and "special cases" we have never got the list started.

I was, as always, very interested in all the news, and I hope you are finding the new appointment fully up to expectations.

I certainly do not get any scope for my engineering knowledge out here; as a trooper one gets no scope for any knowledge except how to groom, and I have been thinking whether I

should not do better and be more useful elsewhere. From what one hears it seems hardly necessary for an officer in the new army, on the "duration of the war" biz. to have any private means to speak of, and I was wondering if you would make enquiries as to whether I could get a commission in the R.E.'s.

I hardly think I should do well in the Mechanical Transport Section, A.S.C.; there are so many who know more about motors than I do, but we have knocked up against the ordinary Engineer officers, and most of the work is quite within my capabilities, although my knowledge of surveying is a bit on the elementary side. Still the actual experience I have had out here with trenches, wiring, etc., would give me an advantage over any "Kitchener" man.

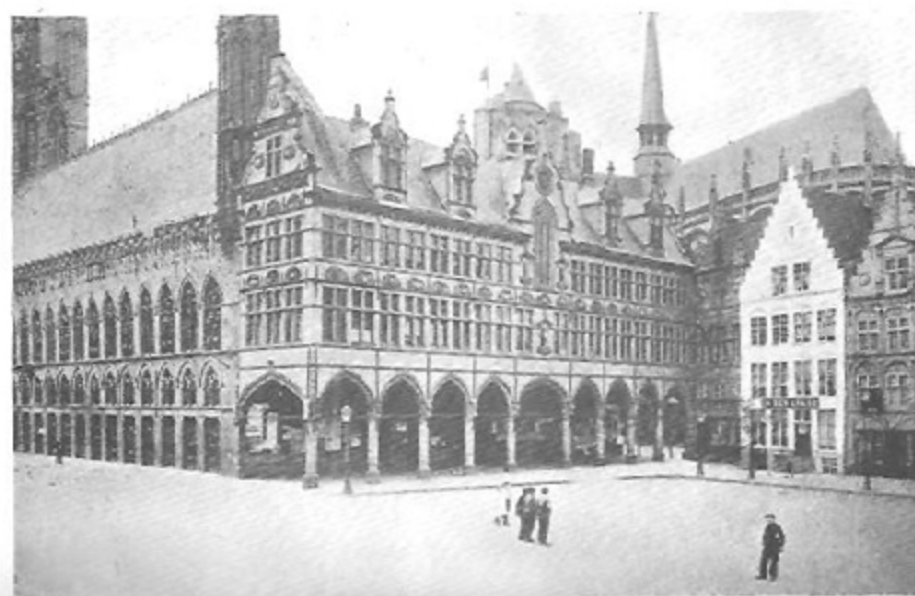
There is a section of Specialised Engineers in connexion with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers; Worthington, the Secretary, would tell you all about this, and perhaps you would enquire about this also; but I would not chuck the Yeomanry except for a commission.

You must not think I am particularly "fed up" or anything of that sort, but I have had these ideas running in my head some time, and I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind sparing a little time to enquire for me, as one cannot get any real idea of the situation in England out here.

Also these ideas have *not* been accentuated by the fact that we are now looking after a certain length of trenches. We usually do four days in and eight out, owing to our having the horses to look after as well. The job has the disadvantage of being wet and thirsty at the same time, and one does not get much sleep during the four days in (none at night), but it is by no means unbearable, and it is not expected to last very long. We have a section where things are quiet, in order that more men may be placed elsewhere where they think there may be an attack. The business is really interesting in many ways.

February 26th—Friday.

Guard on Saily Bridge to-day. Stobbart, Orderly Officer,



YPRES—HALLES NIEUWERK

sent me back on ground that my coat was not quite clean. Have to parade with guard every morning till we shift. What with cleaning tack, parades, and looking after horses for men away, we are having a worse time while resting than in the trenches.

March 1st—Monday.

Trenches again to-night. Hulty being away on leave we had Sergeant Thomson with us. We're in extreme left-hand trench next Guards. Shared dug-out with Marchal, Dierick, and Hindson. Much easier time than last.

March 3rd—Wednesday.

Were relieved to-night by Canadians. The Canadian Division is relieving the whole of the 7th Division, which is to take over one brigade frontage from 8th Division, and so give men more rest. There are large reinforcements everywhere now, and general signs of reorganisation for spring campaign. Probably no more trenches for N.H.Y. Our Canadians had lost themselves, and it was nearly 10.0 p.m. before we were relieved. There were horses waiting for us, and we had long ride through Estaires to a farm between Vieux Bequin and Motte au Bois, six kilometres from Hazebrouck, where we arrived at about 2.0 a.m.

March 4th—Thursday.

Had some supper at Carrick's billet. Did not turn out until stables, 11.30. Most of troop billeted in cottages, but Pocock and I left out. Sleep in loft of farm, where horses are, which is also officers' billet, and have meals at farm next door.

March 8th—Monday.

Marching order at 2.0 p.m. to-day. General clear up in morning and lots of good saddles and saddlery burnt. Having lost all my kit at the last move when at the trenches, mobilisation not much trouble. Since old George was sent away at Epinette as being too heavy I have been without a mount

and have been riding Pimley's. To-day Pimley decided he was well enough to ride, and I had to go on wagon. Returned to near old billet north of Estaires—Mt. Petit Bois. Troop again divided; I and three others had a most comfortable billet in cottage of woman whose husband is soldier—Mme. Dellys.

March 9th—Tuesday.

Exercise this morning as usual. Afterwards got orders to be ready to move either to-night or to-morrow. I got a horse from No. 2 troop, but found my sack of saddlery had been rifled and had to go round cadging. Got fixed up late at night with great difficulty owing to almost all the spare saddlery having been destroyed this week.

March 10th—Wednesday.

Réveille 4.30 this morning—like old times—parade 6.0. Big attack on to-day. We went to a farm on the Saily-Estaires road and stayed there all day in reserve. Horses and men in big barn. Unsaddled until dusk. At about 8.0 p.m. we were preparing to sleep when ordered back to old billets. Fine job putting up horses and drawing rations in dark. Got to bed about midnight.

March 11th—Thursday.

Réveille 4.30 again, and back to same farm for more "standing by." Slept in barn to-night. Hear that attack is being successful; 300 prisoners taken.

March 12th and 13th—Friday and Saturday.

Being on spot, réveille 6.30 to-day. Saddled up at once. At about 10.0 a.m. moved off to a field on outskirts of Laventie (south) and stood by horses all the time as there was a battery of 4.7's in next field. Then we moved to another field further up. When nearly dusk saw the Lancers and Scots Greys go up, but they came back soon after. All our artillery pumping shot into the Germans at a great rate all day. At about 6.30 we went back to field near Laventie, handed our horses over to No. 3

and marched up on foot to house just behind trenches to right of Laventie front. Wretched, dirty, ruined place, but kipped in it until 4.0 a.m., when we went up to the second-line trenches and relieved Grenadiers, who went up to first-line trenches. On road up we passed detachment of motor-cycle machine-guns, and further on several dead bodies on road. In morning Germans opened the ball by shelling our trenches (one man hit), but soon got heavy reply from our artillery. A party of 200 Warwicks had been taken up to wrong trench by mistake and could not get back before daylight. They were caught on the road and the Germans dropped several of them, but a good many were able to gain our trench. At about 8.0 a.m. our party was ordered to retire. Did so through the communication trench to the road and then as best we could. By no means pleasant crawling and crouching alongside of road, past the dead men, expecting the machine-guns to start at any time. At last we gained a redoubt, where we took up position. The firing on both sides continued very brisk all day. As the dug-outs were very crowded as usual and the trenches were dry, I and some others got straw from stack near by and got a snooze lying in bottom of trench. At the dusk stand-to were told to be ready to move off. "A" and "B" squadrons marched back on road past ruined houses where we kipped first night (have since heard a "B" squadron man was killed by a shell in barn adjoining our house that night), and got to another redoubt, which we occupied.

March 14th—Sunday.

Spent the first part of night working, fetching rations, shell-proofing dug-outs, etc., but towards morning got some sleep in bottom of trench as before. This redoubt was 1,200 to 1,400 yards behind our first-line trenches, and so it was not necessary to take elaborate precautions against exposing ourselves, although we got a good many stray bullets that came over the top of the firing trenches. There was a battery of R.F.A. about 150 yards away, and a little behind. Morning quiet, could hear the church bells ringing, but at about midday they began shelling our neighbourhood for about an hour.

We got orders to stand to, as a German counter-attack was expected. At about 4.0 p.m. the Germans sent up several star-lights, which was a signal for their artillery to shell our trenches. Their guns fired short, however, catching their own trenches, and the men began to crawl out. Our men 'phoned our artillery to this effect, and the guns, including our battery, opened fire, and did great damage, in spite of the fact that the German heavy artillery was shelling us and the battery all the time with shrapnel and "coal-boxes." Some of the shells were pretty close; one was within five yards of our look-out post, but the sentry being behind the parapet was not touched; several times we were all covered with dirt. One "coal-box" landed right in the barn of the ruined farm where the artillery men were billeted, and a shrapnel dug a line of "mole-hills" within a few feet of a gun while it was being served, but by good luck neither we nor the gunners lost a man, although we must have had a hundred or two shells in the afternoon. Other sections of the regiment were not so fortunate. We lost ten wounded and two killed from first to last of this battle. Our heavy batteries had also been busy during the afternoon behind the German lines, and cut up their reserves and reinforcements pretty badly. At any rate, the intended attack did not come off, and at night things were comparatively quiet, except for some desultory shelling at intervals on both sides.

March 15th—Monday.

Rather cold sleeping in trench, but as we had to work part of the night, and all draw rations at 2.0 a.m., did not have time to worry about it. After the usual stand-to at dawn, and brekker, we were all busy washing and shaving when a motor-cyclist came with orders for us to return. Marched back to Laventie, where our horses were. The horse-holders had not had too easy a time. Besides looking after four horses each, ten men had been told off on the first night we left to escort fifty prisoners to Estaires. Heard that Neuve Chapelle had been taken. We found the horses saddled up, and moved off at once to another farm on the Sailly-Estaires road near previous billet, but this

time had the horses in the open with lines down. Great contrast to morning; everything just like camp except tents. Several men leaving for England to-morrow. Cook-Jones to take commission in 2nd Reserve Regiment. Harry Brown is required for postal work. Latter has been recalled without option. Heard this evening that British have taken Aubers, the final point of this attack. (Heard later Aubers not actually taken.) The billet here was so rotten dirty that nobody would sleep in it. We all kipped in open behind our horses on our waterproof sheets. Fortunately fine, mild night.

March 16th—Tuesday.

Exercising horses this morning in field. Moving again this afternoon to rest and quiet at Petit Bois d'Estaires again. To-day the squadron was paraded and Major Burrell asked for two volunteers to take a course and join the Gun Section. I stepped out, but I was the only one at the time.

March 17th—Wednesday.

Back at old place; horses in open field, but we four in the nice cottage under the care of Mme. Dellys again. Went to Gun Section at 10.0 a.m. Six chaps have been turned out and six (two from each squadron) replace them. Gun instruction in afternoon, stable guard at night.

MY DEAR MATER,

March 17th, 1915.

As before mentioned, there is no further chance of leave, but we are having a pretty good time. We had a little excitement the other day, but very few casualties; none in No. 4 Troop. Now we are all quiet again. . . .

It was very good of the Gov. to get all the papers for me about commissions. Unfortunately I am told that I cannot get a commission without going to England and cannot go to England without one! Perhaps it is just as well.

I have recently transferred to the Gun Section. It is not yet certain whether it will be permanent, but for the present my letters should be addressed "Gun Section," instead of Troop 4, "A" Squadron. The gun work is very interesting, but the

section has the worst set of horses in the regiment, and I have about the worst horse in it for cleaning and so on. It is a small cart-horse, with hair like a Clydesdale and lice, and it spends all its spare time rolling up to the ears in the nasty clayey mud that this part of the world is famous for. Consequently stables for me consists in scrubbing down a thing like the hinder end of a cow, with intervals of getting played war with for not having a clean horse.

March 18th—Thursday.

Exercising horses at 6.45 this morning, stables and brekker afterwards. Gun-instruction in morning, cleaning saddles afternoon. Had a walk into Estaires this evening with Corporal Forester.

March 19th—Friday.

As yesterday in morning, but marching order in afternoon. Moved to place near Merville (Chez M. Cocq, Henri, Rue du Vieux Berquin). Good billet in two empty cottages and most of horses under cover. Very glad, as my horse is a thick little beast with long hair and lice, always rolling in mud.

March 21st—Sunday.

During exercise this morning Billy Owen's horse was rather restive and backed into ditch. Took us nearly an hour to get it out again. Church parade this afternoon, followed by horse inspection. Have got my horse clipped.

March 24th—Wednesday.

Gun instruction goes on rapidly. Fraser and Wilson went to St. Omer for a course on Saturday last, and rest of us are being taken through by Sergeant J. Thompson. Have done action of mechanism and jambs. This afternoon were firing. There is a big heap of earth near billet, and we rigged up target against this and fired from twenty-five yards. Very good practice.

March 26—Friday.

Firing the machine-gun again this afternoon, practising traversing. Colonel Backhouse came and had a look at us, and also Colonel Bates.

March 28th—Sunday.

Church parade this morning, but did not go as I was stable guard.

March 30th—Tuesday.

Mounted drill this morning, coming into action with the gun, etc. Quite good sport; also had some jumping.

March 31st—Wednesday.

More mounted drill to-day. The Colonel came and looked at us and said we were doing very well.

April 1st—Thursday.

Marching order this morning, but not for a shift. There is a new system now, and we all had to arrange our tack accordingly and then be inspected. Afterwards a route march. Road led through the Forêt de Neppe, and in this part the wagons were nearly up to axles in mud, so had to turn back. This gave drivers a lot of work, as wagons are kept clean and harness bright; looks very smart when not buried in mud.

April 2nd—Friday.

Exercise before brekker and gun instruction after. Saddle cleaning in afternoon, relieved by party of officers coming for gun instruction and practice. A second draft joined the regiment to-day and we got one man of them, called Dodds, who comes from the Elswick Engine Works Drawing Office, and so was able to give me a lot of news about the people I used to know.

April 4th—Sunday.

Had church parade in the chapel of a local R.C. institution now known as No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station.

MY DEAR PATER,

April 4th, 1915.

I intended to write this a couple of days ago, but did not get the opportunity. I hope, however, that it will not be much too late to wish you many happy returns of your birthday.

Since writing last I have received a parcel of eatables, another of clothing, and a letter from the Mater and yourself, for all of which many thanks. With regard to the commission, I put the matter to our G.S. Officer, Mr. Robson, saying I should be glad if he would approach the O.C. again, etc., and he tells me he has asked the Colonel and also the Adjutant about it, but although they would not put any obstacles in the way if I had been invited to take a commission in some particular regiment, they do not feel justified in signing a *carte blanche* recommendation form. I am not sure whether you at home realise the absolute finality of a thing of this sort in the Army, but here the matter will have to rest.

Personally I don't mind a bit. The war may not last another year, in which case it will not have been worth while to change, and this machine-gun biz. is very interesting. The things I learnt at Vickers are of great service now, and all the section is shaking together and getting quite smart. The Mater suggested that it was a more dangerous branch of the service. Of course we all understand that this side of the question is not worthy of the slightest consideration, but, as a matter of fact, I don't think it is so. They never put the machine-gun in a very exposed position, in case it gets captured.

I got the packet of papers all right, including the two *Punches*. Did you read the article entitled "From the Back of the Front," about a machine-gun section? It was jolly good; allowing for the different addresses, it hit us off to a T. That was a good one too about the chap trying to shoot through his periscope in the trenches. We often used to chaff each other about this with our own periscopes when we were up there. I wonder how the chaps get the local colour? The man who drew that sketch had been in the trenches more than five minutes, and not very far from our Division, if I mistake not. You should get *The Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle* for March 25th, but you need not send me a copy as I have seen it.

I never had occasion to wear that extra special pair of gum boots the Mater sent me, and they got knocked off the saddle some time ago, on an occasion when I wasn't stopping to pick up things—a most annoying example of the wastage of war, but we get quite hardened to worse slices of ill luck than that. At Ypres I have known us, at a time when rations were scarce, to leave a good stew behind just when it was nearly ready to eat. Those times seem a long time ago now; you should see our present home in a cottage; all complete except a latch-key.

Hoping nothing will mitigate your enjoyment of your recent and further successes, and that more tranquil times will soon arrive for us all, and with best love to you and the Mater.

I am your affectionate son,

FRANK.

April 5th—Monday.

Were to have mounted drill this morning, but weather was so rotten we only exercised horses. Heard that Jos. Potts of No. 4 has returned to England as telegraphist, and has been posted to the Signal Section R.E.'s.

April 6th—Tuesday.

Had quite a sporting day. In afternoon a N.H. team played a Rugger match with a team from the Scots Greys, and our lads won 7 points to 0. In evening there was a boxing-match in the Soldiers' Home in Merville. T. Murray, of Ashington Troop, was matched with a gunner from the R.F.A., six-round contest, and Murray was fighting well, but he got disqualified in the fifth round for holding. I couldn't see very well, but I think he tried one or two tricks that were rather near the wind, otherwise he would probably have won.

April 7th—Wednesday.

Have been drilling lately with the packsaddles, and to-day Mr. Robson offered ten francs for the pair who could get pack out of limber and get gun and tripod all strapped on in shortest time. Russel Sanders (late of "B" Squadron) and I made a

pair, and we were third on list, 5 min. 18 sec., but two other pairs tied for first in 4 min. 45 sec. The O.C. took the times personally; he seems enormously interested in the machine-gun just now.

April 10th—Saturday.

It had been arranged that we were to have regimental sports on Monday, but it is now known that the regiment is to be broken up in a few days, and so the sports are to be held to-morrow. Had a quiet day practising for them.

April 11th—Sunday.

Sports held this afternoon, the heats having been run off this morning. Lovely weather and very pleasant time altogether. Little Ernest James, who drives the wheeler in the gun team, won the Musical Chairs, and only lost the V.C. race by his mare Molly casting a shoe on the way home. "A" Squadron did best all round. In the open jumping a sergeant of the Scots Greys won. In the officers' jumping there were many disappointments, as most of the horses refused the first jump and officers were not allowed a second try. Mr. Robson got all round well, and was fourth; not so bad considering there were more than a dozen entries from the officers of the regiments in the 2nd Cavalry Division, besides most of our own.

April 12th—Monday.

The regiment paraded on foot this morning, and Colonel Backhouse explained that this would be the last time the regiment would parade as a whole in France, as it was to be split up, each squadron going to a different division, and he would now say good-bye to us, being assured that in leaving the reputation of the regiment in the hands of the individual squadrons he was leaving it in good hands. He seemed quite cut up at losing his command. "B" Squadron left this afternoon to join the 1st Division at Bethune. "A" Squadron remains with the 7th Division, and we—the machine-guns—stay with "A" Squadron for the present, but our ultimate fate hangs in the balance.

April 13th—Tuesday.

Been under orders to move all day, but stayed as no destination given.

April 14th—Wednesday.

Orders to move cancelled. We shall probably be staying in this truly rural spot some time longer. "A" Squadron has moved, but only a short distance.

April 18th—Sunday.

We continue to punctuate our peaceful existence of gun-drill and exercising by a church parade on Sundays at the "No. 7 Clearing Station." To-day proceedings were enlivened by the presence of four of the nurses.

April 23rd—Friday.

Heard to-day that there has been a big attack by the Germans at Ypres; it is even said that they have broken through.

April 24th—Saturday.

After a good long route march this morning, right past our old billets near Vieux Berquin, we had the gun out in the afternoon, trying some stove-pipe attachments which are supposed to hide the flash at night. During the latter part of the afternoon the Lahore Division passed, including the Connaught Rangers, 4th Royal Fusiliers, and several battalions of Indian Infantry. Also artillery, etc. Said to be entraining at Motte au Bois for Ypres. The latest, according to German official news, is that they have taken 1,500 prisoners, six guns, and three big guns. After tea we got orders to be ready to move. We had to fill the belts that had been used this afternoon and get kits ready, etc., but were allowed to go to bed in peace.

April 25th—Sunday.

We are still standing by under two hours' notice, and we had short bareback exercising trip in afternoon. Hear that during recent attacks Germans used asphyxiating gases, both in shells

and squirted down wind from trenches, contrary to international laws. Also that lost ground has been largely recovered.

Chez Nous,

MY DEAR MATER,

April 25th, 1915.

I am sorry that I do not write often enough, but did you receive my last letter in which I asked for a watch? I sometimes wonder if all my letters get through and I intend in future to keep a note of the date of letters sent, so if you will mention the dates in your replies we shall be able to tell if any get lost.

I must admit, however, that I have not been writing a great deal lately because there has been nothing to write about. For a month or so now we have had an existence about as exciting as that of the peasants who occupy this place in normal times. We have even been holding sports meetings. Between these we exercise the horses and do gun drill, and that's all; in fact, we don't even get a great many rumours.

In case you did not get that last letter of mine, I said in it that I had been troubled about watches. An ordinary watch is inaccessible when one has one's equipment on, which is when one often wants it, and a wrist watch generally gets the crown or winder knocked off. I wonder if you could get me a wrist watch with key winding? If not I should like one of the Ingersoll "Radiolyt" watches, which some of our fellows have found quite satisfactory; 14s. 6d. I think they are.

I had a French watch, but it was too delicate. I am sending it home as I think it could be repaired, and it would be a pity to waste it. It is quite an old campaigner, having been in the trenches and on patrol, etc. I am sending it in a separate parcel with a little souvenir brooch I thought you might like.

April 26th—Monday.

Still standing-by, but had usual exercise this morning, and filled all extra belts in afternoon. Mr. R. says that our forces are now distinctly superior to the Germans on the western front, and that when the big move is made the Gun Section will be in it. Violent bombardment audible to-night.

April 27th—Tuesday.

Rumour to-day says that Canadians near Ypres were driven back by the Germans and lost four guns, but made a counter-attack and recovered lost ground, and recaptured the guns and advanced another three-quarters of a mile. . . .

April 28th—Wednesday.

We still continue to stand-by, but went out exercising horses this morning, and on our return found Mr. Robson waiting us with marching orders. Turned out about noon, went round to "A" Squadron, and moved off with them through Neuf Berquin, Vieux Berquin, Strazeele, where we stopped for about half an hour's rest, and thence to Flitre, where we arrived about 4.30 p.m., and put down lines for the night. The undulating country in which we now are is a pleasant change from the dead flatness of the Saily-Estaires-Merville district.

April 29th—Thursday.

We all spent last night sleeping in open, as it was very fine. We have been having lovely weather lately; indeed, at midday it gets oppressively warm. We had a little drill in the field to-day by way of exercise, but there is no talk of our moving on immediately. It appears that two brigades of the 7th Division, including ourselves, are standing in reserve to the 2nd Army, in action near Ypres.

April 30th—Friday.

We had a route march with the Squadron this morning through Godewaersveldt and up to the top of the Mont des Cats. The latter seemed quite a high mountain to us, coming from such a long sojourn in the alluvial flats of the Lys, and we were all delighted at the change of scenery, although the weather was too hazy to do justice to the view. The monastery or whatever it is on the summit is used as a clearing station for casualties from the Lahore and North Midland Divisions, and we were told that they had dealt with 7,000 cases in last five days. In afternoon we had a clean up, and were then inspected by General Gough, in charge of the 7th Division, vice General Capper.

May 5th—Wednesday.

Got orders to be prepared to move to-day and eventually turned out at 9.0 p.m. Quite like old times moving in dark, and a good deal of commotion owing to being out of practice. Returned to "A" Squadron's old billet near Merville; put down lines and kipped in field.

May 6th—Thursday.

Moved again this afternoon, but only a short distance, to a field near the aviation park on the Merville side of Estaires. Pleasant situation.

May 7th—Friday

Exercise at 7.0 a.m. this morning, and spent rest of day overhauling and making ready for big move. Had a parade in afternoon, when Major Burrell explained projected attack and said that this is the greatest attack yet attempted. The 8th Division is to break through opposite Fromelles, and the 7th Division will go through the gap and work round north and east of Aubers, and meet Indians coming from south, by which time it is expected that Aubers will be evacuated. The French are making a big attack also near Arras, starting to-day with seven divisions and bringing in another seven to-morrow. Our original orders were to move at 1.30 a.m. to-morrow, but at tea-time we were told that everything had been postponed twenty-four hours, so we went to sleep as usual.

May 8th—Saturday.

To-day was practically the same as yesterday. At 11.0 p.m. we fed horses and began to get ready.

Somewhere in France,

MY DEAR WINNIE,

May 8th, 1915.

Very many thanks for your recent letter and all your good wishes. I'm afraid I have been very remiss in not writing oftener, but there is very little to write about (that will pass the Censor), and now the weather is finer we live pretty much

in the open, just going into a barn or something on wet nights. It is not unpleasant, but it does not lead to much literary effort. I am writing this on a truss of hay, sitting on a sack of corn, with my blankets (also those of the others), spread out in the sun, a pair of newly washed socks drying beside me, and the horses all round. Just across the road is an aviation park, with aeroplanes frequently coming and going like the 'buses at Victoria Station. As a fellow said, "They are very tame round here," though I know a district not many miles away where they are quite the reverse.

As regards your request for information as to something I want, our reasonable wants out here are very few. Our chief trouble was very well expressed in a verse quoted by the *Westminster Gazette*, wherein the writer complained that though heaps of girls sent him everything imaginable, there was still an absolute famine of girls! As a matter of fact, I am hard up for a mirror just now. The glass ones always get smashed, but I saw a very good one the other day of burnished nickel. But mind nothing expensive, anything costly is not only extravagant but wasteful out here, where *anything* can get lost in a minute.

May 9th—Sunday.

Marched off at 1.30 a.m. this morning, and went through Estaires to a field near Rouge-Debout, where we arrived at 3.15, already daylight. The artillery opened the ball at 4.30, but the real bombardment began at 5.0 and lasted forty minutes. There were two 9.2's in field next to us. We got our breakfasts and were ready to move again by 6.0 a.m. Then we heard that the first-line trenches had been carried, and moved up to a farm on the Rue Petillon, which was also a dressing-station for the R.A.M.C. It was soon apparent that we were not progressing as fast as expected. It appears that the Germans were in great force, having either got wind of our attack or else been on point of making an attack themselves. Our men could hold their own all right, but were quite unable to overcome the resistance; indeed, we could not find out whether the German first-line trenches were still in our hands or not.

Large numbers of wounded were brought to our dressing station, especially in morning. Some were slight cases, delighted at the prospect of a trip to Blighty, some were in agony and some just pegged out on their stretchers. We stayed here until late in afternoon, when we returned to a farm near Nouveau Monde and camped the night. On the way back we passed one of the 15-in. howitzers, and also the armoured train with wireless train near by.

May 10th—Monday.

We had been told to sleep with our boots on and all expected an early start turn out, but *réveille* was not till 6.0 a.m., and we found we had the morning to ourselves. In afternoon we were told to rest as we should move during the night.

May 11th—Tuesday.

Réveille at 2.45 a.m. this morning, and on the road at 3.45. We trekked through La Gorgue, Lestrein, and Locon to Richebourg, near Bethune, arriving at 7.30 a.m., after which we had no more to do for the day.

"Somewhere in France,"

MY DEAR AUNT JESSIE,

May 11th, 1915.

Very many thanks for your recent letter and still more recent parcel. The contents of the latter were all very welcome; the respirator arrived just when we were getting some dished out, and as there were not quite enough, mine was very useful. Fortunately we have not had occasion to use any of them, though we were very nearly in action the following day. We are very "mobile" just now, and have no possessions except what goes on the saddle. We live almost entirely in the open air and with the fine weather we are having now it is very healthy and enjoyable. It is really surprising how pretty the country looks now; seen in winter under about a foot of mud we had thought it almost hopeless. We were specially pleased with the scenery when, the other day, we visited a part where it was rather hilly, a great change from the alluvial flats in which we spend most of our time.

It must be very interesting to go to lectures on the progress of the war. I get the *Observers* you send all right, and always have a look through them, but we don't get much opportunity for reading. The latest news we have is that the French have achieved considerable success. Perhaps this is not unconnected with the circumstance that our own efforts seem to meet with great resistance. However we seem to have a lot of troops now, so no doubt something will happen some time.

May 12th—Wednesday.

We got sudden news this morning that the Gun Section is to be disbanded. We turned out at 3.15 p.m. and took the guns and ammunition to the Meerut Division about five miles away. The Squadron moved meanwhile, but only a short distance to a place within sight of Bethune, and when we returned it was after 9.0 p.m. By the time we had got our lines down, etc., we were very glad "to get down to it."

May 13th—Thursday.

Réveille 6.30 this morning. Preparations are being made for the Gun Section men to be divided up among the squadrons. Later there was a rumour about the Gun Section and Headquarters going down to the base. Rotten wet day.

May 14th—Friday.

It is now confirmed that Gun Section and Headquarters men go to base. Mr. R. takes over No. 3 Troop and certain men, including those recently joined, are retained with squadrons. The others left in afternoon, including Sergeant Griffiths and Corporal Forester. There is no information as to what they are to do there. The weather is clearing up again this evening.

May 15th—Saturday.

Had a quiet day all to myself, as I have not yet been told off to a troop. Opinion now prevails that attack last Sunday was not pressed home, when it was found that the Germans were in force, as it was considered that a holding attack to prevent

reinforcements being sent to resist the French was better than taking the position at all costs. In evening Sergeant Griffiths and Farrier Hogg returned with Mr. Robson as they are to remain with Squadron. I returned to No. 4 Troop, and we were all busy making ready for early move to-morrow.

May 16th—Sunday.

Réveille 1.30 a.m. and moved off at 2.30 this morning. Went to a field about a mile behind firing line and remained there all day. Eight men were told off from No. 4 to act as orderlies to 22nd Brigade Staff. Returned in evening to same place. The attack to-day was much more successful. The Scots Guards took their first line of trenches at daybreak with only six casualties, and we heard in the evening that the Borderers had taken six lines of trenches and were well established. All the artillery moved forward a mile. The artillery fire was very heavy all day and continued most of the night.

May 17th—Monday.

We did not move this morning, but a section went up as orderlies. It turned out a rotten wet day. There still continue to pass large batches of prisoners, and it is said that nearly 5,000 have been taken, though, like most war rumours, this is probably an exaggeration.

May 18th—Tuesday.

Weather still continues very dull, though there was not much rain, but plenty of mud. This evening several battalions of the 7th Division came back having been relieved after nearly three days' incessant fighting. The men were weary and mud-stained, but seemed very cheerful at their recent successes. Several had German helmets as souvenirs.

MY DEAR PATER,

May 18th, 1915.

. . . . We have been having a good many changes lately. In the first place the regiment has been split up; "A" Squadron remains with the same division as heretofore, and the other two squadrons have gone to other divisions. The Gun Section

at first remained with "A" Squadron, but I suppose the authorities have come to the conclusion that it is not necessary under the new arrangements, and it has been disbanded. We gave the guns away to another Division, and the men have been sent down to the base, except those recently joined, who returned whence they came. So I am now back in No. 4 Troop, and my address is the same as it used to be. We were all sorry at not being in action with the guns ever, especially as Mr. Robson was not only a popular officer, but was known to be a good man in the "real thing," but I don't think anybody is sorry at being back in the troops, where one gets more riding and more often interesting jobs. Probably the fellows who have gone to the base are not so cheerful about it; from all accounts being at the base means looking after about six horses, not always well broken, and working from morning till night.

You will see from the papers there has been some good scrap-
ping lately. Some of our chaps have had jobs as orderlies, but there has not been much doing for us. We have been watching several battalions of infantry coming back, having been relieved after three days' incessant close quarter work. They were weary and mud-stained (the weather has been pretty bad the last few days), but all very cheerful at their successes, and several had German helmets. The latest vocal effort from the front is:

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again,
We gave 'em stick at Mons,
We beat 'em on the Aisne,
We jiggered 'em up at Neuve Chapelle, and here we are again."

The horse I had in the Gun Section we managed to give away with the guns, and I now have a little black mare that used to carry the ammunition packs. She is only a pony, not fourteen hands, but enormously strong and fast. She has plenty of mettle, and with her shining black coat she looks a picture. I have christened her "Black Susan." She takes a lot of looking after on the lines, as she is as vicious as sin with the other horses, but she is friendly enough with men, and has

more sense and capability than most when it comes to really doing anything.

By the way, in the break up of the Gun Section I lost my spare kit. Will you ask the mater to send me another shirt like the last as soon as possible, for, as one of the fellows remarked, "There is the deuce of a lot more than me sleeping in this one."

May 19th—Wednesday.

Went out exercising this morning, but in afternoon got orders to move. Paraded at 3.15 p.m., and went to a place near Lillers. Ground too wet to make bivies, but got good kips in houses.

May 21st—Friday.

Got my turn for a pass to-day to go to Lillers for afternoon and evening. Biggish place, something like Estaires, but rather slow.

May 25th—Tuesday.

On our way here we all noticed some hills in the distance like pyramids and supposed them to be mine heaps. To-day we proved the surmise correct. We passed close to them, and saw several pits and typical colliery villages, which was naturally very interesting to the North Country lads.

May 26th—Wednesday.

Had no exercise this morning, but were all busy cleaning tack, and rumour says that General Joffre will inspect the 7th Division to-morrow, and that the N.H.Y. will be well to the fore.

May 27th—Thursday.

Inspection by Generals Joffre and French came off to-day, but, being stable guard, I missed it. No. 4 Troop acted as escort, and the affair was said to be a success.

May 29th—Saturday.

Went down this afternoon and had a swim in an open-air bath near Lillers. Very big bath and had a good swim for 4d., although the water was not too clean. This is my first birthday on active service, and hope it will be the last. We had a lecture from the Doctor this afternoon, and respirators were dished out all round.

May 30th—Sunday.

No church parade to-day; had good long exercise ride as usual.

MY DEAR MATER,

May 30th, 1915.

Very many thanks for the parcel of eatables, the parcel of clothing and your letter. . . . I was particularly pleased to get your letters; it is some time since you sent me very much news, though I suppose things jog along pretty smoothly without much to write about. . . .

I had to give up writing this last night as the boys started what they in their enthusiasm were pleased to call a concert, and it was impossible to write coherently in the din that ensued. To-day I got your other parcel with the peaches, tongue, etc., all of which were a great acquisition to the table. We are living in some luxury just now, as is inferred in the last sentence. There are about a dozen of us in a small cottage, which is kept by only one man, so there is plenty of room. We have tables and chairs just like civilised life, and being the largest billet we also have the services of the troop cook and do things in some style. I am afraid Susan got only part of the sugar; it is too valuable just now to be given away; which reminds me that a small bottle of saccharine tablets would be very acceptable now and again. Susan seemed quite pleased with what she got, and I didn't tell her about the rest. She is a lady who doesn't allow liberties, but she condescends to be friendly when treated with respect, and also to accept delicacies. A ration biscuit pleases her as much as anything, and there is generally one of these to be had, for if there is not enough ration bread we

usually buy French bread. Butter is another thing that we can practically always buy when it is wanted, though it is rather dear—2.00 francs le livre, and I have known it 5.00 le kilo., or, as the natives prefer to call it, "50 sous le livre." It beats me where they get the French eggs that are sold in London at sixteen a shilling. We can never buy eggs at less than trois sous, and more often quatre sous. By the way "cat sou" is a great phrase with the Tommies. . . .

H. B. is now in Scotland doing telegraph work on a signal section of a Highland Brigade. He has a cottage with the missis and seems to be conducting the war as it should be done; he even writes to say he wishes he were out with us still!! J. P. has also been recalled for similar work. He is at present at a R.E. training post at Bletchley, Bucks, which cannot be such a long way from Chiswick. He is a very decent fellow, and I expect he would be very pleased if you would invite him some Sunday.

We all have proper army respirators now, which are very comprehensive things and quite do away with the necessity for anything else; but I hardly expect we shall have any need for them.

June 2nd—Wednesday.

Moved to-day, but only about four or five kilometres to a place near Robecq. We're in a long orchard, which, as is now usual, has been used for horses before.

June 3rd.—Thursday.

Moved again to-day, but only into next field.

MY DEAR AUNT JESSIE,

June 4th, 1915.

. . . We have been enjoying beautiful weather lately and live practically always in the open air. We build little bivouacs to sleep in out of our waterproof sheets, and we sleep very well in them; in fact it is quite possible to have insufficient ventilation, though in actual practice we take care that this is not the case.

This would be a fine country for Nature-study classes. There are ditches round all the fields for drainage, and these remain half full of water, and are teeming with every sort of life. The croaking of the frogs makes an almost continual chorus, especially in the evening, and aquatic plants grow in profusion. Often it is very pretty when one sees great clumps of water-lilies and irises in bloom. The scenery is very different now from what it was in the winter, but none of us will be sorry to leave it and get back. Life out here is very monotonous.

June 6th—Sunday.

By way of celebrating Sunday we had *réveille* at 5.30 this morning; were on the road at 7.30, and went up to Divisional Headquarters at Hinges for Divine service. We returned along the canal towing path, and those who wished were allowed to hand over their horses and have a swim in the canal. I preferred to continue the usual practice of bathing in the afternoon. One gets a very good swim, although the water is not too clean, but one is glad of a dip of any sort this hot weather.

June 7th—Monday.

Several men went out to-day with Mr. Laing in connection with a project to form a team to work a trench mortar. On their return, however, there did not seem to be much enthusiasm for the job.

June 8th—Tuesday.

The heat wave reached its climax to-day. We had *réveille* at 5.45 a.m. and parade at 6.30, and the morning was sweltering hot. I did not go out as Black Susan has a slight lameness in both off hoofs. Immediately after mid-day stables a severe thunderstorm broke over us, which lasted the whole afternoon, with torrential rain. This is the first rain since we left Locon, and was much needed. Our bivies stood it well. In the evening it fared up and was much cooler.

June 9th—Wednesday.

The 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards arrived in our neighbourhood to-day, and orders were issued that all men in billets

must vacate them by 5.0 p.m. to allow the Grenadiers free choice of billets. Having been in the field all the time this made very little difference to me, but several chaps had to leave good billets, and with all the men living in bivies there is a regular canvas town at our end of the field. In evening walked into Robecq with Davidson (Doctor's orderly). It is a very small village, but we fell in with a sergeant and farrier sergeant-major of the North Irish Horse, and had quite an interesting time.

MY DEAR PATER,

June 11th, 1915.

I believe in my last letter to the Mater I mentioned that I had received and much appreciated the letter and pipe you sent me on my birthday, but the tin of Vermijelli arrived the day afterwards. The best thing we have tried so far is creosote applied strong for washing clothes in, etc. This certainly kills 'em, but, of course, it is only of limited use. I tried your stuff in the same way and gave one particular little blighter a good swim in it. It certainly knocked him out at the time, but he came to five minutes afterwards, though this is not to say the stuff is of no use. I have tried a good deal of it applied to my clothing direct, and it seems to have done a lot of good, though it needs a longer trial.

June 12th—Saturday.

This morning we varied the usual exercise by a bit of a scheme. We formed a series of eight relay posts, and verbal messages were sent round. The messages were simple, and for the most part came through all right, but it was a bit of a change from the usual routine. In the evening had another trip into Robecq, and had a supper of a couple of eggs at one of the pubs. Met one of the few G.G.'s who came out at the start . . . and had an interesting talk. He was near Captain Morrison when the latter was hit at Neuve Chapelle, and he quite well remembered me being at Baron's Farm on the patrol job. There were also two sergeants of the 6th Gordons, who had a good deal to say about the attack last week, when they took and lost a trench twice.

June 13th—Sunday.

No church parade this morning, only exercise. The G.G.'s left this afternoon for the firing line, but the memory remains. We have had an address giving new standard time-table and new regulations. Réveille 6.0. Parade in drill order, 6.15 for foot drill. Stables, 6.45-7.45. Mounted parade in drill order, 9.0. Return in time to water and finish stables by about 1.0 p.m. Parade for foot drill, 4.30. Evening stables, 5.0. Roll-call, 9.0 p.m., instead of 8.30 as hitherto. Robecq and all estaminets out of bounds, except little pub near by, which has a bar counter about 3 ft. long and sells the most wishy-washy beer. This is open from 1.0 to 1.30 and 6.0 to 7.30!!

June 14th—Monday.

Had another little scheme this morning, inasmuch as we rode to a certain point near Aire with advance guard and connecting files, "advancing by bounds," as though it was unknown country. In place of the Grenadier Guards we now have the 8th Royal Scots near us.

June 15th—Tuesday.

The elaborate programme of foot-drills before stables, etc., has broken down, or, at any rate, been suspended, already; for we had to move up a bit to-day in consequence of an attack. We paraded at 3.0 and went along the canal bank to a place about a mile from Bethune. Here we were near our old friends the Engineers attached to Divisional Headquarters. There was also a party of Royal Scots bomb-throwers next to us, who had some rather good yarns. They went up at about 6.0 p.m., as the attack starts to-night. No. 1 troop is already up at Windy Corner with the 21st Brigade, and No. 3 Troop is with Divisional Headquarters, while Nos. 2 and 4 are supplying parties of police, etc.

June 16th—Wednesday.

As usual when there is an attack on we spent most of the day lying on our backs doing nothing. I was one of six who saddled

up at 4.0 p.m. and went to relieve other six as traffic directors. Pocock and I were at a cross roads on the Locon-Bethuen road near our old billet and stayed there turn and turn about, one hour each, till midnight. The attack finished this evening without our having gained any permanent advantage to speak of.

June 17th—Thursday.

We went out exercising in drill order this morning, but afterwards had to have a burial party for Smith's horse, which had broken its leg during the night. In the afternoon we turned out in full marching-order again and returned to the same place near Robecq.

June 18th—Friday.

The old programme of foot-parades before stables, etc., has been started again, and discipline is very strict. To-night there were six men under open arrest for being late for roll-call and similar offences.

June 20th—Sunday.

There was exercise at 9.0 a.m., and church parade with the Cyclists and Wilts at 11.50, but neither event affected me as I was up at the forge near Robecq with Susan all the morning.

June 21st—Monday.

Going down to water to-day Stan Marshall got badly kicked by his old horse Darkie. It laid him out, and is likely to put him off duty for some days. In the evening the Cyclists had a concert in a field down the road from 8.30 to 10.0 p.m., to which we were allowed to go, roll-call being suspended. It was very poor from a musical point of view, but not bad fun.

June 24th—Thursday.

Had another variation of routine to-day. We can take our option between the early morning foot-drill and a run. Most of us turned out for the run this morning, and Mr. Laing was leading. He took us the full half-hour, running most of the

way at a good pace—overdid it, in fact. I kept up to the end, but found later I was very stiff in the calves.

The 2nd Wilts have been billeted in the neighbourhood the last few days, and we have come across one of the men we knew well at Baron's Farm, Saily, before Christmas. He told us that Sergeant Ferguson got his Commission in the spring, and had had his head blown off by a shell at Neuve Chapelle. He also told us that all the officers who had been with the regiment at Baron's Farm had been either killed or wounded. We heard that they have had 3,600 men on the roll-call since they came out, and have never been much over 1,100 strong.

June 25th—Friday.

Very few turned out for the run this morning. I would have, but was almost too stiff to walk, far less run. We had a very long exercising ride this morning; it was nearly 1.0 p.m. when we returned. It rained just enough to wet us through while we were out; it rained so hard we never had a chance to groom the horses the rest of the day, and it rained particularly hard in the evening. Still, after all the fine weather we have been having we can't complain, especially as our bivie stood it pretty well.

June 26th—Saturday.

Had neither foot-drill nor run this morning, as we are going to move, but had usual exercising ride. We moved at 8.30 p.m. to a place near Gonchem. Fortunately it was fine, both evening and night.

June 27th—Sunday.

This morning we had neither drill nor exercise; in fact, the horses were never off the line, and we spent the time building bivies and cleaning up. This field was last used by —, and is in a filthy state. In the afternoon we had a thunderstorm with more heavy rain.

June 28th—Monday.

We had a little scheme on to-day, but being stable guard I

was not in it, so can't say what happened, but the troops were not back until the middle of the afternoon.

June 29th—Tuesday.

Very short exercise ride this morning, and a sports meeting with the Cyclists in afternoon. There were mostly foot events, but our fellows won all except two.

June 30th—Wednesday.

Moved to-day back to the same field as before at Contranc. I went away at 9.30 with the transport to guard the forage, which they dumped down while the wagons went to get to-morrow's rations. The Squadron left at 3.0 p.m. and arrived at about 4.0. We are all eating and sleeping in the field now, billets being no longer allowed.

July 1st—Thursday.

Campbell and I went into Lillers this evening to buy some things and we cut it so fine that we were nearly a minute late for roll call. Nearly had our heads chewed off; apparently evening walks are no longer allowed.

July 3rd—Saturday.

Paraded 8.30 this morning, and N.C.O.'s went off first on a scheme of skeleton outposts. Rest of Squadron rode through St. Vernant and Merville to visit "C" Squadron in our old billets at the Grand Bois D'Estaires. Near Merville we saw Mme. Thibault and her daughter Marcelle, from Laventie, standing in a doorway. This bears out the rumours we heard that Laventie was bombarded worse than ever after Neuve Chapelle. We stayed about three hours at the Grand Bois; saw Wilson and the other fellows that used to be in the Gun Section, and came back by a different route. It made a long ride for a sweltering hot day, and we were all tired when we got back about 7.0 p.m., but it did us all good to have a hard day's work.

July 4th—Sunday.

To-day was really hot and humid withal. We did not take the horses out and were told there would be a voluntary church parade, so we just did what we could find energy for in the heat. At about 10.15 Captain Ridley came into the lines shouting "Everybody put tunics and bandoliers on and fall in for church parade." We were all in very light attire, but got dressed, when Sergeant Thompson came along and said "Church parade cancelled; as you were." Some of us had not quite got back to a condition suitable to the weather, when Sergeant-Major Murray came along with the order "Fall in for church parade, with bandoliers, belts, and rifles." Before half the men were ready Major B. came and said he would take just what men there were. Then he and Captain R. had a discussion as to whether we should take rifles, and then we were told to put our rifles back, and Major B. would take what men were ready. When we arrived where the Cyclists and Artillery were having the parade the service had already begun! Last night it was read out in orders that the 7th Division had been transferred to the 1st Army, and to-night that there is a possibility of a big German attack and the squadron is standing to under three-hours' notice.

July 5th—Monday.

A new routine started to-day. Réveille 5.0 a.m. Parade in drill order for exercise, 5.30. Breakfast, 8.45. Stables, 9.15. This may be in connection with the three-hours' notice business, but after our experience when billeting with the Guards it is thought that the presence of a brigade of R.F.A. over the road who have réveille at 5.0 a.m. probably has something to do with it. We had a respirator parade at 2.30 to-day, so there was no foot drill.

July 7th—Wednesday.

Went down to the forge at Lillers this morning with Spence's horse. No foot parade to-day.

July 8th—Thursday.

Orders last night were for réveille 6.0 a.m. to-day, and a scheme, but guards turned us out at 5.0 with the news that Lord Kitchener was coming near by. We had stables quickly, did what cleaning we could, and paraded at 8.30. We then rode with other units to a road the other side of Lillers, waited an hour, stood to attention with drawn swords while he passed and then returned. There were about four motors in the procession, containing, besides Lord Kitchener, several generals whom I did not recognise, and the Prince of Wales.

July 9th—Friday.

Réveille 6.0 this morning, and a little scheme to carry out. No. 4 was acting as flank guard to an advancing column. We had a good ride and got in about one o'clock. I was stable guard, but paraded just the same, the light duty men having to clear the lines. In the afternoon it rained a good deal.

July 11th—Sunday.

Church parade this morning. There was nothing "voluntary" about it, and consequently no hitch in the arrangements. As it was, however, my turn to relieve Spence as cook, I wasn't there.

July 12th—Monday.

We had quite a complicated scheme on to-day, in conjunction with the Cyclists. There was a convoy, under Robson, to be captured, but it got through. Our lot spent most of the time in the village of Berguette doing nothing, and as it was thirsty weather, we all wanted something to drink. The estaminet being out of bounds until noon, the only drink obtainable was *vin rouge* at the grocer's. Some fellows had several glasses, and on coming out again into the hot sunshine found themselves considerably affected. X., ever unlucky, got put under arrest for being drunk.

July 13th—Tuesday.

Major Burrell evidently considers X.'s a most serious case. At

the trial this morning he said he declined to deal with it himself, and would send him before a Field General Court-martial. I was at the forge this morning getting a pair of hind shoes on Susan when news came down that the squadron moves this afternoon. We turned out at about 3.0 p.m., and went to a place near Vieille Chapelle. Rumour says we are to stay a fortnight or more, digging trenches. X. is under an armed guard, and I was on the job to-day, from 2.30 p.m. till 2.30 p.m. to-morrow. Very slow.

July 14th—Wednesday.

The reason for our moving up nearer the trenches is to enable us to furnish digging parties to help in the great improvements that are now being made in expectation of vigorous German attacks in the near future. Everybody is to take part, officers' servants, and transport men included. We started this evening with practically every available man. It was rotten weather; we saddled up wet horses with wet saddlery, and it rained nearly all the time. The waterproof capes are not able to stand much, and were soon as wet inside as out. We paraded at 7.15 p.m., got to where we had to leave our horses at a quarter to nine, and then marched about two miles, meeting the Cyclists on their way to the same job. Then we waited in the garden of a ruined farm for over an hour. Eventually it became apparent that there were no spades for us, and we had to come back. On the return journey it really rained, and we were all soaked. Tosh Hall and I were kipping together, and had only a very hastily erected bivic, so we slept in the barn to-night. It was nearly 1.0 a.m. when we got in.

July 15th—Thursday.

After being out last night there was no exercising horses to-day. We had réveille 7.30, breakfast 8.15, and stables at 10.0. There was another digging party to-night, but they now arrange to take so many (twelve from each troop) and it was my turn to stay in. The same blunder as last happened again, and they were back by 11.0 p.m. X.'s court-martial took place this morning.



TROOPER F. L. CUNNINGHAM

July 16th—Friday.

There was no digging party to-night; just as well, for the weather was again rotten.

July 17th—Saturday.

X's sentence read out this morning—twenty-eight days' F.P. No. 1, of which the General (Gough) remitted half. . . . A digging party went up this evening, including myself, and this time got some work done. We were digging communication trenches with the Cyclists, connecting up first, second, and third line trenches, all of which were German trenches before the battle of Festubert. There are about five lines of trenches in this neighbourhood, and the important ones are very well constructed, much better than those we manned in February near Fromelles, and at this time of year they are quite dry. The dug-outs are very spacious, and all lined with nice clean sandbags, while one could easily lose oneself among the communication trenches, which have such names as Pall Mall, Embankment, etc., printed on sign-posts. The ground we were digging, once No Man's Land, was still littered with equipment and occasional dead bodies lightly covered with earth. There were two or three such bodies discovered in the line of our trench, and we had to deviate to avoid them, and now and again as we dug we got some most unpleasant odours. Probably it was just as well that it was too dark to see what we were doing except by the fitful light of the star shells. We knocked off at 1.0 a.m., and got back to our lines at about 3.30 a.m., broad daylight.

July 18th—Sunday.

Digging again to-night, same as yesterday; but to-night the stray bullets were more numerous and some of them were as close as they had any need to be. The Allemans also put five shells within a few hundred yards of the led horses, but no damage was done.

July 19th—Monday.

No digging party to-night.



BÉTHUNE

July 20th—Tuesday.

Heard to-day that the reason of there being no digging last night was that there was a small attack made, and our area was shelled considerably. A party went up to-night, but as I was on main guard over X. for twenty-four hours from 2.30 this afternoon, I did not go. X. goes digging, but as the guard has to resume as soon as he returns the men on guard don't go. It is rather amusing that sixteen hours of the day the prisoner sleeps or works with an armed guard with fixed bayonets over him, and the other eight hours he goes up to the trenches with the digging parties carrying all arms and 100 rounds of ammunition himself.

July 21st—Wednesday.

Went up to trenches again to-night; this time sandbagging the parapets of the trench just dug. One party who were filling sandbags dug up another corpse. We had built in all our sandbags by midnight, and got back about 2.30 a.m. There were the usual number of stray bullets and the usual few shells near the horses, but no damage.

July 22nd and 23rd—Thursday and Friday.

Trenching parties as before, sandbagging. We finish this work rather earlier, and usually get in about 2.30.

July 24th—Saturday.

News came to-day that No. 4 Troop is to leave the squadron for a time and be attached to the 1st Army Corps Headquarters. Very busy cleaning kit in consequence. Mr. Joicey of No. 1 Troop left to-day to take up a commission with the 9th Lancers. His groom is not going with him, and took over Black Susan. I am to ride Spence's (the cook) horse in future. Susan has been staying in with a strained fetlock, so it is just as well she is not to be moved.

July 25th—Sunday.

Paraded at 8.30 a.m. to-day, and proceeded to the 1st Army Corps Headquarters in Chocques, whence we were directed to

our billet at a place called Le Hamel, about a mile away. We are taking over from the South Irish Horse. The duties consist apparently in forming posts of three men with N.C.O., if possible, for traffic-directing purposes. Stan Marshall's section (Bates, Jobson, and Macdonald) went off at once to take up the first post at Gonnehem, about a mile away.

July 26th—Monday.

Quiet day exercising and settling down. Mack's horse died in the night.

July 27th—Tuesday.

My turn to drive the spring-cart and fetch rations, also to take Marshall's section their rations. Took over two posts from 7th Dragoon Guards to-day. Dierick's section (Campbell, Morrison, and Hindson) at cross roads near Hinges, and Pigg's section (Elliot, A. Hall, and T. Hall) at cross roads on Chocques-Bethune road, about two kilometres from Bethune. Had to harness up again in afternoon, and take rations to the two new posts. Pack horses had got sore shoulders, owing to collar being bad fit, so put my nag—late Spence's—in shafts. Great talk of leave one man a day or something like that.

July 28th—Wednesday.

With so many men out, it has now become my job to drive cart for the present. Not a bad occupation. Hook in about 7.30 a.m., draw rations from A.S.C. dépôt at Chocques at 8.0 a.m., return and divide things up, and off again about 9.30 to visit the three posts, and get back between 12.30 and 1.0 p.m. Sergeant G. Graham comes round as N.C.O. for the job. Smith and Pimley have volunteered to work on the harvest.

July 29th—Thursday.

Leave to one man every two days. Not much system observable in order. Hindson went to-day. Smith and Pimley don't like accommodation in farm, so come back to sleep. They work from 8.30 a.m. to 5.0 p.m., though the natives work from 5.30 a.m. to 8.0 p.m.

July 30th—Friday.

Dierick says he cannot work his post properly with only three men, including himself, so Pringle went out to-day. Mr. Laing paid us this afternoon.

July 31st—Saturday.

Anty Hall went on leave to-day, and Bowie went to take his place at Pigg's post at Vendin, near Bethune.

August 1st—Sunday.

21st Brigade returning from trenches came to Gonnehem to-day, and Staff Officer gave Marshall notice to leave his billet by 7.0 a.m. to-morrow. As they are taking over post the whole section came in this evening.

MY DEAR MATER,

August 1st, 1915.

I'm afraid I have been awfully lazy about writing lately, but after a long period of inactivity we have now had a spell of comparative busyness. A little while ago we were up digging trenches nearly every night, and now we have a job that keeps us pretty well occupied in the day-time. I suppose I must not say much about it in this letter, but it is one of the safe and comfortable jobs that the Tommies like, and that are generally given to the cavalry at present. My own share in it, which I dropped in for quite accidentally, is perhaps the best of the lot—namely, driving the ration cart. With the junior sergcent, I turn up at the A.S.C. depot at 8.0 a.m. every morning, draw rations for the troop (there is only our troop on this job), come back, divide up the stuff, and then drive round and deliver their day's grub and forage to the three outlying posts, getting back between 12.30 and 1.0 p.m. It reminds one very much of being a country grocer. In the afternoon I ought to clean tack and write letters, etc., but the weather has been so hot lately that if there is no big job on I often drop asleep after dinner. If, however, I find great difficulty in working myself up to letter-writing pitch, in this open-air life, I nevertheless read your letters with the greatest interest. . . .

F*

There has been leave for favoured persons to get a week at home for some time, but up to lately there has been no likelihood of my getting a turn; now, however, our troop is in a very good position in this respect, and there is a possibility that I may be due for a turn in three weeks' time, if nothing happens to upset things. It is rather unusual for us to go three weeks with nothing happening unexpectedly; there might, for example, be another big attack before then; so I advise you not to put too much faith in this date, but if ever you get a telegram from me from "Somewhere in England" you will know that there is a pretty good chance of my coming home, unless I am turned back at Victoria, which has happened before now to other men! I think, though, that I can give you a somewhat later date when, if still alive, I am pretty certain to get home—namely, January 26th, 1916. Orders have come out recently that time-expired men are to have the option of taking their discharge, or, if they agree to sign on again, they are to have a month's leave before recommencing their duties. My time, including the extra year that one can be compelled to serve, expires on January 26th next. I am not quite decided what I shall do about it, as I should rather like to be out of this crush, but can hardly stick the idea of being a civilian again while the war is still on, and I suppose it will last another twelve months at least. I wonder if the Gov. ever comes across any Engineer Colonels who want another officer or anything of that sort; in which case it might not be too late to get a commission yet. I have no fancy for the infantry of the line, but I would not mind joining an infantry battalion as machine-gun officer.

I received your last parcel yesterday, and found all the things in it very nice. . . . We have not had many strawberries, but cherries have been very plentiful, and there will soon be "beaucoup" apples and pears. We generally bivouac in orchards!

I am no longer riding Susan. She had a sprained fetlock, and when we moved last another man took her over who was staying behind, and I took over the mare that used to belong to the cook, thus doing away with a spare horse in the troop. Just

now, however, I am using another man's horse because it goes better in the cart.

The natives here are very busy with the harvest now, and any soldiers with nothing to do are lent out to give a hand. Two of our chaps went to a farm for about four days, but they are finished now. They did not keep the same hours as the natives though; they used to start at 8.0 a.m. and finish at 5.0 p.m. The Frenchies get up at 4.30 a.m., start work at 5.30, have from 12.0 to 1.30 p.m. for dinner, and then work till 8.0 o'clock. Then they have supper, and the outside labourers generally get home between 8.30 and 9.0 p.m.

By the way, you remember that brandy flask you gave me at Lyndhurst? I had had it with me up to about three weeks ago untouched, but its time came at last. It was the first of our digging excursions, and a rotten wet evening. We saddled up at about 6.0 p.m., putting wet tack on wet horses, and the rain came pit-a-pat all the time. We rode about five miles and put our horses in the orchard of a farm where the people were still living and working, although the shells had taken half the roof off the barn. Then we walked about two miles further towards the trenches, and sat about in the rain in the garden of a burnt-out cottage, waiting further developments. At last it transpired that there were no spades for us, so we walked back to our horses and returned to camp. On the way back it really rained. We had waterproof capes and it soaked through those; it ran off the bottoms of them and soaked our puttees until our boots were full of water, and it ran in at every chink. When we got back about 1.0 a.m. my shirt was wet to the waist where the rain had run down my neck. I was kipping with a chap called Tosh Hall at the time, and as our bivic was a very hastily put up affair just then, we decided to sleep in the barn. So we made a bed of our greatcoats and blankets, which were quite dry (in places), and then I remembered that flask of brandy, and thought that the proper occasion was now or never. So we drank half each and reckoned it saved our lives. Anyhow next morning by the time we had had breakfast, a couple of quinine pills, and a bit of sunshine we were as right as ever. The only drawback was that two nights

afterwards we were nearly as wet again, and we had no more brandy, but I suppose we were hardened to it by that time. If you could send the whercwithal to refill, it would be very nice. . . . Now we are having very fine weather, and are all very fit. I hope you and the Gov. are the same.

August 2nd—Monday.

Macdonald left on leave to-day.

August 3rd—Tuesday.

The Yorks (21st Brigade) have taken over Dierick's post, so his section has come in too. There is now only Pigg's post to take rations to.

August 4th—Wednesday.

Kerr and Dotchen left on leave together to-day. In the evening there was a concert, etc., at the château of Chocques, but I did not go.

August 8th—Sunday.

It has recently been decided to cast four horses, and mine—late Spence's—went to-day. I had to parade it at Squadron Headquarters (between Gonnehem and Contranc) at 8.0 a.m., and afterwards took her to Mobile Section, A.V.C., at Lillers.

August 11th—Wednesday.

After taking rations to Pigg's post at Vendin, we went on to Bethune to see about my watch being mended there. Sergeant Thompson was also of the party.

August 12th—Thursday.

The other three horses—Darkie, Jim, and Campbell's—were sent away to-day.

August 18th—Wednesday.

Mr. Laing is leaving for England on leave to-morrow, and is going to get married. The boys had subscribed and got a present: two brass vases, rather handsome.

MY DEAR MATER,

August 18th, 1915.

. . . I was rather amused at the Gov. going off to camp in a cab. The fellows who came back from Ghent had no assistance beyond a small tin of "bully," and the knowledge that the "Deutscher" were somewhere about. Whatever does he want three blankets for? The chaps out here, who don't always get the chance of a dry place to sleep in, are not allowed to carry even one blanket, and that applies to us, although we have horses to help us take the weight. . . .

You need not send me any more newspapers, unless there is something special, as we can always buy the daily papers out here—only one day old. We don't get much time for reading and we don't take much interest in the war, but we like an occasional read of something diverting, so one or two magazine or sixpenny novels would be acceptable, and, of course, *Punch* always.

By the way, I am sorry to say that the orders regarding leave have been changed again as usual, and there is no longer any immediate prospect of my coming home. However there is always January 27th to look forward to. Mr. Laing is going home in a few days to get married. The Troop have made him a little present.

Some of our chaps have been farming, or rather harvesting, lately, but as I am still driving the cart I have not done any except an occasional spell for fun in the evening. It is time the cart went over to the A.S.C. now, but it is raining whole water. However I must stop so as to be ready to hook in as soon as it fairs up.

August 19th—Thursday.

Mr. Robson came to-day in Laing's place.

August 25th—Wednesday.

We moved back to squadron to-day, and were all very sorry to have finished our job. We were relieved by a troop of the Glasgow Yeomanry. Owing to our having two officers' kits and being four troop horses short we could not get all the stuff

on the cart, so it had to make two journeys, and I stayed on guard over the stuff left and then got a ride back—much better than walking. It was about 6.0 p.m. before I got to the new camp, near Calonne.

August 26th—Thursday.

Nearly all troop was away digging to-day, as the others have been doing for about a week. I stayed in as stable guard.

August 27th—Friday.

Was up digging myself to-day. The job is clearing and deepening the roadside ditches in connection with a scheme of improved drainage, so that if the line has to be held in about the same place this winter the trenches will be dryer. Just when we were getting near our destination a couple of good size Jack Johnsons came over, and about half an hour afterwards another couple. They were only a matter of forty yards or less from us, but apparently were intended for a house near by, which is being fortified. We started at 7.0 a.m., commenced work at 11.0, finished about 1.30, and got back at about 5.0 p.m. As it was very hot weather, and we had a longish walk from our horses, we were quite tired enough.

August 26th—Saturday.

Did very little to-day, as we are to move at 7.0 a.m. to-morrow, and transport had to be loaded overnight.

August 29th—Sunday.

Moved to-day at 7.0 a.m. to a place near Berguette, where there was a windmill and a watermill in immediate vicinity. The millstream gave us a very good water supply. Not having a horse I went with the wagons and walked a good part of the way. A party of twelve from No. 4 Troop went straight to Chocques, and returned to Berguette with thirteen remounts.

August 30th—Monday.

The new horses are being kept separate, and the men without horses, chiefly No. 4, look after them. They are not bad

stamp, though, with one exception, rather small. Two are for Mr. Fenwick, and as several men have been sent to hospital since the indent went in, the officers are taking three or four more. One is a kicker, and no good. I don't know which I shall get.

September 2nd—Thursday.

I have been detailed to act as loader to the second-line transport, but as I had to go out exercising this morning I was not in time to go away to-day. I am to take Morrison's old horse, Blackie, as he is said to want a job where there is not much work to do.

September 3rd—Friday.

Went away with the second-line wagons to-day. As the Division is moving, squadron moves to-morrow 7.0 a.m. I also had to guide wagons to new A.S.C. billet. We parked with No. 2 Company at Fouquereuil. Rotten wet ride, rain all day. Clarke was driving the big wagon and one of the horses was ill on the way and collapsed with colic on arrival. It was pretty bad, but recovered a bit in the night.

September 4th—Saturday.

Clarke's horses were sent away to No. 1 Company, and a new pair with a driver, called Young, came in place. Thus we were late turning out, and had some difficulty in finding the refilling point as it was not at the place shown me on the map. The squadron is now at a big farm half-way between Fouquereuil and Chocques. Returning we took the wagons to No. 1 Company, A.S.C., which is parked at Fouquieriers-les-Bethune. As neither myself nor my horse is attached to the A.S.C., I have billeted him in a cart-shed at the back of a brewery kept by Jombard Frères, so I have no one to boss over me.

September 5th—Sunday.

We are getting into the swing of things now. Young is to stay on in Clarke's place. He is a Londoner, and knows Chiswick well. The other driver is a lad called Syd Meadham, who

comes from Wiltshire. The wagons leave at 8.0 a.m. or before, and proceed to the refilling point, where we load up and proceed to the squadron. After the unloading I give a hand dividing up, and we are ready to leave at about 11.0 o'clock. Sometimes we have to wash the wagons before we return. Sometimes I ride on the wagons and exercise Blackie in afternoon, and sometime I ride Blackie behind the wagons.

MY DEAR PATER,

September 9th, 1915.

Very many thanks for your last two letters. I am afraid I have been sadly remiss in not writing sooner. I have been on the point of writing several times lately, but there always seems to be something to do first, and then it is too late. Perhaps I lack the knack of snatching odd moments, but out here writing means generally first of all a clean up, then finding a cleanish place to sit down in, then something to write on, and by that time there is only ten minutes to stables or something, and by the time I have sorted out the letter I want to answer it is not worth while to start.

With regard to the commission in the Engineers, I must first thank you for the enormous amount of trouble you have taken. I can quite understand the difficulties. . . .

Major Page seems to have been very decent. I have enquired about the possibility of getting leave soon, but the latest orders are that leave is suspended. Orders are, however, continually changing, and, perhaps, I may be able to get a turn before too late. On the other hand, I may not. . . .

At the present time I have the job of loader to the second-line transport, and live at the A.S.C. park. I sleep in one of the wagons, but get my grub from the squadron and have it cooked in a house, as I am not attached to the A.S.C. The wagons go off at 8.0 a.m. in the morning to the refilling-point, where we draw the rations, forage, etc., for the whole squadron, take them up to the camp, unload, give a hand with the dividing up, and then we are done, but I still have my horse to look after. I have got him billeted near the park, too. It is a job

that involves plenty of healthy exercise, and I am keeping very fit on it, but I think I shall go back to the troop before long.

I hope you and the Mater are in the pink.

September 10th—Friday.

There are more rumours going about now of a new great attack, but to-day was the first time we could hear any bombardment to speak of. The boys have been trench-digging lately, and to-night our wagons were included in the convoy that went up to the trenches with materials.

There have been great changes in the squadron this last day or two. Sergeant-Major T. Murray has gone home to England, and Jack Thompson has been promoted in his place. Sergeant Copeland has been put in charge of No. 4.

September 12th—Sunday.

To get some information for Quartermaster-Sergeant Hutty I went to "B" Squadron this evening. They are at the village of Gosnay, not far from here. Saw Jack Elliot and James, but not the other fellows from the Gun Section.

September 13th—Monday.

Corporal Forester came up from the base to-day to our Squadron. He is the last Gun Section man to return, and has been posted to No. 4 Troop, as senior Corporal.

September 16th—Thursday.

Great excitement to-night owing to house and estaminet a few yards from the brewery where I billet being burnt down. I went out and helped to form bucket line (incidentally lost my own bucket), but it was impossible to save the house as there was hardly any water to be got from the only two pumps in the neighbourhood. The people were refugees and the fire was due to their putting a candle too near the curtain, and not to the soldiers there. The latter, however, had no time to take their ammunition out of the loft they were using, and the first quarter of an hour was like a machine-gun in action. Nobody was hurt. It started about 9.0 p.m., when I was in bed, and only lasted a bit more than an hour.

September 17th—Friday.

Our dump was in a different place to-day; only a few hundred yards from the squadron. Understand that the old place on Bethune-St. Pol road was given up to leave this road more free for military traffic. Nobody quite knows when the new great attack is coming off, but everybody is expecting it soon. Hear that the other day some Germans shouted to our chaps across the trenches, "When is that big bombardment going to start?" I bet they get a sickener when it does start.

MY DEAR MATER,

September 19th, 1915.

. . . I received the Gov.'s last letter two days ago. Apparently he has the impression that I am particularly "fed up" just now, but such is not the case. We are all pretty bobbish. I have seen Mr. Laing and he has promised me the turn after next for leave, which *should* be due in about a fortnight, but this is not, by many, the first time I have been expecting leave within a fortnight, and may very easily not be the last, so don't set your mind upon it. It was in order the other night that all mechanics, fitters—in fact, practically all tradesmen—were to send in their names to the orderly room, and would probably be wanted for service with the Mechanical Transport or Flying Corps. A little while ago I should probably have sent my name in, too, but having in mind what the Gov. wrote me about Major Page, I thought I would chance my shot on the higher mark and wait.

Yes, as you heard, I saw George Thompson the other day. He was out riding and saw some horses marked "N.H." Thinking that this must be my mob, he asked one of the men if he knew me. It happened to be a chap in the same troop on his way to the forge, so George soon got directions, but he was very lucky; for even supposing he was right about the "N.H.," each of our squadrons is with a different division, and he might have been miles out. However, we met and had a chat. He was looking very fit, very smart, and well-mounted withal, but the artillery always get good horses. He was riding a fresh chestnut cob, and his orderly, riding a respectful twenty paces behind, was on a useful looking black charger. . . .

In a green envelope letter I suppose I mustn't say anything about what we see and hear, but, no doubt, German news would be allowed. Lately the Allemongs have been shouting across to our trenches, "When are you going to start that bombardment?" As a bombardment is no good without an attack to follow, perhaps there may be something doing before long.

* * * *

My son, being a qualified mechanical engineer, had, of course, worked as a practical fitter during his apprenticeship, but as he belonged to a higher rank of the profession he was not among those to whom the order which he mentions would properly apply, and the sending in of names was probably optional. The Major Page to whom he refers was an officer in command of a *dépôt* of one of the London Divisions of Territorial Engineers, who had promised to see my son with regard to a possible commission if he were able to come to London.

His friend, George Thompson, to whom he refers was at the outbreak of the war a private in the Honourable Artillery Company, but had obtained a commission in some artillery unit, and had just arrived in France for the first time.

This was the last communication we received from my son's own hand. The next news we had was a telegram from the Territorial Force Records Office at York, which arrived late in the evening of Thursday, September 30th, stating that he was dangerously ill at the Australian Hospital, Wimereux, suffering from gunshot wounds in abdomen, leg, and arm, and that permission to visit him could not be granted. We went to the War Office at once, but failed to obtain the withdrawal of this prohibition. The next morning we received a letter from Captain E. B. B. Towse, Gordon Highlanders, written at the Wimereux Hospital on September 29th, stating that when my son arrived there that morning he was in a collapsed condition, and although now better was very badly wounded and still in a very serious state. The letter stated that it was written at my son's request, but the only message from him it contained was that he sent his most kind remembrances, was only sorry he could not at present write to us himself,

and that he asked the writer to tell us that he would recover and get through all right. Captain Towse added that my son's condition was due not only to the serious nature of his wounds but to the length of time he was lying out in the field before he was attended to. He said that my son was in a very weak state, but, so far as he could understand from him, he was found by one or two of his own men, or possibly not his own men, and that but for them he would never have been got into the field hospital. It is evident to me now that after he arrived at Wimereux my son was too weak and ill to give a detailed account of what had happened to him after he was wounded. We received further particulars afterwards from his officer, and Corporal Pigg, who so bravely stayed with my son after he was shot down.

We inferred from Capt. Towse's letter that although my son was in great danger there was still some hope of his recovery, and that we should probably be allowed to go to see him if his case became hopeless. It was, therefore, a great shock to us when, at 7.0 p.m. on Saturday, October 2nd, we received a telegram from Colonel Eames, the Medical Officer in Command of the Australian Hospital, saying that my son died on October 1st. We obtained permission to proceed to Wimereux *via* Boulogne, to attend his funeral, and our grateful thanks are due to Mr. Gordon of the War Office and to Captain Waterhouse, the Military Permit Officer, for the great kindness they showed us in giving us facilities for the journey. But when we arrived at Wimereux on Sunday evening we found that my son had already been buried the day before, and all we could do was to visit his grave, and talk a little with the staff of the hospital, who showed us every kindness and sympathy.

After our return we received letters from Lieutenant (now Captain) Laing and Corporal Pigg. Lieutenant Laing's first letter was written on September 26th, and explained that my son was wounded on September 25th, the first day of the Battle of Loos, while taking part in an officer's patrol, when two of the party were wounded and four horses shot. He wrote: "What naturally grieves me, but what I tell you to show what my opinion of your son is, is that I knew our ride would be a

dangerous one, and selected the four men that I thought would be most game to come and most likely to be useful."

In his second letter after hearing of my son's death Captain Laing described in more detail the circumstances under which he was wounded. He stated that just before the attack my son particularly asked him to get him off the duty of loader to the transport, which he mentions in his diary, as he did not wish to miss the fight. The patrol was sent out by the O.C. Divisional Troops under instructions to obtain information concerning the attack, and Lieutenant Laing took with him Corporal Pigg's section of four men, of whom my son was one. They rode up to our first-line trench, which had originally been the second-line German trench, dismounted, and hid the horses in a shell-hole behind a small mound. The officer then went forward and obtained his information, and then returned to the rear, having given orders that the men were to follow at intervals.

The rest of the story is best told in the following letter from Corporal (now Sergeant) Pigg, whose conduct affords one of the noblest examples of endurance and self-sacrifice under the severest conditions in the determination to do all that was possible for a wounded comrade.

DEAR MR. CUNNINGHAM,

On behalf of what is left of my section I wish to convey our feelings of deepest sympathy during this time of your sad bereavement in the loss of your faithful son, Frank. I can truly say his loss will never be filled in the gap that it has made in the section.

A comrade; a soldier; one who was willing to do more than his share; a backbone to the section.

His good ways and kindness in associating with his comrades set an example that will live with them to the end.

Our officer will probably have told you how he was wounded; I will give you a few details.

My horse was shot first, Elliott was next, and then Frank—Elliott in the neck and Frank, the first time, in the leg or thigh. After I came to grief my first duty was to see to the others, and under heavy maxim and rifle fire I got Elliott and

Frank into a small shell-hole for safety. The fire slackened, and Frank proposed a move back into a communication trench about thirty yards away, which led back to our lines. It being the only course advisable I agreed to it, Frank to go first, Elliott second, and myself last. He managed to get about half-way to the communication trench when they opened an intense rifle fire on the part where he was proceeding, evidently having observed him.

On hearing his shout as he rolled over with another bullet through his arm and his stomach, I proceeded at once to the spot under the same conditions of rifle fire. I got him placed in an easy position, and went in search of a doctor, who attended to him.

The rain was coming down in torrents, which made things much worse. I put my tunic off and covered him up as well as I could, waiting for a stretcher to come, although the prospects of one were vague for a while, owing to the position.

This would be about 2.30 p.m. About 6.30, no stretcher putting in an appearance, I set out in search of one. On walking about a mile I came on several, but they were so busy with their own men I couldn't have one, as each brigade confined their stretchers and labours to their own men.

I walked on until I got into Vermelles, about three miles away, where I came on our officer. He and another corporal went back with me to have Frank conveyed back. We found he had gone and thought some of the R.A.M.C. men had got him safely away.

I learnt after that he had heard of the Germans going to make a counter-attack to try and regain their lost trenches, so he had crawled into the communication trench and got away with someone into the Field Hospital.

We happened to get into the counter-attack, which was a very hot corner; thought I would lose my eyesight with their gas; you see, my respirator was in my tunic.

We got back without further loss. I was in an awful plight, only had my shirt on; it rained for hours; hadn't anything to eat all day. But all this never disturbed me; all I wanted to know was where and how was Frank. Our officer sent someone

around the hospitals next day, when Frank was found doing as well as could be expected, which greatly relieved me.

Now that the worst has come, I can't put my feelings into words : I have lost my best comrade, whom I have been attached to ever since making his acquaintance at Gosforth Park. . . .

Believe me, in sympathy,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) E. PIGG, Corporal.

We hope you have enjoyed reading the contents
of this booklet.

Contact us for more information at
www.heroesofchiswick.com

Thank you.

