

*The following is a semi-diplomatic transcription of the original text. Although minor changes may have been made in the interests of clarity and readability, original spelling and grammar have been maintained wherever possible.*

## **World War I Memories**

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November, 1976

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In July 1916<sup>\*</sup> when a lawyer from Grande Prairie came out to Beaverlodge on a U.F.A. picnic day acting as a recruiting I enlisted in the Canadian army the attestation papers being dated July 15, 1916<sup>\*</sup>. When a young English homesteader from near Clairmont, Sidney Crane, who was working for McNaught's heard I had enlisted he signed up too, as did a fellow "Shorty" Tulk, who worked at Rutebaga Johnson's for a while when I worked there. The next day, Shorty and I walked to Saskatoon Lake where we and several others passed a preliminary medical exam. That night as I had a couple of light blankets along Crane and I slept in Lorne Smiths just up from the Post and had breakfast there. That day all of us were taken to Grande Prairie in wagons to the would be townsite of Bezanson on the Northwest side of the confluence of the Wapiti, Simonette and Smoky rivers. We slept part of the time for the mosquitos were quite bothersome, in a partially constructed building that was to be a business place in the new town, which by the way never materialized. The next day we boarded a gas powered boat, on the Smoky River, two boats in fact for there was about 40 of us with a bear cub for a mascot. I was on the larger boat carrying the name "Beaver" but there was no name of the smaller boat so naturally we called it the Muskrat. We were now charge of a Capt. Lucas so now quite a few of us penny pinchers didn't need to keep wondering how we were going to get enough to eat on our way to Edmonton. The Smoky river was very high so we made great time reaching Prudens Crossing, now Watino where there was a railway bridge under construction and we had our first army financed meals in the restaurants. That evening we scrambled up the Smoky banks

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<sup>\*</sup> the year was 1915 as per attestation papers

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to the end of steel, a place called Culp. We slept in abandoned log buildings and next day

boarded the train for Edmonton and on arriving there we were taken by trucks to the Exhibition grounds and billeted in the different buildings. It took some time to put us through medical exams, inoculations and vaccination, clothing issued, divided into squads, given a little marching and other training finally being assigned to a company. I went to No. 2 company then into No. 5 platoon, regimental no. 101094. In due time we were moved to Sarcee Camp, a tented affair southwest of Calgary where we had more training, a couple of sessions with rifles on the target ranges, etc, until Nov. 1 when we were moved back into the Exhibition grounds at Edmonton. The days passed in sort of training, route marches, once to St. Albert and back in one day, to Ft. Saskatchewan for overnight in the jail sleeping on the straw on the floor, back the next day, church parade on Sun., guard duty, lectures a few athletic activities. I got Christmas leave of a few days so went by train to Mildred, Sask to see the boys I worked for during the summer of 1913, one fellow was married and he and his wife went back to the states to visit their relatives for part of the winter, the other fellow was engaged to a local girl so we spent Christmas and most of the other days at her home. Went to the Pantages theatre several times Weds. and Sat. matinees for they were less expensive for at a \$1.10 per day; but even at that I saved a little for Mother and Dad to use until if and when I could use it myself. The only time I went out with a girl I took her to see the picture, a silent movie of course, *The Birth of a Nation*, the greatest picture [...].

All of us were so restless, wanting to get into action in [...] training seemed to lag, we didn't seem to be getting much, and so on. Our commander was quite a show off and knowing we were so restless came around one day and said we were going overseas as soon as "he"

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could get the ships to take us there. We were quite sure it was just baloney, and so it was, but anyway at the time there were many hurrahs and much clapping and cheering probably causing him to believe we thought him to be a great fellow. But finally it was more than just a rumor for we started making preparations to move. Of course there was to be the usual church parade the last Sun. we were to be in Edmonton. Many of the fellows had been living in Edmonton with their families, had sleeping out passes so when not on duty could be with their families when dismissed after the last parade of the day until revellie the next morning. I thought it downright cruel that they should be torn from their families to come to barracks to attend church parade

when they could have gone to church with their families, perhaps for the last time, which proved to be the case with a fellow in a bunk alongside mine. Six of us were in a sort of a cluster, double bunks three tiers high, he was next to me for he had to have some place for his equipment and a place to stay when on duty. He was shall we say quite annoyed about the affair but orders are orders. I felt for him tho otherwise the parade didn't affect me much for I had no relatives, no close friends or girl friend in Edmonton or any other place, but it hurt and still feel it to a certain extent that the chaplain couldn't or wouldn't find a way to cancel that church parade. Was he so filled with such an exaggerated opinion of his own and that parades' importance that he had no room in his heart for a little pity or sympathy or room in his head for a little common sense. By the way, when we were in France holding the line I know definitely many of us, and feel safe in saying that the majority of us would prefer to be in the front or support trenches on Sunday then back in the reserve area and have to

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go to church parade. We had no choice of course. But back to Edmonton. We finally boarded the train late in April, 1916. I had never before seen so many tears in such few hours before the train pulled out. It was a troop train, all cars carrying only soldiers. We were in colonist cars, where the four occupants of the two seats facing each other could by pulling down something like in a sleeping car sleep two in the lower bunk and two in the upper.

Meals, mostly stews, were served on the train. We detrained at Ottawa to be reviewed by Sir Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia, probably the same as the present minister of defence. We heard the same words we were to hear a few times later "a fine body of men and Canada is very proud of you". The train stopped at Moncton, N.B. perhaps to change crews and engines and so many people came with 10 or so apples in each of many small paper sacks that I am sure each of us got an apple or two, and there were about 600, half the battalion, on that train. We finally reached Halifax and boarded the Olympic passenger boat. I think it was the largest one at that time, 54,000 tons. What a revelation for one who had been in nothing larger than a rowboat before, and that only a very few times. We lay in the harbor for a few days taking on coal and other supplies from barges. We had no escort on leaving Halifax and as the authorities thought the ship fast enough to avoid submarines on the high seas we had no escort until off the west coast of Ireland when we were met by three destroyers they said, which were fast enough to

cruise circles around us. It took 5 1/2 days to reach Liverpool boarding a train next day which took us to a camp near Folkstone from where we were soon moved to Shornecliffe camp right near Folkstone. Seems like not so much military training but for a bunch

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of us athletically inclined, more athletic activities. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, (we reached Shornecliffe about May 7<sup>th</sup>) I took part in some racing and even in the tug of war team. It was the largest sports day I had participated in up to that time. Early in June the Canadians in France suffered severe casualties so there was a call for 400 reinforcements from the battalion in which I enlisted, the 66<sup>th</sup>.

What a scramble to get on the draft but our Lt. Col. wouldn't let any of the alleged athletes go on it. We kept on with our several activities and a group was taken for a large sports event at Stormford Bridge, London on Bank Holiday in Aug. We went a few days ahead of time staying at a Hotel, expenses paid, near the Seven Dials. I participated in some races and altho the alleged athletes from Canada didn't cause a sensation we probably did fairly well. But that wasn't the main thing I enlisted for so when there was wind of another draft leaving a few of us got on but when our former commander found out about it we were taken off.

Then perhaps thinking it might pacify me a little I was promoted from Lance Corporal to Corporal. A few times on draft then off again when it looked as tho I might be sent to the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn, and tho a few I knew were sent there and some to the 31 Bn. so when I found out a draft was soon to be sent to the 49<sup>th</sup> Bn., to which most of my friends in the June draft were sent, on explaining to the officer in charge I was switched to the draft for the 49<sup>th</sup>. There was no hesitation on my part to "revert" to the permanent grade to proceed overseas, so in October we were on a boat in Southampton harbor to go to France. It was a very small

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boat with a paddle wheel on each side similar to the ferry boats crossing the Mersey river between Liverpool and Birkenhead.

We left port after dark, it was a windy, chilly night and so rough for such a small boat, so many of us were soon leaning over the rail. After getting thoroughly chilled one would go below, there were only two places on that boat, on deck, or below with the noise and smell of the engines

and so many really sea-sick men. What a night that was one wondered how one could feel so sick and still not die. What a relief to get on to the dock at Le Havre about daylight. We were marched out to one of several tented camps containing thousands of troops to undergo a final 10 days of training to fit us for front line duty so we could be sent to our various combat units. What a 10 days that was, the instructors had seen active duty, "been through the mill" in the Imperial army so knew their stuff. We soon learned the cheapness of human lives. At one pit for instruction and practice in throwing a hand grenade, the Mills bomb, the bomb was constructed with a lever fitting closely along side the bomb and held in place by a pin to which was fastened a ring compressing a spring when released activated a plunger which struck a detonater igniting a fuse which burned for about 5 seconds, igniting the explosive inside which shattered the bomb scattering fragments at quite a speed in every direction. In this instance instead of the fuse burning for the few seconds after the bomb was thrown the explosion took place immediately taking the throwers' hand with it. Special first aid men were called, bound up the wound, took the man away and the next name on the list of that group was called and things went on as usual. By the way when the bomb

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was to be thrown, if you were right handed you grasped it in your right hand with the fingers over the lever then when drawing the arm back in preparation for the throw, not like throwing a baseball but more like the action of one throwing the ball in cricket, with a finger of the left through the ring attached to the pin holding the lever in place, the pin is pulled out so the right hand now has the only control over the lever which of course is released and flies off when the bomb is thrown. Naturally on the first handling of a live bomb one may excused for being somewhat nervous but one fellow was so befuddled that instead of throwing the bomb for some distance it fell inside the pit and in the ensuing confusion caused mostly by the bewilderment of the thrower the bomb exploded before it could be thrown out or the two occupants of the pit could get out. The bodies were removed, the mess sort of cleaned up and pit repaired, the next name on the list called and things went on as usual. In another instance one of a group undergoing practice with bayonets fixed charging enemy trenches, in some unaccountable way had a bayonet thrust through his thigh. First aiders were called, they took him away, "alright let's finish this exercise".

And the food, line up and keep moving, one night for supper in a line up that seemed endless and moving so slowly - "1-2-3-4-5 here you five fellows take these three tins of pork and beans keep moving, keep moving" then on a ways farther hold out your mess tin for your ration of alleged tea. But the 10 days finally ended and we were loaded into those small box cars "cheveau 8, hommes 40" and we were sure that the 8 horses

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were far less crowded than the 40 men with all their equipment were. In due time we came to the end of the train ride and found our regiment and was posted to D company, 15 platoon. The battalion has suffered heavy casualties in a protracted campaign in the Somme area, were finally relieved near the end of that push and had been on the march for three days when I joined them. We marched for three days more reaching what was left of the village of Mt. St. Eloi in the reserve area at Vimy Ridge late one afternoon. During those few days on inquiring about those leaving Shornecliffe camp in June there were very few left, what about Crane, "he went to dislodge a sniper and didn't come back", "Mercerau reported missing", another got him in an attack on Regina trench, another in a counter attack while in Sugar trench" and so on. The next night we moved to take up our position in the front line. We set out after dark in groups so far apart until we came to the battered village where we were to meet our guides who would take us to our assigned sector of the front line trench. There was no building left intact, parts of walls here and there, other places once buildings, mostly of what seemed to be blocks of a sort of chalky nature were now but piles of rubble. Our guides had not yet arrived so 4 other fellows and I took shelter in a cellar. Candles were lit and the four start reminiscing, then got to singing, I couldn't join in the talk of former happenings of course and would not join in the singing. I found out afterwards they thought me very quiet, I was just feeling my way trying to find my place among the veterans who had faced death and, as I thought, which later proved to be correct, had dealt it out.

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After singing a while they talked of incidents they had heard of, seen or participated in most of which bordered on and seemed quite gruesome or tragic and now they were laughing about them. How could they do it? One soon learned.

Finally the guides arrived so we set off for the front lines, and what a bewildering experience that was, dark and as now we were not on paved or cobblestone roads mud was everywhere, it was early October and the winter rains had commenced. The ground had been fought over before so was all torn up which with the darkness prevented us making very fast time. Once we stopped we heard a shell high overhead, fired from a long range gun, on its way to a town about 12 miles beyond the German lines. There were indications that the shell when exploding at the intersection for which it was intended would cause a severe interruption of traffic on a main route and perhaps some casualties as well. When on the move again we finally came to where, tho it was still some distance ahead, we could see the occasional flare sent up by the enemy to light up no-man's-land and our front line for a few seconds. There was seldom any artillery or trench mortar firing during the nights when we were only holding the line, some nights none at all in the immediate area but there was a varying number of bursts of machine gun firing, perhaps only 2 or 3 during a night or up to 10 or a dozen times, perhaps because the gun crew saw or heard something even ever so slightly unusual, or thought they did, or sprayed an area farther back on the chance of hitting some one above ground. Soon we came to our third line of trenches and from there moved by communication trench to and through

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our support line to that part of the front line we were to take over. The line was held by an English regiment and as we went along one our men would relieve the two men on the post, those two falling in at our rear. We were so short of men we could post on only one sentry where they had two, in fact we were so short one post was left without a sentry. Finally I was the only one left, the sergeant telling the guide "take him to the listening post".

I followed the guide to a trench, really a narrow ditch between 5 1/2', 6' deep extending at right angles from our trench out into no-man's-land, which he entered with me following. He proceeded so cautiously one step at a time with his rifle at the ready and of course I had mine that way too. We had gone but a very short distance when he stopped turned partly around towards me and in a whisper said "it's not far now so don't make any more noise than you can help". If he had but known how unnecessary that caution was for already I was holding my breath half the time. We finally arrived at the listening post an excavation between 4 and 5 feet in diameter. While the guide was explaining the layout the Germans sent up a flare and I thought I saw an

enemy patrol of 4 coming from our right so I thought that by getting out and quickly crawling sort of diagonally to the left, when they passed along I would be between the patrol and their own front line then when getting busy with the rifle the patrol would think it some excited fellow in their front line mistaking them for our patrol and those in their front line would think their patrol had found something and was taking care of it enabling me to possibly get in a little effective work before either of the two found out where the trouble came from,

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so when the flare died out in a subdued voice I told the other fellow “I saw a Fritz (enemy) patrol out there and I'm going out to get them” and started climbing out. He grabbed hold of my “harness” with a firm grip pulling back on me and saying in a whisper no doubt much louder than he realized “for Christs' man don't do that”. So I had to remain in the hole deeply disappointed for here after about 15 months in the army and really trying at least half a dozen times to be put in a draft for overseas, in Sept 1915, June 1916 in particular, here I was as I thought right in the middle of a war and he didn't want me to try to do something about it. He wasn't mad just was taken aback that I would do such a thing. He explained to me we were supposed to just hold the line, “my God man don't start anything, the fellows we relieved said if you let him (the enemy) alone he'd let you alone so just watch and listen and when coming off in the morning, some one will come to show you the way to the dugout where you'll be for the day trying to get some sleep (etc), this isn't quite like being on guard where you were on 2 hours and off four, we are so short of men you'll be here all night by yourself tho some one may come around once or twice to see how you are making out , so (again) don't start anything if he (the enemy) got mad and counter attacked he could walk right through us and keep going God only knows how far, so (again) don't start anything, I would rather not hear another shot fired for six months or more”. I understood the last much better later on.

Nothing more happened during the remainder of the night and I thought afterwards that there was no patrol after all for when two or more objects are fairly near in line tho at different distances when the head is moved even

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only slightly to one side, as may unknowingly do when straining to get a better look, one or more



of the objects may seem to move. That was experienced a couple of times later on but at each time afterthoughts straightened things out rather quickly. Four more nights of listening post duty then we moved to the support trench from where we would be put into working parties doing one thing or another sometimes during the day but more often at night for the general routine would be 5 days and nights in the front line, sometimes on sentry duty during the day sometimes at night then the same for 5 days and nights in the support trench then back to the front line for 5 days then back to the reserve area for 5 days where we had a chance to get the mud off our clothing and equipment, perhaps a bath under a real shower, sometimes getting to use a coal mine shower, write letters, visit a pub, which didn't happen to be one of my activities, visit others, etc, etc. We were generally billeted in a large structure in Mt. St. Eloi. Wood was so difficult to “scrounge” and when we did get some it was so wet we generally had smoke instead of fire especially during the rainy season of winter when we were most in need of a fire. On only two occasions do I remember having a small amount of charcoal for a fire in the dugout, otherwise we were nowhere near a fire during the 15 days up the line while tramping around in the mud and exposed to the elements most of the winter and spring chilled to the bone.

One sort of wonders why the enemy didn't do something about that listening post but as long as there was no sniping from there it really wasn't bothering them much if at all and as their lines probably were held by troops as battle weary as most of ours were they wanted it quiet too. Tunnels were being dug under Vimy Ridge, eventually there were 22 miles of them.

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They were dug by the engineers, sappers they were generally called.

The tunnels were only wide enough so two men could pass and as no more than two at one time could do the actual digging in any one tunnel as several we dug at once it was slow going. The diggings, a sort of a chalky nature, were put into sand bags then at night a working party would come carry the sand bags of stuff out using some for bolstering the trenches, scattering the bags with the material left in them here and there, between the lines, out in no-man's-land, etc. etc, so the results of the activities would not be so noticeable, perhaps hardly at all unless aerial photographs taken a weeks or month intervals were compared. We manned that listening post until the night of Dec. 28 when a few tons of explosive under a sector of enemy trenches in the area were set off so we could change location of some of our trenches and didn't

need the post any more.

There was plenty of activity while we were consolidating our new position but after a day or two all seemed to have settled down again with no very serious retaliation by the enemy. And to think we would do that to them when we had been over visiting them on Christmas day. We were on sentry duty during the day for that 5 day spell, we had relieved the night duty sentries just before dawn and during the first daylight we noticed the enemy shoveling the soupy mud out of their trench, we couldn't actually see them only the shovels throwing the debris out of the trench. They knew we would be watching the performance so they waved their shovels at us so we waved to them. We then stuck some tin hats up as tho some of us were peeping over the parapet, there being no shots fired we dislodged some filled sandbags standing well exposed waving to them and they waved their arms. We then got up out of the trench beckoning them to

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come over but they stayed in their trench. We then started working our way through the barbed wire in front of our trench, which scarcely took any time at all and started moving into no-man's-land still waving to them to come over but those opposite us stayed put but by now as far as we could see to the right and left of us men from both sides were moving out into no-man's-land. We kept going and they kept waving us to keep coming until finally we were up to their wire entanglements, how much better than ours, it took us a minute or two to work our way through them in broad daylight, how much harder it would have been to try it at night. There too in some places tho not many they had a length of wire with a little sheep bell attached at the middle so when this wire was moved the bell would tingle and a machine gun mounted to sweep the full length of the wire was swung into action by one of the crew. I have such a bell that I sent to Mother and Dad in a parcel from France. Their officers kept the men in the trench and we were soon exchanging souvenirs, one fellow gave me a clip of cartridges and in my stuttering and stammering German I told him "better this way than the way you were giving them to us yesterday". They just laughed and another fellow gave me a sort of tin matchbox cover with Marshal Hindenberge picture on it. I still have that cover for it was sent home in the same parcel as the little bell. Then another fellow with a good voice sort of shouted out in German "no more shooting, no more shooting". I didn't know whether he meant for the day or call off the whole war so again in my stuttering and stammering German I said "You Germans were the first to

shoot now you can be the first to quit shooting”. I guess they understood that too for there was no

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laughing that time. Then of course as often happens when there is something good going some one has to spoil it for two shots were fired, we couldn't tell just where but it was quite a ways along the trench and afterward there was quite a to-do about which side fired the first shot, don't know if the question was ever settled. We worked our way back through the barbed wire entanglement and their officers ordered their men back to their posts along their trench. No-man's-land was being cleared, occasionally we turned and waved to our opponents but there was no response. Finally all were back in their trenches and we didn't hear another shot fired that day. From October until May the weather was really miserable, cloudy, rain, tho not really heavy, for hours at a time and tho we had a rubber ground sheet about 3' by 6' with an extra piece about 2' or so wide and extending about 1/3 or 1/2 the length along one side making a sort of cape but with the air so moisture laden and splashing around in water, “soup” or mud and being nowhere near a fire for 15 days at a stretch our clothes were damp, if one were fortunate, and a good manager he might have three pairs of sox and when two pairs were not fit to wear without being washed one might be able to send them to the army washer and in time get a pair or two back again tho not necessarily the ones sent out. By being so wet and chilled for so long at a time the blood would not circulate to the outer surfaces of the feet the flesh would become white, dead in fact, to varying extent for different fellows so there would be the trench feet problem. The first aid men were issued jugs of whale oil and we were to see that the fellows would give their feet an occasional good rubbing with it. But that would make the feet colder than ever, creating another problem, for I was a first aid man by that time.

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We were called stretcher bearers for we always had one stretcher with us tho two on special occasions. How I happened to be a stretcher bearer happened this way: I had been with the Bn. less than a month when one night when we were in a dugout in the support line the sergeant came down the stairs shouting out “who'll go as stretcher bearer?” For the first few seconds I thought some one had been hit, placed on a stretcher and some fellows were needed to

take him to the Regimental Aid Post where the Medical officer and his helpers would look after him. But no one else volunteered and I just couldn't understand that, then the sergeant called "anybody else?" and it dawned on me what it was about. I didn't exactly want to be a first aid for I thought to win a war there had to be some shooting and I had not yet fired a shot but I wouldn't back out for wouldn't there be the feeling among others, if not openly expressed one would know it anyway, about a fellow volunteering so quickly showing others up, a newcomer showing us how to win a war etc etc? Then the sergeant told me that in the morning I should go to the Company Quartermaster Stores, turn in my rifle and equipment, go to the regimental aid post, get my first aid kit and I would be stretcher bearer for 15 platoon, which I did and was for just over a year. I thought somebody had to do it. Later on in the winter we were issued rubber boots to wear on the front line but when our 5 day tour there was ended we had to leave them for those relieving us. Tho even that was quite a help but in keeping them on all day, about 13 hours and generally at night the boots were quite damp and of course our sox too and feet generally chilled as well. Now and then there would be fogs of varying density and for

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varying lengths of time. One night while still carrying a rifle, while on sentry duty I saw a white mass moving along towards me with the light breeze. It was an ideal time for a gas attack and as it continued advancing slowly and hugging the ground, as chlorine gas would do as it is heavier than air, I was not going to take chances so I removed the bayonet from the rifle and pounded a shell casing hanging nearby giving the alarm. Soon an officer and his "runner", for an officer generally had some one with him when he moved about, appeared and asked what the trouble was for it quiet along the rest of the trench. I pointed out the white mass extending as far as we could see in the dim light, we watched it for a while then it seemed to become stationary so we relaxed. But conditions were so favourable and everything looked so it could have been gas that he thought I did so right to sound the alarm. We did encounter chlorine gas, in a comparatively small way, later that summer. We were being relieved, the relief getting in around midnight and while we were being relieved the enemy was, to us, for some unaccountable reason shelling an area through which we were to pass on our way back to the reserve area.

And also we could tell that many of the shells seemed to be duds, one dud would arouse but little comment but several in a comparatively short time aroused our suspicion that there

might be dirty work afoot and sure enough when we arrived at that area there was the gas waiting for us. It was in a fairly large shallow depression and as there was no breeze and as chlorine gas is heavier than air it remained there. Under those conditions chlorine gas shouldn't have been too much of a problem, we had good respirators (hold on there, don't call them gas masks or the

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sergeant will bawl you out) and when those in front got a whiff of it word was passed back. When getting the first whiff of gas exhale, then hold your breath, bend the knees a little and hold the rifle between them, undo the two [...] studs holding the closing flap of the container, reach in pulling out the face piece, with the thumbs extend two of the elastics, hook the bottom of the face piece under the chin drawing the rest up over the face, release the elastics, resume breathing, grab the rifle, replace the tin hat which had been dislodged when putting on the face piece and you are ready for business in much less time than it takes to tell about it. But one fellow thought he had inhaled too much gas so was making quite a fuss. Not wanting to take too much of a chance, tho we doubted he was as badly off as he let on we took him out of the contaminated area, removed his respirator, held his mouth shut and crushed an anti gas capsule under his nose. This capsule was of about the same diameter as this ball point pen, about 1/2 in. long of very thin glass inside a cloth cover, filled with some sort of ammonia solution. In use it was placed near the nostrils the capsule crushed and the inhalation of the fumes would help clear things up somewhat. One reason we [knew] that his condition wasn't so bad was when too much gas was taken in would cause vomiting rendering the respirator useless. By that time the sargeant appeared upon the scene and was telling the world in general in no uncertain terms what he thought about the situation tho not mentioning any name and as he was, let us say, well versed in the art of vigorous expression, I still think the sargeant's language had more to do with the casualty's rather rapid recovery than what the rest of us were trying to do for him.

But getting back to after Christmas, during January it was [...] the

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line for sentry duty, work parties, rain, mud, a short peek at the sun now and then, more mud, scanty rations, 8 men to the loaf of bread and not much else, stews, a bit of cheese on Thur., bully beef and hardtack and so on. One would think those in the front lines would get at least as much

grub as any other but sometimes we thought otherwise for instance one time or two on work parties helping the engineers making road or trench repairs etc. at lunch time rations were discussed and we mentioned how we could well do with more they said they would bring us something tomorrow and sure enough they brought a few loaves of bread and some small tins of Emu brand Australian quince jam. Sometimes we would have a chance to have a bath, in the battered village close to our lines. There was a sort of a stock tank of water with a bit of a fire under it, you got a bucket of water to pour into one end of the tank, take out a bucketful from the other end take it to where parts of two walls forming a corner were left standing and perhaps a piece of corrugated roofing was placed standing up for another wall so you might be at least partly protected from a breeze, no roof of course so if it was raining a little you would also be getting a shower while trying to bathe with the warmer water in the wooden beer barrel cut in half. Continual mud excepting for a few days when it turned cold enough to freeze a crust, thick enough to cause the artillery and trench mortar shells to explode above ground causing a louder, sharper noise and shell fragments flying nearer horizontally in seemingly even greater speed in all directions instead of a slightly muffled noise, tho still plenty loud and shell fragments

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flying not quite so near horizontal by starting out from an inverted cone shaped hole when the shell penetrated into the mud before exploding. Sometimes there was hardly any excitement at all, not a casualty in our platoon, of about 70 men when at full strength, which we hardly ever were, but sometimes a few in the battalion as a whole every trip up the line. Sometimes there was a little excitement as when the company next to us raided the enemy trenches, and brought back a few prisoners and as at first the enemy didn't know how extensive the raid was he "lambasted the tar" out of us with artillery, trenchmortar and machine gun fire. One of our fellows, there happened to be four of us in that part of the trench, was quite excitable and when in that state would sort of stick out his tounge and seemingly chew on it, so now doing that, having a wild look in his eyes, nervously swing his rifle around so we had to watch him as well as watch for the trench mortar shells coming over, he repeatedly asked one or another of us "is he going to come over on us?" and we as often asking him "well if he does we are ready for him aren't we?" which didn't seem to sink in. It was some time after things quieted down that the tounge finally got back in its place. When a comparatively small raid, by 6 or 8 men perhaps not more than a

dozen, the number depending on a number of circumstances, our artillery and trench mortars, the latter firing about a 10 lb. shell, would put up a box barrage on the enemy front line preventing help from sides or rear reaching the boxed in portion, our men going over for the express purpose of obtaining prisoners. Prisoners need give but little else than their name and number, all of us carrying tags to that

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effect anyway and answering perhaps one or two seemingly inconsequential questions, but by clever questioning of prisoners taken from different parts of the line from time to time it is wonderful what valuable information is sometimes obtained. And as for watching trench mortar shells coming over they came much slower than artillery shells so we could see them coming in a high arc and if we thought it would fall short we would crowd against the front wall of the trench and if it appeared to be going over we would crowd against the back wall of the trench to try to avoid being hit by shrapnel coming down on angles from the height to which it was thrown by the force of the explosion. Fortunately no shell from any source fell in our sector of the trench. Only once were we able to do anything about the coming of artillery shells. We were on the move over Vimy Ridge after the enemy had been pushed off, it was in broad daylight on a sunny afternoon and were fairly well spread out, perhaps ten paces from side to side and front to back when a long range enemy gun started dropping shells at intervals. There was no other artillery in action so we could hear the cannon fire and could then watch for the shell to come so we saw a few, a black speck visible for only a small fraction of a second before it hit the ground and exploded. They were of a much larger caliber than generally used on infantry so they made quite large holes and those nearest them would run to get into them for tho the enemy had the range only in saturated bombardments would two shells land in the same place even at that we suffered a few casualties tho only about a dozen shells fell amongst us that time.

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The way we operated for some time each company had 4 platoons, ours in D company were 13, 14, 15, 16. I was as before mentioned in 15 platoon.

One platoon no. 16 in our company, was called the duty platoon, they went out at night to meet the horse transport, stationed in the reserve area, to get our daily rations, mail, any needed

supplies that they could handle, if too large a quantity came up a work party was detailed to assist them, bring water, charcoal for the cooks to make smokeless fires to boil porridge, stews and make tea, tend sanitary arrangements etc. etc., while the other three platoons did sentry duty, two platoons at night, one in the day, changing shifts before dawn and after dark, rotating shifts of course. Later in Jan. large quantities of artillery ammunition were being stockpiled, like large haystacks only much longer and perhaps even larger sized, well laid piles of filled sandbags between the ammunition dumps so if one got hit and exploded the other dumps might be protected. A few more pieces of artillery were being moved in and sort of camouflaged, looked like knots of seaweed about two or three inches long tied to nets held up over the guns by poles. And in the back areas, more men in tents. The infantry battalions were taken in rotation to a place about a days' march behind the lines for a week or so of rest. We common fellows, the privates, didn't get much information about pending activities, but there were plenty of rumors, the increased activities indicated we were to be attacked, oh no, look at the wire entanglements in front of our lines, not amounting to much and not being repaired so we are going to attack, but when and so on and so on. Finally it came out turn to go, to the coal mining town of Bruay for our rest. It was the 13<sup>th</sup> of February and toward

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evening as we were entering the town we saw several large notices posted up AVIS naturally we wondered what it was all about so after we six of us were billeted in an empty bedroom up on the third floor of a row house a fellow knowing a little French inquired and was told that a few days before some children found some small parcels and upon opening them found some candy which they ate. That was the last they ever ate. An enemy plane had flown over the town just before that and the notices were to turn in to the police or military authorities any other parcels found. In plain language we thought that was a hell of a way to fight a war. Another opinion about conducting a war was loudly expressed soon after taking up positions in the front lines. I had heard so much about that shot of rum every morning in the front line, the quantity and what it would do for you varied according to the one who told about it whether or not he had ever been up the line. Here we were for a few days and no rum. "What, no rum? That's not the way to run a war, what's the matter with Grusbach (our battalion commander) he never let us down before, or old Sir Sam Hughes (the Minister of Militia perhaps the same as minister of defence or whatever



as now) and again that's not the way to run a war, etc. etc.” So when the sergeant finally came around with the rum one morning I took my ration, one or two tablespoonfuls perhaps, for I didn't want to miss anything as wonderful as that was purported to be. Often after taking one or two swallows of something one will exhale so that is what I did and the resulting fumes coming up momentarily partially strangled me. I thought I'd fix that, instead of

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exhaling I would inhale, take in a good breath of this moist, bone chilling air to counter act the fumes so that is what I did a couple of times and it did help but on the whole I could not see anything so wonderful about it, I thought I was doing all I was supposed to do without it and if I kept on with it I might live looking forward to it from one day to the next as many seemed to be doing so the next time for rum I told the sergeant I wouldn't take the ration, well he asked what are you going to do without it? He had another fellow with him. We didn't have enough men to man all the posts at one time so after leaving a post unmanned for a day or two a man would be taken from another post and put there with continual rotation so it might delay the enemy's finding out how short of men we were, so on the spur of the moment without thinking what it might lead to I said “oh give it to him, he likes it and can do with another ration”. Before the day was over several fellows thought the post I was on was the most important one on that part of the line and should have two men on it and each thought he was the very one to be on with me. Of course there should have been two men on every post. So I made it a point to see the sargeant before next rum time telling him I wouldn't be taking any more rum, for a while anyway and if I changed my mind I would let him know in time and I never bothered with it any more. While we (were) out on rest, about 10 days, we had athletic events, I did some running winning a few francs spending money, did some boxing in one bout being knocked to the floor by a punch I didn't even see coming but I got up in time to continue and by tending to business, even tho I had been knocked down and the other fellow hadn't.

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I won the bout on points and advanced to the next competition when I lost on points. One night another fellow and I took a few children to the picture show, a Charlie Chaplin one, and were the children ever excited, “Charlie Chaplin, Charlie Chaplin”, we got as much watching and

hearing the children as from the show itself.

For water there were taps some distance apart along the street, and many a thin and pale youngster would be seen with a yoke over its' shoulders making trips with two buckets of water suspended from the yoke. The man of the house where we were billeted worked in the coal mines, had a wife and daughter of 18 or so. We managed to get a feed or two of eggs and chips also a loaf or two of bread, quite a dark affair baked in a sort of community oven. It seemed that certain sections had use of this big oven for a certain time at certain times so we sometimes saw youngsters as well as others taking loaves of bread dough to the oven then in time taking the baked bread home. The buildings were hardly touched by war when we were there but we heard afterward that it was flattened within a year. When our rest terminated we were back to sentry go or more work parties then more artillery moving in, artillery fire increasing as each new battery firing several rounds to get the range and the ground that was to be their target when the offensive commenced. Artillery ammunition being taken up and stored in a cavern excavated under no-man's-land just ahead of and entered from our front line so when the guns (artillery) were moved up by horses and mules, ammunition wouldn't be far away. As there were no walkie talkies in those days and there were times when a runner might not be able to get through with information on how the attack was going, communication lines were

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strung along in the tunnels emerging to connect with cables buried 8' deep connected to headquarters. Cable burying and many other activities could be done only at night. By the end of March an unbelievable amount of preparation had been done so our belief in the rumor we would soon attack was quite firm. Then at last when all preparations seemed to have been made we were told we were to attack the next Mon., April 9<sup>th</sup>. Sunday was spent in final preparation, extra rations were to be taken, the army worded it this way "and the other ranks (meaning us common fellows, the privates, the corporals, etc) shall take with them in their haversacks the unexpended portion of the days rations" which we sure meant bully beef and biscuits which proved to be true and the biscuits were not like the biscuits mother used to bake but hard tack but even that were quite welcome at times when rations were so short. And we of the first aid saw to it that our boys were well filled, some small first field dressings, larger shell dressings, triangle and roller bandages, adhesive tape, iodine in a bottle and in capsules of very thin glass enclosed

in a “sack” of cloth which came in very handy when only a little was needed, a scissors, something like a kindergarten scissors with a half a ball on one point so one could cut up the seam of a sleeve or a pant leg, anti gas capsules described previously, morphine in 1/4 grain tablets and in fluid form in a collapsible tube with a hypodermic needle about 1 1/2” long with a wire extending the length of the longitudinal hole down through the needle, the wire having a small loop on the exposed end and to be pulled out ensuring the hole in the needle was open when about to be put into use, with a glass cap screwed to the tube thus protecting the needle. That was used when a casualty needed morphine

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but was unable to take it orally. Whenever a casualty was given morphine we put on a tag when and how much had been given so when passed on those receiving him would know about it. Contrary to some reports we carried no spirits but had an extra bottle of water and an extra stretcher at such times. We also saw to it that every man had a first field dressing in the little “pocket” in the lower front corner of his tunic. About 4 o’clock in the afternoon we struck our tents keeping them out of the mud as much as possible folding them in the prescribed military fashion, took them to the collection dump, from where the transport would take them to storage to remain until needed again. After dark we set off. Soon there seemed to be thousands of men moving along in seeming chaos and confusion but even the smallest unit slowly moving along to arrive at a definite station at the appointed time to become part of a larger unit all fully equipped for the grim work of the morrow. As we moved along I thought well this is Sunday, then not only Sunday but Easter Sunday April 9. So I remembered many another Easter, as we always lived on a farm there were plenty of eggs, first along the Easter bunny placed colored eggs in the nests we prepared, then of course later on we were in on this egg coloring business. Mother made a baking of raisin bread, it was sweeter and richer than ordinary bread and what a treat for the four of us then going to school if there was some for our lunches for a day or two afterwards for if I remember correctly only Good Friday was a school holiday.

We were not regular attendees of the church when we were small but I remember an Easter service or two, so many candles burning most everything

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so hushed, so solemn making quite an impression on a youngster in the lower grades in school. When I was 13 to 14 I moved on to a farm in another neighbourhood at a crossroads less than a 1/2 mile away there was a school and a church across the road from each other. The church was a Church of God affair but attended by all denominations but one and tho we had attended that one and no other, tho far from regularly, we now attended only this country church. It was such a friendly affair, sometimes we had a minister and sometimes not so there was only Sunday school. When a special day came along as Christmas or Easter or Thanksgiving, minister or no there was a special doings at the church. With a minister there would be a special sermon parts of some I remember. One time one said, among other things "Glory to God in the highest on earth peace good will toward men". And as we moved along in the mud those words came to me and I thought what a sham, what a farce, what a mockery for there upon that Easter Sunday in France we were equipped to the full with and filled with a determination that on the morrow we would do our utmost to make the most effective use of the best of the then known equipment, except poison gas, for the maiming, crippling and distruction of what after all was our fellow man across the way. That gave me quite a jolt, a shock from which I have even yet not fully recovered. Then it effected me so my feet faltered to such an extent I almost lost my place within my unit. Soon we were well into the artillery positions

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at a different place than where we had been doing working parties and here to there were so many guns we began to believe what we were told a couple of days previously when, perhaps trying to cheer us up a little we were told that behind us, which bears out the contention that at that time, 1917, the infantry was the spearhead of attack, there would 220 pieces of artillery for every mile in width of the attack. The attack was to be on a front of a little over four miles and there were to be 973 pieces of artillery taking part in the show. They weren't placed side by side of course, had they been it would have been but 2-4 feet from the centre of one gun to the centres of the guns on either side of it. Closest behind us were the field guns, 18 pounders at that time, not that the gun weighed 18 lbs. but that was the weight of the missile they fired, the larger guns farther back, the larger the gun the farther back and fewer there were among them the 6" (diameter of the bore), 8", 9.2" and the 15" howitzer firing a missile weighing 2,240 lbs., not so large in comparison to the weight of the larger bombs dropped from planes these days but just the same when the enemy

counterpart exploded in the near vicinity it gave things quite a shaking up. Such large guns were seldom used on the infantry but they now and then dropped one or two shells around amongst us when trying for a “strong point” just a little too hard to get at otherwise or trying to hit a dugout when it might be well occupied. We were also told the field guns grouped in batteries of six guns each had 5,000 rounds of ammunition for each six gun battery for just this one show, the larger guns not so many but in proportion.

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No wonder then when our barrage cut loose in full force the next morning, and, naturally the enemy retaliated to the fullest extent of his ability, the whole sky was lit up and the ground fairly shook and trembled. And if all the truth were to be told we could well say that at times and in places more than the ground shook or trembled at least a little. The attack that morning commenced at 5:30, it was dark, the clouds were hanging low threatening to storm. Later on it began to rain as tho tears were falling and one could feel a wisp of a breeze around our ears as tho Mother Nature was tearfully trying to plead with you. Still later on sensing that sobs and tears were of no avail but still trying to turn our thoughts from and stop our efforts of destruction, and to hide from sight that which even for the roughest of us was at least unpleasant to look upon, she covered everything with a mantle of white, the symbol of quiet, purity and peace. Later on the snow turned to rain and you could feel and intermittent breeze around your ears as tho some one was still trying to plead with you while sobbing in bitter despair. It was many a day before Mother Nature and many another mother, widow or fatherless child smiled again. Even with the duties and turmoil of the day, and many a time since, those thirteen words would and will come back to me. Well, what about them? Often to the glory of some important person guns are fired in salute on their special day. As this was one of His special days, Easter Monday, was all this firing of guns going on, some of it with such devastating effect, “glory to God in the highest?” On earth peace; not where we were nor for many a mile in any direction. Good will toward men, good will toward men? How

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much good will in a 15” howitzer, or an 18 pounder, or the sweep of a machine gun or even a hand grenade the Mills bomb thrown with the bare hand? What a time and place for those

thirteen words to come to one. D company was not sent into the attack that morning we were held in reserve so if some unit was held up or got into difficulty we would be sent to help them. We were held in a tunnel, to be ready to go at any time and be less subject to becoming casualties. But no call came until late in the afternoon when some of us were detailed to go out on a reconnaissance patrol to see how far the enemy had been forced back in a certain sector, that of course was our version of it but the enemy to save face would say they had withdrawn to shorten and strengthen their line. As we emerged from the tunnel an enemy shell exploded causing three casualties of another group but for some reason had no stretcher bearer with them so our officer held us while we attended their casualties. We had gone perhaps less than a quarter of a mile farther when we came into sight and range of the "pimple" an enemy machine gun emplacement, perhaps in a concrete shelter, over to our left on the fourth division front that had not yet been taken care of so there were soon bullets coming our way. Only one fellow was hit, on the back of the head just below the strap from his tin hat. We fixed him up. As it wasn't far back to regimental aid post and as no bones were broken and enough cords left untouched so he could hold his head up he was sent back without escort. After going quite a ways farther the officer called a halt, took out a map, some gathered around and they finally orientated themselves on

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the map, which was not so easy to do as the ground had been all torn up by the artillery. The officer ran his finger along the map saying we were about here, we are to go here and here, etc, etc. sounding as tho boy scouts were out on a picnic or on the way there. As he was putting the map away the sergeant remarked to no one in particular "I wonder if Fritz has signed any passports to any of those places" he hadn't of course but had signed one to a place far beyond any of those on the map. Away we went again until it began to look as though we might be getting near to something, the officer once more calling a halt, saying he would go ahead to reconnoiter. The sergeant and there were others too with more experience, tried to dissuade him, pointing out it seemed better to send others out in a sort of an encirclement instead of advancing straight ahead, sort of heading into it but no he was boss so he put the sergeant in charge and away he went. He had not gone far when at an angle from our left two shots were fired and down he went. It was up to me as stretcher bearer to get to him and bring him out. We thought it would be foolish to try to get to him following the way he went one way sure to be seen by the enemy and

anything seen moving would be shot, unarmed first aid man or no. It was decided then that the others, taking the stretcher with them for it wouldn't be of much use to me alone, would veer off to the left, advancing at an angle while I would veer off to the right advancing at an angle then try to get to him by going in from my left. So all of us started off in our respective directions. I came to a trench that wasn't too

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badly torn up going in the general direction I wanted to go so I got into it. I passed a dugout entrance but of course didn't stop to investigate. Then I heard rifle shots way to the left indicating our fellows had made contact with the enemy. After going ahead some more I thought I had gone about far enough and should be turning to my left. Then some distance ahead, as for some reason this trench had longer bays than any of ours, there was another trench intersecting the one I was in and leading to the left, the way I wanted to go. I was surprised the trench I was in had not been blocked when the enemy retreated, if there was time for it, so I thought to have a look along the intersecting trench to see if there was a block in it with perhaps a machine gun mounted on it or sentries with rifles behind it. If there was a machine gun on it it would probably be mounted to sweep the trench about waist high so I thought that by stooping well over I could step across quickly and have a quick look to see what was what so I did that and saw a block but nothing else. So I thought to have another look. If any one saw me stepping across they might be watching for others to come along after me but by my coming back so soon from the way I had gone might disconcert them enough so I could have a little better look this time so I did that but was no wiser for it. I thought that if I got out of the trench if there were any behind the block they would see me, if no one was there some others might see me if I followed the trench if there were sentries there they might still look for others to follow me, or they might just happen to notice I was unarmed and that would be an easy way to get a prisoner. However I looked and thought it over, to follow the trench was the best way

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and as I didn't want to fool around too long making up my mind for there is not much difference in getting there too late or not at all so I set out along the trench and when I got near the block I thought there still might be someone on the other side perhaps distracted by the firing of a short

time previously so I thought I'll just sort of throw myself over as quickly as possible and again that's what I did and was happy no one else was there. So I continued along that trench until I thought I had gone far enough and was going to get out than thought no, I'll go around just one more bay and then get out but when I went into the other bay there he was.

He had an eye shot out, if that didn't render if unconscious he would at least suffer great shock and pain, besides having been badly shaken up by tumbling into the trench. Contrary to what one sees in the movies of a fellow when shot throwing his arms in the air and falling over backwards in actuality especially if they are walking when they are shot hardly without fail their knees will buckle under them and they will fall forward, as no doubt our officer did perhaps even taking a few stumbling steps causing him to tumble into the trench. We didn't use iodine around the eyes or internally so about all I could do was to bandage the eye as well as possible without covering the other one and give him morphine, of which he was given a hypodermic injection. He was so dazed, understandably, that he hardly knew what he was doing but I finally got him up on his feet and thought the best thing to do was get him into the dugout, the entrance to which had been bypassed so putting his left arm up around behind my neck drawn over my left shoulder and held there with my left hand then placed my right arm around his body just below his right shoulder, we moved along very slowly this seemed better than carrying him for then if I stumbled into the mud it might be more serious than if we went down this way.

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When we got to the block he was heaved and dragged over, both of us getting muddier in the process, to make a long story/short for it did take quite a while and a great deal of effort to get him down the stairway, now and then dimly lit by a small flashlight I had and into a bunk. There was a wounded German in there, had been bandaged up but could have done with a little more attention, unless one found even more to do when redressing him he wanted me to do it but it seemed not so necessary as some other work I might get into so with gesticulating and in alleged German I told him there was shooting going on over that way and some of my comrades might need me and as he seemed to have most of the fight knocked out of him the two were left down there together.

In the book, *A City Goes to War*, Edna and Ned gave me the officer gives his version of the incident, somewhat different from mine, no wonder considering what he had been subjected



to, and in a comparatively few lines. Following the sound of now and then a rifle shot and a hand grenade exploding I got to the other fellows and reported what I had done. One of the fellows had been hit in the face so after he was fixed up it was "suggested" he get the officer who was recovering at least partly recovering from deep shock by this time and the German out of the dugout and with probably some help from the German get our officer to the regimental aid post and the German no doubt willing and envious to be taken to the prisoner cage where he would get something to eat and re-dressing if necessary. Our man thought the idea well worth trying and he eventually accomplished it. So easily and quickly related but not so in being carried out. By this time it was well into the night, really dark, the enemy just couldn't be dislodged by Mills bombs a rifle fire, it would be foolish for the few of us to try reaching their position, another

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fellow had been hit, a severe head wound so was delirious, was insisting, until the morphine took hold on pulling off the bandages.

Then as we had made contact with the enemy as we were supposed to do, it was decided to rejoin the company. We now had the wounded man on the stretcher to take with us and was that ever a long energy consuming task. The ground was somewhat torn up where we were and kept getting worse as we went along until within a quarter of a mile, tho of course we couldn't tell much about distances, or time as no one had a watch with a luminous dial and all that was beside the point for we had this man to take to a dressing station regardless of the distance or the time of night. We could now no longer have four men carrying the stretcher for the ground had been so churned up it was doubtful if there was one square foot left in its' original place or condition so it was impossible to have a man on each side of the stretcher and get anywhere for either one or the other would be getting pushed into a shell hole by the other trying to get a place to walk, in the mud and in the dark. With only one in front he had a better chance to zig zag here and there and the one in the rear would follow as best he could.

The fellows carrying the stretcher were relieved of their rifles but even at that with only two with the stretcher the conditions were such that a two or three hundred yards was just about all one could do at a time. We could not tell just where we were but could tell our lines were over that way somewhere so we kept going finally reaching our lines and finally afterwards a dressing station deep down in a dug out. We knew we were just too played out to take the man down the

stairs so I went down and told them we had a man on a stretcher up there but just couldn't bring him down so would they please do it, and perhaps from the look of me they thought it was true so they did.

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While waiting for them to bring down the casualty there was a fellow crawling around on the floor on his hands and knees, nose running and slobbering from an open mouth, when a medical officer after finishing splinting a fracture threw the remaining piece back on to the pile just behind the fellow on his hands and knees. It landed with quite a slap and the fellow seemed to spring straight up into the air, spin half way round landing on his hands and knees crouched as a cat ready to repel an attack. After the casualty was at least out of our care what a relief. I picked up another stretcher, worked my way up the stairs, only one step at a time you may be sure, to join the others. Never in my whole life, even after wrestling 2 hrs. 15 min. without a stop as I once did, was I so all in as I was that night. While making our way to join our company we came to a field kitchen brought up and placed in a sunken road, they offered us some tea so we held out our mess tins and were given a generous helping of this really hot drink. As we had nothing to eat since noon, then only bully beef, hardtack and water, I can still feel and hardly believe how that hot tea revived one. We soon found our company, reported then lay down, mud and all, in a tent and went to sleep. The aforementioned "pimple" was at last taken care of the next afternoon, the whole ridge soon after, the artillery moved up to Petit Vimy we in the infantry were some distance beyond and in well into May with the enemy in their new positions near the large coal mining city of Lens and we were in new trenches too and as by then there wasn't much mud around what a treat it was to be in trenches with practically no mud and it was comparatively quiet by then too, one night just to my way of thinking. Our and the enemy front lines were much farther apart than on the Ridge, rather difficult to tell

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just how far for it couldn't be done very well at night when we were out of the trench occasionally and of course didn't put our heads very far above ground level in the day time. On this particular night when on sentry duty we could see the enemy now and then adding material to a fire burning somewhere behind their front line. I asked why someone wasn't doing something

about it and such comments as “they aren't bothering us, they're too far away, etc” our lines were probably even more than 1/4 or maybe 1/3 of a mile apart as I said “if I had a rifle (being a first aider I was unarmed) I would do something about it” and of course that started something and I was offered the use of a rifle if I would clean it afterwards and of course that offer was accepted immediately. I pulled back the bolt, seeing cartridges in the magazine one was put into the chamber by closing the bolt. It was too dark to use the sights so I just guessed how much to raise the muzzle of the rifle on the chance it might put the bullet some where near the target I put in two quick shots. I must have made a good guess for we saw some fellows “hasten” past the fire which was left to burn itself out. Those two were the only shots I fired at the enemy, during the about a year that I was in the “combat area”. Things in general were much better, the weather the best we had seen up to then, very few work parties we could keep cleaner and drier rations were better, only no more than five men instead of 8 to the loaf of bread etc. Occasional patrols were sent into no-man's-land, word usually sent along informing how long they might be out and about where they would operate. One night we could see something we thought might be a patrol but had not been advised about it, so watched it. Soon we could see they were wearing

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our tin hats but as that did not necessarily mean it was ours we still watched it. As it came to our sector they came toward us. Most of us were out of the trench but ready to jump back in. As they came toward us instead of keeping spread out they came in single file one behind the other which of course no patrol in its' right mind would do when approaching an enemy trench so we were sure they were ours. But our officer who apparently had “one more”, drew his revolver out of the holster so I moved over behind him determined he wouldn't fire the first shot.

The patrol kept coming and as I was more suspicious than ever of the officer's actions I moved right close behind him and sure enough he bawls out “open up on them boys, open up on them” but no one paid any attention to him (they came to the same opinion of the patrol as I did) but I watched closely and it is a good thing he didn't start to raise his right arm for officer or no he would have gotten a terrific squeeze or been flat on the ground or both. We had a nice chat with the patrol before they went on. Nothing much more but the usual routine until early in June when we sensed something afoot. Some distance back of our lines a layout of the enemy trenches opposite us was measured out by stakes and tapes and with about six inch strips of

different colored material denoting the location of a dugout entrance, or an observation post, machine gun nest, trench mortar or whatever. We were taken over the layout to familiarize our selves and some assigned the destruction of each of the designated target such as these three men take a mortar missile each with the fuse shortened to a 3 second burn instead of [...] to throw down each group with a certain job to do during the 2 hours we were to stay in the enemy trenches after we go over there on a raid. We were to go over starting at 11:00 p.m. on June 9<sup>th</sup>. When that evening came we went a group at

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a time at intervals to assemble in the jumping off trench. After all were in their places spread out along the trench it seemed so quiet it was really oppressive, no breeze, no firing close by tho there were the long range guns now and firing at a distant target, or some machine gun a long ways off firing a burst. Perhaps it seemed so oppressively quiet for we knew there would be plenty of noise when our barrage cut loose. It was to be a jumping barrage first pounding the enemy front line, the length of that time depending on the distance between the trenches, the condition of the ground, the amount of equipment we were to carry and the estimated strength of the enemy's positions, then when the barrage lifted to pound the second line, those detailed for the front line would jump in and get to work while we of the second and third lines would scramble across to the second line and when the barrage lifted from the second line we of the second line detail would drop in there, those of the third line, scramble across to their line and hop into it when the barrage lifted from there. As we sat in the jumping off trench to the right of me was a fellow saying he was an orphan not remembering his parents and saying but little of the institutions where he was brought up so they were probably as good as any others of their day but I thought would be quite different than being with parents and sisters and brothers. One day when we were in reserve, billeted in a machine shed, cleaning our clothes and equipment, one group talking here, another there and so on, I just happened to hear one fellow say to another "oh, go on you unsophisticated Ethiopian" the addressed closed his fists, his jaw muscles tightened and started to get up from the rather awkward position he was in but as no one else paid any attention to the opinion expressed he sensed no one expected him to do anything about being called

such a name so settled down again perhaps thinking it wasn't such a bad name as he first thought so nothing came of it. More of him later.

To the left was Denny, sitting stiff as a statue excepting now and then making a movement as tho trying to swallow something down a throat do dry it would have put the Sahara Desert to shame so, tho we were supposed to stay spread out as much as possible I moved close to him and asked "well Denny, how's the pulse?" and moved my hand towards him expecting to be told to go to hell or to mind my own business but I was let to place a couple of fingers on the usual place on the wrist and oh! my I didn't know a heart could beat so fast so of course wasn't quite so ashamed of my own which, tho I never timed it was probably at least a few beats above normal. But he just sat there staring into space, so I moved back again, which wasn't far as there were so many of us in there the chance having been taken we were not detected moving so would not be seriously shelled at least for a little while. When our barrage opened up and out we scrambled, making our ways to our designated targets with our shells passing so close overhead it seemed our tin hats would be knocked off, then exploding a short distance ahead with a blinding flash and quite a roar causing one to walk like a drunken man. When the barrage lifted those for the first line got to work and we of the second and third lines scrambled across repeating the performance at the second line, where the unit I was with would operate. The enemy was now shelling our trenches, especially the jumping off on the probability of another wave of reinforcements coming along. After a while the artillery firing died down, the enemy not chancing it to shell their own

trenches for they did not know just what had happened there. Soon word came along that one of our men was laying over that way so I went "that a way" and found him. He had a severe abdominal wound and was naturally under heavy shock. I fixed him up as best I could, and told him I would get a stretcher party to take him out. It was his first trip up the line and I naturally felt sorry for him, he was so young and rather quiet, perhaps he too was feeling his way to find his place amongst us. He was soon on his way out. A month or two later on he was listed as died of wounds. Soon after he was taken out word came along that a C company man was laying in another direction so I looked up the sargeant telling him of the message and said if he would let me go I would see if I could find him as C company had gone on to the third line. After a short

discussion he let me go if I would come back immediately if the enemy would counter attack so off I went, that a way.

I went along the trench and when I got beyond that part which we were to “take care of” then occupy there was no one occupying it when of course there should have been. I may as well explain, now, When we went over for some reason we advanced a little on the diagonal instead of directly across to the enemy lines and whether we didn't angle enough or whether those on our left angled too much, or had taken care of that part of the trench and then had to concentrate on another part when they were having trouble, or whatever, there definitely was a gap in the enemy's front line leaving a machine gun emplacement intact of which I was unaware at that time so after going on until I thought I was far enough on getting out of the trench a flock of bullets came whizzing by so dropped to the ground and luckily wasn't

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hit. Thinking the most likely place to find the fellow was in the direction of where the firing came from so started crawling in that direction but thinking that would take too long so crouching down very low and keeping well bent over I would run a short distance diagonally towards where the firing came from. Sometimes I would run diagonally in another direction, perhaps something like a sailing ship tacking against the wind. Sometimes I would crawl a sort distance in the direction I had been going, sometimes in another, sometimes remaining down for a few seconds before running again always trying to keep them guessing which way I would go next but always on one diagonal or another, would be harder to hit than going directly towards them of course. I don't know how many times I got up and dropped down, perhaps two dozen times, or more, at first the bullets came whizzing by sounding something like swiftly twirling a wire overhead which isn't so bad but all too soon they were popping like pistol shots around my ears which is not so good so I kept to crawling and finally found him. He was badly shaken up but I didn't know where he was hit. I didn't want to use the little flashlight I had used occasionally while shielding it under my tin hat, we were too close to the other fellows this time. By feeling around the only place I could feel where there was blood was about 1/3 of the way up between the ankle and knee where both bones of the leg were broken. Thinking to put an improvised splint on it, say of the bayonet scabbard or the entrenching tool handle, or both and tying the two legs together I started to do so. Perhaps I was too interested in what I was doing and got up too high

for some more bullets came whizzing

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by and they threw in three bombs for good measure. We were so close to them we could hear them working the bolts and the empty shell cases falling on the rubble as they reloaded their rifles and when the bombs exploded we could feel the heat on our faces and the fragments whistling by so closely and at such speed one involuntarily flinched. How they could miss us at such close range, unless they were even more excited than we were. From the trouble I had getting to him there seemed to be no chance at all of carrying him to safety; he should of course have a splint put on his leg before being moved but it just didn't seem reasonable to stay there and try to put one on so in a whisper I asked him if he could stand it if I tried to move him as he was and I thought he said something in a sort of whispering mumble or mumbling whisper about "let's get the hell out of here". I rolled him on to his side, backed to him as well as I could, reached up over my shoulders, grabbed hold of his tunic and by pulling and rolling and a little help from him got him on to my back, and started sliding, more than crawling, away.

I could hear him gritting his teeth and from the way his fingers dug into my shoulders I was sure he wouldn't slip off so I put everything I had into getting him out of there. With him up in the most exposed position one feels so cheap and mean but I could see no other way of doing it. Some distance on apparently we went over enough of a raise to come above the horizon for some more bullets came along and again no one was hit. We finally got back in to the trench near where I had left it to go to him. I would now use the little flashlight, give him an injection of morphine and a little better job putting on an improvised splint. I then told him I

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would report back to the sergeant or the officer and either one would send word to his company to send a stretcher party with a stretcher to take him out. I went back to him and when the stretcher party arrived with the stretcher he was put on it and they lifted him up on to the parapet. Naturally I just about exploded with "don't do that". To which one replied, "Why not? By cutting across instead of following the trench we can get him out in less than half the time and a lot easier" which would be true if no opposition were encountered.

I told them that as soon as they stood up out of the trench they would get a blast of bullets

from a strong point that hadn't been mopped up yet. How do you know? And I said I just brought him from there but there were 4 against one so they got out and as they stood up a blast of bullets came along and three jumped back into the trench. I could have touched the fourth one when he fell, the three others needed no suggestion about following the trench this time. After getting the fourth fellow down into the trench there was nothing that could be done for him, as was suspected, with another stretcher party needed. This was in June 1917 and in the next spring I met the wounded fellow on the street in London still on crutches (wasn't it a wonder they didn't take the leg off about the knee?). I happened to recognize him just before he got to me and wouldn't have been surprised if he had whacked me over the head with a crutch for having been given such rough treatment, his broken leg dangling away must have been exceedingly painful, but instead he grabbed hold of and hung on to me as tho I was a long lost brother. We could visit only a short while and I never saw him again.

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But back to the raid. It was a very large one, one rumor was that it was over three miles broad with Imperial troops taking part too. Our company had been there well over the two hours we were to be there ripping things to pieces as much as possible and the third line raiders that were to pass through when withdrawing didn't come along so I investigated for some distance on either side of us but found no one at all. On taking stock there were three men missing, besides the three, Lt. Downton of Edmonton, Cpl. Dunning of Peace River and Pte. Roxborough of Ontario who went to mop up the strong point causing us trouble but never came back, one was Denny who had the choice, as extra and temporary stretcher bearer, whether to attend any that might fall along the way to our objective or keep going with the main body until the objective was reached. He chose the former but we had no casualties on the way and no one had seen him since we left the jumping off trench. He showed up when we were back in our trench next morning. No comments were made, no questions asked but for months afterwards when he tried to join in a general conversation by any group that had been in that raid the conversation ended rather abruptly. It wasn't until more reinforcements arrived that he could join in general conversation, with them. Another was the orphan boy previously mentioned who also had not been seen since leaving the jumping off trench, and another fellow we knew was with us until reaching our objective, so now deciding we should withdraw too or searched the ground over



which we had come knowing we had but little time for it but didn't find anyone. When getting back to the jumping off trench there was the orphan boy. We came to the conclusion that he had been "through the mill" once too often, too soon again for over the top so when our barrage opened up

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and the rest of us scrambled out something slipped, gave way inside him and he just couldn't make it and that's where we found him crumpled and broken. He was a good soldier so no words of reproach were spoken, instead if pity could be shown by those engaged in such brutality as that from which we had just returned\* [brutality? I did not see the printed orders but word was passed along that only prisoners needed to assist in the evacuation of our own casualties were to be taken and that's about all that were taken. Could it be that an enemy wouldn't be given the time or opportunity to surrender?] pity was shown for him as we carried his body back to be placed among those with whom he had for so long held the line or repelled or gone into the attack who were now sleeping beneath their crosses with the poppies in silent splendor standing watch over them. And of the poppies tears, which in the early morning may be mistaken for dew, for, as with the sorrowing mother and widows they, too, had been in tears in the dark and solitude of the night, many of them having been shed in pity for him who had never known the love of his mother, and for him who left a wife and four young children who, lying there in the mud, with his eyes told you as plainly as anyone ever could with words what it would mean to him and his family if they could be together again for just one day, even for only one short hour, but as you do for him what you can with iodine, bandages and morphine you feel so frustrated so helpless for you need to be well versed in medical lore to see that the well deserved, well earned granting of that ardent desire is to be denied them. And one wonders why couldn't it have been me instead, no one was depending in me, tho Mother and Dad were

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still living I had been away from home for about 5 years by then and they had two happily married daughters and one happily married son living on farms in the same neighbourhood and another married daughter on a farm about 150 miles away, so no one was depending on me, nor did I have a girl friend, but he had a wife and four young children depending on him, and, seeing

a movement of the lips the ear was place close by and who could ever forget him lying there in the mud murmuring their names as he was passing into that long, long sleep. The third man missing from our platoon was accounted for the next fore noon when we saw movement over in the enemy territory as though someone without a hat on was trying to get out of a shell hole and after doing so and with difficulty trying to make his way towards us we could see he was one of our men so two fellows went to meet him and bring him in. He was our platoons' missing man, he had been hit in the head and rendered unconscious until coming to that next forenoon.

The strong point where we lost three men was essentially mopped up that night. The next day sort of straightening things out there was a bullet hole in the water bottle strap in a place where the bullet had to go between my arm and body but that was nothing in comparison to a close shave I had later on nor in comparison to what two other fellows experienced. In one case everything had to be just right to the smallest fraction of a millimeter when a fairly well pointed bullet struck the very edge of the brim of the tin hat knocking it off the fellows' head and kept on going without hitting anyone. In the other instance a bullet entered the front of a tin hat where

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the brim turns upward to form the crown. In punching through a sheet of metal some "curls" are formed on the back of the metal around the hole and apparently the curl at the bottom of of the hole deflected the bullet upwards following around the underside of the crown until opposite to where it entered when it left the hat, knocking it off the fellows' head of course. From the position of the holes in the hat one would think the head had been pierced as well but the head wasn't even scratched. Practically unbelievable but when you are fairly close by when it happens what else can be done about it?

For the next two months or so we were back to just holding the line, very few work parties, good weather in general, hardly any mud perhaps a little excitement now and then, a few casualties now and then for although the papers reported "all quiet on the western front" just about every day, or night someone was getting hurt or put out of commission entirely. Then early in rumors of us being taken out for a change and sure enough within a few days we were taken a days march back of the lines to a small village. We were there only a couple of days or so when orders came along that we were to go to replace the 21<sup>st</sup> battalion which was in serious trouble. By evening we had reached the flattened suburb of a larger place. There was a light railway

running past or through the place and when one heard the click, click coming along, upon investigation one saw a sort of a four wheeled platform with bodies piled on like cordwood pushed along. So one thought "so that's what we're getting into". We got into mustard gas as we moved into our billets but were warned in time so no one was hurt but it

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was very annoying having to wear the respirator for three hours or so in such hot weather we were sweating so much, when in the worst of it we had to be extra careful where we walked, what we touched etc, until things were cleared up. We moved into the line that night relieving, to their understandable great joy the few that were left. One wonders how they could hold on. The worst was just about over but was bad enough for us as the expression was, the enemy had "his wind up", he would seemingly without reason pound quite a sector with artillery and trench mortars and swap quite a circle with machine guns, then soon do the same to another place, and our artillery, trench mortars and machine guns were busy enough at times too. Through one periscope which after all viewed a comparatively small part of it 14 bodies could be seen lying out in no-mans'-land. Neither side could evacuate all their casualties for anything that moved would be shot at. In the attacking and counter attacking there were many casualties on both sides and as not all of them were moved out and after a couple of hot days something had to be done about the bodies lying in the trench so dirt was shovelled over them where they lay. Later on chlorine was used to counteract the contamination and stench. After a few more days when things were well in hand we were moved to another part of the line, being short of a few more men again and back to just holding the line. Around the end of Sept. rumors were we were going to be moved, this time into Belgium and early in Oct. we did move, marched for a while then were loaded into those cheveau 8 hommes 40 cars and taken to Ypres, a large, once busy city now battered to pieces. We were marched to a suburb, Cite St. Jean, now but a mess of shell holes and ditches, that were once, trenches, filled to varying depths of water.

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We were in tents, up to 17 in a bell tent, some used their pack sack, larger than the haversack, for a pillow all of the rest of the equipment hanging on the single centre pole, loaded to the breaking point, while at Sarcee Camp near Calgary we thought we were crowded with only

seven men in a tent. There were puddles of water of various sizes scattered here and there, some covering as much ground as a good sized barn. Where a cobble stone road wound its way the traffic had the mud churned into a soup, the depth about up to the boot tops. The weather was very miserable, raining, foggy and bone chilling. We were doing the many things needing doing during a prolonged attack, this one had been going on since July 1<sup>st</sup>. One late afternoon a plane flew over dropping small bombs around causing a few casualties. On more than one occasion a very large gun mounted on a railway flat car was run up near us, fired a few rounds at some target many miles away then withdrawn in a hurry so the enemy would have trouble finding where the firing came from. Up nearer the front lines there were horses and men still lying in the mud, there were not many tanks in those days but in one area the size of which was difficult to tell for we passed through only a few times at night it may have been about the size of two city blocks five of our tanks had been knocked out one had a great hole bashed in one side with a crew member hanging partly in, partly out. Orders came that we were to take over the front positions, that is just a certain width of them with others moving in to both sides for I don't know how far, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> then go into an attack at 5:30 a.m. on the 30<sup>th</sup>. We had some casualties on the way in, one was a fellow next to me getting

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several fragments, from an exploding shell, in his thighs but as he could still sort of walk he was fortunate to make his own way out.

Again the few that were left were very glad to be relieved for they had attacked a few days previously and were holding on to their gains.

It seemed to be the policy then and there to have comparatively few in the front line for if the enemy counter attacked he would probably overrun it anyway. We did some digging during the night, connecting shell holes, deepening ditches that were supposed to be trenches etc. to make room for the extra men we, being a much greater number than the number we relieved. The ground, as at Vimy Ridge was all torn up. I am sure not a square foot being in its original condition or position. We suffered a few casualties during the night, subjected to what was called a harassing fire, the artillery now and then dropping a shell here, one there. Our artillery did that too. When morning came we settled down into the ditches. We were near the right side of the salient being pushed into the enemy lines so besides the no-man's-land in front of us there was

another one just beyond the unit on our right. Not all the enemy observation balloons were always kept down, if one was shot down they often had another up again then maybe get one of our planes trying to get it down so now we had balloons diagonally off to the right and back of us. We lay where we were, in the mud of course, all day of the 29<sup>th</sup>, if one wanted to change position, get a hard tack out of the haversack or move for any reason at all one had to move very slowly for an ordinary moving rate would be more noticeable from the balloon, their artillery would be informed as to the

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approximate position and the artillery would send a few shell over.

Of course we couldn't move very fast anyway as we were chilled to the bone. After being so restricted in movement and chilled all day what a relief it was to be able to move around when night came, but 5:30 seemed so slow in coming. We were troubled with harassing fire so there were a few casualties, tho none in our platoon.

I kept fairly near to the middle of our position so would not be too far away if needed. In digging the night before there wasn't quite enough time to connect up with the next shell hole, this night we didn't do any digging so there was a sort of step at the dead end of this ditch so I sat upon the step. I probably dozed off for we hadn't had much sleep for some time for the next thing I knew I was laying in the mud up out of the ditch, in a sort of bewildered way thinking perhaps something had happened for it seemed the right half of my head had been shot off (how I thought I could still be alive after that?) and 72 bones, that's about 1/3 of them isn't it? were broken. Apparently a shell passed just in front of me, hit the side of the ditch just over alongside of my lap and exploded. How deeply I was buried or how long it took to dig me out were not thought of then so I never found out, which never worried me any. I remember short sort of flashes now and then but not what happened in between. Two fellows helped me start walking, how far or how long is not clear, perhaps to some dressing station, or regimental aid post or company headquarters for there is a flash of a few seconds of a memory of being in a sort of some such place, then there was this railway car, low sides but not top, how and why I and others were there I didn't know or care. After a long wait the train was moving, jerks and jolts, stops and starts but I just

didn't care. Next I was lying on a stretcher in a large marquee. By evening I was in a cot, nice white sheets, hospital pyjamas so clean and dry, had something to eat, on a plate instead of out of mess tin, nice hot tea in a cup, guess I had at least a sponge bath for I felt quite clean. There were soldier orderlies, even a few nurses, one wondered what they were doing here, this was no place for a woman, it may not have been too bad when the line was just being held, for altho the papers were reporting "all quiet on the western front" as before mentioned there was at least a trickle of casualties passing through but here, and at the Somme, with a conflict going on for four months with an attack every few days with a counter attack now and then there would be a continual stream of broken and mangled humanity, day and night. The nurses seemed to be on for 12 hours or so at a time but I don't know how long was their tour of duty, I was there only for about 2 1/2 days. No wonder there is that place deep in side for the nurse.

That was as far up as the nurses were allowed to come, many of us often wondered why they were let (to) come that far. The next day things began to clear up, I found that by holding my nose shut I could blow out through my right ear, but still a nice clean, warm cot, dry clothes so nice and clean better food than we had since long ago, nothing to do, plenty of pain but oh! well it would probably ease up in a week or so, everything else so much for the better on felt sort of ashamed for being there, wondering how the fellows made out in the attack of a few hours after I left. I should have been there for in and after an attack is when the first aid is needed most. That afternoon in taking stock of things I saw a bandage about midway between the ankle and knee on my right leg. How come I didn't remember putting it there, any way the first

aid bag and my haversack had been left behind, nor did I remember of any one else putting it there. As there were many other places as painful as that one the bandage was removed and there was a gash right by my shine bone about as wide and long as my thumb, which would have fitted in there nicely so the bandage was just put back on. Later on I was put on a stretcher, taken into the operating section placed up alongside another fellow giving him a blood transfusion. When one gave blood one was entitled to a three week or so leave but I felt that if I was giving something I wasn't going to take any kind of pay for it so didn't apply for it. There is a notation in my pay book, which I still have, signed by Capt. Sparrow of the Third Australian Casualty

Clearing Station that I had given blood to another wounded soldier. Transfusions then were done quite different from the way they are done now. How different countries have different expressions for I thought Capt. Sparrow was rather amused by one of our expressions from the way he looked at and asked me "is that Jake with you?" Casualties kept coming in, one evening I recognized a voice Geo. Lowe from another platoon so of course asked how things went when they attacked, they finally reached their objective but paid the price in doing so. He of course had been hit, Cpl. Bruce, the two fellows that started out with me, Stuart Parsons, etc., also Sgt. Slater (who had been sent a good luck charm by his sisters in Brazil that didn't have much power after all were gone another sergeant, whose name I remember but won't mention for he was quite a brutal fellow and was hard on the fellows in his platoon but when they got to him and were going to carry him out he would have none of it, telling them to go on to the others saying he wouldn't make it anyway.

When a fellow go hit the first one to try to fix him you up would be the stretcher bearer, from there to the Regimental Aid Post where the Medical

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Officer and his helpers would do more for you if you needed it which was generally the case, and an antitetanus injection, from there to an advanced dressing station and from there to the Casualty Clearing Station which was perhaps 10 miles or so behind the lines. They were generally in tents or marquees so they could be moved and they did most anything there because they had to, transfusions, amputations, operations of various natures or if something just could not be done prepare them as well as possible and send them on as quickly as possible. Some that were not too badly hit might be fixed up and sent to a base hospital in France, or convalescent camp for a while before being sent back to their unit. The next day more of us were moved out, I was sent by Red Cross train to the Liverpool Merchants Hospital at Etaples (or something like that) on the west coast of France. It was also in tents and maintained by the merchants of Liverpool. I was there for a few days then we, many of us, were loaded on a Red Cross train and away we went, not asking where to because I just didn't care. At about 4:00 p.m. we were unloaded on to the dock at Calais.

Then finally placed aboard a hospital ship, German prisoners doing the work under supervision of course, I was still on a stretcher tho the pain from the crushing was diminishing a

little, everything so clean and everyone so willing and anxious to do something for you.

The crossing from Calais to Dover was so smooth, so comfortable, just the opposite of the one from Southampton to Le Havre of just over a year before. Upon arrival at Dover we were placed on the dock and in due time were loaded on to the hospital train and again everything so spic and span clean and so many willing and anxious

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to do something for you. Finally the train pulled out, on would go to sleep, wake up for a while, go to sleep, wake up with the train rattling on. Finally the train stopped, doors were slamming, casualties being unloaded and whisked away in vehicles of some kind, finally I am unloaded and with others placed in some kind of a truck with a canopy over the top and the curtains at the back flapping open and shut as we sped along. Finally we stopped and were taken into a huge building and put into a cot. It was about 5:30 a.m. and a volunteer worker came along, gave me a good sponge bath and making me as comfortable as possible. We were then given a very thin fish (herring?) sandwich and cup of tea. About two hours later were given breakfast. Visited a little with the fellows on either side of me but I just didn't care about this or that or anything at all. Many a time in looking back one wonders how and why any one would care so little about anything and everything, even life itself seeming to mean so little. I didn't bother to ask where and what this place was, it wasn't until near noon that I found out this was the big muni-hospital, the Royal Infirmary in the heart of Liverpool. Patients were being sent out, others coming in, within a few days I was in a wheel chair then walking again and after about three weeks was sent to an auxiliary hospital, a residence in the suburb of Aigburth turned over to the military by some fellow named Booth connected with the shipping industry. Only one nurse there, the other girls being from the V.A.D., the Voluntary Aid Department, some being regularly employed, doing volunteer work before going to work or coming in after work, as did the fellow giving me the bath when arriving here. I was now getting

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around quite well so another fellow and I helped the girls with the bedridden patients. I was in the auxiliary hospital for about seven weeks, then to convalescent camp at Epsom for a while, then to the Second Command Depot at Bramshott camp. Being athletically inclined I took a three



week course in physical training and bayonet fighting, then with several others to the Canadian Corps school of P.T. & B.T. for another three weeks course after which was put on as an instructor at Bramshott. My back bothered so much but I so wanted to go into physical training that I put up with it until I just had to go to the Medical Officer who booked me for an X-ray next forenoon so had it done with snaps and bangs, sparks and cracklings. Was told the picture was negative but to go again next morning at 9:00 a.m. and have another taken before having any breakfast, but it too was negative.

Thinking I might be charged with malingering if I complained much more which is quite a serious charge, I just kept on pain and all. Sometime afterwards I was transferred to the 21<sup>st</sup> reserve battalion and went on with physical training and bayonet fighting. After a while I just had to go to a Medical Officer, this time it was called lumbago and was given a bottle of white liniment to rub on, but no one in the hut seemed to have time to rub it on and perhaps you can well imagine what kind of a job I did of it so the liniment didn't help. I got quite restless and requested to be sent back to the 49<sup>th</sup> in France but the officer in charge of physical training said "You stay where you are, you have had a turn at it and some one has to do the work you are doing here", etc, etc. Later on the same request received much the same answer so I remained there until Armistice Day.

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Several happenings come to mind many not having been thought of for some time, the time the "kitchen" was near the dugout entrance, the cook a Russian having a coke fire going, there was no smoke from it to reveal its' location, two dixies, one containing the inevitable stew the other for tea, when an enemy shell exploded nearby wrecking the kitchen and knocking the cook off balance causing him to come stumbling down the stairway and when reaching bottom getting up and shouting "whizzbang come whoof kitchen broke mulligan shot to hell" so it was well into the night before we got anything to eat. Or when one fellow got a bullet through the thigh. We were taking him on a stretcher to the Regimental Aid Post and when coming to the first sentry we were asked "Now what?" "oh! McKeller got a bullet through the thigh". "Is it bad?" "The bone wasn't hit and the bleeding is under control so it looks like he'll make Blighty (England)". "No looking over the parapet now, crowd in, give a great handshake, congratulations, if you ever get to that part of England let me know and I'll write my folks or

friends and they'll look after you". Coming to three more sentries along our way more similar questions getting about the same answers, every one happy over his good fortune. Or when a recent reinforcement was sort of belittling the enemys' egg bombs and a fellow with plenty of experience spoke up with "Yes, they are a little smaller than ours but if you got one all to yourself you would ask for nothing more." Or when a shell falling on enough of an angle to put it just under the side of a truck containing some material and a few men that when it exploded the truck was turned upside down, things and men either thrown out or pinned underneath, one fellow going wild it taking four men to hold him. We were to be at a certain place at a certain time so didn't stop.

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Or coming to a place where a shell had exploded amongst a few fellows, a couple needed attention but one didn't, one leg was twisted around so the chin rested on the upturned heel of the boot. Or when a shell exploded near two fellows, one was crushed down into the tracks where he stood the other hoisted into the air making a turn and a half with his arms and legs extended, like a Dutch windmill. Sometimes one sees so much in such a short time and so clearly the memory of it remains for so long, as with a fellow laying grotesquely in the bottom of the trench he looked so young, his features somewhat feminine like, his complexion in life no doubt the envy of many a girl, his hair rather red and his eyes tho half closed and staring, of such a beautiful blue, I saw all that while stepping over his body and thinking "there's another Mothers' prayer that wasn't answered". Most of the foregoing may seem rather odd, foolish or silly to you coming from one such as I but that's the way it was, those are some of the memories remaining as tho burned in so deeply as with a hot iron. Many, too many wounds of the flesh prove fatal or crippling for life, most heal over leaving no pain, only a scar and a memory. Many wounds of another nature, tho, diminished in severity by the passing of the years, never heal over and most of the pain remains. Can you not, even ever so lightly, feel what it might be like to be going around for so many years with those memories, and more like them for who would tell everything, gnawing away inside you? If you cannot, berate me as you will, criticize, hold up to derision even contempt, I would but look into your eyes with full and quiet toleration for no one who has not been through the mill could well comprehend, realize or really feel the anguish and futility of it all.

While we were in near Ypres the Allied objective in that campaign was the battered village of Passchendaele. When it became light enough on the morning of Oct. 29th, when venturing to peep over the parapet we could see it a little over 1 mile away across a very shallow valley. I didn't know then, of course, it was to be my last day in the combat area. But I had seen enough of the results of that campaign to be shocked by the horror of it, so did many others, some moved to the extent to declare that the one ordering it to continue should be shot. He could probably be sort of forgiven for trying it for only a short time but to continue it for so long is a very different matter. Two years after I had been there I happened to read an instalment of Marshal Ludendorff's memoirs published in a newspaper telling of when the Germans moved back into that area after the Allies withdrew in the spring of 1918. I could not read it all, it was still too soon after I had been there, but in the little I did read he told of how he was appalled by the conditions still prevailing there (can you visualize anything that would appall a Marshal in the German army in either one of the two Great Wars?) not only dead horses but the bodies of men as well "one third being of those brave men who gave their lives for the Fatherland". I see no reason to doubt the accuracy of that estimate that means in lives we gave two for one and then gave away that for which such a sickening price had been paid, and use the word sickening to the fullest extent of its' meaning. Some of those bodies lying there were of those just about as close to me as my own brother.

I had been with some of them for just over a year under conditions bringing out what there is in a man probably more fully than could be done in any other way. And to think that after what they had been through for four months their bodies lay out there in all that miserable winter weather in the mud and muck, filth and slime and in places stench, a rather disturbing thought, isn't it? And after the war when the commander who insisted on carrying on the offensive that those of us doing the dirty work thought the price being paid was far too high, was greeted with flag waving and many loud cheers and given a substantial sum of money after being paid what many of us thought was more than he deserved according to the results being obtained even before that offensive was begun.