

THE WAR DIARIES OF CHARLES MOLTEND MURRAY

BOOK 1 : BOER REBELLION AND GERMAN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

11 NOV 1914 - 10 AUG 1915

KINDLY ACKNOWLEDGE ANY REFERENCES TO:

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11 Nov 1914. Left C.T. 8.30pm attached to 7th M.B.F.A. Maj. Usmar and Capt. van Collier. Took valveless on strength of unit.

12 Nov 1914. En route.

13 Nov 1914. Arr. Bloemfontein about 2.30pm. Reported at Tempe and put up at Maj. Usmar's. Speedometer on car 23-50. A fair number of wounded came in during the day with Civil Hosp.

14 Nov 1914. Spent day in completing arrangements. Usmar took over Civil Hosp. in morning. I went in car to visit various departments to secure our mules, wagons, harness, horses etc. The only trouble was absence of amb. wagons. Not one to be had. Saw wagonbuilder in regard to conversion of light wagons. Afternoon at Hosp. taking over wounded.

15 Nov 1914. Sunday. There are altogether over 60 wounded and 14 sick now under our care so we have our hands full as all the proper machinery for correct routine has to be set in motion and at the same time our Brigade outfitted. After tea visited the Nat. Memorial to women and children who died during the war. Fine simple structure.

16 - 17 Nov 1914. Had a busy time. Warned in the morning to expect a considerable number of wounded, from a fight at Virginia near Kroonstad. The day was spent in clearing the Hosp. of all those who were fit enough to travel or be sent to Convalescent Hosp. Van Collier went over to Tempe to open the Military Hosp. there for Convalescents. 16 wounded arrived about 9.30pm. All were serious cases. One had been shot through the abdomen and was obviously dying from internal haemorrhage. I operated but it was hopeless and he succumbed about an hour later. Turned in about 1.30am. Today (17th) heard something of the fight at Virginia. De Wet with about 1500 or more men tried to capture the railway station which was held by about 250 of our fellows. They held out pluckily until reinforcements and an announced train arrived. The wounded men said the rebels were very badly armed. They were using all sorts of weapons even shotguns and had very little ammunition of any sort, but they were all splendidly mounted. A man named van Niekerk, one of the rebel leaders, was brought in today. He gave rather an interesting account of how he was wounded. It appeared that he saw a body of men advancing consisting of about 1/4 the number of his own troop. As they came up he recognised Col. Toby Smuts, who had mistaken his (van Niekerk's) party for his own side. As soon as they came up van Niekerk drew his revolver with the intention of ordering Smuts to surrender, but as he raised his hand Smuts' son recognised this mistake and fired at him at 20 yards. The bullet passed just above his heart but does not appear to have done much damage up to the present. This occurred at Mushroom Valley where the first lot of wounded came from on the day of our arrival. This evening Col. Brand was brought in on the announced train suffering from acute appendicitis. He did not get to the Hospital till after midnight of 17th/18th. We found it necessary to operate immediately. He is bad, as suppuration has already taken place so that the operation resolved itself into clearing out the abscess cavity and putting in a drain. Col. de Kock operated. The latter was at the Diocesan College with me in 1890 - 1894 and I had not met him since those days. He is A.D.M.S. here. Col. Brand's loss will be much felt as he is in command of all the Free State forces and a very capable man. His condition is undoubtedly very critical. He was brought in by a young medico called Swanepoel. Swanepoel was captured at Mushroom Valley and retaken later on by Botha. He said he was attending some wounded when he noticed



that a flanking force was coming up, his own troops having already left the area he was in. He did not bother as he supposed the rebels would not interfere with him. He was rudely disillusioned however when he found they were firing at him. He said that they continued firing until they were within 15 yards in spite of the fact that he was unarmed and bore a red cross on his arm. He said he expostulated and pointed at the red cross, but they only called on him to hold up his hands which he refused to do as he said he was a non-combatant. One of them fired at him again at 15 yards and missed him at which Swanepoel called out if he fired again he would give him a thrashing. Swanepoel is 6 ft 3 in. and broad in proportion so how they missed him I don't know. He said that the rebels were armed with all sorts of weapons including shotguns and even airguns. Most of their ammunition is sporting, that is to say the bullets are of the dum-dum type. The rebels are also wearing their defence force uniforms and also have adopted the white badge on their left arm which our troops had been ordered to wear in order to distinguish them from the rebels. They are looting and destroying all the farms of the loyalists and even wantonly destroying the thoroughbred stock and imported cattle and sheep. I think the rebellion cannot last much longer as they have no ammunition, and in the great majority of cases I don't think their hearts are in it.

18 Nov 1914. The days are pretty full now. Having been up till 4.30am with Col. Brand, we had to be at work again in the Hospital at 9.00am. Among the last wounded (16 in number) 7 have shattered thigh bones and 5 smashed elbows. The wounds are very bad owing to the use of dum-dum bullets. We extracted a dum-dum from one case this morning. I have made friends with an old carpenter who is making wooden splints for me, and is much interested in the work. I have sent a night wire to Lorna today for her birthday tomorrow and Binkie's on 21st. I hope these are the right dates. I never can fix birthdays for some reason unknown. We have heard today that we are to get 3 motor ambulances instead of the ordinary mule wagons.

19 Nov 1914. Had the first good uninterrupted sleep since leaving home and enjoyed it much. The air is so dry and bracing that in spite of having very little sleep - which usually gives me a head - I have never noticed any discomfort and feel very fit and well. My chief work at present is devising splints in shattered arms and legs. The rebels are using dum-dum bullets which break the bones up very much. This makes it hopeless to wire the bones and the only chance is to get really rigid and yet comfortable splints. The old carpenter I have struck is working well; and the splints he makes are proving very satisfactory.

20 Nov 1914. Had a fairly quiet day, by which I mean that nothing very unexpected turned up. The whole scheme of life is so changed. One does not know from hour to hour where one will be next. Everything lies ready for an immediate move to any required destination. Tonight is our first mess night and we are inviting Mr (Jan) Steyn, brother of President Steyn, and President of the National Hosp. Board of Management, and also Col. de Kock, A.D.M.S. of this district.

21 Nov 1914. This is dear little Rhona's birthday. I have wished her pretty little photo many happy returns, and picture her toddling around with her sturdy stride and voluble flow of conversation. Our dinner went off well and being the first official dinner of our mess every one present was made to say a few words. This morning I had orders to proceed to Senekal with one of the ambulance trains and went to the



station, but found on arrival that a train had just gone from Kroonstad so I had to turn back. There has evidently been more fighting up that way. Yesterday 6 wounded rebels arrived. I never saw a more wretched looking lot of fellows. The absolute scum of the country deluded no doubt with all sorts of promises and the prospects of loot.

22 Nov 1914. Last night we had a very interesting account of the Mushroom Valley fight from a Lieut. Fraser, one of Sir John Fraser's sons, who took an active part as one of Brand's commando and was wounded. He had a very narrow escape. The bullet passed through his left arm, then through his handkerchief pocket without further wounding him. The same bullet then passed on and struck the man next to him passing in below his left arm and finally lodging in his spine at the level of the 9th vertebra, where we can see it with x-rays. The 2nd man's name is Lieut. Coetzee. He came off worst as one of his legs is paralysed. However both are getting on well now. So far the papers have published very little about Mushroom Valley, so some account of it will be interesting. It seems that Col. Brand's commando was given the billet of following up de Wet while Botha and the others went to other parts to cut off his retreat. Col. Brand had about 1300 men in his commando and carried out a very rapid journey, in fact they only rested for an hour at a time for nearly 3 whole days and nights. At the end of this they made a final march of 21 miles and came on de Wet in Mushroom Valley in the early morning. The rebels were so confident that there was no one near that they had not even put outposts or sentries. The whole rebel laager was asleep when Brand's men opened fire and Fraser described a scene of the utmost confusion. The rebels had large numbers of horses which they had looted and these stampeded and the whole laager was a scene of the wildest confusion. De Wet made off and just managed to escape owing to Col. Lukin's commando not having been able to get to its post in time. Fraser told us that his commando buried 62 rebels, and since then wounded and dead have been picked up in various directions. About 500 horses were captured and all their wagons, carts, stores and ammunition. The rebels were scattered in all directions, so that the defeat was much more complete than one had any official news of. The rebels have been looting all the stores in the villages and destroying the houses of the loyalists. De Wet is therefore for all practical purposes a fugitive. There are still 2 fairly large rebel commandos, one near Hoopstad and one under Kemp down along the Orange River.

23 Nov 1914. Yesterday (Sunday) we had a Church Parade at the Cathedral, and after that one of the quietest days we have yet had for which I think we were all duly thankful. No more wounded have come in for some time past and as it is our duty to get them away as soon as they are fit to travel, the course is beginning to slack off. The young house surgeon here, whose home is not far from Matatiele had a letter yesterday to say there had been a native rising and his people had had to fly into the town and all the farmers had been called out. I wonder how Gordon will be affected? The country seems in a ferment, but I should not be in the least surprised to hear that some of the rebels have been trying to stir up the natives.

24 Nov 1914. I had a chat with one of the rebels this morning. (I have had all the rebels in one of my wards.) He told me that he had been called out by de Wet and that de Wet had told them all that they were simply assembling to show who had the greater following; Botha or Hertzog. On arriving at the laager, quite unarmed this man was told they were going to fight the government and he must accompany the



commando until he could get a rifle. He was one of the first to be wounded at Zand River near Virginia, though he never had a weapon in his hands. He then went on to say that there were many rebels who had never intended to fight and that the leaders had held back all information and that the great bulk were quite unaware of the amnesty. One of de Wet's staff who has just been captured says that de Wet is furious with Hertzog, as he says he has let them all down and funk'd coming out as he should have done. I think Hertzog comes worse out this affair than any. To stir up men and egg them on to lose their lives in rebellion and then back out, is the limit of human meanness. So far the government have allowed none but the burgher commandos to do the attacking work and it is wonderful to see the enthusiasm of the men "to wipe out the stain on the name of their race" as they put it. One of the Commandants in Brand's commando under my care did not turn back in storming a kopje until he had been shot through both arms and the abdominal wall. He said he had a good horse and was able to steer it with his knees until he got back to his own lines. It is wonderful to see where a bullet will go without killing. I have one man shot through the neck, who is slowly getting well. Another who was shot through one eye and out through the back of his head. This man is now quite well physically, but at times is very upset mentally. Several have survived shots through the chest, and what is more seem to suffer but the slightest inconvenience. The news this morning is unamazing. There seems to have been a fair amount of fighting all over the country. But there is no doubt that the rebellion is now practically squashed. There will still no doubt be a good deal of clearing up work to be done. De Wet seems to be flying hither and thither with only 4 men with him pursued night and day, so I don't think it will be long before he is either taken or shot in pursuit. I am sending this away as it will give you all our news up to date.

29 Nov 1914. "Tempe". A gap of nearly 3 days in this has occurred partly because there has not been much of special interest and partly because a slacking off of surgical work has meant an augmentation of outfitting for our trekking work, which we hope is soon to come! Yesterday we had orders to move to Tempe. Tempe is the site of the big camp made during the S.A. war. It lies about 5 miles out of the town in a range of low hills commanding a splendid view of the country round. The government have taken over this camp but as they would only take over some of the buildings the remainder were sold and so everywhere you go you see the foundations and fragments of these houses which give the place a rather desolate appearance. When all the buildings were there it must have been a very imposing camp but now it looks like a skeleton of one. The British government spent about 1 1/4 millions in this camp I am told.

30 Nov 1914. During the past week there has been a lot of heavy rain, accompanied by much thunder and lightning. About 4 inches of rain must have fallen during the week. It has been a perfect godsend as the country was extremely dry and the last 2 seasons have been droughty ones. The commandos must have had a miserable time out in the open without any shelter at all. It is remarkable how quickly de Wet has been knocked out this time as compared with the last war. It was done by the remarkable mobility of the commandos. As instance, Brand's commando of about 1500 men travelled nearly 100 miles in 2 days and three nights, giving themselves no rest and very little food until they caught de Wet at Mushroom Valley. So quickly did they cover the distance that de Wet had not the slightest idea they were anywhere near him. One pictures a commando as rather a picturesque fine looking body



of mounted men, but the reality is anything but imposing to look at. The burgher regards commando work as the dirty and unwashed job it is going to be and so turns out in his old clothes. They are then given a rifle and bandolier and a white band to tie round the left arm. This completes the outfit. For sleeping they usually carry 2 blankets just under the saddle to serve as a numna by day and cover for themselves by night. However each man has a somewhat different plan. After being on the move for a day or two and not washing or shaving you can imagine what a fearful looking lot of ragamuffins they look. It is scarcely to be wondered at that their wounds go septic. I went down to the station a few days ago to see some sick men in a commando which was resting for a meal. The station smelt exactly like a monkey house. Horses out having a feed and drink on the platform, men going about with little kettles and tins of bully beef and loaves of bread and all in the state of the utmost filth. It was a sight to make you realise what fighting really meant to these men. Out to fight and nothing else. No comfort, no show, just out to fight for their homes. All sorts of ages, sizes, shapes, and dispositions. Some gloomy, some cheery, but all in earnest about "Onze Commando" and keen to show a commando could still do as well as ever commandos have done before. There was a pathetic note too, in such a scene. These were not professional fighters. Everyone had given up his means of livelihood to meet an emergency.

1 Dec 1914. The weather has been delightful since the downpour. One day's sunshine served to dry the surface, and now the grass is growing fast and the country beginning to look less like a desert. On moving to this camp we have joined the other two M.O.'s and occupy the Colonel's Bungalow. The nights are so beautiful that we have our beds out in the garden, rise early and ride before breakfast. It is a splendid chance for us to get ourselves gradually broken in for the trek. We all long to get on trek for our experience at present is that owing to the rush to get men into the field there has been no time for training. The result is M.O.'s go off with their columns without any clear idea of what is expected of them. This is fatal to a systematic treatment of the wounded and results in M.O.'s running short of supplies, and thereby unnecessary suffering and delay. The scheme adopted by our forces is one adapted from the R.A.M.C. It is roughly this. Regimental M.O.'s accompany each regiment. Their duty is to render first aid in battle and to sick on the march. These cases are sent with all despatch back to the Field Amb. (We are a field amb.) Our duty is to give further treatment. Operate only on urgent cases, and then evacuate all cases to the Lines of Communication and so to the base hospital. You will see therefore that unless each man is fully conversant with the plan there is sure to be delay and muddle. They are in the position of having to learn as they go, instead of being prepared beforehand. The main point is that every endeavour has to be made to get sick and wounded away from the point as soon as possible. The ordinary medico has considerable difficulty at the start, to realise that he must move cases he would not care to risk in the ordinary way. Here it is a case of putting the sick man to a considerable amount of risk, on account of the risk there would be to the whole regiment in having their movements hampered by an accommodation of sick. Until this is fully realised the novice at fieldwork is inclined to get an accommodation of sick which he thinks are unfit to remove, they use up his supplies and soon he himself (the M.O.) becomes useless because he has nothing else to give.

3 Dec 1914. Yesterday was fraught with a considerable amount of excitement. We - that is Usmar, van Collier, and myself - have been



struggling hard to be kept in our unit to work together as a whole. So far we have managed to keep together. But yesterday comes a wire from Headquarters to Col. Knapp, our S.M.O., to say send either Capt. Murray or van Collier or both to Cape Town for duty at Walfish Bay. Col. very considerably asked us what he was to do as he knew our desire to keep together and also considered it more satisfactory from a military point of view. He therefore wired he had Capt. Gow here unattached and could send him. At 8pm comes another wire saying, send Murray he has prior claim. However Col. Knapp stuck to his guns, and Gow was able to continue his preparation. During the evening it began to rain again and came down in torrents.

4 Dec 1914. Gow left early this morning in floods of rain. It is still pouring and the country is practically under water. Everyone is jubilant at such splendid rain. Van Collier and I clad ourselves appropriately and went for a walk in the rain. The wide shallow valley between this and Bloemfontein was a huge lake and the town must be having a thorough wash out. A wire came from Pretoria to say that they were quite satisfied about the arrangement of Gow taking my place, so once more we are in hope that our unit will not be broken up. The news of de Wet's capture came today. Feeling is very high here and I am sure that unless the government takes very strong measures against the captured rebel leaders and de Wet in particular they will lose a great deal in prestige, and very equally in political ways. The feeling is that unless rebellion is very firmly put down unrest will be roused again very soon.

5 Dec 1914. Today the rain is over though a good deal of cloud is still hanging about and it is somewhat oppressive, so that we may have a bit more before long. The town has been quite seriously flooded but everyone is so pleased at having such a splendid rain after so much drought that no one minds a bit of damage. We had a nice ride again this morning. I have changed my horse and have now got a fine sturdy guy which carries me well and I think will turn out a useful animal. Yesterday we had arranged for quite an elaborate mess dinner, inviting 4 guests. But unfortunately for various causes only one was able to come. We lashed out and got a turkey, which our soldier cook turned out quite nicely.

11 Dec 1914. Since writing last we have had regular routine work at the Tempe Hospital. The staff consist of Col. Knapp, we three and a dentist named Brothers. The latter has retired from regular practice, but has come forward to give his services for the men in the field. There are very few wounded coming in now, but a good many sick. There are generally from 150 - 200 cases in Hosp. I have charge of the surgical wards and van Collier the medical. There is quite a lot of surgical work and I am getting a good deal of experience in cases one does not often come across in private practice. We have had news from Headquarters that there will not be much doing for a couple of months yet as the troops are being rested and reorganised after the rebellion work. It is just possible we may go back to Wynberg, as Usmar is wanted for giving instruction. We ought to hear in a day or two. Col. Knapp left today for Pretoria to discuss matters at Headquarters. In any case we shall not be going on trek yet awhile. The day before yesterday the news of Beyer's end came and the rounding up of the last rebel commando. Yesterday I drove with de Kock to a place called Glen about 15 miles out. Owing to the heavy rains the roads have been very much washed out. We had rather a struggle crossing a drift. The road in and out had acted as tributaries during the storm and huge banks of



sand had collected on either side. I managed to zig-zag up this huge bank of sand, but only did so after much digging and paving the way with flat stones to give the wheels a grip. The country was looking perfectly lovely. The grass is quite long and green, as right. I have never seen before beyond the Hex. There were lots of funny little meercats, different to the Karoo kind, and birds of various kinds. We also saw a couple of Duiker bok as we drove along through the scrub towards sunset.

15 Dec 1914. The weather has been very hot again, culminating in high wind yesterday followed by heavy rain last night. This rain is splendid as it will consolidate the good done by the previous ones. Work has gone on much the same for the last few days, but much discussion as to our future plans has originated in the news brought back by Col. Knapp from Pretoria. He himself is under orders to leave for Cape Town en route for Luderitzbucht tomorrow. We are to remain until the Hospital is sufficiently clear for 2 men to run it. All the cases fit to travel to go to Kimberley. After this we are to proceed to Wynberg and from there to Swakopmund. We therefore spent yesterday in sorting out the cases and planning as far as possible to get away by Thursday or Friday next. In the meantime it was decided that I should go to Pretoria to get full information on a number of points in regard to our future movements. So I started off this morning to catch the 8.25 for Pretoria but found on reaching the station that the train is nearly 4 hours late. I am therefore now writing in the Bloemfontein Club, waiting for the train.

16 Dec 1914. Since last writing I have been to Pretoria on business connected with our Brigade. I left on Tuesday morning and travelling all day reached Pretoria at about 1.30am Wed. It was a warm thundery sort of day with rain showers showing in various directions. All the bridges and culverts were guarded by pickets of burghers and D.F. men. The turnouts of the burghers were most varied and remarkable. Men of all sorts of ages, each got up according to his own ideas. Most seemed to favour their old clothes. Some of the officers had parts of a uniform. One man had almost a complete uniform the whole being finished off by the most jaunty looking little pale grey civilian hat. Another rather fine looking old man had on a grey tweed riding suit, with a Sam Browne belt-revolver and so on. Every sort of mixture of civilian and military clothing and not the least amusing thing about it all, was that no one seemed to think they were the least bit funny. It was quite interesting approaching the Witwatersrand in the night time. It was clear up there but inking dark and the masses of lights on the mines showed up particularly well stretching away for miles. There was one long line with great clusters cropping up at odd intervals, indicating the mines themselves. I was out early on Wednesday and spent the whole morning conferring with Col. Stock and various other officers in regard to various points in connection with ambulances and field work. We inspected all sorts of ambulance vehicles from two wheeled contraptions to carry one stretcher case to a motor ambulance for four stretcher cases and four sitting. It was quite interesting and most instructive. After lunch I went for a trial run in a light motor ambulance and drove up to the Union buildings. They are really very fine indeed and stand on a splendid site. From the terrace in front there is a splendid view of the town and owing to the plentiful supply of rain everything was looking its best. The town lying in a hollow with hills all round dotted with trees and buildings and at this time covered with fresh grown grass, looked quite beautiful. I have no doubt it must be very close and hot in warm weather, but that day it



looked its best. On returning to the office I saw more vehicles and interviewed more people and finally left by 5.20 for Johannesburg. The journey through rolling downs deep in a rich growth of grass and forest patches scattered about and making new growth all looked very beautiful. As we drew near the reef the huge white "Dumps" and dirty houses and engine shops around the mine heads began to appear. Of course I only saw the part of the town seen from the railway and what I could see of the principal streets in 1/2 hour in a taxi, but I was not much impressed. Pretoria is decidedly picturesque, while Johannesburg is a mass of houses, mine dumps, and hauling gear. I left at 9pm and as I managed to secure a compartment to myself I had a good sleep, arriving at Bloemfontein at about 9.30, where Usmar and van Collier were waiting for me on the platform to hear the news. Our plans now are to clear the hospital and proceed to Wynberg to open a training school for officers and men during the month prior to embarkation for G.S.W.

#### Report on official visit to Pretoria

Proceeded to Pretoria from Bloemfontein on Tuesday 15 Dec 1914 and owing to delay on railway reached Pretoria at 1.30am on Wednesday 16 Dec 1914. Reported myself to Col. Stock at 9am. Col. Stock arranged for an interview at 10.30 at which the following questions were discussed.

#### 1. Plan submitted by Maj. Usmar for training at Wynberg:

Col. Stock approves of this scheme in total; and argued further to the principle that officers and men attached to the Training School should not be detailed for other duty. Maj. Usmar to take over duty of D.C. Training Camp on arrival in Wynberg. As many officers and men are to be sent for training as is possible. Should any units be at the school longer than 10 days, they are to attend revision classes or go over a second 10 day course. The importance of attending this course of instruction must be impressed upon all M.O.'s who can possibly attend, in addition to those specially detailed. Officers who go through the course are to be instructed to convey to officers they come in touch with, who have not attended a course of instruction, the general scheme upon which the medical service is being run.

#### 2. Ambulance Vehicles.

After discussing fully the various types Col. Stock arranged for a parade of the various types that were in hand and also photographs of others. The following types were inspected.

a) Light 2 wheeled vehicle for one stretcher, man riding on horse or mule. This could not be considered of much practical value.

b) Light 4 wheeled spider chassis with light body arranged for one or two lying down cases on stretchers, man riding as above. Useful but not of much practical value.

c) Mark I Light. This takes two lying down cases but could very easily be arranged to have one upper tier as to carry four stretchers. This wagon is light and strong and is drawn by any number of mules according to circumstances and would be capable

of going anywhere, giving the maximum amount of accommodation for carrying sick or wounded for the minimum of energy expended. It is fitted with water tank and a collapsible hood like a motor car.

d) Photos were shown of a heavier type of wagon with large capacity water tank and pump.

Of these there is no doubt that most useful all-round vehicle is (c).

### 3. Motor Vehicles.

A number of different types of bodies were seen; which resolved themselves broadly into two classes.

a) A body built for lightness and compactness capable of carrying two stretcher cases and two or three sitting.

b) The same thing duplicated and capable of carrying four stretchers and four or five sitting.

Both these types of body are good for their special purposes. The governing factor would be the surface over which the car was expected to go.

Chassis. I had a discussion of some length with D.C. Motor Transport - Capt. Hope - and was in agreement with him that the most suitable of the American-made chassis was the Hapmobile. The long chassis for (b) and the short for (a) bodies.

My recommendation was that the Hapmobile chassis be adopted as standard for ambulance vehicles and that the two types of body be adapted and used according to the nature of the country.

There was in addition a training Hap. which had been converted so that the body resembled the "Valveless Sleeper body". This is a useful car as being adaptable for both ambulance and ordinary use.

A general discussion was subsequently held at which I argued that our unit should be equipped with 2 motors fitted with (a) and (b) bodies respectively and possibly a third motor with sleeper body, and 3 wagons of (c) type. We could then report later as to the suitability of such equipment.

An officer who had had transport experience in Southern G.S.W. made it clear that in those regions motors were useless owing to the sandy nature of a great part of the country.

Of the Northern regions he knew nothing but had heard that the country was less sandy.

The difficulty seems at present to be obtaining very reliable information as to the practicability of motor transport and I was informed that reports from time to time would be invaluable.

### 4. Question as to duty of Brigade.



The Brigade is to consist of 4 officers and 60 men. Maj. Usmar is to recruit up to this strength. The men in the employ of the S.A.R. are to be called out. The Brigade must be thoroughly and fully equipped while at Wynberg. Maj. Usmar must indent for equipment up to full war strength.

5. Question of water bottles.

Col. Stock said he was aware that these were not satisfactory but said that it was impossible to obtain others. In regard to suggestion of canvas water bags, he said these could be indented for in Cape Town. I asked him also as to the men being supplied with shorts. He agreed to this but thought there might be some difficulty in obtaining an issue from ordinance. In regard to Maj. Usmar's question as to whether a special surgical haversack similar to those used by the French army and containing a supply of special first field dressings could be issued. Col. Stock agreed to this which he said could be indented for in Cape Town.

Strictly Confidential Information

The Brigade will proceed on Jan 12th or 24th to Walfish Bay and so to Swakopmund. It will be attached to the Force under the command of Col. Brits. Maj. Usmar will be on his staff as S.M.O. There will be 4 Regt. M.O.'s - Capt. Nortje, Cillie, Zeiderberg and Marshall. Lt. G.M. Bowyer i/c stores. These officers will be sent to Wynberg for training. Swakopmund or Walfish Bay will be the base. Here will be Col. Odlum: A.D.M.S., Maj. Milner-Smyth: O.C. Hosp., Maj. Moffat: Surg., Capt. Maynard: Sanitation.

23 Dec 1914. Late at night on 20th we got our orders to proceed to Wynberg. We therefore turned out early on 21st and arranged for our train to be sent to Tempe. By about 12.45 we were all aboard and moved down to Bloemfontein station. Here the ladies of the Victoria League presented each of the men of our Brigade with a parcel of papers, a pair of socks and some cigarettes. On leaving Tempe we took a new recruit on our strength in the shape of a fine grown Airedale pup. We have christened him "Tempe", and he will now accompany us on our travels. He is a splendid big chap and full of beans and is already quite regarding us as his masters. We are not on the ordinary train but have 5 carriages attached to a goods train, so our progress is very slow. We reached de Aar at about 9am on 22nd and remained there till 11.30 when we pushed on again reaching Beaufort about 8pm. It is now 11.15 and we have only reached Constable so it is probable that we shall not reach Wynberg until near midnight.

26 Dec 1914. We reached Wynberg station at 5am, and did not get into the goods siding until 7am. The Brigade is now in the Training Camp at Wynberg. Capt. Forbes who came down with us and had been attached to Col. Lukin, gave an interesting account of how the Col. nearly lost his life by lightning. It appears that he went to the top of a kopje to reconnoitre a position and while there a thunderstorm came up. When it passed over the kopje, Col. Lukin had near him 2 signallers. One was operating the helio about 60 yards away and the other was standing about the same distance on the other side. They were all knocked down by lightning and Col. Lukin said he had hardly regained his feet when a second flash came and they were all bowled over again. This time Col. Lukin was unconscious for about 5 minutes. One of the signallers

escaped unhurt. Col. Lukin had his breeches ripped down the side of his leg but was otherwise not hurt. When search was made for the 3rd man of the party the soles of his boots were found on the spot upon which he had stood, still occupying the same relative position as when the owner had stood on them. His body was lying about 10 - 15 yards away down the side of the kopje. He had a gash on the side of his head. His clothes were so torn that it was practically impossible to separate the fabric of his tunic and shirt from one another. The uppers of his boots were on his feet. All his buttons were gone. His body was marked with fine exfoliating black marks. Death was instantaneous.

29 Dec 1914. Since reporting at office of S.M.O. F.G.H. (Lt. Col. Buist R.A.M.C.) on 24 Dec 1914 I have been detailed for special work in his office.

26 Jan 1915. In train just leaving Beaufort West. I remained in Col. Buist's office until Jan 16th when I rejoined my unit at Green Point. We were shifted the following day to Young's field, Wynberg, for the purpose of carrying out our scheme of training ourselves and other units in field work. Everything was just getting into shape when orders came that we were to hold ourselves in readiness for immediate entrainment for the front. At the same time Usmar had orders to remain behind to carry on the training school. This was a great disappointment as so far we have stuck steadily together, and Usmar must feel being detached very much as for months past he has been working up his brigade. He has a promise, however, that he goes with us to G.S.W. Van Coller now takes command and has been promoted to Major. Our orders came on Jan 23 the very 1st day on which according to original orders we were to have started for G.S.W. with the 1st mounted Brigade, to commence our invasion of G.S.W. We had still to draw our amb. wagons and transport, so this was a busy time before us. However by nightfall these arrived. Some idea of the size of our unit can be gathered from the following:

- 4 med. off.
- 60 men
- 40 natives
- 140 mules
- 20 horses
- 6 amb. wagons and 2 motors
- 6 general service wagons
- 4 scotch carts
- 2 water carts.

At 2pm on Sunday the word to inspan was given and by 2.45 the wagons were all drawn up in order of marching e.g. amb. wagons, G.S. wagons, scotch carts and water carts. The mounted men form a string along the right hand side by which words of command can be passed along. We were due at C.T. station at 5pm, but found on arrival that the work had been too much for them and we could not expect to leave till the next morning at about 6am. Our orders were to encamp on Green Point Common once again, so off we went. G.P. Common is undoubtedly the most hopeless camping ground one could wish for. No depth of soil, dust and always windswept. That evening it was blowing hard and I imagine the men had a bad time, as they were enveloped in clouds of dust all the time, the wind blowing hard all the night. We slept fairly comfortably in a marquee we found there. Reveille went at 3.30 next morning and by 6 we were at the station once more. The trouble now was that they were



short of rolling stock. However things were gradually got together and all our Brigade safely on board. It took 25 trucks and 3 coaches to carry us. We were the 20th troop train to leave in the course of 36 hours, the whole of the 1st M.B. having preceded and to which we are now attached. At the present moment we are passing Plaat-Doorns and will soon be at Nelspoort.

27 Jan 1915. De Aar. Arrived here early this morning. We are now waiting for further orders. I wired on the 25th to Wallace saying we should pass Nelspoort this following afternoon, but could of course give him no definite time as in a troop train one jogs along very quietly with no scheduled time. We passed Nelspoort about 7.30, but did not stop, and saw no one. The weather is somewhat hot though when coolly clad, not at all unpleasant.

29 Jan 1915. We spent all yesterday at de Aar. The evening of our arrival there the O.C. of the Hosp. came over to say he had just brought in a soldier whom the police had gone out to arrest. This man apparently managed to knock one man down and when running away was shot by the other. The bullet went through his back and finally lodged in his abdominal wall. I went over to give a hand. The operation was a weird and wonderful performance. One wonders at the courage of some men, at undertaking things they can't do. However it was got through somehow and I imagine that the patient's fate is sealed as having been fatally damaged internally, the operation could not have materially assisted him, in any way. The less said the better. About 1pm we got our orders to go on to Upington. When I woke this morning we were just leaving Prieska. From there we are on the new stretch of railway. We have been pegging away all day through very arid looking country. The local people say that in common with the rest of the union there has been no satisfactory rain for 3 years, but whereas the drought has broken elsewhere, there seems no prospect here. We should have reached Upington at 5pm but it is now past 6 and we are still about 50 miles away.

30 Jan 1915. Upington. When I woke this morning we were standing in a siding at Upington. The town lies on the Northern side of the Orange River, and must be about 1 1/2 miles distant in a direct line from where we stand. All around us is a busy railway terminus gradually springing up on a waste of brown powdery sand, with drought stricken and stunted looking trees and bushes scattered thinly about. Beyond stretch mighty plains, as far as the eye can see, broken here and there with low ridges and occasional curious looking little kopjes of big stones. Everything looks dried up to the last degree. The river is marked by a belt of green trees resembling weeping willows, which grow close to the water's edge on either bank. I was dressed by 6.30 when van Collier and I sallied forth to report our arrival. We trudged along the railway track in the deep soft sand for about a mile, until we got to the outskirts of the trees fringing the river. Here we found some of the commandos encamped among the trees. I foresee we shall have great difficulty with these. They have no discipline and do what they like when they camp. At this place they were scattered among the trees in little knots. The horses tethered to the same bushes beneath which the men slept and ate. No attempt at any method in sanitation or provision of clean water for drinking. Just all higgledy-piggledy. Presently the railway track took us over a temporary bridge across a spruit, in itself a very considerable river, and then a little further on we came on the edge of the main stream. At this point it is about 1/4 mile broad and flowing very fast. They say it has been rising



steadily for some days past and is now too high for it to be safe to use the Pont. After waiting some time a petrol launch came over and in this we crossed to the other side. The path from the river passed through some most verdant looking gardens which were irrigated from the main stream, and lay in what is really an extension of the river bed in times of extreme flood. On emerging from this to the level of the plains on the other side we found a motor bike which we got and were soon deposited at the Headquarters. Col. Brits was not there yet, so after making further enquiry as to his whereabouts we made our way over to "The Hotel" and had breakfast. The town of Upington is not beautiful. The houses are scattered about in some sort of order, but the intervening spaces can hardly be called roads. After breakfast we ran Col. Brits to earth in a lovely spot. Striking across the arid rubble strewn apology for a street and down a steep slope towards the river we crossed a water furrow and entered at once into a most luxuriant garden. It was just a tangle of vines, fig trees and creepers of the convolvulus type, almost smothering the path leading into it. In this garden stood a pergola heavily matted over with vines, and here in the cool shade we found Col. Brits and his staff about to have breakfast. I did admire his good generalship in the choice of this lovely spot to camp. After a short chat we returned and have decided to remain for the present in the train. It is blazing hot but more comfortable than camping on the dust. So far we have had no news of what is on foot. All sorts of rumours but nothing certain. About an hour ago we heard some heavy gunfire and then some rifle shots. I have just been watching from the top of an engine water tank and saw a big commando saddle up in one of the camps on the other side of the river and make off at a gallop in an Easterly direction along the river. There were a few more rifle shots later but now all is quiet and I last saw the dust of the commando disappearing among some ridges about 5 miles away.

2 Feb 1915. The last two days have been awfully hot. We heard no more of what the firing was about, but on that day Maritz and 3 of his staff were brought in to arrange terms. The sequence of events has been as follows. Jan 23 - Maritz sent a message in to Upington to tell them to remove the women and children as he intended to attack the place the next day. This he did. Those who took part in this affair said it was quite the battle of the rebellion. Maritz had about 1200 rebels who were all equipped in German outfit and had apparently been well drilled during their sojourn in G.S.W. He also had 200 Germans with big guns. Their guns considerably outranged ours, but in their anxiety to capture the situation they brought them unnecessarily close, so that our fellows in the C.F.A. were able to get within range and once they did this their shooting seems to have been very good as they soon put one of the German pom-poms out of action and eventually did such execution that the rebels were forced to retire. One of the gunners told me that at the point he was in charge of the rebels came up for the attack in splendid order and though he soon got the range and began putting shell after shell into the midst of them they never gave way, and when eventually it got too hot for them they retired in perfect order. I'm not sure quite what the casualties were but we had about 10 men killed and about 20 wounded while I believe the rebels lost pretty severely as they left 18 dead when they were driven off. This failure to take Upington seems to have been the finishing touch for Maritz as he now dare not go back to G.S.W. and his men are too disheartened to carry on the struggle. So apparently he asked to be allowed to come in to make terms. This was the reason of his visit on Saturday. We know nothing of what took place, but suppose that as in other cases surrender would



be unconditional. In any case he and his staff returned on Sunday. So we ought to hear news in a day or two. It seems that the Germans do not mean to surrender with their guns and have probably trekked back to G.S.W. It is a great pity that the Orange River has become so flooded that neither ourselves nor any of Col. Brits' commando have been able to get across the river. The only means of communication is by a petrol launch. Neither the new Pont put up by the government nor the old one belonging to the town can be worked. I rather think if Col. Brits had been able to get his force across the river he would have had a go to round up the Germans as well as the remainder of the rebels. As it is the river is very high. The main stream is 365 yards across, and besides this there is a side stream about 50 yards across, which is running very strongly. It is a wonderful sight to see this enormous volume of water running through this desert. The only rivers I have seen to compare with it in size are the Rhine at Cologne and the Danube at Vienna. Sunday was very hot. I don't know what the official reading was but it must have been somewhere about 110 or more in the shade. It has been up to 120 recently. On Monday we had a change in the shape of a dust storm. As there is no vegetation except an occasional very dried up looking bush, and all the soil is light and powdery you may imagine what an unpleasant time we had. We took refuge in our railway carriages but here the temperature was 105 and atmosphere laden with fine dust. This went on pretty well all day, but towards evening the wind dropped a bit and van Collier and I got on our horses and made for the river. The river water unfortunately is so laden with fine mud that it was only like washing in thin mud. However it was wet and cool. During the night the temperature has dropped very much and this morning it is cool and bright, for which we are all very thankful. There is no more news as to what has been decided. All we know is that Maritz and co. have returned to their forces which are lying beside a big water pan about 40 miles away. There is no water between this and that so that it would be well nigh impossible to send a force out to attack as if the capture of the water was delayed even an hour or two the attackers would be doomed. One report says that Maritz and his men were sent back in a motor and that when they reached their camp they stripped the car of all its spare tyres, petrol, oil and grease leaving the chauffeur just sufficient to get back to camp. If this is the case I should say it means that Maritz intends clearing off with the Germans and leaving his men to their fate.

5 Feb 1915. Friday. One trouble we have encountered so far and one which we fully anticipated is that scarcely anyone from the highest to the lowest has anything more than the haziest of knowledge of what their duties are. So long as the particular person you are dealing with is sufficiently candid to admit this and is willing to discuss what is the proper course to pursue, all is well. Unfortunately Col. Brits' Chief of Staff is one of those who is quite immersed in his own duties and at the same time fully confident that he can do exactly as he thinks. The S.M.O. of a column is of course perhaps the officer of all others that should be kept as fully informed as possible of what is going on and as far as possible future movements in order to be able to lay his plans for the medical arrangements for the troops. So far, in spite of frequent attempts to obtain this information van Collier has been unable to do so, as Col. Brits' Chief of Staff and Brigade Major is under the impression that the S.M.O. is not entitled to any more information than he cares to eke out, which up to the present is nil. The result of all this is that we lay at Upington from Jan 30 to Feb 3 with not a word as to what was going to happen next until we had an order to leave for Cape Town on Feb 3. On approaching de Aar yesterday



evening we got another order to remain at de Aar for further orders, but still no intimation as to what the rest of the force was doing. So here we are waiting and doing nothing. This morning we decided it was impossible to carry on in this way and have wired accordingly to our headquarters to have the matter looked into. As a further illustration of the manner in which things are being done. By the time our train was ready to leave Upington we found two additional coaches being attached, one for passengers and one for Col. Brits' staff. We pointed out that this was not right as no combatant officers are allowed to travel by ambulance train. However under the circumstances we had to accept Col. Brits' order, but said he must understand we were going at our own pace and must look after our animals. However at Prieska we found the train being split up. Van Coller again remonstrated and asked that all orders be put in writing to safeguard him from the irregularities taking place. This was refused and Col. Brits had the train divided, our coaches going forward with him and the animals and wagons coming later. At de Aar we again urged strongly that written orders must be given, but were told by Maj. Brink that this was unnecessary and that he would hold himself responsible. We pointed out that this was a further irregularity as every officer had to produce if called upon an order in writing to show his authority for doing any duty which might be queried by the third party affected. However all this will probably gradually right itself as time goes on. Monday and Tuesday were terribly hot, in fact every day at Upington was. We had no special thermometer, but I found each day that my clinical thermometer which I kept in my tunic pocket hanging in the coolest part of our carriage, always rose over 105. There was no relief from it anywhere as even in the shade of the trees along the river the sand under foot was so hot and powdery that it seemed to make very little difference to ones comfort to get into the shade. The least puff of wind or any person or animal passing by sent clouds of dust into the air. Altogether I don't think I have ever experienced such intolerable heat. There was no escape from it anywhere. I tried all sorts of dodges from sitting with nothing on at all to clothing heavily. No clothes at all was worse than any other dodge as ones skin became burning dry and hot with no protecting layer of moisture. One comfort was that hot though the sun was it does not burn ones skin like the coast sun does. One could walk about with bare arms and legs with impunity and fear no serious sunburn if due care was taken. Upington must be a miserable place to live in. We were delighted to leave and I don't anticipate any anxiety to return there again. We covered the distance of 120 miles between Upington and Prieska in something under 18 hours, which works out an average of 6-7 miles per hour for the sum. The delay is chiefly due to want of water. Each engine carries 4000 gals more water than usual and where the water supply is weak it takes a long time to fill up. At Draghoender a horrible disaster took place. The train was just moving out when I heard one of the men calling Tempe. As always happens in these cases he kept dodging the man who was trying to catch him to put him in the train and finally dodged under the train. He was knocked over and I think the train must have gone over one of his hind legs as he raced off into the veld on three legs. The train was so long that we could not attract the attention of the driver and so off we went without poor Tempe. I have telephoned and wired instructions for him to be destroyed if too badly injured to be sent on. It is a most wretched accident but really no one is really to blame. The trains on that line generally make 3 or 4 short moves to get their engine tanks filled and no one was quite sure whether we were really off or not. Prieska we saw only from the outskirts of the town. It lies close to the River and looks as though



it had some pretty gardens. From thence towards de Aar we travelled through terribly drought stricken country. The bush looked and I think really was quite dead for long stretches together and not a living thing to be seen. As we got nearer de Aar we passed through some rain showers, but none very heavy. Just before reaching Britstown we passed through the block of farms owned by the Smartt Syndicate at Hout Water. They have big dams and are irrigating extensively. It was quite a marvellous sight to come out of all this terribly burnt up looking country and pass suddenly through fields of waving green grass, lucerne, and harvested crops. It all looked very prosperous and I hope will turn out to be a successful venture.

24 Feb 1915. We remained 3 days at de Aar, and then journeyed slowly down to Cape Town. I say slowly - for we took 56 hours for the journey which under ordinary circumstances is done in about 24. The railway was congested with traffic and engines had been so constantly worked that they were giving out all along the road. We camped at Green Point Common awaiting our turn to get away by sea. Green Point Common is a horrible place for a camp. There may be no wind in Cape Town or Sea Point but at Green Point it will be blowing 1/2 a gale. Clouds of dust penetrating everything and the soil so shallow that there is no grip for tent pegs. Consequently tents are always on the point of coming down. We spent a busy time completing our equipment. Difficulty in obtaining proper supplies leaves us in a chronic condition of being short of something. However we are now I think about as well equipped as is possible, though I may say at once that this does not mean that we are in any way adequately equipped. Yesterday we embarked on the Galway Castle, our horses, mules, wagons and motors going on the Shonga and Erna Woermann and British Pruic, which make up the rest of the convoy. Yesterday was a perfect day. Fairly warm, just a light S.E. wind and everything looking its best. Usmar lunched with us and later on Col. Buist came down to bid us farewell. Finally the Governor and Gen. Thompson came up the side, had a look round and said goodbye and we were off. I am not quite sure when we actually left the docks as I was busy in the depths of the ship settling our men down. Fortunately I found the Chief Officer was an old shipmate of Freddie's and with his aid I obtained a portion of the promenade deck for our Brigade, where they will at any rate have plenty of fresh air. The space allotted to them originally was in the steerage with about 380 Burghers. Not too cheerful a prospect!! This is another lovely day, and beautifully cool and fresh. We are being escorted by the Armadale. The ships with the horses and transport are not in sight. I suppose it is not considered necessary to worry about them so long as the men are protected. We are a good crowd on board. Many of the men have never been on the sea before. They are certainly having a very pleasant first experience.

27 Feb 1915. Saturday. Walfish Bay. We got in early yesterday morning. There was a fairly heavy mist so that we could see nothing of the land, except a fleeting glimpse now and again of low lying yellow sand hills. About 750 of us got on board a tug and a lighter, and were landed at the whaling station. The fog was so thick that we made a bad shot and found ourselves almost on the beach, had to back off and coast along until we found the jetty. From this point we had to walk about 2 miles to the principal landing stages and settlement. As we went along the fog thinned out a bit and we could see something of the nearer land. The beach stretched away in either direction without a break in the smooth brown sand, as far as the eye could see. It is like the beach at Muizenberg, without mountains to relieve the eye in either



direction but there is no surf as the bay is almost land-locked - so they say - but it is seldom possible to get an extended view on account of the haze which sometimes becomes a dense fog. On reaching the settlement, which is just a huge camping ground for the troops and stores that are landing, we came upon a scene of the greatest activity and apparent confusion. There is one fairly substantial landing stage which boasts of a steam crane. There is also another small one where lighter goods can be landed. The horses and mules are brought off in huge "floats" or ponts. These are hauled close in to the shore by crowds of Kaffirs all singing and chanting, gangway is then put over the side and the animals walk down into the shallow water and so ashore. Quite a simple matter, the only trouble being that on account of the shallow water the strips have to lie a long way out. Our first business on arrival was to find a site to camp on. We visited the Clearing Hospital and found Maj. Campbell-Watt and a section of his ambulance in charge. It was nice meeting them again and also fortunate for us as they have taken us into their mess, but as it was late we lunched with our men off bully beef, raw onions and biscuit, which I must confess I found excellent though some made rather heavy weather of it, as a trial go off. They will all have to get to like it soon. After lunch we went over to the beach to look out for our things. "Floats" were coming in every now and then and discharging masses of equipment from which each commando was engaged in trying to sort out its belongings. A little further along would be another float discharging horses. All along the beach were men bathing and catching soles. These seem very plentiful at times. One supply officer told me they came in in such quantities that they scooped them out in cartloads and fed all the troops on them for 3 days. From the shore the beach goes back quite flat and only just above highwater mark under ordinary circumstances, but when the neap tides come, the water runs back for a couple of miles over this flat. Our horizon inland is limited by huge sandhills like those at Fish Hoek, only no rocks or vegetation, and the sand is of a light brown shade which looks almost yellow in certain lights. The camps have been formed on this flat and here was a scene indeed. Masses of men, horses, mules, oxen, engines, tents, trucks, telephone and telegraph wires and poles, wagons, big guns etc. People going about every direction. Some busy and others idle and all looking very cheerful and well. Maj. Campbell-Watt says he has been here now two months and that the climate is perfect. Very little wind, quite cool and bracing, with delightful sea bathing. The people who live here permanently say that it is like this all the year round. There is a good deal of mist and fog which really keeps things cool. They have once had heavy rain, but this is very rare. Water has to be distilled from the sea and everything else must be brought from the sea or inland. This morning the sky is clear but the haze round the horizon much the same so that no extended view can be obtained.

28 Feb 1915. Sunday. I saw an account yesterday of the weather conditions at Swakopmund. Amongst them a record of the rainfall. The total for 1912 was 1/10 of an inch while that for 1913 was 3/10 of an inch. This rainfall comes in the shape of fine mist spread over a great number of days, so they really have no rain that can be called properly by that name. The climate is really ideal for a seaside resort. Mild, cool, bracing, no wind. The bay is so land locked that there are no waves. The beach is so gently shelving and the sweep of the coast so gradual that bathing is perfect. No danger to the most timid and plenty of swimming for the more venturesome. The men spend all their spare time bathing and spearing soles which are very plentiful. When we go to Swakopmund we travel all along the beach.



Our possessions are slowly coming ashore, we expect that they will all be landed by tonight. So far we hear that Gen. Botha has pushed in about 30 miles from Swakop. along two routes. At this point they have struck nice country with fine lucerne beds and plenty of fruit and good water. Our orders are to follow up as soon as possible. It will take another day or two before the Brigade is ready to move. At present there are only two engines and a limited number of trucks and owing to the heavy sand every thing heavy has to go by train. We are arranging for our heavy kit and motors to go by rail and then we trek on with our wagons and horses. Today some of the infantry troops here are moving on and also lots of railway material. The sky is clearer and the sun bright but the air very cool. The horizon is never quite free from heavy haze or rolling banks of fog which retreat out to sea as the sun gets hotter and then back again in the evening till next morning.

2 Mar 1915. Tuesday. Walfish. Yesterday our belongings came ashore fairly regularly and by this evening all our wagons, carts etc. were safely in camp. We were to have gone on to Swakop. today, but could not as some of the gear of the rest of the commando has not yet come ashore. However I think all will be ready for a move early tomorrow morning. This morning we had a short ride. At first we went South along the seashore and across the bed of a lagoon from which the water recedes at low tide. There were thousands of seabirds wading about and among them large numbers of flamingoes. These latter are remarkable looking birds, particularly so when on the wing. Just as they rise the crimson splash on their sides shows up well against the rest of their snow white plumage. Last night it was really very cold indeed. In spite of my sheep skin bag and an extra blanket I felt cold. This morning has been warm and bright and clearer than hitherto, so that from the tops of some of the sandhills we got quite a good view of the country. As far as one can see with a glass there is nothing but rolling sandhills, with here and there very scanty patches of thin scrub. The sand takes up all the formations that Scott describes in the Antarctic. Even the "Sastingi" are beautifully strewn over large tracts. I noticed also formations and fantastic shapes which might quite have been the originals of many of his photos to illustrate the varieties of surface encountered. Evidently the subsoil is of a clayey nature and gets mixed with the overlying sand. Result of this is when the wind sweeps the sand along, the clay does what the frost achieves in the Antarctic, forming a sufficiently binding basis, to get the sand to stick together and assume the curious shapes noticed.

4 Mar 1915. Thursday. As arranged we trekked from Walfish at 8.30 yesterday morning. At first while the tide was low we got along quite well, but gradually we were driven higher and higher up the beach until the whole cavalcade was struggling painfully along in bottomless sand at the foot of the dunes backing the beach. As usual the burghers have taken no notice of their orders and instead of sending all their kit away in the train, they had put a lot of mealies and other stuff on their wagons. The result was that eventually the mules could struggle no longer and the officer in charge threw 30 bags of mealies overboard and left them on the beach. After this we got on better, but even so the first 7 1/2 miles took us 5 1/2 hours. At the end of that time we arrived at a siding called "Rand Rifle Siding" where we had been told to water our animals. But here again we found that our cheery burghers had never made any arrangements to have the water sent on, so that the burghers who were ahead had drunk up all the water before we arrived. So there we were with over 400 transport animals and no water. However by means of the field telephone running along the railway we got a 2000



gallon tank sent out from Walfish. During the halt van Collier and I walked some distance out to the top of the highest sand dune and got a splendid view. It was really a remarkable sight. The scene again was quite arctic. Vast plains of white sand stretching away in every direction and worked by the wind into miniature hills, valleys and mountain ranges. Far inland we could make out a range of blue mountains. Of vegetation there was none unless one could dignify occasional very lean little tufts of scrub by that name. The day was one of the clearest and warmest we have yet had, which was fortunate. After a halt of about 3 hours we trekked on again. The railway skirts the shore all the way and is guarded by blockhouses which were manned by the D.E.O.R. At the halting place we met Maj. Rose and others we knew. The tide was still up and the struggle grew worse and worse until about 7.30 the track crossed a point, and here the mules could struggle no more so we decided to camp. Fortunately we had been careful enough to pick up sufficient of the discarded mealies to give the animals a good feed. As the day closed the fog drew in again, and before turning in we dined off our emergency rations and some raw onions. This morning it was still foggy but we got a nice swim in the sea and trekked once more. About 1 1/2 miles further on we came on Col. Gregory's headquarters and found them just starting breakfast, so we gladly joined in. Another four miles of struggling brought us into Swakopmund, where we found our camp pitched by the men who had gone on by the train. Here as elsewhere the only unpleasant thing is myriads of flies. I have never seen anything to equal them. They swarm in countless millions. Our camp stands on the outskirts of the town on the edge of a shallow valley which is the mouth of the Swakop River. The water came down a little while back for the first time for many years. Under ordinary conditions the river like most on this coast, loses itself in sand long before it reaches the coast. Landwards there stretches a huge sandy plain devoid of vegetation while the horizon is bounded by high mountains many miles inland, some say 80 miles but they don't look quite as far away as that. There is evidently a concentration of forces going on here as camps stretch away all round the town, with thousands of horses picketed behind them. We hear that Col. Alberts has made a reconnaissance with about 1200 of his burghers and is now camped about 40 or more miles out having driven the Germans out of the position and subsequently found them strongly entrenched at a place called Jackal's Water about 60 miles inland.

5 Mar 1915. Friday. Swakopmund. Yesterday afternoon and this morning we have been into town and had a look round. It is quite a large town with many fine buildings. The curious thing to me on first seeing the place was that all the streets are left as they were, just soft deep sand. One would have thought that with expensive buildings, water and electric light laid on the Germans would have paved the streets with either wood or stone. As it is they have contented themselves with laying wood footways on either side of the principal streets and narrow gauge railways to the various parts in the middle of the thoroughfares. These are no doubt convenient in a way but an abominable nuisance to any other wheeled vehicles. There are lots of private houses which are all well built and splendidly furnished throughout. Very nearly all the buildings in the town have now been allotted to the various units stationed here. It is curious to walk into fully furnished houses and find men camping out everywhere. It appears that the Germans quitted the town in great haste leaving everything just as it was. They must have done this when the place was shelled by the Armadale. It was then unoccupied by either side except for a small patrol who were evidently left by the Germans to fire the



various mines they had planned. During this time the coloured population in the neighbourhood seemed to have looted the place and done a great deal of malicious damage to furniture etc. Evidently the few German soldiers here used summary measures as at one spot outside the town where our men were making a blockhouse they came on the freshly shot corpses of 19 natives. It is supposed they must have been met by a German patrol coming away with loot. General Botha is living in a fine looking house overlooking the landing stages. The landing arrangements are very elaborate consisting of twin piers running out into the surf with enormous cranes for lifting the goods. These big cranes are carried on one of the piers which is still in course of construction and to be used solely for the cranes to move along. These were apparently wrecked by the Germans before they left. In spite of all their preparations the surf which rolls in on this unprotected coast is so formidable, that ships have been known to lie off for as long as 42 days before they could complete discharging all their cargo. Though the weather has been calm ever since we were here, the swell rolling in has never made it possible for anyone to land on the pier unless they were exceedingly daring and active. The water supply of the Swakop comes from boreholes in the river and is horrible. It is very brak and tea and coffee is miserable. There are rumours that we push on early next week.

6 Mar 1915. Saturday. Swakopmund. We have had a quiet idle day and have just returned from a delicious bathe immediately in front of the town. During the afternoon we met Maj. Campbell-Watt and the rest of his brigade. They are living in a nice little villa, which is beautifully furnished and belonged to the German Government Geologist. It is most curious to stroll about from house to house and find them all occupied by soldiers. As a matter of fact the troops are now camped outside the town and only those whose work keeps them in the town are given the use of houses. We also saw Maj. Moffat and others we have met or knew elsewhere. The weather continues delightful. Cool and fresh all day and very cold at night. However I am told conditions change rapidly as one gets away from the coast. As it is it is hard to imagine that we are only 10 degrees South of the Equator.

8 Mar 1915. Monday. Swakopmund. It seems probable we shall be here for some little time yet. Today we have had a horrible change in the weather. The night remained warmish which has been quite the contrary up to the present, and as morning broke in a fiery red sky, it got hotter. Then a few puffs of wind and very soon, quite the worst dust storm I have ever seen, came tearing down on us. The wind was burning hot and the temperature rose rapidly until it registered 108 in the shade and 138 on the sand on which we are encamped. It was awful. The tents began to blow down and cooking became impossible. Van Collier and I put our goggles on and beat a retreat into the town where we had some work to do and remained there until near lunch time when we faced the "blizzard" once more. All we could do in camp was to creep into our tent which threatened to blow down every moment and munch a biscuit. There being no abatement later we went off again and had a dip in the sea and then visited "headquarters". The building they are occupying is nice and dry and cool. Here I met Dr Nobbs who is in the intelligence department. He showed us a very interesting collection of photos of the interior which do not inspire one as the country seems very arid in every direction.

9 Mar 1915. Tuesday. Swakopmund. Last night the wind dropped and a gentle breeze came in from the sea which was an immense relief after



the fierce heat and dust of the day. But not long after sunrise to our chagrin the land wind started again and soon we were enveloped in clouds of driving sand and although it did not get so hot the dust was quite as bad. This state of affairs continued until about 4pm when the wind dropped and changed round again. We had a glorious bathe.

11 Mar 1915. Thursday. Swakopmund. We are still waiting to move. I presume that supplies are being collected and sent forward and that we shall not move until this is accomplished. In connection with the heat on the 8th I was examining my clinical thermometer today and found it had risen to the limit and then the bulb burst. So I asked van Coller and Edmeades to examine theirs and we found that all confirmed a temperature of 110. These thermometers were all in our tunic pockets hanging on the tent pole which therefore represents the heat in the coolest and most protected spot in camp. Today is warm but pleasant as there is very little wind and what there is comes in light breaths from the sea.

13 Mar 1915. Saturday. The weather has once more settled down to what appears to be its more usual routine. That is to say a good deal of mist and haze along the shore varying in intensity and rendering the air cool and damp, and positively cold at nights so that one is glad to get into all ones warmest things for sleeping. A few days ago we were asked to lend 5 of our Gen. Service Wagons to the Brigade for transport purposes, the idea evidently being that all available transport is being used to push forward as many supplies as possible. This evening our conductor returned looking rather the worse for wear and giving a story of having ridden the first trip of 30 miles or more each way with hardly any rest being allowed to the animals and then receiving orders to load up and do the trip again after a halt of barely 4 hours. This he said was impossible for the animals to do, with the result that he appears to have come into conflict with some officer in charge, and has therefore returned to report to us. However we shall have to investigate tomorrow.

16 Mar 1915. Tuesday. Swakopmund. On Sunday we rode out to railhead about 9 - 10 miles out. We made a "Bee" line across the desert for our destination. This is a real thorough going desert and no mistake. Not a sign of vegetation anywhere except a scraggy growth in the bed of the Swakop River. Not far from here the deep soft sand comes to an end and the surface is then fairly firm, so that it is splendid for riding over and motors get along well, as although sand is soft in the hollows one can always find a way round on hard ground. When we reached railhead we found that our mules were still away. What was disconcerting was to hear from Capt. Pymm the officer in charge that ours was the 3rd conductor to be sent back which lends colour to my idea that the senior Transport Officer having given promises to carry out certain moves, if supplied with sufficient wagons, and finding that the various conductors were reluctant to kill their animals for his glorification, he has dismissed them on one pretext or another to work his own sweet will. However this may be it appears that our poor animals are doing about 66 miles on one drink and short feeds for each time they make this journey. Van Coller gave our conductor a note to Maj. Wilson the O.C. Transport saying that he insisted on either an explanation or our own conductor remaining in charge of his own teams. We have heard no more. From the railhead the country showed no prospect of mending. Still nothing but desert as far as the eye could see in every direction. We are still waiting until supplies have been accumulated for a move in.



17 Mar 1915. Wednesday. Swakopmund. The mules came in this evening. The conductor reported that the note had had the desired effect of reinstating him in charge of our animals. He reports that two animals were knocked up and were replaced but otherwise the teams do not look too bad considering the amount of work they have been through. The upshot of the whole thing is that we shall have to take a lot of persuading before we lend our teams again. Tonight we hear we shall be able to draw 24 extra mules so that we shall be better off. This will mean 12 to each G.S. and ambulance wagon, and 6 to each cart or water cart. Our orders are to leave at noon tomorrow. So our trek starts in earnest at last.

19 Mar 1915. Friday. On trek. We left Swakopmund at noon yesterday. We found it imperative to leave a good deal of our outfit behind. This included all the mens kit except one change of clothing and one blanket. Also all tables, benches and camp furniture together with 10 of our bell tents. We had devised loops of stout rope to lash on to the motor wheels for the sand and these proved a great success as with an occasional shove from the men our motors were able to struggle through the first deep stretch of sand and are I believe the first cars to get out without being towed by animals. Our first stop was at a place called Nonidas on the Swakop about 7 miles out. About 1 1/2 miles out the surface became much harder and the going quite good. After watering our animals we started off again and have been going all night. It was quite clear but no moon and as far as we could see there was nothing but sandy desert in every direction. At about 5am we halted where we now are at a sort of subsidiary supply depot not far from Haigemchab. Here the Rand Rifles are encamped. There are a considerable number of troops moving up. It is curious to see the motors forging along over the desert. The surface is just hard enough to make it possible to get along. Motorcycles do marvellously well. No sand seems too deep or surface too rough for them. One hears the hum of the engines and then a little convoy will go flying by scattered over the desert, twisting and turning and skidding as they sort out the best ground to go over. The car speedometer registers 25 miles. We go on again soon.

20 Mar 1915. Saturday. A deal has happened since my last entry - to continue in order. We trekked on from Haigemchab at about 11.45 and got into Husab about 2pm. Here we found a huge straggling camp. The waterhole was about 4 miles down a gorge and a fearful struggle going on to get the thousands of animals watered. We immediately on arrival tried to find out what was going to happen, but headquarters said nothing definite was yet planned. So we sent our animals off to water which under the circumstances meant that they would be away many hours. I then tried to get some rest but many interruptions occurred until at 7pm a message came that we were to be ready to trek again with as light equipment as possible at 8pm and carry enough food and forage for two days. We were told to move towards a place called Riet. Van Collier decided at once to move forward with 4 out of our 6 amb. wagons taking 12 mounted men so that we should travel light and have the maximum carrying capacity. The rest of the Brigade was to remain at Husab to cope with any wounded sent back and pass them on to the coast. It was about 9pm before our mules returned. The next difficulty was that no guide was provided nor could we find anyone who could do more than give us a general idea of the direction. "Keep the Southern Cross on your right" was about as near as anyone seemed able to tell us. So with the help of my electric torch we floundered clear of the camp. There was no moon. Once out van Collier and I skirmished



about until we found a spoor leading S.W. across the desert. With the mounted men strung out behind us to guide the wagons we moved slowly forward until the spoor became more defined. It was a curious feeling to strike out across the desert in the dark in a new country and in the neighbourhood of the enemy, not knowing for certain that one was sure of the road being the right one. This is a typical instance of the way in which our highly mobile and irregular army goes to work and I trust will not lead to disaster. At about 11.30 pm we decided to outspan and rest our mules, and after doing this we found that we had camped not far from some transport, which was comforting as it showed at any rate we were on the right road. At 5am on the morning of 20th we trekked on again, and not long after dawn saw the General and his staff striking camp in front, and as it grew lighter still the dust raised by the Brigade could be seen. We had been travelling across an immense flat toward a big granite mountain and now we saw that the road turned down to the left of this mountain and dipped into a wide valley towards the river. The burghers had no sooner begun to go down when the Germans opened fire with shrapnel from some big guns away down in the valley. We remained on the crest of the valley watching the troops spread out to attack. The Germans were firing very badly as their shrapnel was bursting from 200 - 300 feet up in the air. Presently we made our way down into the valley and placed our wagons under cover of a ridge while van Collier and I with one wagon and 4 men went forward to where we heard a man had been wounded. As shown in sketch we kept along the road while the German guns were delivering a heavy fire of shrapnel at the sandy ridge behind which the larger part of our force had left their horses. By turning down to the left we took the wagon right down behind the ridge close to where our guns were stationed. Having got the man on board we remained where we were as there was some risk to the wagon in returning. Our guns are under command of Toby Taylor who was Capt. of our Soccer team at Pembroke in my year. He managed to get his guns under the tail end of the ridge shown, only 950 yards from the German guns and out of their sight so that they did not know where the fire was coming from. We arrived just before the firing began and got a splendid view from over the top of the ridge. The fight opened by the driving in of the German outposts and an attack on the rock ridges marked 1 & 2 from which the burghers drove the Germans with rifle fire. It was after this that the guns took position. After a few shots our guns found the range beautifully and one after another the German guns were silenced. Their gunners must have had an awful time and the beauty of the whole thing was that they never could make out our position and kept firing right over our heads. While this was going on our burghers were working their way in on each flank. Some splendid work was done by them on both wings as the Germans had such a magnificent position and such splendid cover that only very few of them were seen all day. About 3 in the afternoon we saw a horseman gallop out from behind the German guns toward the road and presently one of the gun limbers came into view making for the road. Our guns immediately opened and a shrapnel shell plunged right into the limber knocking over the whole team of mules and as we found afterwards killing one of the drivers. The Germans then brought up another team which was also wiped out and one of the drivers killed.

23 Mar 1915. A lot of rifle fire followed till dusk and as we left the scene of the fight we saw the dust rising in rear of the German position and then later followed a most tremendous explosion followed by a blaze. During the day we collected 8 wounded and 7 deaths were reported. The next morning the Germans were found to have cleared out and we went forward. On reaching the position of the German guns we



searched for wounded and found 3 severely wounded and one slightly injured by a fall. In our search there was every evidence of the haste with which the place had been left. There were about 150 unfired shells and several boxes of unfired cartridges. Also all sorts of personal kit, medical stores, etc. While there were signs of all sorts of stores wine, beer, and meal having been destroyed. We have got a fine supply of medical stores and a nice officers tropical tent. The German position was most wonderfully strong and had all sorts of natural advantages. Directly behind the guns was a deep gully which led down to the bed of the Swakop eventually. It was by this means that the guns had been got away and it was evident that the unfortunate limber had been sent out as a decoy to draw our fire while their guns were being withdrawn down the kloof.

25 Mar 1915. Thursday. The Germans had had their camp all along the kloof behind the guns and in the larger one into which this debouche right away down to the Swakop where there was a waterhole. Along this were strewn all sorts of equipment the useful parts of which such as stretchers, dressings, medicines, tents, we gathered up for our own use. In searching the following day behind the guns a shallow grave was found with 3 bodies, but the task of going deeper was so unsavoury that the men pursued their investigations no further. At another point the remains of a man was found who had apparently been struck by a shell, the only recognisable part being one leg. So it is evident their losses must have been considerable. Our scouts also captured an amb. train with 4 corpses on it but allowed it to proceed to its destination. Last night van Coller got orders to return to Swakopmund as the bulk of our Brigade is returning there until the transport and supply arrangements have been got into good working order. At present they cannot keep us properly supplied. It was therefore decided that I should remain here at Riet with 19 men and establish a non - Dicted (sic) Hosp. Van Coller trekked at 10pm. This morning Edmeades arrived with 15 men and the equipment which had been left with him at Husab. He has been through some very hard work. Seeing how things were van Coller very wisely had decided to leave Edmeades with enough men and equipment at Husab to look after any wounded we might send back, but the 9th M.B.F.A. had not been so farsighted and like all short-sighted people were landed with a far larger number of casualties than ourselves with the result that Edmeades and his men had to take on some 50 odd wounded which they had sent back to Husab and had made no provision for. So poor Edmeades found himself with nearly 70 wounded. He managed to get the assistance of Capt. Vaughan R.M.O. Rand Rifles, to help cope with this rush. He seems to have managed the whole thing most ably and deserves every credit for all he has done in running the evacuation of the wounded of both our own and the 2nd M.B.

28 Mar 1915. Sunday. We are gradually getting news of what happened to the 2nd M.B. They left Husab the same night as we did and divided into two columns. One under Col. Alberts and the other under Col. Collins. Alberts attacked Jackals Water which was held by about 300 Germans and Collins attacked Pforte where there were about 200. Alberts captured nearly 200 Germans and 2 guns and 2 or 3 Maxims, but Collins seems to have made a mess somehow, and lost about 30 or more men either killed or captured. But taken all round and considering the positions held by the enemy our total success has been very excellent. It seems that Alberts gave the 9th M.B.F.A. no explanation of their plans but simply told them to follow him. This was of course very much what happened to us, but anticipating the necessity for a tent division at Husab. We left it there as the 9th should have done too if they had



stopped to think a bit. However the ultimate mistake lies with the Commanding Officers in not making the Medical Officers fully acquainted with their plans, and if there is any cause for grumbling it will be themselves who must take the onus. What must have been obvious to anyone looking more than a very little way ahead, has now recurred. We are stuck for supplies. To keep a force like ours supplied in a desert is a huge undertaking and one which is entirely beyond the available system of transport. Unless some very radical change is made and the transport trains augmented to at least 4 times their present capacity, there will be constant delays to our advance. I am now stationed at Riet with 20 men and about 1/2 our equipment, while the rest of our Brigade has gone back to Swakopmund to wait until a sufficient amount of supplies has been sent forward to allow of a further advance. What beats me at present is why any attempt has been made to move inland until it was certain that we had sufficient transport to keep us in supplies for a steady advance. Trekking to and fro will only wear out men and horses and necessitate covering hundreds of miles more than is necessary. As far as the fighting goes the Germans have very little chance, as we outclass them in all branches in the field. Our only enemy is the country. Hitherto I have had no time to say anything about the country and must take the opportunity now that we are resting to say something about it. After leaving Swakopmund we only trekked about 9 miles by daylight. At this time we passed through barren hillocks, the surface of which was simply disintegrated quartz mostly like coarse granulated sugar and giving a very fair travelling surface. During the same night we seemed to cross an immense flat with the same sort of surface but even firmer and the going quite good apart from the dust. When morning dawned we found ourselves still among endless sand dunes to the South but about 4 miles to the North kloofs led down to the Swakop. On the opposite side were the most weird and wonderful looking rugged hills and small mountains. These were cracked and scored and blistered to an extreme degree and present an example of the utmost possible desiccation. They seemed to be composed of granite mostly while seams of quartz and an almost black looking fine grained rock ran in fantastic lines across the landscape. The picture was one of utter desolation. This same country was maintained until we reached Husab at about 2pm. Here the camp was at the head of a valley leading down to the Swakop. The bottom was broad and sandy while the kloofs leading into it all round the head and sides presented the most wonderful examples of desiccation of huge masses of granite. The bottoms of these kloofs were soft and sandy with the results of the disintegration. The whole effect was of a huge amphitheatre with little antechambers leading off all round. In these were ensconced the various small units, like ourselves, the various Colonels and their staffs, Headquarter staff and so on while the main force lay in the amphitheatre. As we left again at nightfall and trekked all night we saw nothing of the intervening country. Here we lie in the bed of the Swakop. All round are still the weird and wonderful worn granite kopjes while to the South is Langer Heinrich, quite a considerable and very rugged granite mountain. The formation on the last part of the plain before reaching this valley was worthy of note. It was quite flat, but the surface instead of being covered with fractured quartz was closely and neatly packed with smoothly worn quartz pebbles varying in size in certain areas, but wonderfully even in size in any given area. Mostly they varied from the size of a pigeons egg to be either a little smaller or bigger. They were nicely packed and looked as if they had been finally rolled with a heavy roller, so that on looking down the general effect was that of mosaic work. As far as one can see ahead the country is still very rugged and similar in character to what



we have passed. Here and there in the kloofs one sees some very drought resistant scrub, but the bushes are very few and far between and seem mostly to belong to the fat stemmed small leaved varieties found in arid regions. There is no doubt it is a most remarkable part of the world and one in which the student of Geology would have unlimited scope for the study of the effects of desiccation in the extreme. The whole face of the earth is blistered and scorched until it looks like nothing I have ever seen or imagined before. It is fairly hot during the afternoon but cools towards evening and early morning. Unfortunately it seems rather a windy place and as the thousands of animals which have passed through and to and fro to the water have thoroughly loosened the ground we suffer from much dust. It is no use whatever trying to keep clean and every one looks the same colour. The dust being composed of disintegrated granite contains much mica and as this settles all over one it looks quite pretty glinting and shining in the sun. As the whole 1st Mounted Brigade has now moved back for a time Edmeades and 11 men go back too and join the rest of our Amb. Brigade at Swakopmund. I shall await them here. Today the Rand Rifles have arrived. They looked very miserable as they came in having been marching pretty steadily about 18 miles per day from the coast. I must say I should not like to have to walk in this part of the world. I am now going to send this part of my diary to Colonel Stock as he will be interested in our doings and can forward it on to you.

2 Apr 1915. Eventually did not send away my diary for fear of perhaps losing sight of it. The postal arrangements are naturally somewhat irregular. In the interval since writing I have been in Riet. After van Collier left I took over the farm house at Riet, a small crazy looking structure made up of 4 rooms all of different sizes, none of them built true, and none of them having anything to do with the other except for a small window connecting a sort of store room with one of the larger ones. The place had been ransacked by the burghers and was in a fearful turmoil. In the garden they had unearthed a galvanized iron drum in which the owner had packed his "cutlery and plate". The house stands in an enclosure of about 2 acres. About 1/3 of this has been levelled off into garden beds sown with lucerne, and mealies and in front of the house the nucleus of a fruit orchard. There are a few peach trees and an assortment of citrus trees with labels on showing that they were supplied by "H.E.V. Pickstone and Bros". Our first job was to clean up the house and immediate surroundings and then the enclosure. I had the fences mended and gate repaired and Red Cross flag installed at the entrance to our estate. The engineers supplied us with a pump by the air of which we pumped dry and cleaned out a well in the front garden and have got a nice supply of water all to ourselves. The grounds are dotted with large trees which give a nice shade and also some gum trees and other imported varieties. At the back of the house we have erected a section of a fine large marquee captured here which makes a nice shady hospital for from 15 to 20 men. We have also our 2 operating tents and 8 bell tents pitched around it in the shade of the trees and are ready for anything up to 100 cases at a pinch. Since the pump has been fixed we have watered the lucerne in front and it has shot out nicely. This we are using as a vegetable and find it to be like sweet spinach. Our cook boy Harry has also made some quite nice "Brade" with it, some onion and bully beef. Some of the troops are beginning to suffer from the continual bully and I am hoping a feed of lucerne will set them up. The men have worked well and we are as a result rewarded by being as comfortable as circumstances will allow. The force now here consists of Rand Rifles



about 200 strong and 300 burghers under Commandant Bezuidenhout. In addition there is a maxim gun section under Capt. Goldberg (Benjamin's partner in the firm of Benjamin and Lawton) a section of S.A.E.C. under Capt. Muller and an intelligence section of about 30 Herero natives under Capt. Kennedy and Lt. Howie. So we are a comparatively small community. I am alone in charge of the Hospital but have the company and help if necessary of R.M.O. to the 300 burghers. It is really quite pleasant here on the whole. A good deal of dust at times usually for 3 - 4 hours every afternoon, pretty hot as soon as the sun rises and fairly cool at nights. But with good water, nice fresh lucerne to eat, and moderate shade, things might be a lot worse. Our patrols are vigorously scouting the country all round for 20 miles out. Yesterday I was chatting with Capt. Kennedy who told me he had sent 3 of his men and a native boy a long way in to see how the water was. Presently in came one of the men without his hat and one of the natives. He said that they reached the waterhole they had been ordered to inspect just after dusk and were resting. This man said that having had orders not to rest near the water hole he was annoyed with the others and so he and the native withdrew and lay down under a bush some little way off. About 10pm he heard a noise and saw some Germans surrounding the horses and 2 other men. They also spotted him and called on him to hands up, but he and the native managed to slip away behind a rock and escape. We were still discussing this piece of news when who should turn up but the Sergeant and other man on their horses. They were very done up and after a rest and some tea related how when they were challenged by the Germans they got behind a tree to which two of the horses were tethered, the other two being a little away from the tree but between them and the German patrol. They did not answer but while the one man covered the German with his rifle the other saddled up quietly. In the meantime they heard the German order some of his men to go round in rear of them. However when ready they got on their horses and bolted down the river bed making for a kopje behind which they doubled and then stood still. The German galloped after them but went right past and as soon as they did this, our men followed them right out of the river and then slipped away. They declared that the Germans followed them in small detachments till 4am after which they saw them no more. All the explanation these two could give of the other men who had run away on foot was that they had "cold feet" and there was no necessity for them to have bolted. This evening I was again over at Kennedy's camp when in came Commandant Bezuidenhout to say that a patrol of his had just been over to Tuikas (the nearest waterhole to the scene of the adventure) and there had found the two horses supposed to have been captured the day before. The mystery has not been solved yet.

3 Apr 1915. The solution of the foregoing incident seems to be that in all probability the German patrol was a small one too and both were afraid of the other and in the darkness thought discretion was the better part, and so each escaped from the other. This afternoon I went in company with Colonel Wylie - who has now arrived and taken command of the troops here - some of his staff and some engineers to inspect and destroy a mine which had been laid by the Germans. They had protected the approach up the bed of the Swakop River by erecting a barricade of thorn trees and barbed wire. Immediately in front of this barricade two mines were placed. The barricade lay at a point in the river immediately in front of a watering place and where the bank on either side consisted of precipitous granite cliffs. The idea was that the horsemen would mass up against this barrier while an opening was being made and then the mines would be fired. And this is what very nearly happened. The burghers massed up against the barricade and one



German who remained behind was seen pulling at a wire to fire the mines. Fortunately the device jammed and he was captured before the mines went off. The mine he was trying to set off was immediately disclosed and fire kindled over it and the dynamite burned out. The other mine was only discovered later on and it was this one we went down to destroy. The engineers dug down upon it and placed a charge over the cases of dynamite. It went off with a mighty explosion, which must have wreaked havoc had it gone off at the time intended. So far the Germans have not met with much success in the mines they have laid.

4 Apr 1915. Sunday. Today Capt. Redlinghuis and I went for a scramble on horseback along the slopes of Langer Heinrich. This is the most prominent mountain in this region and lay on our right flank during the engagement of Riet. We struck a game path which took us all along the top of a rugged ridge through wild and desolate looking foothills, with deep gorges on either side. Wherever there was the smallest bit of level ground we found the holes made by zebras for rolling. The only living things we saw were some small birds, dassies and a pair of the brown knorhaan found in the Karoo. The path at the end of 2 1/2 hours, brought out on to one of the shoulders of the main mountain and from this we got a magnificent view of the country around and particularly ahead. Beyond an increase in the growth of trees in the river bed up towards Salem, there was no improvement to be seen in the country ahead. We had a fine view of Tinka's Flats over which Commandant Bezuidenhout had ridden many miles in an endeavour to outflank the Germans in Riet. As a matter of fact the path over the hills which he ought to have come by and did not find passed over the foot of the shoulder we were on and was the one by which we eventually returned. From our point of vantage we also had an excellent view of Modderfontein and the country towards Jackals Water. We could see the railway line winding up a sandy kloof from the Swakop at Riet and ascending by a long gentle slope to the higher flats of Modderfontein and on to Jackals Water. This piece of railway had been laid expressly for the defence of this position, and its existence was quite unknown until the day of the attack. The Germans had indeed taken a lot of trouble and have undoubtedly lost a magnificent chance of holding us back, by failing to hold such a wonderful natural fortress. I don't think there can be many other positions where their chances will be anything like as good. One pleasing result of our ramble was that in spite of his somewhat clumsy appearance I found old Cato is quite a handy man with his feet. I have called my horse Cato because not only is he a most splendid old philosopher but he is a bit of an orator too. He always has a friendly word to say when he comes across other horses or is rejoining his friends. When he rests he does so thoroughly. If the night is warm he lies down full length with his head resting on the ground and goes sound asleep. The night before the attack on Riet we had not had much rest for 36 hours when we lay down to sleep on the road for a few hours before dawn. When we had to go off again I went over to the wagon to which Cato was fastened and though it was rather chilly I suppose he was pretty tired and I found him full length fast asleep. I took him by the ears and gave his head a shake, at which he raised his head with a groan, but did not get up, as much as to say "Good heavens!! Are we off again?". I then gave his ears another pull whereupon with more grunts and groans he got on to his feet, gave himself a good shake, quite clearly indicating "Well if it must be, I'm ready". Then if I fall back along the line - and ours is a pretty long one when the whole brigade is on the move - to see that all is well, as soon as I start forward he will give a loud neigh and two or three more until I get back to van Collier's or Edmeades'



horses, who are his friends. He is quite a character and carries me easily and well and is docile and quiet and not easily scared by anything. If left loose for a moment or two among any group of wagons, it does not take him more than a very few minutes to find where the food is. No matter what it is in he soon finds how to tip it out or pull open a bag or even bite a hole in it if the worst comes to the worst. So take it all round he is a splendid fellow for a campaign, and I hope when it is over to manage somehow to keep him.

5 Apr 1915. Monday. New troops came in today and I spent most of my time in getting them settled into their various sites. The engineers have got some good pumps going now and there is abundance of beautiful water.

6 Apr 1915. Tuesday. This afternoon I accompanied Colonel Wylie over to Modderfontein on a visit of inspection. Here we found Capt. Wood with 100 men forming a volunteer squadron of the Bloemhof commando, doing outpost duty. Their camp lay at the foot of the most immense granite boulder I have ever seen. It was not so very high but the area rising above the sand was immense. The top of it was pitted and scored by the heat and drought, into all sorts of curious crannies and caves. In one of the larger caves Capt. Wood made his refuge from the sun for the day. It was nice and airy and cool commanding a magnificent panorama of the country round. One could see over the whole valley of Riet over to the ridge we were on, on Sunday and away back towards Husab. He said they had patrolled about 20 miles in and found good veld and considerable quantities of game, but no water. On one occasion they saw a herd of about 300 - 400 Springbok. It was near Capt. Wood's camp that the German headquarters had been and here again were signs of the rapidity of their flight. In fact they had left their camp in the morning for the fight and never got back to it. It was near here that the ambulance train was captured but when found to be a Red Cross train was allowed to go back. Here as elsewhere the country is entirely desert, though there were it is true a certain number of Euphorbia bushes which relieve the eye, but do not signify much as regards fertility or plenitude of water.

7 Apr 1915. Wednesday. Today I have remained in camp all day. A good deal of correspondence. A wire from van Coller to say Moffat comes out leaving on Thursday and I am to remain here till the brigade returns. I am glad of this as I did not fancy going back and having possibly to return immediately.

10 Apr 1915. Our patrols seem to be unlucky or careless according to the way one views the case. The day before yesterday a Lt. Dempers in Uys' Scouts with 2 men went on a long patrol as far as Dorstriviersmund. On the return when about 8 - 9 miles from Salem they off-saddled for a rest, and to wile away the time they started shooting at a mark. This frightened their horses. Dempers remained with the saddles and rifles while the men went after the horses, which ran all the way to Salem. When they at length returned they found Dempers lying on his face shot dead. The whole episode is wrapt in mystery, because after searching him they found the bolts of the other 2 rifles in his pocket. It is difficult to explain the position as if one of the enemy had done the deed why did he leave the bolts of the rifles behind? He did not shoot himself as was shown by the direction of the bullet. The tracks in the sand showed that he was (so I am told) walking along smoking a cigarette and that he fell in his tracks and never moved, his cigarette lying beside his mouth. It is curious this



should follow so soon on the episode with Capt. Kennedy's men. The other men in the Scouts seem to think Dempers must have been shot by a native scout, of which both the Germans and ourselves are making use. Two days ago one of the enemy aeroplanes visited Rossing but we have seen no signs here of any attentions from the Germans except the above mentioned patrol episodes, both of which are so mysterious. In neither case could anyone be absolutely sure of the presence of any of the enemy. The weather is very uniform here. Calm and cool at nights and really very cold in the early morning. Light breezes come from the East during the fore part of the day. It is then still and hot for an hour or two and then about 3pm a breeze comes from the West usually considerably stronger than the Easterly one and often sufficient to raise a good deal of dust. This dies away after sundown, and so the routine begins again. The heat is never serious and often just pleasant. We often see great masses of cloud in the East and flashes of lightning which seems to indicate that they are having a good rainy season up-country. This is a great slice of luck for us as it will facilitate the rapid clearing of the country when we get on the inland plateaux. The news from all sources indicates very clearly that the Germans are clearing out of all the Southern regions, and either massing what troops they have to resist our Northern force in our next advance, or possibly retreating still further North into what I am told is a high mountainous region. I should think the latter course is unlikely as we know that they are already short of a good many kinds of provisions.

12 Apr 1915. Monday. Yesterday we experienced quite a good rain. It started towards midnight on Saturday and continued to rain gently off and on throughout Sunday until well on into the night. This is most extraordinarily fortunate as it will bring on the grass splendidly and has cooled the air and made everything delightfully fresh. This morning Capt. Muller arrived with the first instalment of the Field Hospital which is to be established here. With him came Capt. Jamieson and Capt. Brothers. The latter was with us for a time at Tempe, and is doing dental work. I carry on for one day more to give them a chance to unpack and then await our Brigade which will very shortly be on the move again. This afternoon Redlinghuis - one of our Regimental Med. Officers - and I rode up to Salem, a farm on the river about 7 miles away. We had a most delightful ride. From a point about 2 miles above this the river bed becomes quite thickly overgrown with fine trees and a good deal of undergrowth and nice grass. There are evidences of quite a lot of game. We saw some pheasants only. Salem is held by an advanced post of Uys' Scouts and 2 companies of Rand Rifles under Maj. Creswell. There is quite a fine farm here with cattle kraals and splendid wells and pumps with quite an elaborate system of zinc plumbing for irrigation purposes. There is quite a nice little Bungalow of wood and iron for the homestead. The morning of our occupation of Riet a body of our men rode up to this place and surprised 4 Germans there who knew nothing of our having driven their forces out of Riet. On approaching the house a Captain and Sergeant went forward and called to the Germans to "Hands up". One of the Germans however immediately shot the Sergeant dead, while the rest tried to escape. One was shot dead and 3 others captured and one got away. The house had many bullet holes in it as our men fired into it immediately the German shot the Sergeant. The precaution of clearing the farm of cattle had evidently been taken some time before. Some donkeys and a few goats was all that was found. The kraals showed signs of having been used for camels. Capt. Uys who has lived nearly 8 years in the country, says that the Germans have gone in quite



extensively for camel breeding in the Southern regions, but that it was unusual to find them in use in this part of the country, as the ground is too rough for their feet.

13 Apr 1915. Riet. When at Salem yesterday we had tea with Capt. Uys who is there in charge of a body of Scouts. There were leaving early next morning about 30 strong to ride as far ahead as they could. This evening we hear that they had not returned up to a late hour. Muller has been busy all day fixing up their tents for the Field Hospital.

14 Apr 1915. Riet. This morning we heard that 14 of Uys' men had returned about midnight. It seems that they came in contact with a German Patrol. Uys and one of his men was riding considerably ahead of the rest when the German patrol of 9 men came in view. Uys fell back at once and took up a position among some rocks, and as the Germans came on they shot 2 and wounded 3 with the result that they then turned tail and fled to a farmhouse. The rest of the patrol came up and then drove the Germans out of the farmhouse, following up until they reached some kopjes in view of Tsoabis, where they saw what they took to be a large German Camp. They had now got somewhere about 35 miles from Salem, and no water so they were obliged to turn back. Their way led back down a dry river bed along which they had often passed before. On reaching a point about 9 miles above Salem they came to a place where the river bed narrowed. Two large trees stood on either side but some distance out from either bank. Their custom hitherto had been to pass to either side of these trees, but being dark the patrol kept to the middle. As they passed between the trees there was a loud explosion and one man and his horse were thrown over, and almost immediately there was another explosion. Fourteen men had already passed over and these went on and arrived in at midnight, but up to about 10am no further news of Uys and the rest of his men had been forthcoming. A strong patrol of 50 men was sent off early to seek for Uys and make further investigations in regard to the enemy. Not long after they left Uys turned up and said that after the mines exploded he thought it wise to off-saddle till daylight.

16 Apr 1915. Riet. Yesterday was full of interest and on the whole a very unfortunate one for our men. Early in the morning we heard several explosions far off that sounded like heavy gunfire, and it was immediately surmised that Capt. Barnard who was out with the patrol of 50 men had come in contact with the enemy. A little after 11am came a helio to say that a patrol out towards Sphinx on our extreme left had come in contact with the enemy, 3 men wounded and one killed, action still going on. I went off in the motor ambulance with the driver. In spite of grave doubts on my own part and assurances of certain failure on the part of others I managed to get the car up the long deep sandy kloof leaving out of this valley on to the higher flats around Jackals Water. Once on to these flats going was good and easy. Sphinx - the place at which the trouble was going on - was about 16 or 17 miles up the line from Jackals Water. At Modderfontein we had picked up one of the troopers as a guide, and now could get along splendidly as regards pace. It was wonderful to note the effect of the rain. Blades of grass were pushing up through the sand and soon the veld will look quite respectably green, where a short time ago there was not even a dead blade of grass to be seen. Our way led out over a huge sand flat with a range of fine rugged looking mountains of considerable height away to the North East. These must be the Ghnos Berg, which I see on the map are about 5000 feet in height. The huge sand flat sloped away to the South East towards the Swakop River, from which we had come and



were now running parallel with. Right ahead of us on the horizon was an isolated kopje, where the scouts had encountered the Germans. About an hour's run brought us to the scene of action. Our reinforcements had just arrived and were coming back towards the wounded men from having made a reconnaissance to be sure that the enemy had all gone away. We found what had happened was this. A patrol of 30 men had come out to Sphinx the previous afternoon and slept the night with a view to pushing as far forward as possible the next morning. At dawn they started off leaving 4 men to go over to the kopje and form a lookout station. These poor fellows rode over and having tied up their horses in a little kloof at the foot of the kopje, proceeded to go up. In the meantime a patrol of about 23 Germans had unbeknown to them, hidden themselves overnight in the kopje. The Germans allowed our four men to dismount and start up the kopje, until the leading man was within about 8 yards of where they were lying. Then without a word of warning or any attempt to take them prisoners they shot all four men simultaneously. On hearing the firing the main body of the patrol sent back a man to reconnoitre and when he got about 400 yards from the spot and seeing 5 horses instead of 4 he made off to fetch the others, but immediately he turned the Germans fired killing his horse. He however ran on in zig-zag fashion and as far as the wounded men could tell, escaped. The Germans then bound up the wounds of the two men who were still alive, shot their horses, smashed their rifles and then made off. When we arrived we found one man lying dead alongside his horse at the foot of the kopje. In fact it appeared that he was remaining with the horses and about to make coffee. Further up we found the two wounded men, both badly wounded. While I was attending to and removing these two men to the ambulance, the rest of the patrol proceeded to search for the remaining man and soon found him higher up, near the top of the kopje, lying dead. We buried the two dead in the little kloof at the foot of the kopje, not far from the station of Sphinx, and went off again back to Riet. The whole episode was the most cold blooded affair up to date in this scene of operations as the Germans were 23 in number and had the 4 men entirely at their mercy. They evidently meant to take no prisoners. One of the wounded was fired at after he had fallen, the bullet going through his leg. One of the killed was shot at about 8 yards, at a point where he might have been captured without even the other 3 men knowing what had happened. The place is well named Sphinx as there is a small kopje of rock lying to the North of the railway, which has a remarkable resemblance to the great Egyptian Sphinx. The country there though still desert was quite reasonably well covered with grass, and signs of an increase in bush. Our patrols have frequently been out there before and have seen a good deal of game in the vicinity. Just after the shooting of the men an aeroplane came up and circled over the place for a few minutes and then went off again in an Easterly direction. Our patrol said that they had also heard the big gunfire over towards Tsoabis - as they thought. They had also heard rifle fire in a North West direction. So as I drove back I wondered whether I should have to go out immediately to Tsoabis, which is nearly 40 miles from Riet.

17 Apr 1915. Saturday. Riet. On arrival I heard that no news had yet been received of Capt. Barnard and his patrol, so his Commandant - Bezuidenhout - very much feared he must have got into serious trouble with a considerable force of the enemy. Reinforcements were being sent up. I therefore wired to van Collier for the second motor ambulance to be sent through that night so that I might be fully prepared. To go out 30 - 40 miles with animals would mean a 2 or 3 days job. It was not till nearly 10am next day that news came that Capt. Barnard and all



his men were back in Salem. They had penetrated to the point previously reached by Capt. Uys and saw what they also took to be a large German camp. However on drawing nearer they found it was only some farm buildings at Tsoabis itself, and that it was being visited by German patrols. They had heard no gunfire, so that we came to the conclusion that the explosions must have been the Germans blowing up the railway. This information has relieved the situation considerably as now it would appear that the Germans have given up all idea of venturing to attack us. A wire came from van Collier this evening in answer to one from me asking why he had not sent the second motor ambulance, to say that he had not received my original wire. I have wired again for it so that it should be here this evening or at the latest early tomorrow.

18 Apr 1915. Sunday. Riet. We are having some hot weather again with heavy clouds in the East. So I expect there is more rain inland. The motor ambulance has not turned up yet nor any wire to say why. Maj. Moffat arrived on the evening of the 15th so that now the Field Hosp. has its full staff. We have been helping them to settle down and as the rough of the work is now over I have moved out and camped further up the River. I have found a splendid place under the shade of some very fine trees. The commonest kind of tree here is a sort of huge Mimosa. They are really very fine and afford quite good shade. There are also a few wild fig trees, like those I have seen in the Tugela Valley. The fruit is more like a green loquat to look at, but is a real fig. Very sweet and full flavoured but quite dry and free from juice, so that they are not pleasant to eat. These trees grow to a huge size and have nice clean pale stems and very beautiful dark green foliage, the leaf being small and rather like a mulberry to look at. There are also Kameeldoorn trees, but they do not grow to nearly such a size as the other thorn trees. The bulk of the shorter trees and scrub is wild tamarisk, such as one sees along the Orange River. Today is exactly a month since we marched into Riet. There is now a fair accumulation of supplies, but the railway is not yet completed so that there is no telling when we shall be ready for a move forward again. All but about 20 miles of the railway to Jackals Water has now been explored. It looks like another weeks work before we can get forward.

19 Apr 1915. Monday. Riet. Very hot again today. Have spent quiet time in the shade of my big thorn tree reading and writing. A wire at midday from van Collier to say he can't spare motor, and is sending ambulance wagon instead. Replied that this will not help. At the present time our scouts go out anything from 20 - 35 miles and to attempt to get so far out with anything but a motor would be impossible. I am faced too with the problem that two of our patrols might have casualties simultaneously in quite different directions and then it would be case of rendering no aid at all to one, with only one motor to do it with. The motor ambulances have already proved themselves of inestimable value and I only wish now we had more of them. I have wired to Colonel Stock today to say how well we can do our work with motors and urging more to be sent forward in place of wagons.

20 Apr 1915. Tuesday. Riet. Another blazing hot day with high wind in the forenoon and much dust. Flies are getting very numerous and most persistent, so that things have not been too pleasant. I am writing by lamp light now. The evening is balmy and very still and from that point of view all that could be desired. But as soon as I



lit my lamp a perfect shower of insects both large and small began to bombard it, and it requires no small amount of perseverance to go on writing in this shower of beetles, moths, mosquitoes, flying ants, and all manner of curious things that are showering down. Some of them bite too and all of them tickle abominably as they walk over one's head and down one's neck. I have had no further word of the motor ambulance today, but have done all in my power to get one sent out. One always had an idea that in war and where men's lives are at stake a request for urgent help would be promptly attended to. But no such luck. My wires have gone unheeded for 5 days, on any one of which we might have had a call to succour wounded, quite out of reach by animal transit. In Swakopmund or near vicinity there are today to my certain knowledge no less than 5 if not more motor ambulances doing nothing. And here where they are urgently needed I have with difficulty retained the one I am entitled to. However today one Colonel at Riet has gone in to Swakopmund and has promised to see personally why I cannot have the help I want. This evening I was warned that patrols will be on the move again tomorrow, so I have despatched another appeal for a motor to come through tonight. I am by now not in the least sanguine that it will have any more effect than the previous ones.

22 Apr 1915. Riet. As I anticipated the motor ambulance has not come through. Fortunately there has been no call for it. The weather still remains hot but beside our experience at Upington, it is by comparison only pleasant. I hear the railway will soon be in working order and then it will not be long before we move forward again. This afternoon Colonels Stock and Odlum arrived, and will leave again tomorrow morning. I was very glad of a chat and Col. Stock has agreed to my suggestion and has cabled for more motor ambulances to be sent forward. I was also able to explain to Col. Odlum the exceedingly uncomfortable position I have been placed in, by not having been able to obtain further help in a crisis. He has also promised to get a motor sent through on his return.

23 Apr 1915. I had a further chat with Colonel Stock this morning before he and Odlum left for Swakopmund. The day before yesterday the additional amb. wagon and water cart arrived. Unfortunately mule haulage is no use whatever at the present instance, when the only casualties likely to occur will be 30 or more miles out, with no water to be had when you get there.

27 Apr 1915. Tuesday. On Saturday morning about 11am I got a wire to say motor ambulance passing Husab. I was then at Headquarters and sat chatting till lunch time. We had just finished lunch when I saw the motor arriving. About 1/2 hour later a message came over to say van Collier had come. On coming back to camp I found van Collier and Rev. MacGregor had come in the motor. We had a lot to talk over and were at it late that evening when I suddenly felt very sick and commenced vomiting. This unpleasant state of affairs went on all that night and next day, although I merely took sips of water. It appears that some of the "bully" had not been in too good order and I think I undoubtedly got a slight degree of ptomaine poisoning, as I suffered at the same time from aches all over and slight cramping pains in my calves and leg muscles. Nothing did any good until I had a small bottle of champagne. Then followed a severe headache which passed off during the following night. The next morning I felt rather washed out but otherwise fit. On Monday we spent a quiet morning. In the afternoon a message came that one of our patrols had encountered a German one and had taken a prisoner, and also shot the horse of an



officer in the wallets of whose saddle there were found certain orders relating to an attack to be delivered on Riet and Salem. Our patrol followed up and found a force of about 300 Germans camped not far up the river above Salem. Apparently it was decided not to molest these in the hope that it would not upset their intention of making a night attack. So once more we went through the excitement of making all preparations for a night attack, but as so often happens nothing has come of it. At sundown we heard some distant explosions which seemed to come from the direction of Pforte. I have omitted to mention that on Friday 23rd a German patrol of 4 men visited Jackals Water. There is a waterhole about 1 mile from the camp there (where there are now about 700 of the S.A.I.) and it appears that one of the engineer corps was sleeping near this hole and saw these men come in but being 4 to 1 was afraid to do anything, but lay in hiding. The Germans rested about 1 1/2 hours and then went on right into the camp before they were noticed. They would even then have all got away had not this prisoner's horse gibbed at the firing with the result that he was made prisoner. I have often remarked that whereas passwords, sentries and all the circumstances of war were most rigorously in force in Cape Town, they have become of less and less consequence, the nearer we have come in actual touch with the enemy. Up to the present all our schemes have to my mind showed the utmost contempt for our enemy. We have treated the Germans as though they were children, and perhaps have been justified in doing so, as they have not so far taken any advantage of our slackness. What these prisoners have told us is most interesting. For one thing they say that the troops after (the) Riet fight retreated by road and not by rail as we supposed. They went to Salem and slept there the night within 9 miles of ourselves. They then trekked laboriously on the next morning and for the whole of the day, during any part of which it would have been a simple matter for a small body of our mounted men to have captured the lot of them and all the guns, as they were so deadbeat that they were utterly unable to put up any resistance. Looking back it does seem strange that no attempt was made to follow up our success. Another piece of information was that the aviator had had a fall in landing and had damaged both himself and his machine so that he will not be able to fly again for a long time. This flying man has undoubtedly put up a fine record as he has flown most consistently without accident for the whole period of the war. The prisoner had been with the patrol at Sphinx and said they got into great trouble with their O.C. for having shot the horses. Both this man and another prisoner taken a few days ago said that Colonel Francke was in a great dive, drinking hard and very severe on his men. He had quarrelled with all his civilian soldiers and was turning them out of the ranks. He had given the survivors of Riet a most withering address and called them all sorts of hard names for having vacated their position. He had ordered his patrols to push forward on all occasions until they were actually fired on, in order that they could bring back no false rumours as regards our whereabouts.

28 Apr 1915. Wednesday. Riet. On Monday a force of about 400 Germans with 12 guns attacked Trek Kopjes, a point on the main line, held by Col. Skinner. Our force had just moved up and had no maxims or big guns. They had therefore to advance against the shell fire until they got within rifle range, upon which the Germans withdrew. Our casualties amounted (we hear) to about 40 all told. The attack on this place and Salem must have been planned concurrently with this, but their courage must have failed them, when they found us fully prepared to meet them. However for two nights now we have been specially on the alert. Early this morning the burghers at the head of the general



advance began to arrive, with the result that the valley - once so peaceful and beautiful - is now a cloud of dust and confusion. Since I moved away from the hospital and came to camp out away from all the other camps under these great thorn trees, I have been able better to observe the bird life. There is really a very large and varied assortment. There is a flock of 8 or 10 slate coloured cockatoos. They are about the size of the white fellows with the celery top, but their "top" is made of fluffy feathers and fuller than the ordinary cockatoo. They have a loud squawking cry, and are not very beautiful to look at. Another bird that has interested me is a very beautiful little wood pecker. He has a nice cosy fitting coat striped transversely with dark and light brown, while his head is capped with a neat fitting little cowl of vermilion. He creeps about rapping round worm holes in the dead branches on the tree above me, until presently some unlucky worm looks out and is gobbled up. There are all sorts of others that I have never seen before. There is one friendly looking fellow like a large jay in build, but with black and white marking instead. Van Collier and I have just returned from reporting to General Brits and Colonel Lemmer. They have both had a step up. Brits our former Colonel is now Brigadier General of 1st and 2nd Brigades, while Lemmer has taken his place as Colonel of our (1st) Brigade.

1 May 1915. Saturday. On Trek. On Thursday we got orders about sundown to tell us to trek at 9pm. We left at that hour in the glorious light of a full moon in a clear sky. The mass of transport was so great along the road that our 1st stage - to Salem - which was only 5 miles from our camp, took us no less than 5 hours. On the way we smashed the back wheel of one of our G.S. wagons. Fortunately we have just had a farrier attached to us and he and his mate were able to fit the wheel of another disabled wagon to ours, and catch us up later on. From Salem we trekked on up the Swakop all night, in deep sand, but through lovely surroundings. The granite kopjes on either side and under the shadow of immense thorn trees in the river bed. By 4.30am I called a halt and after a cup of coffee had an hour's sleep, trekking on again at 7.30. About 11am we reached Dieptal, but found no water so trekked on for another hour and then outspanned in nice little grassy kloof alongside the river, but still no water. On we went again. It was now getting hot and I felt very sorry for our poor animals. By 3pm we reached Horibis where we overtook our Division. There was still no water so we started to dig in the river bed but were most unfortunate going 17 feet in one place and 10 in another without striking water. After sundown we managed to water our animals by making use of some holes made by the burghers higher up. We were just falling asleep, when a messenger came with orders for us to trek at 6am. So up we had to get to make all arrangements for an early start. Our orders said trek light with ambulance wagons only and 2 days rations to be made to last 4 days. We turned out at 4.30 this morning and trekked away after drawing rations. We are now at Dorstriviersmund, where our advanced columns came in contact with the enemy yesterday afternoon. A mine was successfully exploded under one of the commandos killing 3 men and some horses.

2 May 1915. Sunday. Dorstriviersmund. My notes were brief yesterday as after continuous trekking and little sleep one does not feel much in the mood for writing. At the best of times writing is not a comfortable pastime on trek. However we have not moved since yesterday forenoon. Our camp site at Horibis was quite the most beautiful we have yet struck. At this point the river bed was about a mile wide, and except just where the water occasionally runs there was quite a lot



of grass and weedy growth. Dotted over the width of the valley were little groups of the most enormous thorn trees I have ever seen. Under one of the biggest of these we made our camp in beautiful shade, and if it had not been for the anxiety about water, nothing could have been more delightful than this beautiful spot. There was lots of animal life. Pheasants were plentiful and all sorts of beautiful birds, while just at dusk a small buck ran down the river bed, not far from where we sat. It was therefore with a certain amount of regret that we had to pack up our troops and trek away. All the morning we trekked up the bed of the river, the lanes of great trees on either side growing with such regularity as to give the appearance of a majestic avenue such as one sees in some of the old parks in England. The scene of the mine explosion was rather dreadful. One came across pieces of horse and men over 100 yards away and in the afternoon when van Coller and I climbed a kopje fully 100ft up its side and about 150 yards from the mine we found fragments of one of the horses. The most marvellous escape was that of one of the men who was thrown some 50 yards away and landed in a high thorn tree where he stuck and which he eventually came down quite uninjured. The mine was fired - as we subsequently found - by 2 men lying in a little nook among some rocks and bushes. They easily escaped after the confusion caused by the explosion. I must say that I shall not be in the least surprised if our men take some fearful reprisals, if the Germans go on with this sort of thing. It appears that the Germans were holding this point, where the river narrows, but when they saw some of our men were likely to outflank them they cleared off without loss of life on either side. Our division under General Brits consists of the 1st and 2nd Mounted Brigades about 5000 strong. At present the 2nd and the right wing of our Brigade have gone forward and Edmeades with B section. The rest of us are I imagine forming a sort of rearguard. We have no more food left now for men or horses beyond what we have been able to save from our former rations, and when I think of the difficulties of transport I am wondering where our next supplies are coming from. We have had all our animals out in the kloofs today picking up what they can in the way of grazing but it is very very little. This morning I got my rifle out for the first time, and went out just before dawn. I was fairly lucky, as I had not got more than about 400 yards up a kloof when I saw a steenbok which I managed to shoot. We had some of it for lunch today and though tough for want of hanging it was nice to get some fresh meat. Van Coller and I went out again later but saw no more game. I shall try again at dusk as meat is becoming a necessity with the promise of no rations in the near future. At about 1pm we heard 2 loud explosions on ahead which must be mines. We have had no news yet from those ahead so I suppose we shall not perhaps trek on till tomorrow.

6 May 1915. Thursday. Karibib. We entered this place in the small hours of the morning after a trek of about 40 miles without food and water for our poor animals. However they came through wonderfully well. The Germans have cleared out and left their women and children together with a certain number of officials and old men. To return to the events of the last few days which I have not found time to enter while on trek. On Sunday evening we had a chat with Col. de la Rey and from him heard that he was awaiting orders to move forward at any moment. That provisions were practically finished. So next morning van Coller and I started off at dawn for a shooting expedition. After being away 3 hours we had the disappointment of not seeing any game at all. On arriving back in camp at 10 am we found everything ready for a forward trek. Our way led up the bed of the river again in deep soft sand - fearful work for the wagon teams. On the way up we passed some



deserted native kraals - the first signs of native habitations we had yet seen. At midday we rested and watered our animals from holes dug in the river bed. We trekked on again at 2 pm and about 4.30 reached Gamikaubmund where we found the whole of the remainder of the division encamped along the river bed. In the evening we were informed by Col. Lemmer that there were no more rations for men or animals, but we could have some goats for food and must do the best we could with grazing for the animals. In this connection I may say that we were still in desertland with just a very little seed and coarse grass to be found here and there. Our orders were to discard everything we could do without. So we once more resorted our wagons making up one G.S. wagon load of drugs, dressings and a few essentials, per section, and sending these the remaining wagons and all the men we could do without. Our order was to trek at 8 am the next morning.

4 May 1915. Our way again led up the river bed and after trekking for a couple of hours reached Bullolout. Here there was a fine farm where a large orchard of date palms was laid out on a stretch of river bed. We rested all day getting orders to trek at 1.30 am on May 5th 15. We were told we must go right through to Karibib - nearly 40 miles, with no water and of course no feed for the animals. We were off fairly punctually and made 10 miles in 5 hours and then rested for 2 hours. We had now trekked out of the river and were making across a great gradually rising plain covered with quite a heavy growth of thorn bush and a little tussocky grass in places. After this halt V.C. and I ranged out into the veldt to try and get some shooting. Quite close to our halting place we came on the fresh spoor of a lion while there has heaps of spoor of all sorts of buck and large antelopes. We saw quite a number of small buck, hares and Knorhaan, but no large game. Though we perservered for 4 hours we got no chance of a clean shot at any of the small bucks we saw. I came right on top of a fine big jackal, but did not shoot as we were very anxious to obtain meat. We rested again at midday and during the rest I managed to shoot a large hare which we gave to our drivers. During the afternoon we reached Undas and just beyond camped again for 2 hours. Here we decided to give all our water to the animals, which amounted to about 2 gals per beast. At this outspan we had a shot at some game, but the light was bad and the range long and we had no luck. V.C. knocked over a Knorhaan earlier in the afternoon. At 8.45 pm we got away again on our final stage and by 1.30 am today May 6, 1915 found ourselves in Karibib. We were all glad to drop into our rugs and sleep till daylight. Personally I had a most refreshing sleep and in spite of long trekking and little sleep, was quite fresh again this morning

9 May 1915. Sunday. Karibib. On awakening on Thursay morning we found ourselves quite close in to this town. When we stopped at 1.30 am I was not at all sure that we had really reached Karibib. As I have often said before the nearer the front the less the precautions, and up to the time we decided to halt no one had challenged us nor had we seen anyone, though lights shining here and there, and the dim outline of a church steeple made us sure we were either at Karibib or some village not far out. However when we woke, there we were quite close in to this town and as luck would have it almost alongside a neat looking hospital. This proved to be a native hospital in connection with the large Flemish nursing station here. We were met at the Hospital by a nurse who brought us the keys. I think all the inhabitants were extremely nervous as to how we were going to treat them. I suppose they expected we should treat them as their countrymen have done the Belgians and billet our soldiers on the Towns folk and levy a war



contribution from the town. As a matter of fact General Botha called them all together and told the men that they would have to surrender all arms and ammunition and give their parole and otherwise they are permitted to go their way. No one has been allowed to come into the town except by special permission and only those buildings are being made use of which are government property or are not in use. This is quite a fair sized town with good buildings. There are 3 large hotels and some quite fine railway buildings and stores. The people are very short of provisions, and many things like jam, salt, tea and coffee are almost finished. There are about - so I believe - 50 men 100 women and 150 children. The military had left them 2 bags meal, 7 bags rice and 36 bags mealie meal and this they reckoned was to suffice them for 2 months. They have plenty of meat and good butter and I suppose milk - though we have not seen none yet. The altitude is 3845 feet and the climate seems very pleasant. Just like the Karoo. Most glorious fresh bracing mornings and then inclined to be hot, but not unpleasantly so. We arranged to take a room at one of the hotels for a day or two so as to get cleaned up and rested. However on arrival as I mentioned we were handy for the native hospital and found it very nice and clean with very comfortable administrative quarters, so we had a glorious wash and shave. A search round the town followed. We found a civilian doctor who was running a small private nursing home, apothecary's shop and consulting rooms as well as dwelling house all in one. There was also a very tumbled down military hospital in rear of the local gaol. This we took possession of and cleaned it up and got it in order for our patients. Today we had a chat with the missionary people as a result of which they have given us a couple of very nice rooms in the administrative portion of the hospital, where we took up our abode today. This is both more comfortable and economical for us, as the hotel charges were inclined to be high. Yesterday evening V.C. and I went out in the motor to hunt for pasture and took our rifles. We saw 4 springbok and had a long shot. There were lots of Knorhaan and a fair number of steenbok and quite a number of wild ostriches. As we were not successful in shooting any buck V.C. bowled over a fine cock ostrich, which we gave to our native drivers much to their delight. Food is still very scarce. For 5 days we had no issue of rations at all except ox or goat, while the animals had to do what they could with the very scanty pasturage. Meat, with not even salt for several days on end is rather short commons and men were offering 1/- a piece for a biscuit from those who had been providential enough to horde up a few against an emergency. This place was approached by 3 routes. Along our route 44 mines were discovered, along another 87 and by the third, the whole of which has not as yet been traversed 53. In spite of this our total losses from mines have been 7 killed and 6 wounded. The Germans on the other hand had one of their companies pass over a mine which had been laid without their knowledge and this exploded in their midst killing and wounding 38. In addition to this two men of their patrols were killed in another. So that their fiendish plans have recoiled severely on their own heads. Great credit must be given to our engineers and others who were set the task of locating mines, and many narrow escapes have been recorded. It seems that a plan of the disposition of many of the mines fell into General Botha's hands in his advance on Otjimbungwe. The forces that went by that route, detached a commando to come over this way. These report that they passed through some glorious country. They describe it as some of the best country they have seen in Africa. Splended grass, quantities of fat cattle and sheep, and lots of water. These people only suffered the inconvenience of living entirely on meat as we had done but did not have the added disadvantages of no water and very scanty pasturage. When one views



the whole move up here it has been rather remarkable. The time occupied was 7 days and this was accomplished on 2 1/2 days rations for men and animals through a desertland for most of the way. Even on arrival here, there was no certainty of anything and as a matter of fact there was no food to be had for the men as a whole for two days until a couple of wagon loads of biscuit and dried fruit came through. So really the men have gone for 9 days on 2 1/2 day's rations. Several engineers have been found here and this morning the first train came through bringing a little more food, so now we may hope that some fodder will be brought through soon for the animals, who have only the poorest of grazing as a reward for their arduous trekking.

13 May 1915. Thursday. Etiro. For the past 3 days since my last entry we have been resting at Karibib. Rations are still very short indeed and one feels lucky to get even 1/2 rations, while the wretched animals have to be content with such grazing as they can get and the issue of a stray pound or two of fodder. We were informed that the force would not move from Karibib for about a month, that during the interval 30 of the troops were to be sent back and the remainder organised for the finish of the campaign. So everyone began to settle themselves down for a prolonged stay. To this end we searched round the town and hired a room from one of the Towns folk. No sooner had we moved all our things and made our arrangements, than an order comes that we are to be ready to trek at 7 pm on the 12th. The Brigade was to move on in 2 wings of 500 picked men and animals in each. Our arrangement was to take 4 ambulance wagons leaving the heavy wagons and tent divisions at Karibib. Our ambulance wagons travelling in 2 sections with a water cart and Scotch cart in each. Edwards in charge of B section with the left wing and myself in charge of A section with the Right Wing. V.C. of course free to move with H.G. Staff. We were away punctually at 7 and trekked at a good speed for 5 hours reaching this place in the Kahua river at midnight. Here we outspanned and had orders to be ready for the road again at about 5 am. However later on the Brigade Major came over and told us the astonishing bit of information that we were to return to Karibib in the morning as "General Botha had wired that he did not approve of this forward move". This is I think about the finishing touch to a casual campaign. Just fancy a move of this magnitude having been planned and put into effect within the command of a General without even acquainting him of their intentions. Just picture a General having given instructions for a Division to reduce its strength by 30% and reorganise and remain at a certain place to do it and then find that it has planned a fresh little campaign all on its own account, and put it into effect. The whole thing is grotesque and Gilbertian. I do not wonder General Botha has peremptorily ordered us to return. On arrival here we were met by 2 of the Scouts of our Brigade saying that they had come in contact with the enemy about 17 miles ahead and had 3 seriously wounded. It was then 12 midnight of May 12 - 13. V.C. decided to send Capt. Redlinghuis the R.M.O. of Left Wing, with one of our ambulance wagons to attend to these wounded until we came up. He left about 2 am and subsequently returned at dusk the same day. He reported that on arrival he found 2 of the wounded had died before his arrival and he had brought back the wounded man with him.

15 May 1915. Saturday. Karibib. We gave the mules a short rest and then trekked on till midnight until we had passed our rear guard. It is worthy of mention that the rear guard don't worry about the ambulance one bit. They had simply gone off and left us at dusk to come on as best we could. We trekked again at dawn and got into



Karibib at midday May 14.15. During the early part of the evening and up to about 11 pm we saw rocket signals (red and blue stars) sent up several times from the tops of neighbouring kopjies. These must be German look-out men.

22 May. Saturday. Aukos near Usakos. We remained in Karibib until Tuesday, filling in the time by helping Maj. Moffat open a hospital. In fact we were given to understand that we should be in Karibib for at least 14 days. However on Tuesday morning at 7.35, without the least previous warning comes an order to trek at 9 !!! This with all our kit spread through an extensive hospital !! So we made up our minds just to get away in our own time and not worry about trying in the least to keep up with our brigade. By about 4.45 all was in readiness and we left Karibib en route for this place. We outspanned about 8 pm and camped for the night. The nights are getting really very cold now, but the weather is glorious and absolutely ideal for trekking. Immediately on halting a big fire is made, our valises come out and each man arranges himself according to his ideas of comfort. In the meantime the "boys" cook our meal, and within an hour or so of halting everyone is slowly settling himself to rest for the night. The nights are brilliant with stars or moonlight as the case may be, and there is seldom much wind to bother us. Taken all round this is quite an ideal climate for outdoor life. We were off again at 8 am and I ranged out in the veldt in the hope of getting some game, but beyond a few fleeting shots at running duikers and steenbok I had no luck. By midday we reached Usakos and rested to water the animals. Usakos is quite a nice little town. It had been entirely deserted by the Germans and native population. There are some magnificent power houses and workshops and quantities of water. Detachments of the D.L.I. and T.S. were in possession. A railway bridge between Usakos and Karibib and had been destroyed and a gang of our people was had at work repairing it. After lunch we trekked on down the Kahua river until we found our straggling camp. The camp is on a farm called Aukos. The general opinion is that this farm was a government experimental station. There is a fine windmill and accomodation for watering 400 animals simultaneously. The farm lies on the edge of a vast swelling plain, under the shelter of a big mountain. The plain is sandy and covered sparsely with thorn bush varying from 5 to 10 feet in height. Judging by the quantity of spoor there must be lots of springbok, small buck and several varieties of large game. On Thursay V.C. and I decided to sally forth for a shoot. We had been out for a short time before sunset on our arrival and V.C. shot a steenbok. We heard that from Thursday at 12 an armistice was to be declared. We left camp at dawn and drove out about 6 miles in the car. By 10 am we saw a jackal and one or two steenbok. Then we had breakfast. We were now a long way out and on some rising ground and as the going for the motor had been quite good we gave the driver instructions to make for a kopje a good way ahead and await us there. We then separated and after going about an hour I had a shot at a springbok but failed to get him. At this point we found the ground was getting very undulatory and rough and having fears that the motor would be unable to get to the rendezvous we decided we must take up the spoor and follow him up. Unfortunately the man has only just joined up and we did not know what we were in for. After some trouble we found the spoor and followed it for 3 1/2 hours until we found it heading along a road towards Usakos. We were now of course a very long way from camp and without food or water, and about 3 pm. We followed the spoor a bit further until we came to a farm where we found a fine well but it had been blown in by the Germans, so no water. We now made up our minds that the driver, finding it impossible



to get to the rendezvous had made up his mind to return. Then commenced a weary trudge. It took us 4 hours to get back to camp, and both of us felt pretty well done. We had been walking 10 hours without water. To top it all we never saw a single head of game. The driver had not returned. It is years since I had such a walk. We must have covered some where about 25 miles or more. The next morning the motor driver turned up at about 10 am saying that the car had broken down and he had walked part of the way in the previous evening and started away about 5 that morning to get into camp.

24 May 1915. Monday. Aukos. To continue - the motor driver said he could easily find the car. I had my doubts when I had heard all his story as this huge plain swells up very gently towards its centre and has no kopjies or undulations sufficiently distinct to make them one from the other. However at midday I started off on horse back with the motorman, our conductor and a team of 6 mules with their drivers. Three hours walking brought us to where we could get a fairly extended view of the region in which we had left the car the day before, but I very soon saw that the motorman had not the foggiest notion of where he had been and where the car was. I therefore decided to leave him and the mules to rest until sundown and to go on with the conductor in a direction in which I felt sure we must cut across the spoor of the motor. My instructions were that if we did not return by sundown the mules were to return home. The conductor - Pollard - and I then rode forward and after going for about an hour or more we struck an old road and following this for some time came on the spoor of the motor turning onto it. It was now about 5.30 and as it gets dark about 7 there was no time to be lost, so we set off at a canter along the road. About 6 we rode right into a large herd of springbok. There was a slight rise just in front and they were breaking across the road. I slipped off my horse quick, and managed to get in 3 shots in rapid succession as they dashed across the road and into the bush on the other side. One buck fell dead in the road while another wounded one remained behind and the 3rd shot I must have missed. Not anticipating any shooting that evening I had only 3 cartridges in my magazine. While firing the last shot and recharging my rifle the wounded buck made off in the bush and as I was pressed for time I did not follow. The buck I had shot turned out to be a very fine big fat ewe. We pushed on again and about a mile further on I saw a tin house ahead. As we drew nearer I saw the spoor of horsemen. The horses were shod with German shoes and had passed along the road since the motor had done so the previous day. When about 400 yards away I saw the smoke of two fires and as so far the German patrols had always fired at sight on our men I thought it wise to see who was there, so we struck into the bush until I caught sight of a native, and then I knew there were no Germans about as the natives are escaping from them in small batches regularly now. At this place we found a waterhole with some very uninviting looking water in it, but it was all right for the horses. The motor spoor now turned out homewards through the veldt and we pushed on as fast as we could until it got too dark to see any more. We then off saddled for a hour until the daylight had quite gone. There was about a 1/4 new moon and I hoped that it might be possible to follow the spoor again later. When we started away again we managed to hold the spoor by picking it up here and there in sandy places until our perserverance was rewarded by coming upon it, in the bottom of a shallow valley. As far as we could judge we were now about 10 or 12 miles away from camp and the difficulty was to so locate the car as to be able to find it again the next day. To this end we fixed a white flag in a thorn tree in the nearest rise and then kept along a cattle path until we struck an old



road. Here we set two dead bushes on fire and then kept along this road until we came out on a well used road we knew of. Here we marked the place again by dragging bush twice across the road and then we felt satisfied there would be no difficulty on the morrow. Next day the conductor went out and brought the car in. We found that the driving shaft in the right half of the back axle had a bad flaw in it, which had given way. Thus ended our first and rather eventful shoot in G.S.W. It is a long time since I have had such a long ride, and it speaks well for the climate that I felt no excessive fatigue, except after the long trudge in on the first day. At the present time we are resting and organising our force, so far at any rate as the burghers are concerned. Our camp lies on the edge of a vast swelling plain covered with stunted thorn bush which is very sparse, but viewed from a distance looks quite dense. The soil is mostly sandy and quite bare, as all the grass or rather such grass as there was is now quite dead and gone. Just here and there in the bottoms of slight depressions one comes across a little dry grass or possibly showing signs of once being green. Even in the most further spots it only grows in very scattered tufts. The bush is just high enough to make it impossible to see anything more than a few hundred yards in any direction so that it is well nigh impossible to locate anything like a cart or wagon which you might wish to make a base for the days hunting. During my long ride after the motor I saw any quantity of spoor of Kudu and Gemsbok but never saw any of these animals in any part of my journey. Yesterday V.C. and I went out again on horseback. We left camp at 5 am and rode straight out to the waterhole which we reached about 8 am. Here we rested fed and watered our horses and then pushed further out intent on getting at least a Gemsbok if not a Kudu. However we had no such luck for though we kept going till one o'clock we never saw a single head of game of any sort. We then rested a while and turned homewards. At about 2 pm I spotted a single springbok, just in time to stop our horses in a slight "loopje" or shallow water course (of course no water in it). We left the animals with our two "boys" and going forward carefully found ourselves between 300 or 400 yards away from a large herd of springbok. We got up to 300 and started firing. The shooting is very difficult as one only gets a fleeting view of the animals as they dash through the bush. Most of the herd did not know where we were and so the whole lot became confused, with the result that we each put in about 7 or 8 shots before they finally disappeared. After it was all over we picked up 3 dead bucks and then when ranging round I came across another which I also shot. We now each had a buck on our horse so we made towards home. On a little way we again came on two of the herd, one of which I shot and when going to finish it off, we saw another 6 or 7 one of which V.C. wounded, but did not get. We were now about 4 hours ride from camp so we pushed steadily back. About 1/2 way home we came suddenly into another small herd of springbok but unfortunately they saw us before we did them and got away before we could get the range. Today we are busy making biltong which is really the object of our shooting, as we have no wish to be landed for several weeks on 1/2 and 1/4 rations as we were during the last move.

25 May 1915. Tuesday. Kl: Aukos. Yesterday our post caught us up at last and we each got a big accumulation of letters, papers and parcels, enough to keep us going in literature for many days to come. I hear that our plans are to remain here for another 10 days or so until the animals are well rested and have picked up a bit in condition. At the same time supplies will be accumulated and when all is ready we advance on the Northern districts. Yesterday one of our motors we lent to Col. Odlum to go to Windhoek in, came through. The driver said he had



instructions to go on down to Railhead (Garub) and meet Col. Stock. So we expect him to pass through today sometime and shall ask him to take this back.

28 May 1915. Friday. Aukos. On his return Col. Stock passed through to Karibib by a different route so shall have to wait the chance of seeing him on his homeward journey. All the burghers who were sorted out for return have now gone and I suppose we shall have a quite time waiting for the next move, though I presume there will be a certain amount of reorganisation in the medical service as well. Early on Wednesday morning we heard the hum of an aeroplane and saw one of our long expected machines coming in from the West. Our people seem to have been rather unfortunate up to the present as none of the machines have been a success. This one however is a fine bi-plane and was expected to be able to overcome most difficulties. When it passed over our camp it was flying at a great height, and with a glass appeared to have two men in it. We shall all be curious to see to what degree it will be able to help us with scouting in a country like this, when distances are great and the people in it, few and scattered. In any case it made a splendid flight that morning and we heard later arrived safely in Karibib. On Wednesday van Coller and I decided to go out again for some more buck, as we have been unable to get any fresh meat since leaving Karibib, though the burghers are being issued with fresh beef still. This is one of the innovations of our curious army. If we send to headquarters and ask for meat they give a letter to one or other of the Commandants who if he feels so disposed, will issue meat, but if not he takes no notice. Further orders from headquarters meet with the same fate but no pressure is brought to bear on any defaulting Commandant. There seems no penalty whatever for the nonfulfilment of orders, beyond occasionally a mild remonstrance for the senior officer. Everyone in consequence from the highest to the rank and file seems afraid to take up a firm line, so that discipline is certainly absent. Men will disobey orders and insult and even strike their officers without there being any penalty inflicted. As an instance of the general sort of mix up among the force, Capt. MacGregor (the parson) was asked by our Wing Colonel to join his mess. The mess consists of the Colonel, his 2 brothers who are burghers (privates) another man who is a sergeant, and the cook. The cook prepares the food and puts it all on the table and then all including the cook sit down together. A few days ago the Captain who was adjutant to this same Colonel was one of those sent back home. He (the captain) had a younger brother (who was the sergeant on the colonels staff) so the difficulty of filling the place of the departing Staff Captain was easily overcome, by making his young sergeant brother staff Captain in his place !! Imagine in an ordinarily constituted military force, the feelings of the other dozens of officers thus passed over !! However this is typical of the manner in which the whole thing is run. At the beginning of the war the Captain in charge of the Brigade Train (transport) attached to our Brigade, engaged a man as one of his conductors with rank of Sergeant. A little later on this Sergeant was removed to another unit and promoted. By the time we began the campaign here in G.S.W. the ex Sergeant had risen to Major !! and is now in command of all our Transport and incidentally the C.O. of the Captain who originally took him on as a conductor, and so on it goes. The whole system of Commands is rotten, being purely a political arrangement of men supposed to be engaged in warfare. A couple of weeks ago a man was court martialled for sleeping on outpost duty. It was a long time before his C.O. could get a court together and when he did they merely said the man must not do it again ! This for a crime



which might have meant the loss of hundreds of lives of his comrades. For minor offences the usual thing is the imposition of a fine, but it is apparently no one's business to collect these fines so of course they are never paid. However I have digressed from the topic of our last shooting expedition. There having been so much shooting in the near neighbourhood we thought it best to take a watercart and push out further. We left here after lunch in rather threatening weather, and trekked out about 3 hours. As the sun sank we saw a thunderstorm approaching, but it did not reach us until we had finished our evening meals. We had just nice time to settle ourselves in our valises, when the storm broke. There was a good deal of thunder and lightning and high wind, but fortunately as far as our comfort was concerned not very much rain. During the next 2 or 3 hours there were several storms, accompanied by showers, but we kept dry and finally I fell asleep while waiting for the next shower and did not wake till V.C. roused me about 1 1/2 hours before dawn. Then followed a most disappointing day. No matter which way we went we come on horsemen ahead of us, to that after getting 2 or 3 hours ride from our camp we gave it up as a bad job, and trekked slowly home. The game has now been driven too far afield to make it worth while going out again. Today has been hot and sultry but the clouds are so few and scattered that it does not look as if we shall get any rain. The few showers we had with the storm were quite useless and can make no difference to the growth of grass around this part of the country.

1 June 1915. Tuesday. Aukos. Apropos of a rather gruesome photo in this (May 21st.) week's Cape Times which shows 3 of de Meillon's scouts hanged in a tree by their German captors, I forgot to note a point of interest in this connection. There is a native location at Karibib just on the precincts of the town, and in front of this stands an old thorn tree very much like the one in the photo and this tree is used for the same purpose. From a branch hangs a wire noose. The condemned man stands on an empty carbide tin with his head in the noose. The tin is taken away and he hangs by his neck until he is slowly throttled. This is all done publicly and is the sentence for quite trivial offences. The natives told us one of their number was thus put to death, just before our arrival for stealing a bottle of rum. The Germans seem to have acted very brutally towards the natives, with the natural result that the natives are against them now. In connection with our abortive move on Omururu I heard quite an interesting and at the same time illustrative piece of news, which did not leak out at the time. As you will remember we reached the Jahu River at Etiro at midnight and owing to our recall, spent the day resting and waiting for the ambulance we had sent on ahead for the wounded. During the morning our Brigade Colonel rode out some distance ahead, and as everyone was tired with the night trek, they all did as is their usual custom - went to sleep without posting any sentries. In the meantime a German patrol of 4 men rode into the camp with the intention of surrendering. When they arrived they could find no one awake !! and even those who may have been were too slack to take any notice. After wandering about for some time they stumbled on the Brigade Adjutant, whom they also found asleep, and roused him to surrender to ! This sounds almost incredible more particularly in that we were at the time advancing to the attack in quite new and unscouted country, but it is exactly what happened and exactly in keeping with the casual way in which things are done throughout. A spy or several together could come in to our camp at any time of the day or night without the slightest danger of being interfered with. Although we have outposts along some of the principal roads, no sentries are ever



placed around the camp.

3 June 1915. Thursday. Aukos. We are still lying here, with every prospect of remaining where we are for another couple of weeks. The railway is gradually getting into better working order and we now have a fair quantity of supplies for the animals, though our ration has resolved itself once more into plain and unadulterated bully beef and biscuit. The bully is of very poor quality too. Very old, lean and dry.

5 June 1915. Saturday. Aukos. On Friday afternoon van Collier got a wire asking him to proceed at once to Karibib to consult in regard to the new medical arrangements. So off we went in the car and got there about 5.30. Col. Odlum was away for the afternoon so we looked up Maj. Campbell-Watt and his Brigade and put up with them for the night. That evening we saw Col. Odlum and were told by him that the 1st. Brigade had been given a special commission to undertake which would necessitate them being away from all communications for one month. The ambulance was to be cut down to about 1/2 and Edmeades and myself detached on this account. I was to go in charge of a Clearing Hospital with the main advance. All this was rather a crushing blow, as it meant practically the dissolution of our Brigade which we have fought so hard to keep together and which we consider has met all the requirements up to the present, and was easily capable of adjustment to meet any official requirement in the future. However we said nothing until we had slept over the situation. This morning we went over to Odlum again and asked him if it could not be arranged that I at any rate remained with V.C. and our men. He told us then that this was impossible as in spite of representations to headquarters the Commandos had insisted on this reduction and the Med. Hqs. were sick of protesting and had finally agreed to do as they wished and leave the responsibility with the Combatant Staff.

10 June 1915. Thursday. Windhuk. On our return to Kl. Aukos V.C. and I went carefully over the situation and decided that I should return to Karibib on Monday and have a final interview with Odlum. This I did. But Odlum said the position was so impossible between the Commando Hqs. and Med. Hqs. that much as he disliked the arrangement it must now go through. He pointed out that all along the Commando Hqs. have been trying their best to get the medical arrangements in their own hands and now it had been definitely decided to let them have their way. Van Collier was now to travel with Hqs. as S.M.O. purely and solely and the ambulance transport was to be divided and handed over to the R.M.O's, who were in future to be the sole Med. outfit with the Commando Brigade. The only latitude he could give was that if Edmeades very much wished he could remain by swapping with one of the R.M.O's, but that I could not have this chance as I was ear-marked to go i/c of Clearing Hospital B. I returned to Kl. Aukos with this news and it was decided that Nortjie would go with me while Edmeades took his place. Naturally V.C. and I are both very put out as we had hoped that our Ambulance would not be split at this stage in the war. Things being as they were we thought the next best thing was to apply for a few days leave and visit Windhuk. So no sooner than decided we left again then and there in the car for Karibib and took a train at 7 am on Tuesday for Windhuk. When about 3 hours on our journey the train pulled up and we found the telegraph wires cut and a feeble attempt to blow up the line. Luckily the patrol who did this seem to have been amateurs at the game as they had only succeeded in bending the metals so slightly that the train was able to pass over the place quite easily. The whole



day we journeyed over a vast plain, slightly undulating with small undulations and covered with thick thorn bush and quite a fair show of grass in parts. We saw a good many farm houses and some of them very fine ones. There is quite a considerable town at Okahandja, with fine buildings. Most of the buildings are in white and red shades, and done in quite good style. Apart from the interest of seeing new country the journey was very tedious. There is no more coal to be had and the engines are driven with wood fuel. This means that steam pressure can only be kept up for a short while, the engine then having to rest while the steam is got up again. Owing to this and delays in dealing out supplies to the troops along the road, we did not reach Windhuk until the early hours of Wednesday morning. On arrival we went over to the nearest hotel and were luck in hitting on quite a nice clean and comfortable place. We spent next morning in having a look around the town and endeavouring to get shot guns and ammunition from the Provost Marshall. We found however that the order was that guns were only to be issued to men stationed in and around the town. Van Coller managed after much persuasion to get one issued to him for the use of the Med. staff with the pte MB, but no further could the Provost Marshall be persuaded to stretch a point. The town is quite a big one, straggling along the course of a dry river which winds around low rounded kopjies studded sparsely with thorn trees of stunted growth. Quite a number of little villas and not a few pretentious mansions are dotted over the kopjies on either side. On the Western side the hills are lower and more sweeping in contour and over these are scattered several large native locations, while to the East the kopjies are higher and more abrupt, and are the sites for the European suburbs. The new houses in the residential portion of the town are perched on top and all over the kopjies. These have white walls and red roofs and many are executed in quite good taste and give the town a picturesque appearance. The general aspect of this part of the town reminds one very much of the environs of some of the Northern Italian towns. The inhabitants have been allowed to carry on as before, with certain limitations, so that beyond the burghers going about and the sentries posted on guard over some of the buildings, things are going on much as though nothing had happened. After lunch we went over to the Wireless station which lies about 1 1/2 miles out. This was a most interesting experience. I am sorry I have never had the opportunity of inspecting a wireless station before, as it gave us standard for comparison. The station belongs to a big company, who were I suppose subsidized by Government. In any case it has been left intact with just the vital parts removed. One of our wireless operators - R. McLellan - is in charge and he conducted us over the place and explained all the working of the apparatus most clearly. There is a huge power station consisting of a 2 250 HP Diesel Engines for the big range work and 2 smaller ones for use when the full range is not required. Everything is in duplicate in this fashion so as to minimise the chance of a break down. The rods operating the valve in the piston heads of these engines have been removed. The significance of this is that before new ones could be fitted the engines would have to be entirely dismantled, so that it becomes a question whether it would not be cheaper to get a new plant altogether. It seems probable however that some arrangement will be come to with the company for the return of the parts, in as much it will be almost as much to their interest as ours to put the plant in working order again. This constitutes the vital amount of dismantling that has been done. In connection with the power house are the buildings in which are the accumulators, switches, and resistances for the accumulation and discharge of current. Here in one room stands a marble table about the size of a large office desk, at which the engineer is seated and



from which by a series of switches he controls the entire plant. Throughout the plant are numerous motors for various purposes, and varying in size according to the work they have to do. The largest is somewhere about 10 feet in diameter while on the engineers table stands a little chap not much over one inch in diameter. This little fellow is set to signal V's on the signalling key until the required station has been called up. By pressing the proper buttons on the table the big 250 HP motors are set going, the various circuits are made and the messages finally discharged. The whole plant is most beautifully finished off and everything looks as though "made" anywhere but "in Germany". It is good and of the best all through. The "aerials" or wires from which the messages are discharged and by which they are received are supported on 8 sections, each of which is a sort of small Eiffel Tower in itself. These are 3 feet high, and stand on huge glass washers so that the towers are insulated from the earth. There are a number of beautiful buildings in connection with the station, wherein the staff have their quarters and the whole area is surrounded by high barbed wire fences. McLellan tells us that although, as it now stands the plant is useless for sending messages, it will soon be rendered available for receiving and he hopes in this way it to be able to pick up European news. The visit to Windhuk is well worth the trouble, if for no other purpose than to see this magnificent plant. This morning we spent in strolling about the town and again this afternoon. During our rambles we visited the new Government buildings. This is a fine block standing on the top of a hill overlooking the town. In it is the Parliament House and all the departmental offices. It was curious to stroll through endless series of offices just left as they were. Pens, ink, paper all ready for the next day. Most of the important records have however been removed. Later on we came across Maj. Pringle, who has been fixing up the Medical arrangements in the town, as he was the 1st. Ambulance to get in. The town has an ample water supply from boreholes, but I am told the sanitation is bad and not carried out in the thorough manner in which the Germans do most of their work. Tomorrow we return to our duties and it will be with much regret that V.C. and I go different ways, and the Ambulance we have worked for is split up and taken from our control. It is true that about 1/2 the men go with each of us, but the life of the unit as a whole seems to have come to an end.

14 June 1915. Monday. Karibib. On our return journey Maj. Pringle was on the train with a section of his ambulance going out to join one unit of their brigade (3rd) stationed at Wilhelmstal. About 20 miles from Karibib we picked up Maj. Skinner Clarke with the residue of his ambulance (9th) which has gone through much the same sort of metamorphosis as ours. We did not get into Karibib till about 7.30 and put up again at Rosemann's Hotel. Next day van Collier left early by motor and I found my way out to where our men were camped on the outskirts of the town. Here I found a camp consisting of all the odds and ends from the various ambulances that have shared our fate. It seems that these will be shuffled and resorted into the 2 clearing Hospitals A and B. I go in charge of B and Capt. Truter (of Oudtshoorn) in charge of A. It will be some days before we are able in any way to sort out what we require.

15 June 1915. Tuesday. Karibib. This afternoon I was down watching our aviator fly. It was a glorious afternoon following a fall of rain and rather biting wind and the machine looked most graceful. Not long after he descended a second bi-plane, which they had been expecting hove in sight. It was coming along very high up - about 5000 feet -



and as it came over us began to circle round to make sure of exactly where to land. In the final circle it must have been only 3 or 4 hundred feet up. The aviator finally glided gracefully to earth and ran up to within a few feet of where we stood. He had just come from Walfish Bay, having covered the distance that has cost us so much hard trekking in just under 2 hours !! Both these machines are of the most modern type and carry 3 passengers. For war purposes they can carry 8 bombs of 112 lbs. each. They ought to be of very material assistance in helping us to locate and round up the Germans. Yesterday there was quite a change in the weather. A strong westerly wind brought up great banks of mist and cloud from the coast, resulting in quite a good fall of rain in parts, though there was not a great deal here. Now that is has cleared again it is bitterly cold and hard to imagine we are in tropical latitudes.

23 June 1915. Wednesday. Omaruru. Up to Thursday last I could get no definite instructions as to how or when I was to obtain the outfit for the Clearing Hospital I was to form. On Thursday Col. Odium sent for me and told me he was leaving with the General on the forward move, and that Capt. Truter and myself were to do the best we could to sort out from the remnants of the Field Ambulances, what we considered sufficient personnel and equipment to form 2 Clearing Hospitals, with which we were to be prepared to go to Omaruru at any any moment. This was to say the least of it disconcerting news as I knew well there was not nearly enough equipment for even one Clearing Hospital capable of attending to 200 men. It was still more disconcerting when I found that Truter thought I knew all about what he was to have. It did not matter where I went, it was all the same, no one had nearly enough staff to supply, the transport people had had no instructions and had no wagons and in fact it looked quite hopeless. For a start Truter and I decided simply to divide the Brigade (the 7th.) into 2 lots of 15 men each and take 6 natives each for the rough work. Then we had to sort over and divide what equipment there was. Everything was hopelessly short of the requirements of even a 50 bedded hospital - let alone 200 !! Each section was to have 1 ambulance, 2 motor ambulances, 1 watercart and 1 scotch cart and 6 G.S. wagons. There was not one of any of these items that was fit to travel until repaired and no G.S. wagons at all. During Friday and Saturday we worked hard doing our best and by Saturday afternoon had evolved - mostly on paper - what we wanted and hoped to get, but at the very utmost it did not pan out at more than 50 beds per section. On Sunday morning early comes a wire from General Hqs, that both sections were urgently needed at Omaruru. By 3 pm I had got out a complete list of all I wanted and decided to push off with Nortje in the 2 motor ambulances which were ready and go on to Omaruru to see what buildings could be made use of, leaving Truter and Muller to push on all the men and equipment and stores they could lay hands on in the time at their disposal, as soon as they could. Nortje and I left Karibib about 3.30 pm accompanied by Col. Wylie. We took the road to Etiro and got to the farm on the River Kahu at which we camped on our wild goose chase last month when General Brits essayed to attack Omaruru without order from Hqs. We reached this place about 4.30. Here Col. Wylie turned back in his car and we waited for our 2nd car which had fallen behind. It did not turn up till dusk having had tyre trouble. On its arrival we pushed on again for a few miles and camped. Just before we left Etiro one of our aeroplanes passed over going to Omaruru. It was a lovely clear night but bitterly cold, with a very sharp frost, so that we did not get much sleep. Everything was frozen hard when we turned out just before sunrise. We got into Omaruru about 11.30 and found part of the 7th



M.B.F.A. under Capt. Cillie encamped outside the town. He had accompanied part of the 1st. M.B. which had come up via Okorubalu. On reporting to Col. Odlum he showed me the various buildings available for hospital purposes. I decided to take over the school building for B Clearing Hospital and secure the Barracks for H.C.H. under Capt. Truter. Part of the school was for boarders and here we found 25 beds and a Matron in charge who volunteered to do the cooking for us. In the afternoon some 70 odd patients were handed over to me. Nortje and one orderlie was all the staff we had available and we had a worrying time as we had none of our equipment of any kind nor any food. After much hunting from one place to another I borrowed from people in the town a sack of mealie meal and one of rice, with which the men had to make shift for the night. On Tuesday morning the first instalment of the men and equipment arrived in 4 motor lorries, while the remainder arrived this morning with 4 GS wagons and the remainder of our equipment. Yesterday Col. Odlum ordered me to hand over one motor ambulance as his car had broken down. So now I have only one motor to serve both hospitals and evacuate the sick to Karibib - 40 miles away over bad roads. How the Field Ambulances are going to manage to send their sick and wounded back I don't know. Already I have had an urgent wire to send for sick 20 miles ahead which of course I am unable to do. The new scheme could not have been more ill advised and it there are many wounded at any time, there will undoubtedly be a hopeless breakdown of the medical services. The country through which we have come is a great improvement on the previous stretch. It is quite heavily wooded with thorn trees and stretches of grassy land here and there. All along the road we saw guinea fowls and pheasants in large numbers, while big game and bucks of various kinds are said to be plentiful. Omaruru is the name of the river on which the town is situated. Where it passes through the town there is a small stream of running water - the first we have seen in this country. The town straggles along the banks and most of the houses have beautiful gardens, where everything grows luxuriantly. Date palms, orange trees and bamboos are the most conspicuous feature in the gardens, but all kinds of fruit and vegetable grow well for most months in the year. The weather is very cold at present. Sharp frosts at night and bright cool and bracing during the day. This morning we had a great blow as George - my boy - come in to report that my horse and 2 of Nortje's had gone. From the look of things it seems probable that they have been stolen. The boys searched all day but not a sign of them is there to be seen or heard of. I suppose some scoundrels among the troops trekking forward have stolen them. It is most disheartening to lose Cato who though no flier is a most suitable animal for this sort of work.

25 June 1915. Friday. Omaruru. We have had a tremendous rush of work, the difficulties were added to by all the orderlies being not quite conversant with their new duties and the large number of patients to be dealt with. All have worked well and willingly which is half the battle. On Wednesday with the Hospital full to overflowing and our equipment and staff taxed to the utmost, came word that a fight was anticipated next morning. I wired for the Ambulance train to be sent forward as soon as possible, but got a wire and phone message to say this was next to impossible until Friday morning. On Thursday there was no word of any fight having taken place. Capt. Truter and his (A Clearing Hospital) (sic) arrived during the day and went over to take up their quarters in the old Barracks. These are quite a good block of buildings. The houses are in the form of a square, and all built with wide enclosed stoeps back and front. Have water laid on and good



stabling. They stand on clean sandy soil and are in every way suitable for hospital purposes. They in fact form quite the most suitable block of buildings for this purpose that I have seen in this country. The water being good and plentiful this would be a most suitable spot for an advanced Base Hospital. Late on Thursday evening Maj. Whitehead arrived with the Ambulance Train and was able to take away about 40 of our sick early this morning so that the congestion is at least relieved. During the last few days we have had over 100 patients to deal with as well as rather more than this as outpatients. This with 15 men and the difficulty in getting food, has kept us all very busy. This afternoon a wire has come from Odlum to say both A and B C.H.S are to be ready to move. This is delightful, as up to the present we have been provided with less than half the necessary transport. However we have wired that A can move but in this case B cannot until transport is provided. An Ambulance has just come for Kalkfeld which has now been occupied, the Germans having retreated without fighting. I forgot to mention that one of our aeroplanes came to grief while landing here on Sunday. One of the planes touched a bush and the machine swung round into a tree. No one was hurt luckily and they think the machine can be repaired fairly soon. The ambulance driver tells me another of the aeroplanes came to grief to Kalkfeld this morning, having apparently got mixed up with telegraph wires when landing. He does not know if anyone was hurt or not.

26 June 1915. Saturday. Omaruru. I hear today that it was van der Spuy who came to grief, but that it was only a slight mishap leading to damage to his "tail". So probably it will not mean putting him out of action. The same man tells us that the latest news is that the Germans have split up and are going off in different directions. If this is so the end ought to be soon as our men will hunt them down soon. One of the S.A.M.R. was shot at close quarters by a sniper, who got away. General Brits' column has sent us in one wounded German prisoner. Now that I have got rid of the bulk of the sick we have got things a bit straighter, and hope in due course to get a more or less satisfactory outfit. Today Truter trekked off with his Hospital. We thought this best as Odlum has got out of touch. So Truter has taken all the wagons (5 in number) and I must wait till my transport is sent up to me. Moffat has gone with him.

29 June 1915. Tuesday. Omaruru. Yesterday evening a wire came from Col. Odlum saying both C.H's. must move to Otjiwarongo where Truter was to establish his C.H. in a building capable of 60 beds. He was arranging transport by motor lorries for me. I wired Truter and managed to get him on the telephone at Kalkfeld. Yesterday one wounded man came in on one of van Collier's wagons bringing the sick as well. They had been on the road since the 25th. I also had a wire from an orderlie (Bayly) S.A.M.R. MBFA saying he had been evidently forgotten as he had lain 5 days at Kalkfeld with 2 sick and had no more rations. All this is very annoying and discreditable to our organisation as it could so easily have been avoided. I have been endeavouring to get my transport completed, but found to my annoyance that nothing further had been done since we left Karibib. Maj. Russell who was left to act as ADMS spoke to me on the telephone yesterday and seems to take the view that as we got here all right, or rather somehow, nothing further need be done. This is very trying to put it mildly, and I have written and wired to Odlum that I must have better support, if not from him at any rate from his deputies. My orders were to have 6 GS wagons, 1 Ambulance wagon, 1 scotch cart, 1 water cart and 2 motors. At present I am reduced to 1 scotch cart !! Everything is the same. I am short



in everything - blankets, pillows, sheets, towels, cups, plates, cutlery, cooking utensils, drugs. It is all the same. It is all very disheartening as we foresaw this and could have avoided it had we been allowed during the 5 idle days at Karibib, to start getting an outfit together and the deficiencies brought on from Swartkopmund.

2 July 1915. Friday. Omaruru. On Thursday Maj. Russell, acting A.D.M.S. came up. We had a long chat and I feel sorry for him as he has been left with an awful muddle to try and deal with. His efforts to get transport have so far been unavailing in addition to which there is a shortage of available supplies in all departments, so that however willing he can't give them to me. He went back early next morning. Today we are no further with the matter. Odlum seems to be sending wires, by as the D.H.S.M.G. tells me here, if a man goes out without giving fair warning of his requirements it is impossible for those in charge of departments to be expected to provide at a moments notice, what they have not been warned to prepare for. I have worried everyone I can, but having no proper authority to back me it is a hopeless sort of task. It is now 5 days since I got my orders to move and still the chances of getting transport seem as remote as ever.

3 July 1915. Saturday. Omaruru. Having no further news of transport and having handed over the Hospital to Capt. Drew, we decided to go for a shoot. So yesterday afternoon we took the cart and our horses and drove out to a secluded spot close under the Ovongo mountains. The country was quite beautiful here. Lots of good grass and the bush not quite as thick. There was lots of game spoor about. Just at dusk we came on the site of an old German camp, and about 2 miles further on made our camp for the night. Early next morning we went off. Nortje and a Lient. Owen who had accompanied us went one direction and I went the other with George. Though we saw lots of spoor we were unlucky in seeing no game, so on returning to camp about 11 am George and I rode back to Omaruru. On my return I found a wire saying I was to have transport and trek to Otarifontein and take over hospital duties there. I saw the D.A.G.M.C. and from him learned that Maj. Rose (of the Dukes) had come up and that he had 24 motor cars with him to take us along. Later I saw Rose and it was a pleasure to meet someone who had some sort of organisation under him. The motors he said would be in next morning. It was nearly 9 pm before Nortje turned up bringing a fine young Kudu cow which he had shot. It must have weighed about 300 lbs. and was just about as much as our light cart could carry. It appeared that after going a certain distance they had come across another shooting party and so had turned back and followed on my spoor coming very soon on a herd of about 15 Kudu. Just my kind of luck !!

8 July 1915. Thursday. Otarifontein. Next day Sunday the motors came in and we got packed up and started away. I went ahead with Nortje and the Hosp. Ambulance and got into Kalkfeld about 6 pm. Here I saw van der Spuy and Capt. Turner the flying men, van der Spuy was recovering from his accident and Turner was seedy. After patching them up I pushed on for 3 or 4 miles and camped in the veld the rest of our convoy not having caught up. It was bitterly cold. Next morning we pushed slowly on reaching a farm about 11 am where we got a plentiful supply of fresh milk, butter and cheese. The farmer let us have as much milk and butter milk as we wanted for 6d a head, and sold us butter for 2/- per lb and cheese for 6d per lb. This was a splendid addition to our fare. At midday we reached a delightful spot in a river bed. Here the country was splendid. Lovely grass in unlimited quantity and heaps of game. While the kettle was boiling Nortje shot a



steenbok and I a couple of pheasants. We rested here until our convoy caught us up at 3 pm, going on again we kept together until we got to Otjiwarongo spending a night on the road. Here I found ACH had trekked 2 days previously. We also heard that the whole German force was surrounded just outside Otari. We pushed on again until lunch time at 1 pm. The country now was just a paradise for stock. Vast fields of lovely grass standing waist deep, lying in great glades in the surrounding bush. We saw one great Kudu Bull about 600 yards away but as he did not offer a chance of a certain shot we did not fire. That night we camped again in beautiful country. Next morning we came on again and began to get into uncertain country as regards roads, and finally took to the railway and drove along the track. This we continued to do for many miles turning off and camping once more in the veld. That evening we cooked 2 pheasants and a guinea fowl and very excellent they were. I made a beautiful warm bed of cut grass, and though it froze hard it was quite pleasant to be able to defy the cold. On the next morning Wednesday we pottered along the rail track and shot some more guinea fowl and a couple of partridges before our convoy caught up again. After lunch we went ahead again and got here at about 4 pm. The news was that the Germans had sent in for terms and an armistice had been declared from the previous day until 5 pm today. This morning we heard that General Myburgh not having heard of the armistice had advanced from the North to attack. The Germans sent out officers under the White flag. While the palaver was going on the officer carrying the flag, put it down and his comrades who were watching thought that something had gone wrong and fired on our troops, wounding one man. General Myburgh immediately gave the order to charge and in a few minutes our burghers dashed in a captured 500 Germans and their guns and released about 300 of our prisoners. We also got news that General Brits, who is up near the Etoscha Panne had captured 200 Germans there in charge of the remainder of our prisoners. So now they are all liberated. General Manie Botha has got to Grootfontein and has come in on the German main force, which is now surrounded and lying about 12 miles out. It now appears that negotiations have come to a head by the Home Government saying there must be unconditional surrender. The Germans have asked for a further extension till 7 pm. Later. The Germans have asked for a further extension till 7 tonight and orders are out for everyone to stand to arms, ready to move out at a moments notice. So things are quite exciting for the moment.

9 July 1915. Friday. This morning we heard that the negotiations had been going on through the night and that at 4 am the Germans had finally decided to surrender unconditionally. So far not a word has leaked out as to what the proceeding will be.

10 July 1915. Saturday. I have been so busy up to the present that I have had scarcely any time to write down the various items of news in their proper order. I found about 40 cases in hospital among which were some 14 very badly wounded and all suffering from want of attention owing to the extreme shortage of hospital material. Had my transport arrangements been provided at the proper time I could have had my hospital going within 24 to 48 hours of the arrival of the troops in this place, instead of arriving 8 days late. Owing to the shortage of everything the whole place was in a great mess and it has been hard work getting things even morderately clean. I want now to turn back to the course of events during the final stages of the campaign. After the retreat of the Germans from Kalkfeld our forces moved after them with all speed. General Brits on the extreme left made for the Etoscha Panne, where the bulk of our prisoners were



reported to be. The infantry went along the railway with the 5th. MB in advance while General Myburgh was trekking on the extreme right making straight for Grootfontein. We have not heard much of the adventures of the flanking forces but whatever happened they reached their destination so quickly that it is doubtful whether the Germans were aware of their presence, until they found General Myburgh in possession of both Grootfontein and Tsumeb, the two terminals of the railway. The central forces after reaching Otjiwarongo had a stretch of 75 - 80 miles to traverse with only one waterhole at Okaputa leaving a final stretch of 50 miles without water, the Germans holding Otarifontein at the end of it. From Otjiwarongo the main road lies to the east of the railway while another one goes along the same route as this line. Otarifontein lies between two ranges of hills running east and west. The road pierces this southern range and here we had news that the Germans had laid a huge mine 156 yards long with flanking mines, the whole containing 6,600 lbs of dynamite. Guns were posted on the hills and the main defence prepared to oppose a force entering by the main road. General Botha therefore sent a force of the S.A.M.R. to deploy along the main road, in mean time sending the main force to attack the Germans right flank along the railway. Both these forces had to march the intervening 50 miles at their best speed, and immediately attack on arrival. The Germans taken utterly by surprise when they found the main attack being delivered on their flank, fled after firing a few shots and were pursued by some of our mounted men until they fell back on this main position about 12 miles further back. The S.A.M.R. scouts going carefully came on the wires leading to the big mine and cut them and then following up the wires found and captured the 3 men whose duty it was to have fired the mine at the proper moment. In the desultory fighting that went on 8 Germans and 6 or 7 of our men were wounded, and several killed on both sides, 4 of ours I believe. The German main position is out on the Tsumeb line and here they found their retreat cut off by General Myburgh. I heard subsequently that when General Myburgh captured the 500 Germans and released our prisoners he also captured the main bulk of their supplies so that in a very short time the Germans found themselves in the hopeless position which led to their final surrender. The whole thing has been a most brilliant piece of generalship which could only have been accomplished by troops capable of getting every ounce out of their animals without killing them in so doing, and men not afraid to face the prospect of fighting for their water after doing all this. I am told one of the first things Col. Francke asked General Botha, was what breed of animal he possessed capable of doing such wonderful trekking. The infantry too covered 50 miles in 36 hours which under the circumstances must be a record.

11 July 1915. Sunday. Otarifontein. I am gradually getting together a more connected account of the last fight, from various sources. I find from one of our wounded that he and some others who were pursuing the Germans and endeavouring to cut them off, got so far ahead that our guns mistook their dust for that made by the Germans and opened fire on them, killing one man and wounding 3 others. One poor fellow had his arm shattered by a shell, amputation being necessary. Today a train load of about 300 reservists was brought in. These men are to be given their parole and allowed to go back to their farms. The regulars - about 2000 or more - are being sent to Aus where they are to be interned. General Botha has been most magnanimous as he has allowed the regulars to surrender with "honours of war" which seems to mean that they will be allowed to go Aus carrying their rifles. All ammunition and big guns of course have to be given up. The reservists



on arrival were detrained in front of the hospital so that we have had a good view of their arrival. Most of them look very battered and dirty though apparently most of them had been issued with new hats and other articles of equipment, to render them more or less tidy for the occasion. I managed today to evacuate about 32 or 33 patients by means of some motor lorries returning empty to Kalkfontein, so that this will ease our congestion.

12 July 1915. Monday. Otterfontein. Late last evening another couple of train loads of prisoners arrived, about 500 bringing the total to 900 odd for the day. These are still the reservists. There are altogether so I found out officially last evening 4200 odd prisoners to come in. This seems a large number to surrender without putting up a single fight. However the end was inevitable whatever was done, so probably Col. Francke thought it was useless to throw away lives. I know General Botha is delighted beyond measure to have brought the campaign to a close with little loss of life on either side.

13 July 1915. Tuesday. Otterfontein. More trains have come in today bringing 4 field guns, 4 howitzers, and quantities of ammunition and equipment of all sorts. Also a large troop of horses and mules were driven in at daybreak. Truter has gone on ahead and wired his arrival at Okaputa and will go on to Otjiwarongo to open a hospital there. So when the train arrives and we can clear our hospital there should be no further use for our services.

17 July 1915. Saturday. Otterfontein. We are still here leading a more or less humdrum existence for a change. The hospital work keeps us going pretty hard all the morning and then all sorts of odd jobs in scattered intervals during the rest of the day. Most of, in fact all, with one exception of the wounded were horribly septic on arrival and this has entailed constant dressing and re-dressing to get them at all clean. Yesterday I had to amputate the leg of one of the German prisoners close up to the hip joint as it had been inclaimably septic. Unfortunately the poor fellow is phthisical, and very thin and miserable and does not look as though he had much chance of pulling through. Fortunately he is a cheerful fellow and that is half the battle. Nortje and I have made some short excursions into the bush round about, but there seems to be very little game just around here. Probably all been scared away by the large numbers of troops and animals scattered about recently. The settling up arrangements strike one as curious and quite in keeping with the rest of this wonderful campaign. The German regulars have not yet been taken over and remain in their camp with their arms and ammunition. In the meantime all the troops have been withdrawn, with the exception of a small force of S.A.M.B. and infantry, who are eventually to act as an escort to the prisoners. However I hear on good authority that Col. Francke is playing the game and faithfully carrying out all the terms of the surrender. The Germans are repairing the line from this end while we are working up from the south. Today I have it on good authority that it is anticipated that the linking up will be complete by tomorrow - Sunday, and further that the ships will leave Swakop on August 3, so that we must all be down there somewhere about that date. Maj. Botha - brother of the general - is here and was telling us some of their experiences in the 3rd Brigade, which advanced on Grootfontein. They found no force there so pushed on to Tsumeb, the other terminus of the railway. It was he who was leading the advance guard of General Myburgh's force when they attacked Tsumeb with the result I have already recorded. He said that about 18 miles outside Tsumeb they



found a sort of subterranean lake. A great hole 300 feet deep leads down into this lake and all the slopes of this were strewn with shells and ammunition which the Germans has been throwing into it. The Germans have now reported that when they found they were likely to be surrounded and their animals were giving out, they threw 28 big guns into this lake as well as all the ammunition they could take there. Up to the present time the trains which are arriving daily from the German camp, have brought in 34 big guns, 22 maxims, 26,000 rounds of big gun ammunition, about 1,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition and lots of rifles, harness, wagons and all sorts of stuff. I am told there are still huge quantities of equipment to come in from Tsumeb, where the Germans had constructed huge kilns for the destruction of equipment but had not had time to entirely destroy. They seem without doubt to have been prepared for something very much bigger than the mere defence of this country, against natives, who do not use aeroplanes or require the employment of big guns.

22 July 1915. Thursday. Otarifontein. Still waiting for the ambulance train. We had a wire yesterday afternoon to say it had left Kalkfontein, about 100 miles from here, but up to the present (6 pm) today, we have heard no more of it. There is of course great congestion on the line, with all the troops, prisoners and captured material going back, with scanty rolling stock and a narrow guage to cope with it. On Thursday afternoon Nortje and I went off in the motor and pushed out some distance to the neighbourhood of a place called Aairus where we hoped to get a chance at some big game. Just at dusk as we were looking out for a spot to camp we spotted a fine old Gemsbok bull about 400 yards away. I had a shot at him. He ducked his head down and shuffled backwards a few yards and then made off and was soon lost to sight in the dusk and long grass. We could not be sure that he was hit. Next morning I went to the spot but could find no signs of his being wounded. We were camped far out in an immense plain, which looked dead level, but was covered with vleis - now dry and deep in yellow grass, and patches of low scrub about waist high in most parts, but higher here and there. There were not more than about a dozen thorn trees in sight. After going about a mile I spotted with the aid of my glasses a fine big blue Wildebeest bull. He was about a mile or more away and though the plain seemed so flat it was surprising how soon he walked slowly out of sight on the near horizon. I set off after him and when I got to the point where I had seen him last, after a long search with glasses I saw him still about a mile ahead. Going forward again I came on 2 steenbok and decided to try and secure them as we were anxious to get some game. I shot one dead and hit the other in the hind leg, but he got away in the bush. After marking the spot where the buck lay I went on again in search of bigger game and about a mile further saw a magnificent Gemsbok bull standing in some rather high bush. I ducked down to site my rifle and then tried to get a view of him, but he was on the move and eventually I got a shot at about 400 yards, but missed. One has to shoot standing as the grass is too high to sit or lie down, and even standing it is difficult to get a clear view. However I followed him for about 2 or 3 miles and eventually got another chance at a long range but failed to hit. By this time I had to return to camp and pick up the steenbok en route. On our way back after lunch we spotted a herd of 5 gemsbok feeding near a flock of about 5 or 6 ostriches. But these fellows made off as soon as they saw us, being followed shortly by two huge bulls we had not seen at first. On our way home we called at a farm house where we found a nice homely old lady who was a refugee from Swakop. She gave us some milk to drink and butter and bread made of stamped Kafir corn. It was rather like



shortbread made of very coarse oatmeal. She showed us some fine horns and eventually sent for one of the bushmen working on the farm who produced the skull of a bush-pig with magnificent tusks. He had shot it with a poisoned arrow which he also produced. Nortje purchased both the skull and the arrow.

28 July 1915. Wednesday. Otarifontein. On Friday (23rd) I had to go up to Guchab, a place about 1/2 way up the line to Grootfontein for the gruesome purpose of investigating the truth of an assertion by some natives that one of their friends had been shot dead by the engineer in charge of a mine, about 3 weeks previously and just after the occupation of the place by our troops. I went in the car. The road lies in a long Kloof rising very gradually for about 25 miles until Guchab is reached, about 1000 feet above this place and therefore over 5000 feet above the sea level. Along the road we passed several Copper mines but none of them seem to be worked on a big scale. They all had the appearance of leading a very pottering existence. I called in at the only farm that looked promising and found it belonged to a Dutchman called Venter. He was out shooting so I did not see him but spoke to his wife. She told me she had been born in the country (she appeared to be about 45). Her father's farm was a Noridas, near Swakopmund. What interested me immensely was that she told me that in the early days her father had about 3000 head of stock on this farm and that the veldt used to be splendid. At the present time it is an absolutely barren desert without a vestige of growth anywhere except just in the riverbed. She was most emphatic on the point that splendid grass used to grow not only in the river, but all over the veldt, which today is a howling wilderness of sand and rock. From this good lady I was lucky in getting 4 lbs of fresh butter and my water bottle full of milk. On arrival at Guchab it was too late for me to start my investigation so I camped about 2 miles away in the veldt, and carried out my work the next morning. The fatal shot was through the neck. The culprit has been arrested. I returned to Otarifontein that day (July 24th) and during the evening Maj. Whitehead (D.C. Ambulance Train) rang up on the telephone to say he had got to Otari. So I arranged to send for him next morning so that he would be here for breakfast. On his arrival we made enquiries about the return of the train and found that there would be no engine available until Tuesday 27th. We arranged therefore to go for a shoot on the 26th. This time we decided to take the road for the Etoscha Panne and go out along it for about 20 miles or so and see what was to be got. So Nortje and I started away that same evening (25th) and trekked about 4 hours to a poort called Goab Pforte where we slept going on again early next morning. About 3 miles or more from the poort we passed a waterhole and deserted farm house and a mile or more on came to a low ridge of hills where we decided to make our shooting camp. As soon as it was light we walked out along this ridge to view the country and try and spot some game. For miles around the country was heavily wooded with occasional open glades, which we scanned closely with our glasses. The trees here were finer and different to what we had seen previously, mainly being very fine and tall. The foliage in many cases had taken on beautiful Autumn tints. Grass was deep everywhere in the open and even under the trees where they were not too densely packed. We had a most interesting walk for about 4 hours, but though we saw no end of evidence of the presence of gemsbok, kudu and hosts of small game, we were unfortunate in seeing nothing at all up to our return to camp about 11 am. Here we found Maj. Russell and Whitehead who had just arrived in the car. After some coffee and biscuits we went off to try our luck in another direction, where the bush did not look quite so thick. Our direction lay back towards the



hills through which we had come. This time we rode and saw no big game until we ascended a Kopje at the foot of the hills, when I spotted 3 gemsbok feeding on the outskirts of the forest and heading down towards the Kopje I was on. Unfortunately Maj. R and W had gone to another Kopje and failing to see the buck as they went up it, scared them away into the forest. Nortje and I decided therefore to ride along parallel to the direction in which they had gone along the foot of the hills and endeavour to herd them back towards the others who were to remain on the Kopje. We galloped across the open stretch between us and the edge of the forest and down a long narrow glade among the trees. As we neared the end of this Nortje spotted the 3 gemsbok among the trees on our right, so off we tumbled and opened fire. They were only about 150 yards off but in the hurry and excitement I missed my first shot. My second however reached its mark and after a parting shot at one of the remaining bucks we got on our horses and gave chase. We found the buck I had shot standing among some trees, the bullet having gone through its shoulders. I could not see if from where I was no Nortje gave it a finishing shot. Unfortunately it proved to be a young heifer and therefore had not much in the way of horns. Apart from this it was in fine condition and good for the pot. The next business was how to get it to camp. After several futile efforts to get it one of our horses we gave that up as a bad job. It must have weighed about 250 lbs. and was too much of a handful for even the two of us, with a dodging horse. So with the aid of my picketing rope and a mule chain we got it into a tree, and decided to go the for Scotch cart. On returning to where we had left the others we set off to return as previously arranged to the Waterhole we had noted on the way out, and to which I had sent our conductors and the carts and spare horses. We had not gone very far when we came suddenly out of a belt of thick bush into full view of a magnificent Kudu Bull with a cow. Being anxious to give Maj. R a chance we all waited for him to fire but unfortunately he was some way behind and could not get a clear view, so that the old Bull moved off. I had a couple of shots as he bounded over the bush, but without effect. Then on we galloped through the thorns and high scrub until I spotted the old Kudu standing under a tree. This time I got Maj. W off his horse and we walked up under good cover until he could get a good view of our quarry. He had a shot at about 250 or 300 yards of which the Kudu took no notice. I had another snap at him as he moved off but neither of our shots told. As we rode on I came across the spoor of the cow and dismounted to examine things but could not find the spoor of the bull though when last seen they were both together. I started back on the cow spoor to endeavour to make out when they had parted or whether possibly he had been hit. On my way back I passed R who said he would follow the others. I tracked the cow spoor back to where she had been standing when we shot at the bull, but though I spent some time I could not pick up the bull's spoor owing to the hard ground, and being anxious to do something in regard to getting my gemsbok home. I therefore made for the waterhole but found on arrival none of the others were there yet. About 40 minutes later Nortje and Whitehead came in. It was now getting dusk and we were all rather perturbed at the non appearance of R as no one seemed to have seen him after he passed me and that was about 2 1/2 hours ago. When it came to about 8 pm and he had not turned up we realised he must have got lost, and the prospects of finding anyone in a maze of forest and high bush was rather hopeless. I decided therefore to send the conductor off to the Poort and instruct him to take our boys and make a big fire high up on the hillside. I remained at the waterhole and Nortje and W set off on foot to go back to where we had camped during the day. You may imagine my relief when about 9.15 I heard the carts



coming back and saw R coming along. By a piece of immense good fortune the conductor heard a shout in the bush and found R who after much fruitless wandering had just made up his mind to make a fire and rest where he was for the night. This adventure made us rather late and it was 2.30 before I got back of Otarifontein, Nortje remaining behind to fetch the buck in the following morning. On Tuesday 27th, the Ambulance train arrived here and went on to Grootfontein to pick up some cases there. They returned again the same evening and on the following morning (28th) we got the bulk of our cases on board and the train left about noon. We heard today (30th) that it arrived at Usakos last evening and went on to Ebong. Ebong is the station where the new broad guage laid by our troops meets the German narrow guage. They ought to be able to off-load on to the broad guage ambulance train today and start back to us sometime this afternoon. If all goes well they should reach us here about Sunday or Monday. They will then have to go to Tsumeb, the other terminus of the line and bring patients from there and so back taking us en route.

28 July 1915. Wednesday. Otarifontein. We decided to try and fit in one more shoot before the return of the hospital train, so Nortje started away in the evening with the scotch cart, buggy and riding horses to go to Hiams' plains where he had been before, but without horses. The idea was that Russell would leave next day for Tsumeb and from there wire me his plans, when I would go out to join Nortje, who would then return or not according as Russell was able to get back or not.

29 July 1915. Thursday. R did not get away today there being no opportunity.

30 July 1915. Friday. R got away in the Railway Managers Motor to Tsumeb and I should hear from him on his arrival. All the troops are now gone except the S.A.M.R. who remain permanently.

31 July 1915. Saturday. No wire has come from Tsumeb all day up to 3 pm, so I am leaving a note for R and will push off to the veldt and let Nortje return and find out what is happening.

1 August 1915. Sunday. Otarifontein. I have just finished my note to R and getting into the motor, when 2 wires arrived. One from Whitehead to say Hospital Train was at Otjiwarongo and another from R saying he would remain at Tsumeb for a few days and perhaps visit Namutoni on the Estoscha Planne. I called in at the Station leaving a note for Whitehead telling him my plans and heard from the R.S.O. that in all probability the Hospital Train would go on to Tsumeb that afternoon and return to Otarifontein by midday the following day Sunday. On the strength of this the only plan for me was simply to go out and bring Nortje back. The distance to the point away out on the plains to which Nortje had gone was about 25 or more miles. It was near sundown when we drove right into a herd of 6 haartebeeste standing close to the road about 250 to 300 yards ahead. I fired a shot at the nearest one, from the car but missed. I then jumped out and before they got out of range I managed to drop the two biggest which unfortunately proved both to be cows though fine specimens and in good condition. I shot a 3rd. one which in the confusion of locating the bucks in the long grass, we missed and never found. After this episode I decided to camp where I was and sent the motor on to tell the rest of the campers to come back. It was 8.30 before I heard the carts coming along. Nortje arrived later in the motor having returned late to camp as he had shot



a fine haartebeeste bull, towards dusk. Unfortunately it was too late to go out to bring his buck in, so he had just brought the head, and also a steenbok shot earlier in the day. Nortje had had a great day. He said the previous day he had spent pottering about, locating the game, and then as I did not arrive as expected, he had started away that morning to have a hunt. He said he saw about 100 gemsbok, several herds of haartebeeste and wildebeeste as well as pau and all sorts of small game. However it was now too late to turn back for a further hunt on the morrow so we pushed off early next morning for the hospital. On arrival I found a wire to say the train would not arrive till Wednesday morning which was aggravating as it meant I need not have cut short our last shoot.

4 August 1915. Wednesday. Tsumeb. Having got everything packed and ready to put on the train we decided yesterday to take the chance of running up to Tsumeb, meaning to return on the ambulance train the following morning. The journey was interesting as it took us through the German position near Korab, where they had intended making their last stand. About 10 miles from Otari the railway passes over a low ridge flanked by higher mountains on either side, the gap being about 1 mile across. The approach to the ridge was across a flat grassy plain quite devoid of cover. All along the ridge had been fortified with exchanges and gun emplacements while roads had been made in the rear leading to every part of the position so as to facilitate the movements of the ammunition carts and guns. Everything was marked out clearly with sign-boards showing where the roads led to. Out on the plain white crosses were placed to mark out the ranges. In this position they had placed 22 maxims and 34 big guns, for which latter they had 28,000 rounds of ammunition. The troops numbered something over 3000. As a matter of fact though the position was a strong one for a frontal attack, there would have been no very great difficulty in outflanking and attacking in rear. We got to Tsumeb about midday yesterday and had a poorish lunch at one of the hotels. We found the ambulance train there hoping to get away the next morning. Whitehead, Russell and Dalton returned about 4 pm from Namutoni, where they had gone during the interval. Tsumeb is the "Rand" of S.W.A.. Evidently the copper mines along the Grootfontein road are only subsidiary affairs, as here they have a huge mine, where apparently they carry out the whole operation even to the smelting. Here also the military had their main Supply and Ordinance stores. They had made hurried efforts at wholesale destruction when they were cornered but had not had time to do a great deal of damage. They managed however to burn a large quantity of rifle ammunition and burn large stacks of rifles, as well as some motor cars. They had also started to burn 4 field guns, but were interrupted before any damage was done. The Stores were filled with all sorts of equipment in large quantities, enough to have equipped our whole army efficiently. The Copper mine was being searched and had so far yielded several cases of rum and was still disgorging all sorts of things up to the time we left. Captain Dalton was one of the medicos captured at Sandfontein and has been with our prisoners ever since. He was in charge of some sick from among our prisoners, waiting for the train. We ought to have left this morning but no engine was available nor did it seem possible to find out when we should get one. This was rather disconcerting and I hunted round the station yard and found a sort of tandem motor trolley which after a little persuasion I got to work. We then found another light trolley to hitch on behind for our luggage, and had determined to sally forth next morning, back to Otarifontein if no engine was forthcoming by then when a wire came saying we should have a special engine by the morning.



10 August 1915. Tuesday. "Ebari" We got away from Tsumeb about midday on Thursday, picked up our sick at Otarifontein and did a most successful and rapid trip to Usakos. Here we saw Col. Odium and Capt. Jameson and were told we were to push on at once and get on board the Ebari, sending the narrow guage train back from Ebari the same evening. So off we went and got about 5 or 6 miles away when we crashed into the back of another train which had left 20 minutes before

us. The impact upset most of us and threw some men out of the train, but fortunately only the guard of the front train was damaged, having his leg broken. For the rest the engine of the front train has its water tank burst and generally put out of action (it was pushing the train at the time to help it up a rise). Some of the carriages were partially telescoped, and it took the relief gang about 2 or 3 hours to get things straight, after which we retreated to Usakos. Here we got things together once more and pushed off about 11 am. This time we made a more succesful run and got to Walvis late in the evening, embarking early the next morning on the Hospital Ship Ebari.



THE WAR DIARIES OF CHARLES MOLTENO MURRAY

BOOK 2 : FRANCE

3 JAN 1916 - 25 DEC 1917



3 January 1916. At sea. We received our marching orders on the afternoon of December 28, 1915. To entrain at 3.55 am on December 30, 1915 at Farnborough, which is about 8 miles by road from Tweseldown. The night was luckily fine and we got into the train dry, and reached Devonport at about 2 pm, and got ourselves and all our stores on board by dusk. It blew so hard for the next two days that we did not get away until the morning of Sunday, January 2 1916. During this interval with the exception of a route march to Plymouth Hoe, we were not allowed off the ship. Though the wind abated it had be no means gone down altogether. The sea was so heavy that first one and then another of our torpedo boat escorts were forced to turn back.

7 January 1916. Last evening we put into Gibraltar in the teeth of a gale of wind. A tug came out to us and after getting our orders we turned round and went out at once. This morning the wind had gone and all day we have steamed in a dead calm sea. In view of possible submarine attack we pursue a zig-zag course, going hither and thither in a most exotic fashion. There have been 4 other transports in sight during the day, also dodging about.

10 June 1916. Malta. We arrived outside last evening, but too late to go into harbour so we had to cruise about all night until next morning. We had about 1 1/2 hours ashore so could not see much of this place. The harbour is very quaint and every available bit of land is crammed with buildings, those fringing the waters edge being mostly fortifications. The country was very bare and reminded one very much of Las Palmas, except there were no high hills or mountains.

13 January 1916. Arrived at Alexandria this evening and lay in the harbour.

15 January 1916. Disembarked and marched to camp at Mex. This is about 4 miles out among sand dunes on a narrow spit of land between the sea and a huge salt marsh. It is quite a nice site for camping in this weather. It has been cold so far at nights and this morning we have had a thunderstorm and heavy rain (Jan. 17 1916) but the wind is getting up and the clouds drifting away. There are large quantities of troops here, and transports are arriving in a steady stream.

22 January 1916. Still at Mex. The weather pleasant - sea bathing good.

27 January 1916. Mex. Very heavy gale 3 days ago and high winds since. Tent was blown down in the night. Lost my sponge and got thoroughly smothered in driftsand.

28 January 1916. Mex. Today we heard that one of our regiments which was sent to relieve some troops on the borders of Tripoli took part in an attack on about 4500 rebel Bedounis. It appears that the Bedounis drove our cavalry back so that when the S. Africans came up a fairly hot engagement ensued with the result that we lost 1 officer and 8 men killed and 5 officers and 104 men wounded. The Bedounis were eventually routed and their camp destroyed. The officer killed was Capt. Walsh of Natal.

5 February 1916. Usman, Welsh and I obtained 4 days leave and left for Cairo on February 1st. at 9 am. During our stay we had several rambles through the bazaars and mosques in that neighbourhood. We also visited the Citadel, the tombs of the Mamelukes and Kalifs, the museum,



Pyramids, "Zoo", Old Cairo and went one evening to an Arab music hall entertainment.

12 March 1916. Mex. We are still inactive. The Colonel has made several endeavours to find out why we have not been sent to join our Brigade. From the various commanding officers both Medical and Combatant that we have seen it seems that we are included in the plan of campaign for the Western Front Force, but that up to the present there has been no call for us to supplement the medical arrangements already existing there. Our infantry were engaged again with the Senussi and drove them out of a strong position with the loss of 5 officers wounded and about 90 men wounded and about 12 killed. It is very difficult to get any definite information as the lists are published in odd details. The Senussi I had never heard of before coming here and as some who may read this may be equally ignorant I shall insert the gist of a few notes made at a lecture given to us by an intelligence officer some time soon after we landed. The SENUSSI are a religious sect which was founded by Mohammed Ali El Senussi, born in 1784 in Algeria and settled in 1839 in the Benghazi district which is on the boundaries of Egypt and Tripoli. Subsequently he settled for a time at Mecca founding some monasteries there. In 1856 he returned once more to JAGHBUB in BENGHAZI district and founded a monastery (or Zawia) there. He died at this place in 1859. His teaching was the simple Koranic Law bereft of all its accretions and expansions. A sort of Mohammadan Puritanism. This man was succeeded by his son Mohammed El Madhi El Senussi, born in 1846. He was a very holy and religious man and in some respects a greater power (spiritually) than his father. He died in 1902 and was buried at Kiefia as this man's son was too young to succeed him a grandson of the original Senussi was made successor, AHMAD EL SHERIF now known as THE SENUSSI. Up to quite recent years this sect laid no claim to temporal power, and had adherents throughout Egypt, the main strongholds being the Benghazi district, and a strip of country extending from Sollum to Alexandria, occupied by the Aulad Ali tribe, and in addition to this the large oases which lie to the North of Sollum. In the Turco-Italian war some Turkish officers were sent over to organise the Bedounis and chief among these was Enver Bey (now Pasha) and a brother Nuri Bey. It seems that the Italians never really succeeded in subduing the Senussi Arabs and it was this state of war with the Italians (now our allies) that gave the Turkish officers a handle by which to urge the Senussi, who were really friendly-disposed to the British regime in Egypt, to rise in rebellion. The hope of the Turks has been that a successful raid from the borders of Tripoli would stir a general revolt on the part of the Senussi throughout Egypt. In the last engagement the Yeomanry who were acting in conjunction with our infantry succeeded in capturing Nuri Bey and several other leaders so that there one hopes that the rebellion will gradually subside. During our stay here one has heard interesting scraps of information from time to time as to the probable future course of the war in the East. The intelligence officer already refused to give it as his opinion that the Turkish attempt on the Canal had been a perfectly legitimate one from a purely military point of view. It not only threatened the capture of the canal but put to the test the theories of the Turkish and German Diplomats as to the internal feeling of the Mahommed in Egypt and India. He considered that having failed to capture the canal last season, lost them their best chance and that now the expedition entailed would be far too prodigious to be undertaken. In addition to this their expectation as to the feeling internally had not been realised and therefore he considered that unless an attack was delivered before this month, the



project could be regarded as having been abandoned. This conjecture seems to be proving correct. Another interesting theory I heard put forward by some intelligence officers who have had many years of experience in the East was one as to the internal state of affairs in Turkey. They said that for many generations the ruling classes have chosen for their harems Circassian women, and that thus the real Turkish element in the ruling classes has become very much watered down and out of sympathy with the genuine Turkish Burger. They contended that the true Turk is not at all in sympathy with the Turco-Germanic alliance and that before very long this feeling may manifest itself very strikingly. They said that it was entirely a mistake on our part to think that the Turks did not know of our intention to evacuate Gallipoli. They knew of it perfectly well but intentionally refrained from a merciless slaughter. The reason for withholding in this way being that the heart of the Turkish troops was not enthusiastically against us, and that orders for a merciless slaughter during our endeavours to get away would possibly have resulted in mutiny. What lends a touch of colour to this idea is the inexplicable manner in which they allowed the evacuation to go on from the South of Gallipoli after they had seen the troops leave Anzac. At the time of our arrival in Egypt there were huge numbers of troops here and they were pouring in in shiploads daily. A great many regiments who have been at the front in France and on Gallipoli and suffered much knocking about and have many wounded, were amongst those sent, so that incidentally they would reap the benefit of the change of climate, and environment. Now there is a set the other way and a sort of exodus is taking place - we presume to France. I think it is taken for granted now that no further attack on the canal can take place until next season, and in the meantime the Russians are pressing in through Erzarum and will give the Turks other things to think about. Hostilities in Egypt therefore seem now almost at an end and the military position will resolve itself into garrison work until the end of the war. During the past month about 6000 West Indian and West African negro troops have been brought into camp here, adjoining our lines. This is one of those ways in which our resources are being wasted as these black troops seem quite worthless. The men are fairly well set up to look at, but of very poor physique, when put to the test. They have have been mobilised 6 months or so and up to the present have not yet had an opportunity of learning to handle a rifle. On top of all this, the scaling pay has been fixed at 4/- per day, as opposed to the regular imperial rate of 1s/2d. You have therefore untrained negro troops drawing a very high rate of pay alongside our British troops mobilized in England at Imperial rates. This item represents an outlay of about 180,000 Pounds per month on a unit comprised of men who are really only fitted for labourers doing the most simple sort of work. (The cost of a soldier at Imperial rates has been reckoned to cost about 7/6d a day, so with increased pay these fellows cost nearly 1 Pound per day per man). In this way you are not only wasting money but giving the negro an entirely false idea of his own worth to the Empire.

15 April 1916. We embarked on the Oriana at Alexandria on Thursday 13 April 1916. The Oriana was the transport that brought the Scottish Regiment of ours out to Egypt and was the boat that immediately preceded us on the Corsican. She is not nearly such a fine boat as the latter. In fact none of these boats are anything like as comfortable as those running on our lines to the Cape.

19 April 1916. The weather has been cold and stormy all the way, sometimes worse than others, but never nice. We are due at Marseilles



today.

24 April 1916. Arrived at Marseilles on the evening of the 19th. and went into dock early next morning. Owing to a case of Typhus having broken out on board we were kept back and ordered to go out to camp about 9 miles outside the town at a place called "La Valentine". It was about 6.30 before we actually left the docks in a slight drizzle. The town's people gave us a great reception as we marched through the streets. The march out on cobbles all the way proved somewhat trying to some of the men. They had been ordered to carry their blankets and extra kit alone in anticipation of the train journey to the North. We got to camp about 9.30 and found tents ready for the officers and the men were billeted in a huge disused mill. The two days following our arrival have been bitterly cold, and ended up with a stiff and chilly gale from the N.W. which blew throughout the day and well into the night. This morning it is lovely - quite a Cape Winter day. We are very busy now disinfecting the men, so that we may be ready to proceed as soon as we have completed our period of quarantine. This is a lovely part of the country. Rocky well wooded hills and lovely fertile valleys all looking their best in their clothing of spring green. I found on arrival that Colonel Hickson, R.A.M.C. was A.D.M.S. so I went to call on him and found him very pleased to hear again of the Cape.

29 April 1916. Marseilles. Camp La Valentine. Since our arrival we have been working hard at disinfecting the regiments. It was slow work at first as we were only able to get one disinfector which did the kits of about 5 men every 1/2 hour. So we put on 4 hour shifts and worked right on, day and night. During the last 48 hours we have had 2 more machines and today only our own men are left to be disinfected. Two days ago another case occurred and so our period of quarantine has been extended to the 4th of May. We are fortunate in being in a very nice camp, well out of the town and in the midst of the most beautiful country. I have never seen such a wealth of vegetation and in such variety. The meadows are deep in luscious grass, buttercups and all the field flowers one sees in England. The street and squares are set out with beautifully kept plane trees, whilst in the country there is a huge variety. Chestnuts, Horse chestnuts now in full bloom, beeches and copper beeches, limes, firs, and all the trees one sees in England and all growing luxuriantly, while mingled with them are plants of various kinds, loquat trees and a large variety of fruits and shrubs that belong to sunnier climes. There are numbers of fine chateaus and country houses, but all seem shut up and the gardens become overrun and neglected. I think it is more in the country than in the towns that one notices the absence of young men. We have only had time for one ride into the country. On that occasion we had tea at a farm house, and the people told us that a great part of the farm gardens were being left until after the war. We kept off the main roads as much as possible, and wound our way along narrow lanes which took us through various farms and small villages which were most picturesque. In many places the lane side was hedged with lovely roses. I noticed most of the varieties seen in the hedgerows were those most commonly seen in the old Cape gardens. Riding through these beautiful peaceful scenes, it was hard to realise that we are at last drawing near the scenes of the fiercest fighting in this grim war. Yesterday we went into Marseilles to see B Section off. They came in a different ship to us and so were not involved in our quarantine. Their destination was Abbeville, where they were probably to get fresh orders as to their ultimate destination. As soon as we reach our base I shall try and find out where George and Ernest are. I had a short note from the



former, which had been wandering about for some time and by the same post one from Hilda saying she had heard he was returning to England for a further course in Gunnery. The day after we landed a number of Russians troops were landed having come round from Vladivostock. I am told they were fine looking men. They are all trained troops but were only armed on arrival here, as they were short of arms in Russia.

2 May 1916. Marseilles is full of all sorts and conditions of troops. I have seen several contingents of black fellows, but I must say the more I see of their coloured levies the less I think of them. The Indians are perhaps the best, but they are miserable looking compared with even the worst European. They lack stamina and intelligence and I am sure can be of very little fighting value under European conditions. Given the same training as the Indians there could be no comparison between several of our native races, and the Indians as fighting men. The Zulu is an altogether finer looking specimen of humanity.

11 May 1916. Abbeville. North France. The finale to our stay at Marseilles was a public reception and march past over which the inhabitants of the town showed immense enthusiasm. So great was the crowd hemming the streets that the police and soldiers along the way, lost control and as a military show the whole thing was spoilt. From start to finish the crowd pressed in so that the troops were forced to march in single file. However they seemed thoroughly to enjoy themselves and I don't suppose our men minded much what happened. At the station the Mayor and ladies of the town distributed a glass of champagne to each man, but unfortunately for our men the supply had given out by the time they reached the station. During the last few days at La Valentine camp the M.O. Capt. Mearns took me on some long and most delightful rides through the surrounding country. I don't think I have ever seen a more lovely part of the world. Everything was at its best and looking most luxuriant. The contrast of rugged and wooded hills, and wide and fertile valleys rich with a growth of luxuriant trees, orchards and vineyards, lent a charm to both which I have seldom appreciated so much before. Perhaps it was the months of desert life that gave it a special charm, but in any case we all voted our period of quarantine could not have been spent in more beautiful surroundings. We got away late on Monday night and travelling by the "omnibus" only reached here early this morning.

13 May 1916. Abbeville. We remained here two days more to complete the re-equipment of those of our men who need it, and then go on to join our Division, when we shall once more get in touch with the S.A. Brigade. This place is about 24 miles behind the nearest point on the front, and when the big guns go they can be quite easily heard. There was a good deal of firing at first but since our arrival things have been quieter.

17 May 1916. We have orders to move off again today our destination we anticipate being to join our Division at the front.

18 May 1916. After rather a tedious journey we reached Steenwerk. It was a glorious morning, with floods of sunshine. As we disembarked from the train we saw a German aeroplane high up over our heads, with balls of smoke from our shells bursting all round it.

26 May 1916. We have spent the past week in visiting the trenches at various points, and our men have been sent in batches to work with the other F.A's to break them into the work. Pringle, Usmar and I set out



a few mornings after our arrival to visit the trenches and as we drove out of Pont-au-Nieppe we saw shelling going ahead, and as we drew nearer we saw they were falling near the road so we drew in under cover of the houses about 300 yards away. Just as we stepped out of the car a civilian was knocked down by a flying fragment. We examined him and found it was only a slight wound in the head, so we sent him back in the ambulance car and watched the shells bursting. They were biggish ones, and gave a very powerful burst. After waiting sometime we had to turn back as the shelling seemed to be likely to continue. In the afternoon we went on and this time succeeded in getting up through Ploegsteert Wood or Plug-street as the Townies call it. There was a good deal of sniping going on and some shelling. At one place the Germans were occupying a crater only 25 yards from our trenches. We had a look with periscopes over at the German trenches at several points. Another day we visited quite a different part, where we got a fairly extensive view. The dressing station we had to visit had just been heavily shelled and was looking very battered and all the men looked rather serious. I don't wonder when one saw the damage that had been done. As our Division (the 9th.) is being withdrawn from the trenches it has been decided that we only take over from the 29. F.A. on this move.

1 June 1916. We moved away to Strazeele, about 9 miles away and have been here two days in billets. We are on the side of a hill about 12 miles from the front and can see the flashes and star shells etc. all along the line at night. There have been one or two heavy bombardments.

2 June 1916. Morbecque. In a quaint old farm house owned by very nice country people.

3 June 1916. Les Tourbicis. Put up in an empty very modern and very dirty chateau.

4 June 1916. Eemy - St. Julien. This is our destination for our field training. How long it is to last we don't know.

12 June 1916. For the past week we have been taking part in various kinds of field exercises, beginning with individual. then brigade and finally divisional training. The latter has been cut short by order to move again.

16 June 1916. Saissermont. I came down here on the 14th. with Granger and the cars. We were ordered to go to another village but when we got there we found it full of troops so I went into Armiens to find out what is wrong. After some difficulty I was ordered to this place to open a temporary hospital for our sick. On arrival I found it full of troops but as it was late, I put up at a farm house. We were fortunate in striking a most amiable couple who though poor made us welcome and did their best. We managed to get milk and eggs and turned in in various parts of the house. I in a neat little and very comfortable room of the absent daughter of the house. The rest of our party turned up today having had a tedious journey and a long march from right the other side of Amiens. We are off again in a day or two for the front to take part in a great move forward.

18 June 1916. Corbie. We have come in to Corbie to join the 29th F.A. (one of the other two in the 9th. Division). The Chateau Corbie has been given over to us. The 29th. are to occupy the house, while we are



to have the kitchen garden for our camp. We ran a joint officers mess.

23 June 1916. We have spent the last few days in clearing the kitchen garden of a year's growth of weed, and erecting shelters for the sick. We are to form a Corps Rest Station, which means that we shall have to cope with sick of the Corps - that is 3 divisions. Similar combinations of ambulances are running a main Dressing Station under a Major Dive - called Dive's Copse. A third ambulance or portion of ambulances run the Main Dressing station for the Walking Wounded. The wounded are collected by our bearers and those of the regiments, into "Dumps" from which they are taken to sheltered Aid Posts for dressing before removal by motor ambulance to the Main Dressing station. From this (after receiving what further attention is necessary) they are transferred to the Casualty Clearing Stations, where they are operated on and rendered fit to proceed to the base. Our medical service is therefore being run as a Corps concern, instead of Divisionally as heretofore. Corbie is on the Somme and about 15 miles from the front. There are great signs of impending activity. There is a constant stream of guns, men and motor lorries passing through night and day on the way to the trenches. The French are on our right for a few kilometers to the north of the Somme, and Division is the one in actual contact with them. They are equally busy on their side.

26 June 1916. Corbie. Yesterday was my turn to visit the various posts along the point, which will concern us. Yesterday the 25th. the great bombardment commenced and I was afraid that I should not be able to visit the front line, but I went up all the same. Just outside Bray we came along the crest of a hill into view of the scene of action, and began to get the full road of the guns. spurts of flame were shooting apparently out of the ground in all directions and from all sorts of hidden lairs. The car took me as far as Billou Farm, where the 98th. F.A. were living in dug-outs, which they had made for the protection of themselves and the wounded. Here I had lunch as the Germans were not replying very vigorously to our fire I decided to go on with my tour. From the dug-outs I passed through a wood where there were masses of ours and the French guns all firing away. Just as I came down the path between the guns a big one went off close over on the right and I distinctly saw the huge projectile leave the gun. The country here has big undulations and as I wound my way up the communication trenches I reached various good points of view. Everywhere guns were going off from every bit of cover and the whole air and earth vibrated. At last I reached a point on a hillside about 500 yards from the German trenches from which I could see our shells landing in huge bursts of smoke and debris, tearing up their defences. On the opposite hill was the little town of Montauban very battered and half hidden in the outskirts of Bernafay Wood. Further to the right was Trones Wood. All these places no doubt afforded well hidden lairs for the German guns. During my tour I visited 4 Advanced Dressing Stations, all dug deep into the ground, and heavily timbered and strengthened with steel girders and piles of sandbags to resist shells. All the young medico's seemed cheerful under the trying conditions they were working in. I was told this bombardment was to go on for days before the attack.

3 July 1916. Corbie. Yesterday the actual attack began the bombardment having reached a sort of climax of fury. We hear that things are going well on the whole and a fair number of prisoners are being made.

10 July 1916. Corbie. Two companies of our Brigade are in the line,



between Bernafay and Trones Woods, from which the enemy have been driven. Pringle, Forbes, Lawrie and Welsh are up with our bearers along with the Brigade. So yesterday I went up to see them. I went along the same route as last time, but now I was able to go by car right on to one of the A.D.S's only getatable before through the trenches. All the way up from Corbie we passed masses and masses of motor lorries taking up supplies and ammunition to the huge number of men now massed on the front. After a search I was told our fellows were in Maricourt Village and as I draw near I saw the end of it was being shelled with what the Tommies call "big stuff". As I came in I met one of our orderlies who said an artillery officer had just been badly wounded by one of the shells, so I went with him. However he had been brought in to the barn being used as a temporary dressing station and had been seen by Forbes. He looked bad. Here I found poor old Horne who had been wounded by shrapnell in the thigh. He is our first casualty and will be a great loss even temporarily. Fortunately his wound is not serious. As I came down to the Barn I saw a shell plunge right into a mass of men and horses who were crowded in a lane trying to get guns through. All this time the Germans had worked up a very formidable bombardment of all our recently gained positions and the noise of this and our own guns was so terrific that one felt scarcely able to think. I then found Pringle and the others who all looked as if they were going through a horrible time. Welsh was up in Bernafay Wood which was getting a terrible doing. I was due back at four to meet Col. Elanore where we had left the car and I met him near our rendezvous on a hill from which one could see the line of battle for several miles. It was a wonderful and horrible sight. Along a line of several miles, which we could see plainly, the Germans were heavily bombarding all the positions we have recently taken. The shells made huge clouds of dense, black, white, cream-coloured or inky black smoke according to the variety used. From this point one could see most of the positions we had bombarded at the beginning. What had been leafy woods were now blasted and battered as though a veld fire had swept through them. It was almost inconceivable that so much destruction could have been done by shell fire alone. The view we had was I suppose quite a unique one in this war as we were only about a mile from where the intense fighting was going on with a full view of the line on either side. The wood (Bernafay) from which our bearers were evacuating and in which Capt. Welsh was, was getting a very heavy shelling with shells of all kinds including "tear shells". After a time some shells came over us evidently aimed at the road leading up to the front. During tea in the ambulance dug-out we heard some more come over. When we started back we found the road blocked the cause being that one of the shells had pitched on the road destroying an ambulance car and two lorries. The ambulance orderlie was lying beside the car with most of his head gone. I heard afterwards that 7 wounded patients in the car had escaped uninjured. However only about 10 shells came over and no more damage was done. NB. I have heard today from one of our men, that Lt. Nimmo Brown has been killed. He and 5 others were killed by a shell.

12 July 1916. Corbie. Yesterday I made another visit to our bearers at Cambridge Copse, which is the name given to some dug-outs just outside Maricourt Village, and reckoned to be safer than the village which is constantly being shelled. This time the shelling from the Germans was not nearly so concentrated, but they were sending a few shells every here and there which is very uncomfortable as one does not know where they will come next. I found Pringle looking somewhat more rested as - fortunately for him - his feet had got sore and compelled



him to take things more quietly. Lawrie had just come in from Bernafay Wood where he had spent the past 24 hours evacuating wounded. Welsh was there too and I heard some of his adventures from him. He went up to Bernafay Wood at about 1 pm on the 9th. (the same afternoon of my last visit) and after evacuating as many wounded as possible had returned with his men who were quite worn out. In the meantime he had had a note from the R.M.O. of the 2nd. S.A.E. to say that there were a number of wounded of the previous division that had been abandoned by their ambulance on account of the heavy fire, and that the S.A. Reg. SB's were collecting them together. So Welsh called for 20 volunteers from among our men and returned to the Wood reaching it about 12 midnight. He then had a frightful time as he only found the wounded after 3 hours search amongst a turmoil of bursting shells and teargas, and finally found them and got them away. Perhaps one of the most marvellous things is that neither he nor any of the orderlies were wounded or killed. Two of them have succumbed to nervous breakdown which I think is not to be wondered at. I forgot to say that on the way up in the forenoon as Welsh was going up with a mixed lot of orderlies from our and the 27th. F.A. they heard a shell coming. Welsh and one of the orderlies flung themselves into an old shell hole. The orderlie was wounded, while another who had taken refuge in a trench, was killed. The fighting has extended further on as the Germans are being driven back, but is is furious all along the line and the casualties are terrible. Colonel Jones of the S.A. Scottish was killed while standing near the Dressing Station. Captain Russell has been shot by a sniper and another officer, while there have been numbers of other casualties. A very difficult job has fallen to the lot of the S.A. Infantry.

14 July 1916. Friday. On Wednesday evening Ernest arrived. He had just come back from La Boisselle where his Regiment had been on the unpleasant job of burying the dead on the battlefield. We had a note from Pringle yesterday saying that the Germans had shelled a battery near to them and given them a horrible time, using tearshells to a large extent. Some of the shells fell short and unpleasantly near their dug-outs. The 27th. F.A. Bearers, who are in rest at W. Pervine, have had 2 more casualties from shrapnell fire yesterday. On the 12th. Norman went up to see our bearers and found they had had rather a bad time the previous night. Some very heavy shelling began while evacuating wounded from Bernafay Wood resulting in 5 casualties, none have been killed, but one severely wounded. Staff. Sgt. Walsh is reported to have done phenomenally good work, dressing wounded, finding and bringing them in and continuing to do this for 4 nights and 3 days. In fact he only returned on being told he was "under arrest". Our men have all worked splendidly and gained praise on all sides. This morning the final effort to break through has been planned, and news has just come to the effect that this has been done and that a large mass of cavalry is being pushed through to try and capture as many guns as possible. The fighting has become simply furious and the casualties on both sides are too fearful to think of. All we can do is to wade through the masses of wounded. The 27th has gone forward to help cope with it and we join them as soon as the out-going ambulances can take over our Rest Station.

17 July 1916. Monday. Dive's Copse. Events are crowding in so thick and fast that it is quite impossible to keep abreast with any connected account of it all. The 27th. F.A. came up here on Friday and we followed on Saturday. We are now, in conjunction with the tent divisions of 2 other ambulances running the Corps. Main D.S. We have



sorted ourselves into shifts and are working day and night at a never ending stream of wounded. The fighting is simply beyond description. Since it began on the 24th. the bombardment has never ceased day and night. We attack during the day mostly and the Germans counter-attack mostly at night. At these times the bombardment reaches a sort of climax. Our bearers are having a most arduous and dangerous time. Up to last night we have had one killed and 22 wounded. A wounded bearer who came in last night told us that Capt. Lawrie has been hit but he thought not seriously. He has not come in yet, so we are in hopes it is only a slight wound. On the 14th. there was a second big attack on the German 2nd. line of defense which was successfully carried out. The holding of the captured positions is where the heavy losses come in. The S.A. Brigade took part in this and their losses then and since have been extremely heavy. In this attack the Germans were pushed out of Bazentin le Petit, and Longueval. Trones Wood being finally cleared in so doing. The attack has been since pressed beyond Longueval into the Bois Delville, where the S.A.'s have had desperate fighting and heavy losses. Most of this ground has been so heavily under fire of all sorts that it has been impossible to get the wounded away. The 2nd. S.A.I. have suffered extremely heavily and nearly all their officers have been either killed or wounded. Our bearers pushed up as far as Longueval yesterday and had just selected a house on the outskirts of the village when the Germans delivered a concentrated bombardment. They had to take refuge in a cellar and the orderlie who came down, was wounded by a bursting shell while helping to get the wounded under cover. The wounds sustained in this sort of warfare are really terrible, and it is simply marvellous how patient the poor fellows are. One has rows of them lying waiting on stretchers many - in fact most of them - dreadfully mangled, and yet one seldom hears a groan even when they are dressed. And when one pictures that in addition to being wounded they are usually soaked to the skin and covered with mud, one realises the real pathos of it all. All day long one is hearing wonderful tales of what is going on, when the guns never cease, and where no man knows when he may be the next victim of the continuous and ruthless bombardment. We have passed through a considerable number of German prisoners among the wounded. They all say our bombardment has been terrible and I can well imagine it as we have been giving them anything from 5 to 10 shells to their one. Much of the ground taken has not yet been cleared of either wounded or booty and it is not known how many of their guns are now in our hands but apparently there are many abandoned guns in concealed positions, over which our attack has swept. The whole of the 9th. Division has suffered very heavily, so heavily that it seems doubtful if they can go on much longer. They supported the first attack on the 2nd. of July and from that date were constantly under shell fire without being able to strike a blow until the morning of the 14th. In fact for the week previous to this period their bivouacs constantly came under long range fire. The result was that the Division suffered a loss of about 2500 in killed and wounded, before they themselves pushed in to the attack on the 14th. in place of the 30th. Division who had done the first part. By now our losses must be colossal and our place will have to be taken by others.

18 July 1916. Dive's Copse. Today the official list of S.A.I. casualties amounts to no less than 114 officers, and our Div. has lost about 6700 men. It is anticipated that they can only last out one or two more days after which we shall have to withdraw to refit. One of our orderlies came down today and brings the good news that Lawrie was not wounded after all. One of our bearers was brought in this morning



among a number of others suffering from gassing. The Germans have been using poison gas shells. We have about 20 or 30 cases now in our block alone. The attack seems to have been pushed further in and more troops are coming up to replace our Division. The bombardment is still very intense on our part and has spread both up and down the line, so that the French must be going on again. I have seen several of our officers, among them Colonel Tanner the D.C. of 2nd. S.A.I. He said when he left 16 out of 20 of their officers were gone and the fighting still goes furiously on. All speak in the highest praise of our bearers who have stuck manfully to their onerous task. Another of our officers came in after having been buried by shell explosions no less than 5 times. He was a man of iron nerve, but is a total wreck for the present. What with want of sleep and food and the constant narrow shaves, I marvel that more men do not succumb entirely to nerve prostration. The cavalry effort two days ago seems to have been only very partially successful. The Germans have still more defences to be broken through before they can do much work.

20 July 1916. Thursday. Dive's Copse. Ever since about midday on Tuesday there has been an immense influx of wounded. 6 medical officers have been continuously at work. All during this time our guns have been going and at times the firing is so concentrated that there is one continuous roar. To hear it one would think that no living thing could be left before it, and yet when our men advance to attack the Germans come pouring out of their dug-outs in huge numbers. Though many of them are almost too dazed to fight, there always seem plenty of most plucky men among them who fight to the end and do immense execution among our men. We are losing immense numbers in holding the ground once gained. Once we gain a position, we seem to stick at no sacrifice however great to hold it, and this I think is demoralising to the Germans, as they realise that their counter-attacks are almost doomed to failure. This morning I have taken a very good map from the Times which shows all the ground over which the fighting has extended. I can only describe in a disjointed manner, as I have gathered it from the wounded, the part that our division has played. On the 3rd. and 4th. of July when the attack was started, the 30th. Division took Montauban and Bernafay Wood, and held it. Later on in another attack in which they were helped by our division which was in reserve to them, they gained a footing in Trones Wood. Some of the S.A.I. were in this. The rest were camped about the point I have indicated in the map. Our division was there under shell fire and surrounded by the roar of our guns until the 14th. of July during which 2500 were either killed or wounded. Our bearers were engaged all this time in clearing Bernafay and Trones Wood and the space between, under heavy shell fire all the time. On the 14th. our division had relieved the 30th., and now attacked Longueval which they captured. During the following days they pushed still further on and gained Delville Wood. This particular duty fell to the S.A. Brigade who suffered terrible losses in winning and holding Trones and Delville Woods. The French who have done so well seem to have failed to take Guillemont, which they should have done, with the result that the Germans were able to bombard and sweep with rifle fire the whole of these positions. To look at the Woods it is marvellous to think that anything could remain alive in them. A great proportion of the trees have been shot down and blown up, while every leaf has been blasted off those that remain standing. Our bearers have worked nobly and penetrated through Longueval and Delville Woods in bringing away wounded. As the Germans are driven back the positions that have been blasted by our fire, are then further blasted by theirs when we occupy them. The fighting has been so furious that many of the



wounded have simply had to be left to die there they fell, while of course no attempt has been made to bury the dead and the numerous horses and mules that have been killed. No more barbarous warfare can possibly have taken place, in the history of the world than is going on daily here. Yesterday afternoon I had a few hours off and made up to another part of the line namely Fricourt. There too the same thing. Fricourt and Contalmaison like Montauban, are literally razed to the ground, in fact not only razed to the ground but actually churned many feet into it. During the last few days, we have taken to the left Bazezthin la Grand and Petit and the woods in connection with them, also Contalmaison and Ouvilliers. On the right the French have Hardecourt which they took in the first few days, but have not yet secured Guillemont which is important, while we have taken Waterlot Farm. Yesterday Monaghan and Granger came back, so that I have been able to have a nice quiet morning. Today our bearers are to be relieved which is a mercy. They have now been 21 days, in the midst of awful surroundings. Incessant din, and working unendingly in momentary risk of their lives, that some have broken down from mental strain and overwork is only natural, the wonder being that more have not succumbed in the same way.

22 July 1916. Dive's Copse. Yesterday our Brigade came out of action. The General came over here in the morning to enquire about the wounded and I rode back with him to where the remnants of the Brigade were camped in "Happy Valley", just beyond the area of constant shelling. It was a glorious morning with brilliant sunshine and the men were appreciating it to the full after the terrible weeks of fighting. The losses have been extremely heavy, but it will be some time before they are fully known. The brigade was about 4100 strong, and the casualties are as near as is at present known about 2500. The 2nd. Reg. have had all their officers killed or wounded, while the 13th. Bgde. as a whole has lost very nearly 100 officers. I found Pringle and the others all looking wonderfully well under the circumstances, but of course they and the men look very battered. After being with them for a time I rode on to Billou Wood to arrange about their transport. As I rode up I saw 4 German aeroplanes come over at a very great height. There was immediately a tremendous fire opened on them by our anti-aircraft guns, and after a while our own planes began to swoop in from all directions, and thus the Huns made off for home. At Billou Wood the Germans were sending over some huge shells, which they have done at intervals ever since the beginning. The road forks at the point to go to Maricourt to the right and Carnoy to the left. It is wonderful how accurately they come, from some huge distances to within a few yards of their mark. As a matter of fact they have hit quite a number of wagons and lorries at this point during the past fortnight. It is wonderful to see the traffic as crowded almost as the Strand in London streaming steadily on no matter what happens. A shell strikes a wagon. It is pulled aside and the hole filled up, whilst the traffic goes steadily on. A military policeman stands at points like this and if the shelling gets very bad he diverts or stops the traffic for a time, but until this happens all goes on as if there was no damage. On returning to camp here I found Dyer had come back to join us again, and orders had arrived that we are to move back to "rest and re-equip". A fierce struggle is going on for the possession of Longueval Village and Delville Wood. Both the Germans and ourselves have had immense losses in the fighting for this part. On our right the French have had a further success and captured 3000 prisoners, 3 guns, 30 mitrailleuses and gained more ground. It is reported that the Germans have now to get about 1/2 million men on our



front. They bombarded Delville Wood and Longueval yesterday with what was estimated at about 300 guns of all sizes.

25 July 1916. Magnicourt. Since my last entry we have moved away ahead of the Bgde. to arrange billets for our men. We all left Dive's Copse on the 22nd. and went to a place called Mouflers about 12 or 15 miles to the N.W. of Amiens. There the men are resting for a day and will join us here. This place is not far from Lens. We had quite an interesting drive up here in the car. I passed through Abbeville, where I found the S.A. Gen. Hosp. had come about a week previously. I called in to see them, but could only spare a few minutes as I had to get on here before nightfall. I think they all seemed pleased to be in France at last, and getting some real good work to do. I was also able to visit two of my men who had been seriously wounded. One poor young fellow has lost one of his legs and looked very seedy. The joining up has been quite delightful through very nice country and a great contrast and relief after spending all that time in an atmosphere of constant bustle, roar of guns, and all the horrible sights and sounds of the great battle.

28 July 1916. Fresnicourt. Yesterday we moved over to this place about 6 miles. It is about 12 miles to S.W. Bethune and about 7 miles from the line. This morning Forbes left us under orders to conduct a party of 50 men made up from the 3 ambulances, to the Forêt de Nieppe, for what purpose we do not know, but imagine it is for fatigue work there. The country is quite pretty just around this part. Hilly and dotted with forests. The little village lies in a hollow behind a steep hill, which is capped by quite an extensive forest. We presume we are to be allowed to rest now for a time, and certainly the troops need it. The latest return shows that of 3500 of our Brigade that actually went into the battle 2900 have been killed and wounded. It is therefore bound to take us some considerable time to get up reinforcements and re-organize and equip. My regret has been that I have been unable to put down more of what I have seen and heard but such was the press of work during the battle, that this became impossible. One heard innumerable stories from the wounded of their particular part in the battle, which would have filled a volume with thrilling incidents. The last wounded S.A. I saw told me he took part in the first attack on Delville Wood at a time when his company went right through and beyond it. His leg was shattered and he lay out where he fell for 6 days. Just after being wounded he was dressed and carried a short distance by 2 Rgt. SB's. The fire was so heavy that one was killed. The other one dragged the wounded man into a shell hole and went off for help, but never returned, probably being killed or wounded himself. Such has been the intensity of the bombardment on both sides, that the great majority of wounded have resulted from shell wounds. The intensity of fire too has made it impossible in many cases to collect wounded at all, and they simply had to be left to their fate. Young Sills - one of the SB's in my section - who has lost his leg and is now at Abbeville, told me that he, another bearer, the Rev. Cook and a soldier, had gone into Trones Wood to rescue a wounded man. As they were returning the Germans started a barrage just over the region they were crossing. A shrapnell shell burst almost on them. It killed poor Cook, smashed Sill's left leg and both arms, and killed the soldier, while as far as he knew the wounded man on the stretcher received no further injury. A lieutenant in the S.A. Scottish told me that he was given his commission on the eve of the battle and that at the end of it, his entire platoon of 25 men were all killed and wounded, his last man being blown to pieces close alongside him. Sgt.



Walsh told me he was coming down from Longueval with the last party of four stretchers. On his particular stretcher they were carrying a man who had been wounded in the head, and whom they could not make walk as he seemed too dazed. A huge shell burst close to them blowing them all over, but miraculously wounding no one. The man with the head injury came to earth some distance off and immediately raced off toward the German lines, chased by two of our men, one of whom collared him low, and so managed to secure him and guide him back in the proper direction. There was not one of our bearer party from the officers downwards who did not have, not one but many narrow shaves, and that so few were injured (37 out of 110) is I think, under the circumstances quite marvellous. Major Power told me that on one occasion he was bandaging a man's head, when a fragment of shell passed between them carrying away half the man's head. Shortly after another fragment swept away his gas mask (Tower pattern) which was hung in front of him from his neck. Captain Libson got a bullet through the inside of his thigh, while another nicked his ear. I see one of the papers today says that about 5,000,000 shells have been fired in this battle by our guns alone, and I think this is no exaggeration. For miles behind our lines there were batteries within stones throw of one another. Some of the huge howitzers were run up on the railway and operated from the terminus, about 3 miles behind our line at the start and of course double that as our line advanced. In the case of these big guns it was quite easy to watch the projectile for a long way on its course. This afternoon I have seen our list of officers, killed, wounded and missing. It totals 98, besides which there were two or three others who received slight wounds for which they did not fall out. The list of men is not yet quite complete. I saw Col. Thackeray of the 3rd. Rgt. He was ordered to attack and hold part of Delville Wood at all costs. This he did and held his part for a week. At the end of this time he had lost all his officers and had only 110 men left of his whole batallion. He himself was hit 6 times by spent fragments of shell which did not cause wounds. He said the German snipers were most courageous and clever in the wood. Our troops were never able to get rid of them. One sniper that was spotted and shot by one of his men was dressed in a dirty torn pair of trousers, a brown sweater on which he had fastened leaves at odd intervals. His face and hands had leaves painted on them. Disguised in this way these fellows stood or lay perfectly motionless, with their rifles aimed down an opening in the wood and as soon as anyone crossed their path they fired. There were two snipers who continued like this for the whole time without being discovered, and who accounted for nearly 100 men. The woods were honey-combed with cleverly hidden dugouts in which were concealed maxims and in some cases even guns. The men who were wounded in these advanced positions were in a very precarious way, because first of all it meant conveying them through the area of sniping for perhaps a mile or more. Then through a zone of nearly 5 miles of shell fire before safety could be reached. When the shelling became intense, the removal of wounded became a matter of impossibility. During this time more wounded accumulated, so that when a lull did come, there were far more than the Stretcher Bearers could cope with, or than the fighting men could spare men to deal with. The result is that wounded had had to be left wholesale to die where they fell. The great range of the guns and the fearful power of modern explosives, is making the question of dealing with the wounded more and more difficult, so that warfare is becoming more and more cruel as time goes on. One wonders that whole regiments do not panic when they are asked to go into an inferno, the full meaning of which they know. The knowledge that the wounds inflicted by bursting shells if not immediately fatal are too fearful



to contemplate, while only about 1 man in ten can expect to return unscathed. As I have heard many a soldier say "This is not fighting, it is cold blooded murder" - a man's strength or skill is going to profit him nothing or practically nothing in the face of a deluge of high explosive shells of immense size.

29 July 1916. Fresnoicourt. Last night we heard a very heavy bombardment away in the South, so they are evidently still hard at it on the Somme. The last two days here have been glorious and really the first that could be called at all summery. We are all revelling in it, and in the peace of this spot.

7 August 1916. Fresnoicourt. The weather still continues fine but inclined to be cold again. It is most amusing to read the war correspondents writing to say they wonder how the men will bear up against the heat! If they had slept out with no blanket or great coat for a few nights they would not talk of heat, as anything but most welcome. On the 5th. Our Brigade was inspected by General Sir C. Munroe, the Commander of the 1st. Army to which we now belong. He spoke very clearly and seemed most sincere in the high compliments he paid to the S.A.'s. for all they have done both before and at the battle of the Somme.

#### Note on the rescue and evacuation of wounded at the Somme

To understand that the difficulties of collecting wounded in such a battle as that in which we have recently taken part, it is necessary in the first place to realise some of the conditions. The range of modern guns is so great and their control so accurate, that the depth of area occupied is very extensive. The objects of the fire are to check the advance of the enemy, to pound him to pieces when he halts, to put up screens or barrages of fire behind to prevent reinforcements and supplies coming up to shell all paths of approach for many miles to the rear. In addition to this the shelling of special points very far in rear which have been marked down by aeroplanes, is done when the conditions are favourable. The Germans shelled one of our depots almost 16 miles behind the line in this way. At the Somme during the battle the shelling was more or less intense all over the ground for about 4 to 5 miles behind the front line. Beyond this it was confined mostly to roads up to 5 - 7 miles back. From this it follows that a wounded man is not entirely out of danger until he has been brought back about 8 miles or more. As one attack was being carried out in great concentration so that divisions were being used almost as Brigades have been used before, the medical service was adapted to meet the occasion by centralising it and working for our army Corps. as a whole, instead of Divisionally as heretofore. To this end all the Field Ambulances in the Corps (I think there were 9) were pooled. The bearer divisions in each case were sent to their regiments and moved with them. The Tent Divisions were grouped into:

1. A Main Dressing Station for serious wounds only.
2. A Dressing Station for walking wounded only.
3. A Corps Rest Station for sick.

1. To the Main Dressing Station the tent divisions of the Ambulances whose Brigades were going into action were moved up. There were from 4 to 6 of these as a rule. The essential arrangement of the tentage at this place was in blocks. Each block consisted of four marquees linked together end to end. The cars delivered the patients into the first two until they were filled eg. 20-25. The 3rd. tent was the operating and dressing room. When finished the patient was passed on to rest in the fourth tent until the motor convoy arrived. There were 6 blocks as



above, and each could deal deliberately with from 40 to 50 patients in each 8 hours. The blocks were lettered A to F. A opened first and when full B, and so on until by the time F was filled up A was ready to go on again. Sometimes only 3 blocks working in this way could keep pace, at others all blocks were in full use together. I am not describing further detail at present.

2. The walking wounded Dressing Station was run by M.O.'s detached from F.A.'s, and supplied with dressings and shelters for the men.

3. The Rest Station was worked by the tent divisions of two F.A.'s and dealt with about 100 sick per day during this battle.

The best method of indicating the work of each of these lines of evacuation for sick and wounded is to follow the course taken by a patient. A man wounded at the point of battle immediately fell into one or other class. (1) a stretcher case - seriously disabled (2) a walker and therefore in a measure able to look after himself. (1) remained where he was until the fire subsided sufficiently for the Reg. SB's to come for him, and not infrequently this was impossible for days together. The Reg. SB's took him to the Reg. M.O., where he was dressed and kept under shelter from fire as far as circumstances would permit. From this point the ambulance SB's joined a chain of Stretcher parties by which the patient was carried over the next 3 to 4 miles, the last part of this stage being done by horse drawn ambulance wagons if the nature of the "terrain" allowed and sometimes in the lighter type of motor ambulance. This brought the patient to the rendezvous for the ambulance motors which conveyed them to the main Dressing Station which was in this case about 8 miles or more behind the firing line. Along the chain from the firing line to the rendezvous for the motor ambulances, rest stations were formed at convenient distances, where the patients were rested and dressings adjusted and food given. On arrival at Main D.S. patients were given soup, hot drinks and food if able to take it. Those who were unfit to travel further were kept at rest until able to do so, or if moribund not moved any further. Between the M.D.S. and the C.C.S. a convoy of 50 motor ambulances filed incessantly by which means as many as 3000 patients were taken away in 24 hours. At the M.D.S. all patients were re-dressed, inevitable amputations were done and arteries tied. 2. A walking case walked down with the stretcher cases until they reached the motor ambulance rendezvous, where they either walked to the D.S. for walking wounded or travelled in empty returning lorries. At the main D.S. and walking wounded D.S. all patients were given a prophylactic dose of anti-tetanic serum. Here also a careful record of all particulars was kept and each man given a Field Medical Card tied to his tunic in a waterproof envelope and giving full details of all that had been done for him. On the whole the scheme worked well and smoothly and I never saw any of the awful congestion previously described as having taken place in other big battles. In fact once a man left the Reg. Aid Post provided he did not get hit again (which of course not infrequently happened) he was passed down quite steadily and as fast as was advisable. If at any point on the journey a M.O. thought it advisable he could be kept at rest for a few hours or a whole day. 3. Sick men followed either route according to the nature of their illness, and if not acutely ill were sent to the Rest Station instead of the C.C.S. Here if making satisfactory progress they were kept 5 to 6 days, and returned to their regiments. If getting worse or looking like being ill for more than 5 days they were passed out at once to the C.C.S. and so away to the base.

8 August 1916. Fresnicourt. Last evening I rode over to Grande St. Servius where I had dinner with Lt. Col. Watson RAMC, who is i/c of an



ambulance. There also I met Lt. Child. We are all Cambridge men and also all Guysmen of the same period, so it was quite interesting hearing from one another what each had done in the interval. It was a beautiful clear night and soon after dark some of our aeroplanes began to pass over towards the German lines. We saw some huge flares in the distance, which we took to be incendiary bombs which they had dropped. Soon after we saw the signals made by our planes as they drew near home and the answering ones from the aerodrome. During this passage over the German lines the bursting shrapnell appeared as sharp sparks of light very high up. By day these bursts look like balls of cotton wool and hang in the air for a long time.

9 August 1916. Fresnicourt. Orders have come today for a move. Our Division is to take over part of the line in the Mont St. Eloy sector, which lies below the famous Virny Ridge. Virny Ridge is a very important point strategically as it dominates the country for many miles both in front and rear of it. It was captured by the French at a cost of something like 55,000 casualties. Last May - I think it was - the Germans took us by surprise whilst the position was being handed over from one Division to another and captured it with comparatively small loss to themselves. The Germans have shown themselves particularly clever in obtaining information of these reliefs and taking full advantage of them, while we on our part seem to have lent them every assistance by our bungling way of doing things. At any rate on this occasion it cost us very dear, and naturally must have thoroughly disgusted the French who had sacrificed so much to win it. This morning the Col. and I went over to look at our new quarters. We are taking over a very nice place at Estree-Cauchie, which will be our Dressing Station and another place at Gancourt which we are to run as a Divisional Rest Station.

15 August 1916. Estree-Cauchie. We moved over here yesterday. It is only about 1 1/2 miles from Fresnicourt. This is one of the places that had previously been used by the French for hospital purposes and is very neat and nice. It is scarcely ones idea of the abode of a field ambulance. There are 3 commodious huts for wards with wood and asphalt floors. The grounds are quite neatly laid out in lawns and flower beds, and as geraniums and sweet peas are in full flower it all looks very bright and nice. Very different from most of the places we have been in before. A couple of days ago the King passed through on to tour through the lines. He was accompanied by the Prince of Wales and General Haig.

18 August 1916. Estree-Cauchie. We are settling down in our new surroundings and like our present camp immensely. This camp is quite one of the show places along the line and we are trying to improve it even more. Perhaps the only thing against it is that as a unit we are rather scattered. I have seen very little of the country round as I have been very busy since arriving here and spending most of my spare time in writing a report on our doings, which the Col. hopes to get censored for the S.I.A. Press, so that all the good people who have given to help us, will have some idea of what we are doing.

The following account of the work of the S.A.F.A. during the battle of the Somme has been compiled from the accounts and notes of various officers and men.

In order to understand what the work of a Field Ambulance was in a battle such as that the Somme, it is necessary to have a rough idea of its composition as well as a sketch of the plan upon which the medical



service was based. In a Field Ambulance there are 9 MO's, 1 SM and 182 OR. Besides this there is attached to it a section of A.S.C. whose duties are with the transport. In this section there are about 60 men who have charge of 3 Ambulance Wagons and 7 Motor Ambulances for the conveyance of sick and wounded. In addition there are 7 G.S. Wagons, 4 limber wagons and 3 water carts for the conveyance of equipment and stores. The duty of such a Field Amb. is to collect the sick and wounded of a Brigade. In each Division there are 3 Brigades and 3 Ambulances. When a Division goes into action the A.D.M.S. of a Division gives orders for the disposition of the ambulances in a manner best suited to meet the case. In our Army Corps. there were 3 Divisions and consequently 9 Field Ambulances. The attack was going to be in such concentration that in order to prevent overlapping and avoid congestion in any one Fld. Amb. because it happened to be at a point where casualties were particularly heavy, a comprehensive scheme for the disposition of the ambulances was worked out by the D.D.M.S. of our Corps. as a whole instead of leaving each Division to work out its own arrangements for the rescue of wounded. To this end the Bearer Division consisting of 110 men and 4 to 5 officers was distributed to each Brigade. The Tent Divisions were then grouped as follows:

1. Main Dressing Station (M.D.S.) at Dive's Copse
2. Walking Wounded Dressing Station (W.W.D.S.) at a point not far from Bray
3. Corps. Rest Station (C.R.S.) at Corbie

The range of modern guns is too great and the power of the explosives used in the shells so high that a wounded man can scarcely be regarded to be in safety until he has been removed from 8 - 10 miles behind the battle front. In this particular battle the number of guns used on both sides was so great that a belt of 4 - 5 miles in depth was continuously under a more or less intense shell fire. Beyond this and up to a distance of 8 miles from our front line, roads and other important points were systematically shelled. If the foregoing remarks are borne in mind it will make clear the necessity for the great distance behind the firing line at which the MDS had to be placed. Thus:

1. MDS 9 miles from original front. Here all the seriously wounded were brought.

2. W.W.D.S. was at first 4 miles behind our original front and afterwards moved up as the battle progressed.

3. CRS 14 miles behind. Here the sick of the Corps. and those who were worn out in the battle were brought down to rest until they were fit to return to their regiments or if not improving be sent to a CCS.

To understand the use of the various links in the chain of evacuation the easiest plan is to follow what happened to a man wounded in the front line. When wounded a man becomes immediately either a walking or stretcher case. In either case he is in the first instance attended by one of the Reg. Stretcher Bearers, who applies a first field dressing and drags the wounded man under the best available cover. The Reg. SB's then if possible carry him back to the Reg. Aid Post (RAP) which may be anything from a few hundred yards to half a mile or more behind the front line. Here the Reg. MO has established himself in a cellar, dugout or trench and re-dresses the case if necessary. Keeping him together with other cases that have arrived in the same way, for subsequent removal by the F.A. SB's. This spot is called the Reg. Aid Post or RAP. From the RAP the wounded man is borne by the FA SB's towards the rear. Owing, as has already been pointed out, to the great range of modern guns, the distance to be covered in this way may be very considerable, anything from a mile to 3 or 4. The journey is therefore broken into convenient stages. A dug-out, cellar or other



sheltered position being selected as the resting place. As a general rule a different squad of bearers worked between each of these dug-outs, the distances being apportioned according to the nature of the ground, whether from the point of view of obstacles to be got over, or freedom or otherwise from fire. This finally landed the patient at the Advanced DS, which made the terminal link in this part of the chain. Wherever necessary MO's were stationed at the dug-outs along the chain, to supervise the SB's and attend to those patients requiring re-dressing or surgical aid in other ways. To the ADS came the motor ambulances. In some cases it was found practical to get ambulance wagons further up the line and so save a certain amount of carrying. But it was seldom found possible to reduce the distance a patient had to be carried to under 3 miles. From the ADS the patient was conveyed by motor to the MDS. From the MDS a convoy of 50 motor ambulances ran constantly between it and the CCS. The walking wounded after being dressed were directed along the chain of evacuation until they reached the WWDS where they were placed on lorries for conveyance to the CCS. It will be seen from the foregoing that on the Fld. Ambulances rests the responsibility of getting wounded from the battle front to the MDS which is situated in a place of safety.

18 June 1916. Corbie. In accordance with the above scheme the Tent Division of our ambulance was told off in conjunction with the Tent Division of the 27th. FA to form a CRS at Corbie. The Chateau Corbie was allotted for this purpose. The 27th. occupied the Chateau, whilst we were given the kitchen garden. This was one of those old French gardens surrounded by high brick walls and laid out in rectangular beds for vegetables, gooseberry and currant bushes, with rows of fruit trees along the borders of the paths. The garden appeared to have been neglected since the commencement of the war and was waist deep in grass and undergrowth. The first business was to clear away all the undergrowth and prepare the ground for the tents and shelters we intended to erect. At the end of 4 days hard work by all hands we had provided shelter for about 300 patients and began "taking in". All this time the town and all the roads leading up to the front presented a scene of the greatest activity. A constant stream of troops, guns, lorries, motor cars and every form of transport passed steadily forward day and night.

30 June 1916. Corbie. On the 20th. Capt. Dyer, 1 NCO and 7 men were ordered to report for duty to No. 45 CCS. On the 24th. Major Pringle and 78 bearers moved to Bois Celestine where they met Capt. Forbes and the rest of the bearers, who had been detached during the move of the Brigade to this area. On the 28th. our 7 motor ambulances were sent to Dive's Copse MDS where the motors from the other FA's were to form a convoy for the removal of wounded from immediately behind the firing line to the MDS. On the 25th. the great bombardment of the German positions began. This was continued day and night from hundreds of our guns of all sizes concealed in gunpits and woods to a depth of 4 miles behind our front line trenches.

1 July 1916. During the night of June 30th. Maj. Pringle marched from the Bois Celestine to Grovetown. The road was simply a cross country track with many bad patches of mud holes and swamp. It was often necessary to detach parties to assist the transport. That night they camped in a cornfield and got their first impressions of what it was like to be close to the guns during the big bombardment.

3 July 1916. Corbie. On the morning of July 1st. our troops delivered



the first wave of attack capturing all the German positions to Montauban and the outskirts of Bernafay Wood and Caterpillar Wood. On the afternoon of Sunday July 2nd. Capt. Lawrie with a section of the bearers went forward to assist in clearing the captured trenches of wounded. This party on arriving at Billou Wood deposited their equipment and proceeded by road to Carnoy and Montauban. Here they assisted in clearing the wounded from Caterpillar Wood. The shell fire was very heavy and though 2 RAMC were killed our party returned intact. In the meantime Major Pringle with the remainder of the bearer Division moved up under cover of darkness to Trigger Valley, where the S.A. Brigade was camped. This valley was surrounded by batteries of British and French guns of heavy calibre and the noise was beyond description.

4 July 1916. Corbie. On Monday July 3rd. Capt. Welsh and a bearer section was sent forward to assist in clearing captured positions. Their work consisted in clearing the trenches at the Brigueterie SE of Montauban. Another party under Capt. Forbes proceeded to Cambridge Copse for the purpose of making a pathway for walking wounded.

5 July 1916. Corbie. On the night of July 4th. the whole Bearer Division marched to Maricourt and were billeted in more or less shell shattered houses. This was an exceedingly trying march. The road was packed with traffic going both ways and it was only with great difficulty that the wheeled stretchers could be got through. Added to this the recent rain and the heavy traffic had made the mud very bad, while the roar of the guns and the noise of bursting shells much interfered with the passing of orders.

6 July 1916. Corbie. On the morning of the 5th. July volunteers were called for burial parties and 3 squads were formed under Cpts. Rev. Walsh, Hill and Cook. These parties were kept busily employed and in spite of shelling managed to clear a considerable portion of the trenches before Montauban. The same afternoon a party commenced making a dug-out for the protection of wounded at the Willows, about 1 mile from Maricourt. Shelling continued throughout the night. In fact since the commencement of the battle there has been no cessation on either side, day or night.

7 July 1916. Corbie. On the morning of July 6th. Bearer relays were arranged for clearing wounded from Glatz-Redoubt to an ADS on the Peronne Road. This work was carried out continuously day and night. The men worked steadily in spite of the shelling. The muddy state of the roads and the sticky quality of the clay made the work particularly laborious and uncomfortable.

10 July 1916. Corbie. About July 5th. the SA Brigade moved forward in support of 30th. Division and were camped in reserve among the German trenches before Montauban. As here they were under shellfire casualties began to occur and stretcher parties were detached for the assistance of the RMO's of the 3rd and 4th Regiments. Some very difficult carrying work was done in clearing these RAP's. In many places the trenches were too narrow for stretchers whilst in the open the number of shell holes, litter of wire entanglements and debris from dug-outs made stretcher bearing under shell fire a performance which called for great steadiness of nerve as well as physical strength. During this period it was found necessary to make another dug-out which was christened "Samcy" dug-out. It lay between the Willows and Glatz-Redoubt. All hands put in as much time at this work as could be



spared from their bearer duties. As Maricourt was receiving an ever increasing amount of attention from enemy shells it was decided advisable to move to Cambridge Copse. This move was carried out on the evening of Sunday July 9th. On the afternoon of this day we had our first casualty in Sgt. Horne, who was hit in the thigh by a piece of shrapnel.

12 July 1916. Corbie. Cambridge Copse proved by no means an enviable abode. The men had to burrow holes for themselves to sleep in, in the sides of the trenches. As ours and the French guns moved forward the dug-outs were soon surrounded by batteries of guns, the incessant fire from which renders sleep well nigh impossible. The presence of these batteries very soon drew the enemy's fire and as they made free use of tearshells every one suffered intense discomfort from this source. The lack of sleep and heavy strain of stretcher bearing and the nerve racking conditions under which they lived, began to tell severely on all ranks and it is not surprising that one or two of the men broke down temporarily under the strain. On the 8th. July 2 Corps. of the SAI were moved up to take over some of the front line trenches along the edge of Bernafay Wood. Here their RMO took over a large German dug-out about 300 yards from the trenches. The German guns shelled this wood with the utmost fury and casualties occurred in large numbers. In addition to this the fire had been kept up with such fury as to make it impossible for the out-going units to clear their wounded, with the result that the next few days proved a time fraught with the greatest difficulty and danger to our bearers. It was during these days that much splendid work was done by all who took part. The fight for Bernafay and Trones Woods raged furiously for several days. Our men would clear the woods during the day while the Germans would get in again at night. On Sunday July 9th. Capt. Welsh had been clearing wounded all day in spite of the heavy fire. On returning towards evening he found a message from RMO 2nd. Reg. to say he had had word that there were several dumps of wounded from previous units still lying in the wood. Capt. Welsh had now been 16 hours at work and most of the men were dog tired, with continuous stretcher bearing. He then called for volunteers and with 20 men returned once more to the wood. They arrived there about midnight, but such was the intensity of the fire and so great the confusion caused by this and the darkness that he wandered through the shell swept wood, stumbling through shell holes and over fallen trees in clouds of "tear gas" for over 3 hours before he and his party could discover and take away the wounded. On another occasion some 2 days later Capt. Welsh and SS Walsh while attempting to get into Trones Wood were caught in a barrage of shell fire. For more than an hour they lay in shell holes with shrapnel bursting over them. When at last they managed to get back they found that Trones Wood was still in German hands!! The whole of this period, and in fact from then to the end of our time in the battle, was fraught with adventures of this kind. On July 11th. Sgt. Damp and Sgt. Mathews had a narrow escape. They were proceeding together to Chimney Trench where it was proposed to make a new dug-out. Hearing a shell coming they both lay down, but it buried itself almost under them and blew them into the air. Sgt. Mathews recovered himself sufficiently to return for help when SS Damp was found buried up to his neck but still alive. He was dug out and brought in in an unconscious condition. His collar bone was found to be fractured but otherwise he had escaped serious injury. During this period Ptes. Tomselt, Sills, Gimber, Du Pont and Heydenrych were wounded. Bernafay Wood was so continuously and severely shelled all this time that it was found quite impossible to get the wounded away from parts of it. SS Walsh did extremely good work in this



connection, visiting all parts of the wood, dressing wounded, locating them and dragging them under such cover as came handy. In spite of all obstacles in the way of shell fire he continued for 3 days to visit and feed these wounded until such time it was possible to remove them. The evacuation of Trones Wood proved an exceedingly difficult task owing to the fact that to do so it was necessary to cross an open space between it and Bernafay Wood. Here the Germans constantly put up a very heavy barrage. It was while engaged on this work that Capt. Rev. Cook was killed and Pvt. Sills seriously wounded. Corpl. Latham and Pvt. Tobias were specially prominent in this work, returning out into the open and along abandoned trenches to the rescue of wounded.

17 July 1916. Dive's Copse. On Saturday July 15th the tent division moved to Dive's Copse. Here we took our share with other FA's in running the MDS. The plan on which this work was carried out was as follows :- A large open field had been selected in which rows of marquees have been pitched, linked up end to end with 4 marquees in each block. The ambulances who arranged this camp before the great battle, have put in splendid work in widening the road of approach and laying down good hard roads between the rows of tents. There are 6 blocks of tents. Each block is in charge of a MD. The first 2 tents in each block form an ante-room in which the patients are placed as they arrive. The 3rd tent forms an operating theatre where necessary operations and dressing are done, after which they are passed to the fourth tent, where they remain until taken away by the convoy to the CCS. The 6 blocks working together can deal with about 1000 cases in 24 hours, without undue pressure on anyone. Since we have been here there has been a fairly constant stream of wounded, but never at any time has there been any of the horrible congestion one has so often heard of. The scheme therefore seems to be working well, particularly when one realises that casualties are occurring on a scale never before encountered. On the morning of July 14th. a second general attack was delivered. The S.A. Brigade took part in this and their losses then and since have naturally been heavy. In this attack the Germans were pushed out of Bazentin le Petit, Longueval and the remainder of Trones Wood. Later the attack was carried by the SA Bde. beyond Longueval into Delville Wood where they have had desperate fighting. In the wake of this move our bearers have had to push forward and form a chain of evacuation from Longueval back to Bernafay Wood and down to SAMCY dug-out. Fortunately the roads have been cleared to some extent enabling ambulance wagons to get up to SAMCY dug-out and by another road to Bernafay Wood. To form this chain of evacuation the bearers were divided into various parties. A party under Major Pringle at SAMCY dug-out, another under Capt. Forbes and Welsh at Bernafay Wood, and a third at Train alley under Capt. Grainger and Laurie. At the head of this chain were the RAPS which had been formed by the RMO's. Capt. Liebson of the 3rd Regiment and Capt. Monaghan acting MO of 2nd. Regt. were at Longueval while Capt. Taylor of 1st. Regt. was in a small quarry and Major Power of the 4th. Regt. was under a bank in a lane. There was little or no cover at either of the latter places. Our bearers in conjunction with those of 28th. FA cleared from these points to the dug-out in Bernafay Wood, which had now been taken over as an ADS by the 28th. FA. Stretcher squads under Sgt. Callis regularly visited the two RAP's in the quarry and lane as it was necessary to get all cases away at once owing to the lack of shelter. The men were forced to take considerable risks in doing this, as the approach was across the open. The fighting in Longueval and the adjoining parts of Delville Wood was extremely fierce. Sgt. Hall who was i/c party of bearers at the RAP's there, did some excellent work in scouting the



Wood and bringing in wounded and marking down others for subsequent removal. During the earlier stages of the fighting at Longueval it became necessary on one to two occasions to withdraw our troops and shell the place to get rid of snipers. During this time those in the RAP's withdrew to the quarry before mentioned. Eventually as we gained a firmer footing in Delville Wood the RAP's were all re-established in Longueval.

SS Walsh said: " The Stretcher bearing had been difficult enough in Montauban Road, but the road from Longueval to Bernafay Wood was in an indescribable condition. It was impossible to carry from the front of the RAP owing to the sniping which was at times very severe and accurate. At the rear was a mass of ruins, wire entanglements, garden fences, fallen and falling trees, together with every description of debris from shattered building material. It is one thing to clear a path up which re-inforcements may be brought, but quite another to make a track along which 4 men may carry a stretcher with even a modicum of comfort to the patient. In some places huge shell craters in the roadway left only a narrow path along which men could pass in single file, and when it rained, as it did later, it was only by proceeding with the utmost care that a sufficiently firm footing could be obtained to pass these spots in safety. Besides this road there was a narrow sunken lane, which at first afforded some safety, but later became so pitted with shell holes that the bearers were compelled to take their chance in the open. However eventually a squad was made up with infantry and a path was cleared through the village, difficult places being bridged with duckboards, beams and anything that came handy for the purpose. In addition to these difficulties it must be remembered that these roads were shelled heavily day and night. At times the enemy would put up a complete barrage with heavy shells, which meant that no stretcher bearing could be done until the fire was over. Patients who were unfortunate enough to be caught in one of these spent moments of nerve-racking suspense crouching in shell craters, under banks or whatever cover best available. One of the worst experiences of this kind was when it had been decided to shell Longueval once more. Very short notice was given to clear all RAP's. It was about 9 pm. Bearer squads were rushed up under Sgts. Callis and Brink together with another from 28th FA and details from other units. Only 2 men per stretcher could be spared. Padres, doctors and odd men were pressed into service to enable all patients to be got clear. As the party left the bombardment began from both sides. Scrambling, pushing, slipping and sliding amidst a tornado of shell fire the party headed for Bernafay Wood. It was impossible to keep together and in the darkness squads easily became detached and lost touch. The noise of bursting shells was incessant and deafening, while the continuous sing of the rifle and machine bullets overhead would have tried the nerves of the hardest veteran. To crown all it was raining and the roads were almost impassable for stretcher work. In fact, had it not been for the light of the German star shells which at first fell comparatively near, it is improbable that all the bearers would have returned without accident. As the night wore on squad after squad of tired, soaked and mud covered men trudged in to Bernafay Wood. Here came an MO covered with grime and mud from tip to toe carrying a stretcher with a kilted Scot. Then a tall person unrecognisable under a coating of mud with a stretcher bearer for a partner, whose orders he obeyed implicitly. Thus they struggled in until when word was passed round in the morning that all had returned alive, some were so incredulous that they started an enquiry on their own."



had relieved Lt. Taylor, was in turn relieved by Capt. Laurie, who established an RAP in the village of Longueval. The following morning it was again decided to shell the place. It was however found to be quite impossible to get all the stretcher cases away. So Capt. Laurie decided to remain behind with his patients, these being over 20 and others still coming in. The RAP was in a building and as the Germans were counter-attacking and our troops going out, the windows and doors were barricaded with mattresses, furniture and anything that was calculated to help stop a bullet or a bomb. The bombardment was opened by both ours and the German guns and for about 9 hours a hurricane of shells were poured into the place. By nothing short of a miracle the RAP was practically the only place that did not get a direct hit. During the night dressing the wounded was carried out under great difficulty as only a small electric torch or candle could be used. Capt. Rev. Hill who had also remained to help, kept a constant supply of tea and coffee going in spite of insufferable difficulties. On the morning of the 19th. a counter-attack was driven well home and Captain Laurie's party was thus saved from capture. Orders arrived on this date for the relief of our Division and all the wounded were successfully evacuated. Then came messages from Delville Wood that a large number of wounded were lying scattered about it. As several similar reports had proved to be somewhat exaggerated Capt. Laurie and Welsh decided to investigate for themselves, as they did not feel justified in risking the lives of a number of SP's in a fruitless task. The wisdom of their decision was proved by the fact that they could find no definite trace of any wounded in the wood at that time.

22 July 1916. Dive's Copse. By the evening of the 19th the various stations were relieved by the incoming ambulances. Pmts. Spinaz and Thow unfortunately being hit just before leaving Train Alley. Though one has described certain incidents as typical of what were daily occurrences throughout that memorable fortnight it must be remembered that all along the line of evacuation equally trying circumstances prevailed. Train Alley came in for a very generous share of the shelling. At one time a very large number of gas shells of a new type were poured upon the place, and caused a considerable number of gas casualties. Owing to its situation in the line of evacuation a very large number of cases passed through this station. Capt. Grainger who was in charge there, was kept incessantly at work for over 60 hours, at one period. Subsequently he was partially gassed and sent down to the MDS. Cambridge Copse which it had been hoped would be a place of refuge for a good rest, was a region that was constantly shelled. Here also the surrounding batteries kept up a constant fire which made sleep impossible.

23 July 1916. On the afternoon of the 19th. July the Bde. was withdrawn and our bearers marched back to "Happy Valley" a spot just beyond the area of constant shelling. The following day was a brilliant one and it may be well imagined, a day of rest in the grateful warmth of the sun, away from the turmoil of the past 3 weeks, was a day most will not easily forget. On the 22nd. July the unit collected together once more at Dive's Copse and moved off the same afternoon to go into "rest".

27 August 1916. Caucourt. I moved over here on the 24th. to take over from Pringle, who has gone back to Headquarters to take my place. Here we are running the 9th. Division DRS. The staff consists of myself, Capt. Gordon and 25 NCO's and men.



4 September 1916. Caucourt. Today Lord Derby who happened to be visiting this area, was invited by our Corps. Commander, General Wilson, to distribute the recent awards and honours to our Division. SS Walsh got a very richly deserved D.C.M. There were about 30 recipients of honours in the S.A. Brigade about whom Lord Derby made some very flattering remarks.

6 September 1916. Caucourt. Yesterday I made a tour of various aid posts and ADS's in our sector of the line. The weather has been horrible lately, wet day after day, but yesterday broke misty and cleared by 11 am to be quite bright and warm. I had a most interesting visit. We drove to Carency where there was tremendous fighting last year, when the French were still holding this part of the line. The village is now no more than a mass of debris. What few semblances of walls still stand are riddled with shell and bullet holes. From the village we took a long communication trench which led across a wide flat, covered by the Virny Ridge, of which the Germans hold the crest. As we got near this ridge we could see all that is left of Sauchez. The remains of this village is entirely dominated by the Virny Ridge, and is also nothing more than debris. Just below this ridge is a shallow valley called Zouare Valley. We hold the near side of the ridge, and the whole face of it is seamed with trenches and defensive works of all kinds. The crest itself is really a series of craters, the result of the explosions of mines and counter mines. In the parlance of the trenches it was a "quiet" morning, which means that there was only desultory firing going on. Some of our trench mortars were at work breaking up wire. They hurl a bomb of about 60 lbs. I believe and the explosion is very heavy. Even larger ones are being used now I fancy. While we were going along the various parts of the line behind the ridge the Germans landed a chance shell of large size in a quarry, where a large body of men were at work making dug-outs etc. The result was about 20 casualties, about 9 being killed outright. As we made our way back we saw one of our planes do a very daring thing. He flew quite low - only about 700 feet up, so that he was too low for the anti-aircraft guns to get to but of course therefore well within rifle shot. He swooped over the ridge and seemed to take the Germans by surprise as only a few shots were fired and he was off again before others had time to get going. He went back some distance and then repeated the same manoeuvre, but this time he was met by quite a fusillade, which however did not seem to have any effect. I suppose the result was that he managed to get some very useful photos. At another point we saw an interesting thing. Along a road there was a row of trees which have nearly all been shot down. Sometime ago the Germans managed to shoot away the top of one of the few remaining, leaving a stump about 25 or 30 feet high. During one of the following nights the RE's took down this stump and replaced it by a steel tower painted to look like the stump. The result is a splendid observation post for the artillery. The ruse seems quite unknown to the Germans up to the present. Our Division is now holding this line. The area under cover of the ridge is so extensive and the fighting so severe that the dead still lie where they fell last year, it being quite impossible to venture out to bury them.

25 September 1916. Gouy-en-Ternois. Yesterday we handed over to the 74th. Ambulance of the 24th. Division and moved over to this village which is about 14 miles from Estree and 7 from St. Pol. According to the orders this is to be our "Training Area". Exactly what particular training we are to go in for is not yet announced, but it looks very much like preparing once more to enter the area of attack. For 5 days



in succession the weather had been quite bright and fine which is as far as I can remember the longest fine spell we have had this summer. All are appreciating it to the full. It has made our move a pleasure instead of a tribulation as generally.

2 October 1916. Grand-Rullecourt. Moved here on September 30th. to take up our quarters together with the HQ of 3rd. SAI, in the Chateau. We had delightful weather for our move. The same evening Gen. Furse (NT) our Divisional Commander invited me to dine at Le Cuvroy. Today the weather has broken again and it is gloomy, cold and pouring with rain. A little more of this will entirely put an end to all further active measures against the Huns.

5 October 1916. Bonnières. Moved over here yesterday. It poured all night and up to about 8.30 am when a breeze got up and seemed to keep the rain off, during our move. Towards evening however the wind abated and it poured again all night. Today the wind has been high and almost warm with no rain, but huge masses of drift cloud. We move on tomorrow.

9 October 1916. Lavieville. On the 7th. we did a great journey. The transport of the Division having been sent off the previous day, the troops were convoyed by motor bus. At daybreak we moved out and lined up along one of the "Routes Nationales" and were all in position by about 9.45. A fleet of French buses then arrived and the whole of our Brigade embarked. It took about 500 of these buses to carry the whole division. We travelled via Douleus and Amiens to our destination at Querieu. Here we spent a fairly uncomfortable night as the place was simply packed with troops. The next morning we marched off in floods of rain to this place which is temporarily our Hqs. We are now a few miles from Albert and about 7 or 8 from the present front.

12 October 1916. Dernancourt. Our ambulance is acting as the "FA in Reserve", which means that we are used to supplement the other units along the point who require re-inforcing. The same general scheme as last time is in force now. The day after our arrival Dyer and de Villiers (who has just joined us) were told off with a Tent Section for duty at the MDS for Walking Wounded. On the 9th. more orders came, and Forbes went off with a small party to run a sort of relay with ambulance wagons. I was sent with Capt. Neale-May to the 1/1D South Midland CCS, with 12 men to help there. Welsh is acting as relief to one of the Regiments and so is Joubert, so we are all well scattered. Yesterday our Division took part in an attack at 2 pm and last evening wounded began to stream in. So far none of the officers I know well have come through and there is no definite news of what has happened. The attack seems to have succeeded so far, but whether the ground is being held or not I don't know. This afternoon I rode over to Fricourt. It is a wonderful sight. All the way from here - about 5 miles - the hills are entirely covered with camps and stacks of war material of every description. Thousands and thousands of troops are marching up, and a certain number returning. From where the German lines were originally and onwards the country is in a state of wildest turmoil. The villages are so utterly destroyed as to be quite difficult to trace. Everything is blasted to pieces. Fields are seamed and furrowed with trenches and pitted with huge holes, while the woods are blasted and wrecked, all the trees being either blown over or so riddled and torn that they are now dead and leafless. The scene is one which can only be seen to be realised. Absolute and utter desolation. At this CCS we are working in 8 hour shifts, dressing,



operating and generally endeavouring to render the wounded fit to travel away to the base. Some of the captured documents taken recently are highly interesting, showing that the Germans are really at their wits end as to what to do. One long order urges on the airmen to do their utmost to attain the ascendancy of the air "if only for 2 hours a day". Another implores the troops not to waste ammunition "from sheer nervousness". Another urges the "necessity for greater care in the working of the guns" as the wastage had been greater than the output and so on.

14 October 1916. Dernancourt. This encampment of CCS's is called Edgeaill. So far we have not had a great deal of work. Three days ago another big attack was made but failed. It seems that the affair was to be started by the 9th. Division and some colonial troops, attacking the Butte-de-Warrencourt. As soon as this was taken the rest of the line was to push forward. However something seem to have gone wrong. Our barrage under cover of which the 9th. Division was to attack, fell short and as our men advanced they began to get into our own barrage which was doing no harm to the Germans who were able to man their parapets and mow our fellows down. The S.A. Bde. led the attack and the companies engaged have lost very heavily as did also our other Brigades on the flanks. Several of our officers have come through wounded but it is very hard to get any connected account. It seems now that another attack is being organised. The weather had really been exceptionally fine now for some time past. There was a little rain the night before last but nothing to matter. It is getting very cold. The day before yesterday as things were slack here I rode up towards the lines. I had a most interesting time, and saw lots of interesting things. At one place between Becourt and Contalmaison I saw the crater of a gigantic mine. It looked about 80 feet deep and about 60 - 70 yards in diameter. It was in "no man's land" and just took the front of our trenches and I am told buried a good many of the Tyneside Scottish. Near there I saw a battery of 9 inch howitzers at work, and also a single monster of 15 ins which throws a simply huge shell. All over the battlefield camps are being built and swarms of troops are billeted. On the way back I rode through Albert which has been fairly badly knocked about though not entirely destroyed. The church has come in for a good deal of shelling and has a huge golden image of the Virgin, which topped the steeple, now hanging dejectedly over, just held by some of the metal work.

18 October 1916. Dernancourt. Early yesterday morning another attack was made on our front, but so far as one can gather from the wounded coming in, it has also failed. We are attacking a very strong position which is held by a German Naval Division. We have not had many wounded coming through, but unfortunately for those who fall in these unsuccessful attacks they cannot be rescued until either one side or the other is driven back. Yesterday night the weather broke. The rain held off most of the day but towards evening it started again and has rained heavily during the night, and is still pouring this morning. The troops must be having a thoroughly miserable time of it. Yesterday I rode over to La Vieville and found that the remainder of the ambulance had moved up to Fricourt. Laurie was sent off some days ago with 20 men to report to the 27th. FA for duty. I hear he is in charge of a post about 1100 yards behind our front line, and he is likely to have a somewhat unpleasant time. Only Pringle and Power are now left with the Hq of our Ambulance, though when they get to Fricourt they will have Forbes with them again. There was some very heavy bombarding again last night. There seemed to be a good many of our



heavy guns at work.

23 October 1916. Dernancourt. The rain fortunately did not last very long and the last few days have been much brighter but bitterly cold. Stiff frosts. Fortunately for those most concerned there have not been a very large number of casualties coming through. Yesterday I rode over to Fricourt to see the others. Pringle was away up the line when I arrived. I found that two new MO's have been sent out. De Smidt and Meiring. I did not see the latter who had gone up to replace Joubert who goes back to the Gen. Hospital. As it was nice and fine I walked over to Contalmaison and most interesting it was. It was a clear bright day and one got a more extended view than usual. As far as one could see in every direction on this huge battlefield, the place swarms with life and the business of war. The country is a series of great gentle hollows, whose sides are seamed and scarred with trenches and fortifications of all kinds. The trenches have all been battered out of shape by shell fire, which has also pitted the whole surface of the land. Dotted all over the hills were tents and rough shelters of all sorts, huge stacks of ammunition and food, and the litter of battle. Batteries were planted in every convenient and inconvenient spot firing away regardless of everyone else. The range is so great that they appear to be firing almost straight into the air, so that it is no uncommon sight to see huge guns firing apparently straight across a road packed with traffic, from no more than 50 yards away. All that is left of the woods where ever they occur is just a scattering of stumps, looking like the charred skeleton of their former selves. The village of Contalmaison like all the others, was just a mass of debris, now trodden under foot, by the ceaseless throngs of wagons passing forward, to feed the battle with the material of war. On the return journey we walked across country and everywhere was just the same. Every now and then one came on a little mound in the bottom of a shell hole marked by a rough cross, made of any odd sticks that came to hand and marking no doubt the grave of some poor battered and un-recognisable fragment of humanity. Frequently too one saw the bottom of the shell hole marked by a little pool of blood, indicating the refuge of a wounded man. We often get cases in where men have lain like that for as much as 8 days without food or water until the tide of battle passed and they were still alive to be rescued. At Fricourt I examined the site of one of the German "strong points". Here on the crest of a buttress they had made a maze of trenches and dug-outs 20 or 30 feet beneath the ground, with steep staircases leading down into them. Here our guns had poured a veritable "waterspout" of shells forcing the defenders into their dug-outs. In the meantime our miners had burrowed beneath the hill and laid huge mines and when the bombardment was at its climax the mines were fired and practically the whole hill crest, deep dug-outs and all blown sky high. Our ambulance Hq are now installed at a most palatial German dug-out in Fricourt. A long flight of steps led down into the bowels of the earth ending in a passage. On either side of this opened rooms, and in some cases further flights of steps led to rooms still further down. The whole of this underground house was lined with three inch timber, and stoves were fitted in most of the rooms, whilst the principal bedroom was papered and had fine big mirrors fitted into the walls. On reaching the end of the passage another flight of steps led into a cellar, which formed the mess-room. One of the rooms below was the kitchen fitted with a nice large new kitchen range. Evidently the German Commander who made this elaborate house, had no thoughts of being driven out of it. That day I met a huge howitzer being towed back from the front and clanked in large letters on the barrel was "Done Her Bit". The Tommy never at any moment ceases to see the



humorous side of things. The day before yesterday the Corps. on our left carried out a successful assault resulting in an advance on a 3 mile front and the capture of the Stuff and Regina Redoubts (sic) and a depth of from 300 - 500 yards. Yesterday great bombarding was going on on our right and there were summons that in conjunction with the French we were attacking in the direction of Sailly-Sailliescul but we have heard nothing definite yet.

26 October 1916. Dernancourt. The weather seems quite broken up again. We are getting lots of rain and gloom and cold. How it will be possible to continue the offensive seems hard to imagine. The French were successful in their attack the day before yesterday and gained their objectives so that the Germans have been pushed back on both flanks in the last week. On several occasions a few stray shells of large size have come over this way, but yesterday the Huns put up quite a serious bombardment. For about 2 hours in the morning and another hour or so in the afternoon they sent over shells at intervals of 1 1/2 to 3 minutes, the target evidently being the railway about 4 or 5 hundred yards from our camp. The shells were very large and made a tremendous noise on exploding. Curiously enough the spot they reached most frequently was a German prisoners compound close to the railway. However the prisoners were immediately marched out and only one was wounded. Many of the shells plunged into the village and during the day quite a number of casualties were brought in and I believe some even were killed. There was not much other firing going on and we could hear the gun boom every time, followed a few seconds later by the arrival of the shell. Towards morning I saw the flare in the sky made by the gun going off and taking the bearing of this it seems to indicate that the gun was on the railway that runs from Anas through Miraumont, and the range in this case would have been about 10 - 12 miles. The shooting on the whole was extraordinarily good never being very far from the railway and in several cases actually on the embankment.

27 October 1916. Lavieville. I came back to rejoin the ambulance today. The others are all back for their several jobs and this time we have come out with only one so slightly wounded that he did not have to leave us. The Brigade has had between 11 and 12 hundred casualties and the Division has suffered fairly heavily on the whole. I heard today that the gun which fired on Dernancourt the day before yesterday, did so from a range of 26,000 yards and was using 9.2 inch shells.

30 October 1916. Wanquetin. From Lavieville the unit marched to Rubemfue where the whole lot of us put up in one of the finest farm houses I have yet seen in France. We did not get in till late and left again very early in the morning so I did not see as much of it as I should have liked. Yesterday we embarked on lorries - curiously enough the same convoy that brought us down to the Somme - and after a 5 hour journey, were landed here. If the present plans are not changed we shall be here for about 5 weeks. The weather is stormy and wet, but not so cold.

Map

22 November 1916. Maizieres. The unit moved over here the day after I left on leave (9th). I have just returned. Dyer has effected an exchange and Lawrence has taken his place.

24 November 1916. Maizieres. Yesterday I managed to get over to



George's area and see him for a short while and congratulate him on his award. His unit are at present at Achicourt near Arras. To get there I had to go through Arras, or rather just the fringe of the town. It was curious to see a big town like that deserted and nearly every house hit in at least one or two places. I dare say we shall soon see a good deal more of it.

6 December 1916. Arras. On December 2nd I was sent on here with an advance party to take over the ADS in Arras from the 107th FA. The weather has been bitterly cold and the fields were white with frost and the trees heavily laden with rime. On arrival we were put up by the 107th, and during the next two days the rest of our ambulance came up and replaced the 107th. The German front line is only about 1500 yards from the centre of the town and so most of it is under observation. We had therefore to do most of the moving in and out after dark. During the early part of this war the Germans swept through Arras and were afterwards driven out by the French, a good deal of heavy fighting taking place actually in the town. Almost every house has been hit at one time or another and all the fine conspicuous buildings have been practically demolished and are gradually being more and more demolished as time goes on. There are only a few civilian inhabitants left now, and the rest of the town is quite deserted except for soldiers. For our ADS we have a huge red brick building, the Ecole Normale. In common with all the other buildings in the town it has no more glass left in any of the windows or skylights. Such rooms as are required for our purposes have been made habitable by replacing shattered window panes by calico and blankets which can be let down at night as of course no lights can be shown. So far my knowledge of the town is confined to the necessary visits I have had to make to the various parts of the line in connection with the evacuation of wounded, but I hope soon to have time to do some exploring. The splendid Cathedral and fine Hotel De Ville have both been reduced to irretrievable ruins, as well as all the conspicuous buildings, railway station etc. Yesterday I found time to walk with Pringle over to Achicourt to see if George was still there and we were lucky to find him just in for tea. Unfortunately he is under orders to leave tomorrow and will be going some distance away. It has been very nice to see something of him.

22 December 1916. Arras. Since writing last I have seen quite a lot of the town and sector which our division occupies. The trenches mostly commence among the houses and radiate out to the front line. A river and canal system (Scarpe) runs through the line at a place called Blangy. Here the opposing trenches came to within 7 yards of one another, but in most parts the gap is the usual 200 - 300 yards or more. The Germans are employing some very large trench-mortars (or minen-werfer) which throw a projectile containing about 200 lbs of high explosive. They do tremendous damage to the trenches. Most of the worrying has been carried on in the front line by these means. Our ADS is just inside some old Earthworks at the back of the town. There are numerous gun positions in and around these Earthworks and as they are found 50 to 100 yards away it gives us a good shake up when the firing starts. There is no warning and at any time of the night or day these guns burst forth. One gets accustomed more or less after a time. When the weather is clear and the Hun planes come over the anti-aircraft guns generally come up and stand on a bit of ground immediately behind and help to keep up a fine noise and drop pieces about. They are mounted on lorries and it is quite an interesting sight to see them at work.



28 December 1916. Arras. We have just been through somewhat of a nightmare. All yesterday afternoon our guns bombarded the German lines. Power and I had quite a nice walk out among the batteries and watched some of them at work. The night set in cold and frosty with mist lying about the hollows. As we were turning in the German commenced sending over large numbers of shells. However I fell asleep only to be raised at 12.15 by two of our men coming in with their gas-masks on and saying "gas". I lost no time in getting into mine and then we all collected together, feeling rather stupid as one feels rather like a rat in a hole. I noticed on waking a peculiar pungent stuffy smell. After about an hour or perhaps less the gas seemed to pass away and we were able to discard our masks. The shells were still coming over thick and fast and were evidently the carriers of the gas. We turned in again, but about 3.45 am another wave of gas came over and again we had to don our masks for half an hour or so. This time the smell was very strong and pungent, making the eyes water somewhat. The patients all had to wear their masks for a couple of hours. At length the shelling died down and we were able to turn out to breakfast with most of the gas gone. During the morning we have had a good many gas cases come in and several deaths have been reported. Altogether it was a weird and most unpleasant experience one could well wish to have.

8 January 1917. Arras. On the nights of the 4th and 5th the Huns treated us to another bombardment of gas shells. On the night of the 5th they sent over a good many big shells as well. One burst in the street just opposite our house and a couple of gas shells fell in the courtyard of the hospital which is just behind our house. For about 1/2 an hour or so we retired into the cellar. A good many buildings were struck and a couple of gas cases come in, but on the whole not very much damage was done.

11 February 1917. Arras. We have fallen into such a regular routine that I have almost forgotten about making an entry in my diary. We have never been so long in one spot since we came to France and fortunately I don't think we have ever been more comfortable. Three weeks ago a cold snap came, ushered in with a heavy fall of snow. After this the weather settled down into a steady frost, with clear bright days. I think everyone prefers this to the wet and slush which is the usual thing here, both winter and summer. For the last 3 weeks my principle job has been the charge of a working party, where we are converting some dug-outs about 1000 yards behind the front line, for use as an Advanced Dressing Station. It is quite interesting as I have had to cut various roads through the ruins of a village to get to it, and fit up the interior with racks for stretchers. They are fine dug-outs going 60 feet or more into a hillside, so that they will be quite immune from the heaviest sized shells. Near this place I discovered a swimming bath which is about 60 yards long and about 30 yards wide, and there on my way home each evening I have been able to have a good skate. It is rather a curious experience to be skating so near the front line. All sorts of missiles have landed on the ice at various times. Now and again when the Bosch anti-aircraft batteries open on one of our planes, there comes a shower of high explosive shell. There are pieces of all sizes and as they come swooping down, they make humming noises of varying pitch. So when one sees the shell burst, and a few seconds later a sort of band approaching from above, one is wise to take cover. Bullets come over too, mostly from fighting planes, but occasionally from the front. One day a "dud" anti-aircraft shell pitched into the bank while some of us were busy making a hole in the ice to see how thick it was. The noise of our blows drowned the



whistle of its approach until too late to dodge. However after a time one takes all these things as a matter of course. Shells are always either coming or going overhead at that distance from the trenches and guns going off at odd moments all round. During our stay the Bosch has occasionally bombarded the batteries around the hospital, but so far, though 3 or 4 shells have landed very close to the building, none have actually hit it. Yesterday one struck a wall quite close by where unfortunately there was a party of sappers at work and 17 of them were wounded. What has been very nice has been that Georges' battery is quite close, and we have seen quite a lot of one another. He has now moved even closer than he was before, so that their mess is only about 10 minutes walk.

22 February 1917. St. Nicholas. Today we got our marching orders and had to vacate our pleasant abode and made room for the ambulance of the VI. Corps, which has been allotted part of the area we originally occupied. The main part of the ambulance has moved into what was rather a fine Chateau not far from the Cathedral of Arras. I have come with Capt. Joubert to live in the dug-outs I have been preparing for some weeks past. We are really most comfortable indeed. Part of the end of one of the dug-outs has been partitioned off, into a cosy little room, lit with electric light, and lined with hessian. There is a nice fire-place in one corner, the chimney of which is conducted into an adjoining well, of one of the houses on the hill above. I am now to get the place working as an ADS, and will deal with all the casualties from our sector. The trenches commence just outside, but the cars can come up at all times under cover of the hill to evacuate our cases. There is still a lot of finishing off in the way of fitting up the dug-outs for our purposes, but in time it ought to be very nice. I have two good carpenters who are working well. I have about 84 bunks for stretchers now finished and will have about 20 more in a few days. The dug-outs were originally made by a New Zealand tunnelling company and were taken over later on by 184th. Tun. Corp. RE who are to occupy two of the big dug-outs until they move and we take over the whole. Joubert and I have fixed up a mess with the 2 Tun. Corps. officers in charge of this party.

24 February 1917. St. Nicholas. We are very busy settling into our new abode. I have now got accommodation for 100 stretchers, and am still busy fitting a large dug-out as a receiving room, where the cases will be attended to on arrival, prior to being sent away in the cars. There are signs of great activity in all directions. Guns are being planted in every possible and impossible sort of position. They are all round the mouths of our dug-outs, and fire across us from all directions, whilst no doubt the Bosches will plaster the place with shells. New trenches are being dug and earth made into a regular warren of caves and passages. The preparations seem far more elaborate and perfect than were those for the Somme.

26 February 1917. St. Nicholas. Stewart's birthday. We are making it an excuse for a sort of little dinner party in our little mess. Two tunnelling officers, Joubert and myself. Today has been a lovely spring day as regards weather, but a busy and gruesome one for us. We had just finished breakfast and were preparing to see the sick and begin our usual day's round, when a scared looking orderlie came running in to say that a shell had landed plump into a working party, which was parading on the road just below us. So Joubert and I got to work and by lunch time we had dressed 25 cases, the great majority of whom were horribly mangled. I had to amputate above the knee in one



case. It seems that the shell fell right in the ranks killing 6 men on the spot, whilst 3 others died on arrival here, and we hear 3 more have died since. So the total for this one shell is 31 of whom 12 are killed and several others very likely to die from their wounds. The men were all from the Tyneside Scottish regiments. Their RMO came in and gave us a hand. During the day there was a good deal of shelling by the Bosch and a considerable amount of aerial work going on. One of our planes was shot down near here in the afternoon and we hear that another was brought down further back. In the sector next to us a very successful raid was carried out over 40 prisoners being taken. We had the news yesterday that the Germans are retreating along quite an extensive front, before the 5th Army on the Somme, probably as a result of the steady pressure which has been kept up all the winter.

3 March 1917. Savy-Berlette. On the 28th of February I had orders to see the ADMS. He told me he wished me to take the command of the CRS here, or rather that he had recommended me for the job to the DDMS. I was to move over the next day. So on the 1st March I left St. Nicholas and came over here. The proposed site is a nice one on the slopes of a gently rising hill. Here I found Capt. Argo of the 2/1 Highland Fld. ambulance of the 57th Division. He had commenced the erection of the huts etc. I am to have 30 Nissen huts, and a number of marquees and have to be able to accomodate up to 1200 men. There will be lots of work as this is quite a new station. I shall have my hands very full for some time to come.

7 April 1917. Savy Berlette. Since my last entry we have had a busy month mostly spent in endeavouring to construct a camp on a very soft site, in the face of really the worst weather we have had; and with a general scarcity of material to baffle one at every turn. The weather had been the worst thing to battle against. We have had a regular sort of rotation of gales, rain, frost, snow, sleet, hail and chilling winds. Sometimes the weather has confined itself to one or other variety, but on many days we have had a dose of each variety all in the space of 24 hours. However I have now got a camp of sorts with 32 Nissen Huts and 30 Marquees, whcih will give accomodation for about 1000 men and more at a pinch. I have the Tent sub-sections of 3 FA's, which represents about 57 men and 5 officers besides myself and a Lt. Quartermaster Simnett. In conjunction with this place we have fitted up 2 large huts in Aubigny as a Rest Station for 30 officers. To run this I shall have to detach one officer and 5 or 6 men. Three days ago we began taking in cases from all the Divisions and Troops in our Corps and have now about 300 in camp. The great shortage of timber has been a serious handicap as it has been doled out so slowly and in such small quantities that one has never been able to go at a job and finish it. It has been a case of putting up makeshift structures and taking them down again and extending as the material becomes available. We have now come near the time when the next great battle will be fought on this front and everyone is waiting for the word to go. The preparations are on a stupendous scale. Though one cannot get absolutely accurate figures there are probably about 4000 field guns and several hundred heavies to every mile, so that once they get going, a previous bombardment in this war will be quite a mild affair by comparison. There has been heavy gunfire for the last 24 hours and this evening the bombardment is becoming more general and much heavier. Fortunately the weather has taken a turn for the better, and tonight it is a beautiful clear moonlight night, with the nip of frost in the air. There has been tremendous air activity the last few days. We have a large aerodrome near us, and heaps of planes going night and



day. Our bearers have gone forward under Major Power to occupy the dug-outs I was fitting out before I came here. Pringle is at Ferme Dofane not far from here with the remains of our ambulance.

10 April 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday our Corps (XVII) in conjunction with a Corps on either flank, attacked. The men went over at 5.30 am under cover of a barrage from the mass of our artillery. The whole thing seem to have gone off like clockwork and all objectives were taken at the exact hour laid down for its capture. The official report states this morning that our Corps has taken up to date 3000 prisoners including 77 officers, among which are several battalion commanders. There were very few casualties on either side in as much as our barrage was so effective that the enemy had to take to earth and on regaining the surface they found our men in possession. The officers captured state that the attack was a complete surprise as they had anticipated a much heavier bombardment, before we actually came over. They were therefore unable to offer any opposition. Yesterday was a bright day though windy, but towards evening it began to snow and since then continued heavy squalls of snow have been blowing over making it extremely cold.

11 April 1917. Savy Berlette. Today has been an awful one as regards weather. At first it rained hard. The rain gradually turned to sleet and finally about midday a heavy snowstorm which has gone on since, and now it is freezing. The news from this front is still excellent though one is unable to get any connected account. It seems that besides our Corps the Canadian Corps on our left and the 6th on our right are the 3 Corps so far involved in the attack. The Canadians are reported to have taken Vimy whilst the 6th Corps is also advancing well on the south of the Scarpe. The attack line represents an onslaught on the German Right Flank, whilst we hear that the French are attacking the left flank down in Champagne.

12 April 1917. Same Place. The Corps summary announces that up to 5 pm yesterday our Corps (XVII) has captured over 3400 prisoners and 59 guns as well as many machine guns and trench mortars. During the night a great deal of snow fell and it was bitterly cold. The ground was deeply covered with snow. During the day it has thawed and drizzled and everything is fearfully slushy. Up to the present we have had remarkably few patients, but this evening they are streaming in and there must be several hundred now come in since about 5 pm. It is late and the wind has got up once more and it is raining heavily. The condition in front must be truly horrible and one wonders how the human frame can endure such hardship. The marvel is that we have not had more cases to deal with than we have, but no doubt they will begin to stream in now. This evening I hear that the party from our ambulance under Captain Reid (who has just come up from Richmond) who were at the "Walking Wounded" at Anzan have moved forward to St. Nicholas and that Maj. Power and his party of bearers who were at at ADS in August Avenue have gone forward to a dugout in the old German front line. This move was effected to cope with another attack to be made by our Division at 5 pm this afternoon. Our Division is reported to have done splendidly throughout and captured all its objectives in splendid time. The casualties are naturally fairly heavy but up to the present nothing like our previous experiences. There is a very heavy bombardment now going on up Vimy way (11.30 pm).

13 April 1917. Same Place. Today the bad news came down the line that poor Welsh had been badly wounded, and later this evening a further



message to say that he had been brought into St. Nicholas and died there in the early morning. This will be a great blow to everyone in the unit as undoubtedly he was the most loved officer in the unit, by all ranks. I have heard no further particulars but intend going to Arras tomorrow with Pringle to the funeral. Today the weather though still cold, has improved no end. But now those who have succumbed to the hardships of the past week are streaming in and the total now in camp must be close on 1000. On the whole our plans are working well, though it is hard to cope with such large numbers with any special degree of comfort to individuals. The news from the front has been meagre, but rumours are afloat that the 9th. Division after their great success of the first day were put in again to capture a third position which the 4th Division failed to do and that they in turn have suffered heavily.

14 April 1917. Savy Berlette. This morning I left early with Pringle for St. Nicholas, where we found that Welsh had been too seriously wounded to move from the RAP near Fampoux,; and had died there about 10 hours later, (2 am of the 13th.) Arrangements had been made for his body to be brought down during the night, but the road was so bad that the car had been unable to get through, so I was obliged to return, as the work here was mounting up. From all accounts our division has had a very severe handling in endeavouring to take a position which should have been captured by the 4th., and from which they were driven back. It seems likely that our casualties have been so heavy that we shall be withdrawn. Apart from local setbacks the news along the front seems good, the Corps on either side of us doing well too.

17 April 1917. Savy Berlette. Today another horrible day. A storm of wind, cold rain and frozen snow at intervals. A number of our marquees have been blown down, in spite of constant fatigue parties struggling to keep them up. Pringle came over the day before yesterday and said the attempt to get poor Welsh's body brought back to St. Nicholas had had to be abandoned, and he has been buried somewhere near the RAP somewhere between Athies and Fampoux. In the confusion of the battle one hardly realises that he is gone and it will only be when we piece ourselves together once more that we shall fully realise the loss to our unit. In spite of all the difficulties of the weather our troops continue to press the Germans back all along the line, and apparently without the same great sacrifice that occurred on the Somme last year. However - though relatively less - the cost in casualties is enormous, as seems inevitable in this kind of warfare. The Germans too are losing heavily in all their counter-attacks. This is a really awful country for climate. There has never been more than a few hours respite from the most intolerable weather and one wonders that sufficient men can survive it to carry on the fighting. Here we keep fairly busy, and at times had nearly 1000 men in camp.

21 April 1917. Savy Berlette. The weather continued vile on the 18th and 19th, but took a turn for the better yesterday and seems to be improving. Since then there has been a good deal of bombarding in places, but a lull in the advance. Tonight however there is a tremendous and very extended bombardment going on all along the line as far as we can see, and rumour has it that a very extended assault is to be made along the whole of our front and a great part of the French. Certainly it looks very extended from here and huge flashes are showing up right along the horizon.

23 April 1917. Savy Berlette. All yesterday and last night a heavy bombardment has gone on, but at about 5.25 am there was a sudden access



where thousands of field guns chimed in prior to the attack. For about 35 minutes there was rapid fire, and I don't suppose anything like it has been done before. There was just one continuous and mighty roar which set up a rhythmic quiver in the earth, felt and almost seen even at this distance behind the line (about 12 miles now). The roar was so continuous that for a time I began to think it was a convoy of lorries with their engines all going just outside my hut and I got up to make sure. Over and above this roar of the field guns was the deeper and also very rapid booming of the heavies surmounted in turn by the less frequent crashes of the monstrous "Hows" and "Naval Guns" of 12 inches and over. So far there is no accurate news of how the attack has gone beyond that on the whole we are doing well.

27 April 1917. Savy Berlette. At last - we have had a spell of quite decent weather. For 4 days now there has been no rain although it has remained cold. The attack this time was much more strongly opposed, and we have not advanced very far, but the slaughter seems to have been enormous as the Huns counter attacked in masses, and were mowed down by our artillery as fast as they came on. Some of our Brigades have suffered heavy losses in killed and prisoners among the SA Bde. more heavily than the rest. On the whole however the results seem to have been satisfactory. My section has orders to rejoin the main body, but I am ordered to remain in charge of this camp as long as our division remains in the Corps. Yesterday the Surgeon General visited the camp and seemed well satisfied with the way things were going. There is an aerodrome close to this camp and it has been very interesting seeing the various types of machines at close quarters and seeing something of the men and hearing of their exploits. We have seen several exciting air fights, one took place two days ago at an enormous height above our heads. A large double tractor Hun machine came over at great height pursued by a small one of our high up above him. So high was ours that it was only just possible to see him with the unaided eye, after locating him with the glass. The two machines eventually disappeared from view and what happened eventually I don't know, except that I see in the papers that a Hun machine answering to the description of this one, was brought down.

1 May 1917. Savy Berlette. The weather is holding fine in wonderful contrast to the preceding months of misery. It makes an immense difference to the appearance of the country. Yesterday our Division moved into the line once more and during the day the news reached that our ADMS Colonel Symons had been killed. It appears that he was walking along a road not far behind the front line, when he was struck by a shell and killed. He was evidently by himself as his body was found later on by a party of gunners. He will be a great loss to our Division as he was a most capable man and very much liked by all under his command. Our Division and especially our Bde. is considerably depleted. Our Brigade has gone in only one Battn. strong, the remnants of the other Battns. being formed with fatigue parties of stretcher bearers, ammunition bearers etc. They are attacking some very strong positions that have held out against frequent assaults up to the present, so I am afraid very soon the poor 9th. will be so depleted as to require a long period of rest and training before it is fit to come into the line again. This time our ambulance has gone in with the Division to look after the evacuation of the wounded from the forward positions and will doubtless have an arduous time, though probably not nearly as long drawn out as before.

3 May 1917. Savy Berlette. The weather still holds good. Today there



is a most tremendous bombardment in progress. Report has it that this is going on along nearly the whole of the British front and certainly it sounds more extensive than anything before. The ground shakes right back here and we are 12 miles or more from the actual front line, though most of the guns must be about 10 miles away.

8 May 1917. Savy Berlette. An attack was launched again early on the morning of the 4th., and some very fierce fighting took place in which neither side gained any advantage, so far as our own part was concerned. On either flank the division of the 1st. and 4th. armies gained ground, but on the whole the results cannot have been up to expectations. Some of the prisoners taken stated that they were massed ready to attack but that our attack had anticipated theirs by 2 hours, so it looks very much as though our attack had been meant more as a means of breaking up their offensive, which it seems to have done most effectively. There is no news of any other offensive on our front, further north.

13 May 1917. Savy Berlette. Interrupted.

19 May 1917. Savy Berlette. Since I wrote last a lot of desperate fighting has gone on for special positions. Attacks and counter-attacks have followed in rapid succession so that it has been difficult to know what is really the position. The Corps communique itself has generally been content with saying that "the position remains obscure in the centre" or wherever else there has been special activity. The main points have been the Chemical Works which lie between Roeux and Gavrelle and not far from Fampoux which together with Greenland Hill form the names constantly mentioned as having been either re-taken or lost from day to day. We claim to have caused the Germans immense losses in these operations and they do the same. I can't imagine there can be much difference in this respect. Our ambulance is out in rest now with the Division, which I take it will be training and re-organising after the many months they have been almost constantly in the front line; and latterly very much depleted by the many and furious attacks they have been engaged in. I heard from George yesterday and 2 days previously. He seems well but has been through a very stiff time. His battery Commander and another were killed and the Adjutant wounded, so that he is now Adjutant. I am hoping he may be able to come away and rest for a few days with me.

25 May 1917. Savy Berlette. The 51st Division who took our place in the line have had a lot of fierce fighting, during the process of capturing and consolidating our front. All the important points such as the Chemical Works, Fampoux, etc. are in our hands and daily becoming more secure, with the exception of part of Greenland Hill. On the whole the fighting has subsided very much and both sides seem content to secure themselves where they are. Officers who have come down lately say that our general position is very satisfactory as we dominate all the ground in front of us, so that we are in a very favourable position for working up another big attack at some future date. Lately I have seen quite a lot of our flying squadrons near here, and have heard many interesting tales. Last evening I met a nice young fellow called Buckton. He told me he had twice been shot down by the Huns in the recent fighting. On one occasion he was attacked by 2 Hun Halberstad machines which are their fastest and best. They far outclassed his machine so although he was 3 miles behind the Hun lines he had to dive for the earth, pursued by them to the ground. He managed to land successfully, about 3 miles behind the German lines.



He and the observer then took the machine guns off their plane and began to make their way back. In so doing they came across a British machine with the pilot and observer lying dead beside it, which had been missing for 3 days. They secured the identity of the machine and the men and went on again. They were then attacked by a patrol of 8 Germans, whom they put to flight with their machine guns, and finally managed to gain our own line, among the Canadians. The information they were able to give enabled the Canadians to attack the next morning and make a considerable advance in that part of the line. On the second occasion about a week later he was over taking photographs when he was attacked by 6 Germans (Halberstad planes) and this time his machine was riddled with bullets and all the instruments on his dashboard broken up. He took a spinning dive and crashed to the ground the plane snapping in two just at his seat and letting him fall uninjured to the ground about 140 yards in front of the German line. His observer and the two halves of the machine rolled into shell holes. They were of course immediately swept by the fire of numerous machine guns and lay in shell holes till dusk when they managed again to get back to our lines. After showing all about his machine he took me for a fly - the first one I have had. Though somewhat breezy it was a glorious evening. When mounted in the machine I sat in the observer's "cockpit", quite a roomy circular well in the tail, just behind the pilot. The first thing is to get the engine going properly, which is done by placing a couple of blocks in front of the wheels whilst a couple of men steady the wings. The pilot then gets the engine running up to nearly its full speed, and when satisfied that all is right, waves to the men who whip the blocks away. The machine is now free and as the engine gathers speed it begins to run along the ground with its tail scraping on a small skid. For a short distance, as the speed increases the tail rises, and the machine now runs along on its two wheels, until it has gathered up its flying speed. Up to this time the speed seemed tremendous and then we left the ground, and now the machine rode quite smoothly and the higher we got the slower we seemed to go. The seats in this machine were so close that by dint of shouting one could carry on a disjointed conversation, in spite of the rush of the air. It was a beautiful clear sunny evening, and the country below us looked lovely, in its new coat of fresh green that has burst forth in the last fortnight. We rose quickly to 2000 feet and then flew towards the line. From that height one got a splendid view. We passed over Aubigny Frevin-Capelle, until we were nearly over the tower at Mont St. Eloy. From this point we could see all the net-work of trenches of ours and the German old positions and on beyond the bare, brown, shell-riddled and trampled area where the fighting is still going on. Here the pilot did a fairly steep bank followed by a dive just to let me see what it was like, and then he began to climb again and in a very short time we were 5000 feet up. The earth looked like one of those model estates, with rows of neat little trees along the white line of roads, and the villages dotted about made like small neat models in cardboard. At this elevation we reached the aerodrome away down below us, looking very small, though it is really a very large one indeed. My friend then pointed it out and said "I am going down now". The machine dipped down in a great sweep reaching a speed of 110 miles per hour until we must have been about 1500 feet off the ground. Then he banked over and swept round and down in a graceful sweep into the aerodrome and on to the ground with such gentleness that it was only the bumping of the machine over the surface that let me know we were really on terra firma again. We were only away about 20 minutes or so but as the machine was never going less than about 75 m.p.h. we had covered quite a fine stretch of country. The ease with



which this young fellow handled the machine was surprising. Sitting before a board covered with all sorts of instruments, and the "joy-stick" between his knees, he seemed to be doing nothing, and yet the great thing seemed under perfect control, and of course was. One of the most bewildering things to me seemed to be the nicety of judgement needed to land with such precision, with this massive thing sweeping down as if nothing could stop it. Altogether it was a most thrilling experience, and all the more delightful on account of the beautiful weather. Tonight I have received my leave warrant and am due to cross on the 28th.

12 June 1917. Savy Berlette. I am back once more from leave extending from May 28 to June 7th. The weather was beautiful the whole time and the crossing good each way. On the return journey I was lucky in getting a lift in a car which landed me here in 2 1/2 hours, whilst those who came by the ordinary leave train took 24 hours. I found on my return that Major Haig was the only one of the officers left, of those who had been with me on my departure, and he was under orders to leave as soon as he had handed over to me. All the personnel except my own section had been changed also. It was Friday evening (the 8th.) that I got back, and there was a tremendous bombardment in progress, which was the result of a six mile counter-attack by the Huns, somewhere just north of Lens. The attack proved quite fruitless in the face of our fire. On arrival in Boulogne I tried to get in touch with George, who was at a rest camp at Equihen, but I was told he had left that morning to rejoin his unit. Quite where they are now I don't know but am trying to find out.

20 June 1917. Savy Berlette. The weather this summer is wonderfully different to what it was last. Even since the abrupt change in April it has remained bright and warm, not to say hot at times. The early rain has been in the form of thunder showers of short duration. But so well soaked was the ground by the continuous wet of last Summer and the frost of the winter followed by so much snow, that the crops show very little sign of any want of moisture. There are no signs of our Division leaving this Corps so I suppose I am to remain on. This is the longest spell I have had in any one place since the war began, and it has been quite a nice place to be in. I still have no word from George. I hope to hear from him any day now and try and arrange a meeting.

28 June 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday I had occasion to visit Sapignies where the Red Cross have their Southern Depot. The journey was most interesting as it took us through the greater part of the country vacated by the Germans in February last. From here we went by Avesnes-La-Comte to Bienvillers-Au-Bois which was originally just behind the front line. From there we made for Bucquoy which was a village of about equal importance and corresponding position behind the old German front line. We had to go very slowly through the lines and walk a good part of the way as the road was very much cut up and knocked about. Passing through our old lines there was the usual maze of trenches with its litter of war material scattered all over the place and finally the tangle of wire in front fringing no-mans land. Then the German wire came in sight. Far thicker and more regularly placed than ours. All the buildings in the villages behind their lines were very much more battered than those behind ours, as one would naturally anticipate, for we shall them very much more than they do us. In fact very few of the villages within range of our guns, could have been of much use to the Germans as billets and certainly could not have



been used in the same way as we do. The German trenches on the other hand were very much better made and preserved than ours, and their roads were far more methodically cared for. For one thing every road that was intended for constant use was staked at close intervals on either side with either wood or iron stakes. This prevents the traffic from swinging off the crown of the road and prevents the accumulation of mud, which once it has been swept outside the line of stakes, can no longer encumber the road. On each side of the road were "pockets" of spare road material, placed at regular intervals. This system prevailed along all the principal roads, and the result was a very much better preserved road surface and a far cleaner appearance than we ever have. Of course when you are fighting in the enemy country and can lop down the nearest tree for your purpose, it is easy to do these things. Throughout the whole area they have felled all the trees along the roads, only a few around the remains of the villages being left standing. Most of the trees appeared to have been cut down anything from a year to six months ago, with view no doubt to allowing the timber to dry out and use it as required. No cultivation had been allowed so that the country presented a very marked difference to any other part of France. Just rolling plains with nothing but an occasional clump of trees around the ruins of a village, to break the monotony. Of course now, we had camps springing up all over the country, and for the future this will have to be the style of life as the Germans have left nothing to help in this way. From Bucquoy we passed by way of Achiet-Le-Petit to Sapignies. Here the people in charge said we could get tea at Bapaume while they made up my order, so we pushed on and had a look at this famous town. It is now a mass of ruins principally I should say from our long range guns. Our shells certainly seem very effective and do a good deal more damage than those of the Huns. There also seems a certain amount of evidence that the Germans completed the wreckage but considering the amount of shelling we must have done and that the Germans have since done, the amount of wilful damage could not have amounted to much. At Bapaume we found quite a nice Officers rest, consisting of some large marquees, where we were served with tea. The place was run by the E.F.C. and beds could be had there too. After leaving Bapaume we came back by the main road leading through Arras. It was very curious after our long stay in Arras to be coming at it from the German side. We passed through the village of Beaurains a few kilometres outside Arras, which was one of the spots I had often looked at with glasses from the O.P. of George's battery. I only wished I had had time to go and examine some of the points we used to puzzle over. I hope to do so one of these days. Arras has had a good deal more knocking about since we left, but our house in the Rue d'Amiens was still intact and does not appear to have been hit again. Unfortunately I did not know of Georges' whereabouts or I might have been able to visit him. We are having very beautiful weather on the whole. Warm and steamy with heavy thunder showers which have as a rule most conveniently confined themselves to the night. The grass seed sown on a patch for a lawn is showing up well and improving the bare look of the camp very greatly. During the last fortnight I have found material and time to add a stage to our mess-room and we have already had two very good performances. One by the 27th. FA and the other by the "Thistles" which is the 9th Divisional Troupe. The men enjoy these concerts immensely.

2 July 1917. Savy Berlette. For the previous 3 days the heavy guns in the direction of Lens have been pounding away very heavily and though there was a lull this morning they are at it again now. The guns must be shelling the German line of communication in order to embarrass



their retreat, and we are slowly pressing in behind them. Last night we had another very successful evening in our new theatre. The troupe this time was the "Follies" of the 4th. Division. They were the original troupe of this kind in France. Now every division has one and they are quite a good institution, and are much appreciated by the men. Our men have been working hard at improving the stage and with the aid of some spare timber, and green and white material from the Red Cross have made a front, curtain and general stage setting that would do credit to many a small Town Hall. They have even dug a well in front for the orchestra, and fixed operating lamps for footlights. My mention in dispatches has led to an awkward mistake, as somehow or other the Guys Gazette has got me among the D.S.O's and several people have written to congratulate.

5 July 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday I managed to get over to Doullens at No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital to see George, who has been there for some days. He is feeling much better and certainly seemed to be improving on what he has been. He expects to get away on leave soon. The hospital is in the citadel of Doullens and quite a beautiful spot. The citadel is one of those old time forts, much as are at Arras and elsewhere. The essential feature is massive brick walls, backed by a great thickness of earth, and the fortifications laid out in the form of a star. From the battlements there is a splendid view of the country around, which in that part of the area is quite beautiful. Most of the north of France is most monotonous and unlovely. The grass grown walls formed a splendid promenade for the patients where they could walk, sit or lie out all day in fine weather, and at the same time enjoy a commanding view of the country round. There is still a lot of artillery work going on around Lens and it sounds today still further North. The Belgian army, rumour has it has now been taken out of the line altogether, and is being relieved by the French and ourselves. It seem that it had got into a chaotic state and that scores of the men were deserting and going over to the Huns. A good many of the men seem to be being sent back as labourers in France. The French are much delighted by the arrival of American troops. We hear that they are quite sufficiently trained and in fact better trained than most of the Allied troops were at the beginning of the war - which by the way is not saying much - and that they will very soon be taking their place in the line. The medical Corps have already taken over several hospitals, and many of their M.O's are scattered about getting an idea of how things are done.

10 July 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday I was astonished to see Ernest ride into the camp. His unit has been down near Peronne for some time past holding trenches. He is looking very well, though during the recent fighting and especially on Ap. 9th. they went through some horrible hardships in the shape of moving about in that awful weather and having to sleep out in the snow and rain. They are now stationed at Acq where he thinks they may be for 10 days or so, and I hope to see something of him. Acq is only about 4 miles from this place. The weather has been somewhat disturbed again. A good many heavy showers, winds and rather cold.

12 July 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday I rode over to lunch with Ernest at Acq. It was a delightful warm day and after lunch we started off on horseback and rode, across to Villers-Au-Bois and then on through Carency and down to Souchez. It was most interesting as this was all in the sector we were holding about this time last year. Souchez lies in the mouth of the valley flanked by Vimy Ridge on the



right and the slopes of Notre Dame de Lorette on the left. From there we rode up along our old support trenches leading up on to the lower spur of Lorette, from which we got the most wonderful view I have yet seen in France. About 9 kilometres away lay Lens and we commanded a splendid view of all the country between and away out to each flank. The country there is densely populated and covered so thickly with small red roofed buildings, as to appear like one huge town continuous with Lens. Each little house has its holding, and laid out regularly. Here and there are the pit head works and huge factories. Through all this the newly made trenches seam the ground in every direction, and the soil being mainly very thin over chalk, they showed up very glaringly among the red-roofed houses. Some of our batteries were at work and it was interesting to be able to see the guns firing and the shells landing in huge bursts of smoke and dust in the German lines. We did not have time to visit Vimy Ridge, but I intend doing so soon.

14 July 1917. Savy Berlette. Yesterday I went over again to lunch with Ernest, and for another lovely ride. This time we turned away from Villers-Au-Bois and kept on through Gudy-Servins and on beyond until we gained the top of the ridge near Bouvigny, turning down this ridge which is the commencement of the Notre Dame de Lorette ridge. Our road then took us right through the Bois de Bouvigny, bringing us out on the very top of Notre Dame de Lorette. This ridge like Vimy has been the scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the war. There were huge cemeteries packed with regiments of wooden crosses, where the French soldiers were buried. On the top we found a small party of gunners spotting for their battery in the valley near Souchez whilst overhead floated one of the huge observation balloons. The view from this point was really marvellous and on a really clear day commands a view of the greater part of our front. Away on the left we could see Loos and the Hohenzollern Redoubt whilst to the right one could see away to Douai and Cambrai with Lens as the central point. With our glasses we could occasionally see figures passing along the roads behind the German lines, and got a splendid view of the various points on which our batteries were working. We were particularly interested in watching a battery of 6 inch Hows. bombarding a group of huge tanks in connection with some factory of sorts. It was quite interesting because each time before firing a phone message came up to the observing officer. We were engrossed in watching this performance when there was a rattle of machine fire overhead and we saw a German plane making for the balloon. He used fire bullets which left a trail of smoke that gave the effect as though the plane had suddenly become connected up by wires with the balloon. The first discharge seemed to have no effect but the plane veered off and circled up and then made a fresh dive and once more the "wires" shot out and this time we saw a little tongue of flame flash up on the top of the balloon, and this in a few seconds spread rapidly and in a few more seconds with a big burst of flame and black smoke the balloon vanished, whilst the blazing basket went hissing to the ground. Mercifully there was no one in the balloon, which was evidently only put up as a decoy to distract the enemy's attention from the real OP at which we were seated. None of our planes were near at the time so the lucky Hun made safely off home no doubt much delighted with his afternoon's work. This is the first time I have been quite close to a balloon, when tackled by a plane, and when one sees how quickly and easily it is done one does not quite envy the observers their task. They are of course provided with parachutes, but there is not much time to make up your mind and quite easy to have the flaming balloon catch you up in its fall. We sat for about an hour or more watching this wonderful scene, which I don't think I shall



easily forget. When we got back here, Ironside was waiting for us at dinner. I had met him the previous day, not having seen him since Penbrooke days, 17 years ago. He is with the 7 CBFA, which looks after Ernest's lot.

25 July 1917. Savy Berlette. It has now been decided to close this camp, as a new Rest Station has been formed further forward. It seems a great shame to be abandoning it, now that it has been made comfortable to resist all conditions of weather, especially as the other place is only about 5 miles away - if that. Patients were stopped yesterday and now the remainder will gradually be sent back to their units as they become fit and so the camp will empty itself. Today the B Section of our Ambulance went off to join the Headquarters but I remain to finish up, which I hope to do in about a week. Before Ernest left he and I had another visit to Notre Dame de Lorette. The view was again splendid. This time we watched an 8 inch How. Battery at work. The shooting was not very good but the observing officer said the battery had only just moved into position and could not expect to do much until the guns had settled down. After we had been there some time the Huns put 3 or 4 shells over our heads, which burst about 300 yards behind us. I suppose our party of 4 added to that of the observing party, must have shown sufficiently to make it worth a shot. Ernest left the day following. Last Sunday the 10th Field Ambulance which is now commanded by Lewis, who commanded the 29th FA which we replaced in the 9th Division, had a nasty experience. While the officers were at breakfast a large shell pitched into the cook-house killing the cook and 2 mess servants, and wrecking the whole house over the 5 officers at breakfast. It was nearly 2 hours before some of them were dug out, but marvellous to relate no one was killed. Lt. Archdeacon and Lt. O'Hara who were with me for quite a long time were longest buried and much shaken and knocked about, whilst Col. Lewis got off with a wound in the head. They were at a place S.E. of Arras.

28 July 1917. Savy Berlette. The weather has turned very warm again, being rather hot and steamy. There has been a good deal of artillery work going on during the previous 2 days, but today all is quiet. The fine weather has encouraged the Hun Aviators to come over more freely. Yesterday one came over our camp at a tremendous height. In fact I have never seen a machine so high before. Though it was a large one, it was a mere speck in the sky even when almost overhead, and quite out of reach of our anti-aircraft. He disappeared going toward the back area. From here we have a good view of the balloons along the line, and recently the Huns have been doing some very good shooting at them with a gun that sends a very big shell. They do not fire often but the shooting is good and the balloon aimed at usually does not wait too long before coming down. Last evening I saw one being fired at and after a time the observer jumped out and floated down in his parachute. It look a somewhat uncomfortable proceeding as he swung about like a pendulum during his descent. I am rapidly getting rid of the remainder of the patients here and shall probably close by the 31st. and be off a day or two later.

3 August 1917. Bus. I left Savy Berlette yesterday afternoon and joined the ambulance here. I was lucky in getting a lift down in a touring car with Capt. Fenton, but unfortunately what might have been a delightful drive was spoilt by the bad weather. There has been a bad break up of the weather with floods of rain and high winds. The first new of the new "push" in the north came through on the morning the infantry "went over". The weather will undoubtedly seriously interfere



with the success of the operations. On my way down I came through Arras. After leaving there the road to Bapaume lay through the re-captured territory. This place is about 8 miles SE of Bapaume. On my previous visit to this part I was not altogether convinced as to whether the Germans had been responsible for any specially wanton destruction, but in this region there is no doubt of it. The villages have been completely and systematically destroyed. In those nearest us the churches have been blown down by large charges of dynamite put in the vaults. Today I examined the church yard here and found the graves had been opened and rifled in a most systematic manner.

5 August 1917. Bus. This morning I went on a foraging expedition which took me over some very interesting ground. The first important point was Sailly Saillisel where the French had such fierce fighting to drive the Germans out. And the ground showed! Every tree was regularly worn down to the ground by repeated shell fire. The villages were quite obliterated and only distinguished by bricks being mingled with the soil. Everything is now grown over with thistles, poppies and long grass. The troops have moved forward and none but parties of salvage men are to be seen about. As you go along you can picture the happenings by the litter that everywhere strewn the ground. Ammunition of every kind from rifle cartridges to huge shells. Rifles, machine gun carriages, shattered waggons, picks, shovels and masses of barbed wire. Everywhere are little crosses, made in all sorts of ways, and out of whatever came handy, with "German Soldier", "Unknown British Soldier" or "French Soldier". Here and there again little groups with the names in full evidently buried by their pals, with a steel helmet or a rifle to mark the spot. In these parts it is only possible to distinguish the most recent shell holes, but the whole face of the earth is torn up into the wildest confusion. Everywhere are the mouths of dugouts, some closed up by shell bursts and others still gaping open, and all looking gruesome. From there I passed on to Combles where the Germans hung on until the French had almost quite surrounded them and they only had a narrow track down the valley whereby to get in or out. In this place I explored a huge dugout made by the ambulances of the Germans. A long shaft sloped away down into the earth and down there it was like wandering in the catacombs of Alexandria or Rome. This afternoon I rode with Pringle and the ADMS up to the line. We left our horses in a quarry and walked on to Hermies where Laurie and Sampson are making an ADS. From Hermies we went on to Demicourt. During this part we got a good view of the German positions on the opposite side of a wide shallow valley in the bottom of which runs a huge canal in process of construction, Canal De Nord. The villages opposite were Havrincourt, Flesquieres, Graincourt-Lez-Havrincourt and further to the NE the Bois de Bourlon. The German positions here are reckoned to be extremely well planned and powerfully fortified, whilst ours of course are only under construction. The canal forms part of the foreground defence of the Germans.

15 August 1917. Bus. Last evening a heavy thunderstorm passed over the camp. One flash struck the men's mess tent in which a number of them were playing games. One of the poles was shattered into splinters but none of the men were injured although they were only a few feet from the pole.

27 August 1917. Bus. Tomorrow we shift to a camp at a spot not far from Achiet-Le-Grand. This move has come as rather a surprise as we were given to understand that we were to settle down here for a good while, and on the strength of that we have been working hard to make



ourselves comfortable. The move undoubtedly means that very soon we shall be sent to take our part in the fighting up north. Yesterday Capt. Fenton of our Amm. Sub. Park wanted to visit the 4th Army HQ and offered me a lift, which I was only too pleased to accept. We left Le Transloy where he is stationed and drove north by way of Arras, Noeux-les Mines, Bethune, St. Venant, Haazebrouck, Steenwoorde, Wormhoudt, Bergues, Dunkerque and on to Malo-Les-Bains where the 4th Army headquarters are. Here we arrived in time for a stroll along the sea front. There seemed to be quite a large number of inhabitants there and a great number of French soldiers. The sea front consists of a low sandy beach, backed by dunes, where it is not built over. As there has been no labour to keep the sand clear it is gradually heaping up on the Esplanade and almost burying some of the houses. Although 14 miles from the front line Dunkerque has been shelled by big guns, from time to time. It was recently shelled by a big gun at a range of 40,000 yards (about 23 miles) and every shell fell well into the docks and busy part of town. Of course air bombing is almost a nightly occurrence. While I was there I saw a huge aeroplane belonging to the French. It was sailing majestically over the town. I was told it could carry the equipment of 23 men, and is used as a bomb dropper, being escorted by fast scouts while on its raids. The air fighting up there has been very strenuous indeed and as far as I could gather the Germans still have much better machines than we do, but they are not so numerous nor are they such reckless fighters as our men. As regards the state of affairs in the front, we heard that the 4th Army hold quite a short front of about one mile, next to this coast. Then come the French with a small army of 3 Corps, but they are their best. They hold also quite a narrow front and next to them comes our 5th Army, which holds a big front and has the bulk of the work to do at present. At the start all these Armies including the 2nd and 1st Armies, which came next in order, attacked together and all except the 5th did well. The Fifth has for its central objective the region about Lange Marcq. Here the fighting has been very stubborn, and though we have and still are attacking constantly we have not been able to drive them out. It appears that this point is at present the key (or at any rate so regarded by our HQ) of the position, and until the 5th Army has driven the Germans back, the other Armies cannot go forward. The difficulties of fighting in Belgium are enormous and depend almost entirely on the weather. The least bit of rain on a surface, beneath which the water level is only 2 or 3 feet, means reducing it to an impassable morass. The roads are causeways off which heavy traffic cannot venture. Our losses were spoken of as being very heavy indeed, and from the accounts I heard it is small wonder. There seems no doubt that the failure of the 5th Army has meant such a rebuff to the whole offensive, that unless they can do something before the break up of the summer, the whole offensive up there will end in failure. Yesterday was nice and fine all day until evening when it began to rain fairly heavily. It cleared again later and was fine until midday since when a heavy driving rain has set in, with a low grey sky, and general appearance of "set-wet" about it. There has been quite enough already to put a further stop to things up north, and I should not be entirely surprised if it means the end of our operation this season, at any rate in the north. On the undulating ground down here it was far more possible to go on later into the winter, but from all accounts this cannot be done up north. On the way back we came through Bailleul, where we met two of the Ducros brothers, who are running a M.A.C. They are of the Ducros' of Dunlop Tyre fame. After this it began to rain and we pushed on via Haaze Brouck and Lillers to St. Pol where we had dinner. After dinner we drove in sheets of rain back by Arras and Bapaume. On my



return I found Pringle had returned from leave, having got back about dinner time. When I went over to see the site of our new camp on Saturday, I found the Colonel was Bermet whom we met at Tweezledown, when we came over. His division, the 16th. has just come out of the fighting around Ypres and has had a very bad time with big losses and small gain.

30 August 1917. Achiet-Le-Grand. On the night of the 27 - 28th there was a fierce storm, which lasted with great severity right through the next day. All night we wrestled with our tents, and when morning came, 14 large marquees were down, and lots of small tents. Our otherwise spic-and-span camp looked a horrible wreck. I don't think anyone got any sleep. Fresh orders came in so that we did not move till yesterday. The wind was still high and many showers fell. On arrival at our new camp we found that it had been wiped flat, so we have all been pretty hard at work getting things straight. Pringle came back from leave on Sunday and brought a gun. We were out on Tuesday morning in spite of the high winds and again in the afternoon for a short time. We got 11 partridges in all.

1 September 1917. Achiet-Le-Grand. I have just returned from a most interesting drive. From here we went by Biauourt and Grevillers on to the Bapaume-Albert road. This has been most splendidly remade and is now tar-macadamed all the way and staked on each side with stout posts. The first point of special interest to us was the Butte-de-Warlencourt, which lies on the left of the road as you go towards Albert from this side. This was the famous spot that resisted all attacks during the latter stages of the Somme battle, and in fact never was taken. It was the SA Brigade who attacked it in November last, and had so many killed. The Butte itself was originally the mound against which the targets of a rifle range was placed. It stands on a slight rise at the confluence of two small valleys, and as the general fall of the ground is away towards Albert it commanded a very extensive view of our line of attack. A little further on we passed the site of le Sars, in fact there is hardly a trace of any of the villages on which the battle swept, that is recognisable. Notices have been put up to show the site and but for these it would be almost impossible to say exactly where any given village had been. Next along the road came Martinpuich on the left and Courcellette on the right and Thiepval a little further out. Here we saw the remains of 5 or 6 tanks in various fantastic positions, and a large cross put up to the Australians who fell there. At La Boisselle which was the next place along the road, we passed through the old front line trenches, of the time before the Somme battle. The country is covered all over with little white crosses, but here they were very thick. Hundreds to be seen at a time, just put up where the body of the British or German soldier had been found long afterwards. Some identified but many not. From La Boisselle the road took us on to Contalmaison through which village our line of evacuation lay, last November in the attack on the Butte-de-Warlencourt. Then we passed on by Bazentin and Mametz Wood to Longueval and Delville Wood. Laurie found it almost impossible to locate even the spot where the house had been, when he had a dressing station there in the early part of July 1916. Everything has been so churned up and now grown over with rank weed and grass that the various parts of the village are quite unrecognisable. At the time of our attack this wood was large and very dense. Now every tree has been cut down by the storms of shells, and very few of the stumps are more than a few feet high. The ground is simply a turmoil of mounds and shell holes, and nearly as thick as the tree stumps are the little white



crosses, whilst who knows how many have never been identified, and show no mark at all of the spot where they fell. As we strolled about Laurie and Pringle were able to identify certain spots of interest. We saw the position that was so gallantly held by Col Thackeray, with the ruins of Waterlow Farm on the opposite slope, outside the wood. This cost the 3rd Regiment almost its entire strength in men and officers. The regiment of another division who eventually relieved them, was driven out during the next day or two. From Longueval we turned back toward Maricourt passing the remains of Bernafay and Trones Woods, where our Brigade also had such fierce fighting. Just before reaching Maricourt, we turned off back by the Maurepas road. This took us through the country captured by the French. They must indeed have had hard work, as the contours of the ground are much boulder(sic) than on our front, and afforded much stronger natural positions for the enemy. From Maurepas we passed over to Combles, which lies in a deep valley at least deep by comparison, with the type of country in the north of France. From Combles we returned via Sailly-Saillsel to Bapaume. This round has taken us over the greater part of the Somme Battlefield. It is a scene of the utmost desolation, and will be more or less uninhabitable for years to come. In fact places like Delville Wood it would seem better to leave as they are. A monument to those whose remains lie crowded there.

14 September 1917. Abeele. We remained at Achiet up to the 12th spending the time in training and sports. The weather remained fine and on the whole we had a very pleasant time and I think all were sorry to leave the area. Pringle and I spent most of the latter part of each afternoon with the gun and managed generally to get 2 or 3 brace of partridges each time we were out. On the 12th we entrained at Bapaume and left at about 5.45 pm and travelled all night reaching Godewaersvelde at about 6 am on the 13th, where we detrained. Power who had gone with cars was on the platform to meet us. He told us that our 6 cylinder Wolesley had been caught on a level crossing and smashed just a few hours before. From the station we marched to this camp, which is quite a pleasant spot. A nice expanse of turf on the crest of a knoll with a good view of the country around. We can see Cassel and the Mont-Descats. After lunch yesterday Forbes and I went to the Mill at Vlammerdinghe, which is the Corps Combined Post for Walking Wounded. This the ambulance will take over tomorrow. After having a look around and getting a general idea of how things were run, we turned back and called in to see our ADMS. Here I found a wire had come from a Division (35th) who are still near Bapaume demanding my presence at a court-martial in which my evidence was required. I remained to dinner at the Div. HQ and afterwards saw Col. Jeffcoat, who wired back that I could not be spared at present, so I shall not have to go back till after the pending battle. It seems that during the last push although we drove the Germans back some distance it was not far enough and they stuck to some high ground to the East and North of Ypres. Though this has constantly been attacked no one has been able to hold it yet. The Germans have fortified the place by building numerous very strong concrete block-houses, arranged to enfilade one another, so that thought many of them have been temporarily captured it has been impossible to hold them long because of the failure to capture those in the vicinity. The approach to this position is over flat ground which has been churned into a maze of small ponds and mud, by shell fire, so that up to the present it has defied all capture. A number of picked Divisions have now been assembled including ours and our work is to be a special attack on this difficult position. The weather has now been dry for an unusually long time and if only it



holds out a few more days the attack will have a reasonable chance of success, but should the weather break it does not seem the slightest use attempting to do anything. Those who have been here some time say that unless their position is taken, we shall probably have to retire from the ground already won. They all give very bad accounts of the positions at present held and of the difficulty of getting the wounded away. It is all too exposed for ADS's to do much more than transport the wounded, as quickly back as possible.

16 September 1917. Vlamertinghe. Yesterday we struck camp after an early breakfast. Pringle pushed on in the cars to take over this place which is the Corps Combined Post for the Walking Wounded (CCPWW) to give it its official lettering. I came over with the men having a tedious march on roads blocked by masses of troops and transport, some coming and some going. We got here about 2.30 and found the others had been hard at work with casualties coming in from a Hun Air Raid. The last of the cases were just leaving when they started with a high-velocity gun and dropped shells all round us and finally putting one plump into the crowded road near by. 6 horses, 8 men were killed at once and about 20 or so wounded. This kept those on duty busy till tea time. Later on Col. Harty of 28th. FA came in to fix up the arrangements for our "battle positions". I am to be in charge of our bearers and look after our Brigade. This morning at 4 am Capt. Laurie and I went up to look over the "terrain". From here we drove to Ypres, which is now quite destroyed. Here in the vaults of the old Prison will be the HQ's of the bearers for the whole of our division, ours along with them. We passed out by the Menin Gate and as it was still dark it will perhaps be better to describe things as we saw them first. We enquired our way of various sentries and finally sent the car back from a road called Cambridge Road. It was a fine clear night and as we walked along we could see the country was flat and very much torn up with shells. Presently up went a shower of red stars and soon after our guns began to put up a barrage on our right. The flashes and various combined lights made quite a brilliant display in the clear black sky. After about 25 minutes walk or perhaps less we struck a semblance of a building which we found was our first objective Bavaria House. This place is one of what the Tommies have called the Pill Boxes. They were another of the German surprises for us. They consist of small block-houses made of re-inforced concrete of about 4 feet thick. They were usually built in some farmhouse or other and now the house has been shelled away there remains the small square unbreakable kernel. These are so strong that ordinary shells make no impression and besides this they are small enough to be a difficult mark upon which to score a direct hit. The way in was on all fours by a hole such as is depicted in Esquimaux igloos. In the lee of this pill-box an elephant dugout has been erected where the MO resides and does what he can for the wounded. An elephant dugout is made by digging into the side of a hill and the erecting a semi elliptical shell of very strong corrugated iron in the hole and then burying the shell. Here there was no hill nor could any digging be done on account of the water level being only about 18 inches beneath the surface, so the shell had been scantily covered with sand bags. This is proof against spent fragments and flying earth, but is about as good as a tent to a shell striking it full. The pill-box is the refuge for the men and MO in sore straits, but no wounded can be got in, so they have to be attended in the open, or where there is only an odd one they could be got in the lean to. By the time we had finished a chat and a look round it was beginning to get light so we struck off for our next objective. We followed a path across the wildest turmoil of shell holes I have ever



yet seen. The ground has been so churned up and blasted by repeated shelling that there is not a sign of growth left on it. The remains of the combatants both men and animals have been added to this mixture and so as each shell hole was full of foul fluid, there was a horrible stench. It is across a flat of this kind that our men have to advance to attack a ridge in front. It is quite impossible to dig any trenches and so here there are none. Our way took us over a very slight rise and from there we were in full view of the German position only about 800 yards away. So we kept moving on. The scene in the slowly lightening dawn was one I shall never forget. Here and there could be seen a man hurrying from one shelter to another. Everything has been swept away by the shell storms and only here and there do slight projections in the surface show what remains of attempts to make trenches or shelters. They remind one of the odd piles of wreckage and seaweed on a beach at low water after a big storm. We presently sighted another rather larger "pill-box" known as Square Farm, for which we made. Here we found two of our Brigade officers taking over information etc in view of the coming relief, and in another section we found a small stuffy hot room packed with "bearers". This is to be another of our aid posts as soon as the move forward occurs. The whole thing looks terrible and so devoid of shelter is the area that one feels the only thing to do will be to carry on in the hope that a shell won't find you. There will be no dodging into dugouts or trenches to be worried about and those who come through will be lucky indeed.

17 September 1917. Vlamertinghe. To continue. On the return journey it was quite light. We found fresh shell holes along the track we had come and some were still bursting on our left and going over. From Bavaria House we walked back to Ypres. On the way back we noted Oxford Road and Cambridge Road. The Mill Cottage when a Decauville Railway passes which will be useful for evacuating wounded. We passed a couple of horses that had been killed during the early morning and all the way were the most loathsome smells. The ruined village of Potijze will be an ADS during the coming battle and will receive our wounded we cannot send by decauville. From there we crossed the sort of moat surrounding Ypres and had a look at the site of the Prison whose dungeons will be our main HG for the bearers. There is so much going on that it seems impossible to keep an accurate account. The Bosch is doing a certain amount of long range shelling with high velocity guns and HE and as the roads are crowded the toll is pretty heavy. Three times since we have been here has he put a shell right into a mass of men causing as many as 26 casualties in one case and 6 horses killed and others wounded. Then he carries out bombing raids with huge "Gothas" escorted by smaller ones, against which our aircraft and guns seem powerless, as they journey solemnly about at quite a low altitude and drop huge bombs on likely looking spots. The Bosch seems still well ahead of us in aircraft as regards the quality, or perhaps he only comes across when he wants to and does not worry otherwise. What with the various forms of excitement in the form of air raids, big shells, casualties coming in and making of plans and thinking of supplies and equipment, time goes fast. This afternoon two American officers came to look round. Majors Osgood and Murphy. The former is concerned in the examination of splints in order to cut down the number of types used to a minimum. He was much pleased with the arm splint suggested by me and said it was just what he wanted and that he would certainly adopt it as the standard type for their army. It has taken nearly a year to get it even noticed in ours. With the usual American acumen they are going about among the ambulances and those who do the work instead of applying to Hqs.



## BATTLE OF YPRES.

19 September 1917. Ypres. ADS at the prison. I moved up this afternoon with the bearers. Capts. Laurie and Liebson are with me. Laurie had gone with 36 men and 2 spare men to Bavaria House. I go at 4.40 am (tomorrow) with a party consisting of 36 bearers from the Infantry and about 10 of our own men.

20 September 1917. I left the Prison at Ypres at 4.40 am with 9 bearers of our ambulance and Lt. Spyker and 36 bearers from the SAI. I took up my post at Mill Cottage and sent Lt. Spyker to Bavaria House with his party. Capt. Laurie had in the mean time moved on to Square Farm. The barrage covering the attack was put up at 5.40 am. There had up to this time been an intense and steady bombardment of the Heavies. Now there burst forth a roar of FA, being the biggest concentration of artillery ever yet attempted. Talking was almost impossible in the intense roar. At Mill Cottage the 28th. FA had hastily put up an elephant shelter, in a trench alongside the Decauville track, where trains were to convey the walking wounded away. Heavy shells soon began to fall around our station and in spite of the soft ground I paced one crater 30 yards from our little shack which was 5 yards across and about 8 feet deep. The softness of the ground was the saving of the situation as the shells did little more than toss up huge columns of black mud. At about 6.40 in the growing light we presently saw the first batch of prisoners come hurrying down with their hands in the air. They were taken to Bde. Hq close by - searched and handed over to us as stretcher bearers, and all day we continued this process so that valuable help was given in this way. I found the trains were being run by a South African Railway Section. They were very pleased to find themselves working with us and each train brought up a petrol can full of hot tea for ourselves and the wounded. The second train was getting away at 8.45 when a shell blew up the track. However a working party came up and in an hour the train was going again. About this time Lt. Spyker came back looking rather bad having been slightly gassed and shaken by shells bursting close to him, so I sent him off to rest. I had a Sgt. stationed where the railway crossed the road to divert the walking wounded down to the entraining point 100 yards away. About this time 9.45 I saw a huge shell burst not 3 yards from where he was attending to a wounded man on a stretcher and for a moment they were smothered in a cloud of flying mud. However no one was hurt. A few minutes later another shell pitched close to the group where the searching of prisoners was going on and one poor Hun went flying into the air, blown to pieces but no one else was hurt. Every 2 or 3 minutes there was a cloud of debris tossed into the air and a good many were killed or wounded, so we were kept very busy. By about 12.30 the stream of walking wounded slackened down, but the stretcher cases still streamed down. I then got an appeal from Laurie for more bearers and went to see what help I could get from Bde. Hq. In the mean time I pushed up 12 of the Inf. detachment and asked for more cars to be allowed to come up to Bavaria House. The drivers of the Ford ambulances did splendid work, plying steadily with shells just grazing them all day, all the way. Laurie reported C.L. Chapman and R. du Toit wounded. So I sent 12 more Inf. bearers to him. By 3 pm trains had taken over 250 wounded away, and I sent 2 of my men to replace the casualties. The DC 28th FA who had previously refused my offer of frequent reports of the situation now sent an urgent message that I was to make an immediate personal inspection of Square Farm as he had had no report from Laurie, though of course I had been in constant touch. I went up and saw Laurie and



found no fresh news except that a note had crossed me to say he had visited Borry Farm and Low Farm and had the arrangements for clearing from there well in hand, provided there were bearers enough. The country round Square Farm had been terribly wrecked and I passed a string of 6 of our infantry lying dead along the track. On my return about 6 pm I set about raising relief for Laurie's bearers with the aid of Bde. Hq. I was able to send him 40 A and SH and had promises of more men for dawn, as the carrying at night was out of the question over the utterly wrecked country. The completion of these arrangements and their final notification to Laurie took me till nearly midnight. Further casualties today :

Pte. Smith NYD N

" Browne GSW leg.

" Thow GSW Abd. Pen.

" Hopkins Killed

" Jenkins Missing, believed killed.

" Butt Wounded but remaining at duty (subsequently evacuated)

21 September 1917. Moved to Bavaria House where Capt. Hepple of 28th FA is also stationed. Lt. Pougnet has reported and will bring more bearers from SATMB. He has now 29 men working between this and Square Farm. 12.30 pm. At 11.30 a party of 40 A and SH have gone to relieve Capt. Laurie's tired men. I visited Laurie at Square Farm at 11 am and I found the clearing work going on well. At 12.30 noon the following parties of bearers were at work as far as I could gather.

A and SH 40 Under Laurie - Borry Farm to Square Farm

SA TMB 29 Under Lt Pougnet - Square Farm to Bavaria House

Bill Cottage to Bavaria House

2nd SA I 50 Under Capt. Stein - All routes

At 5.10 pm I took the opportunity of a lull to go up to Bill Cottage to see how things were going there, and on my return found to my chagrin that Laurie has just been passed through with GSW Thigh, but not very bad. It seems when things slowed down he went up to the front line to assure himself that all wounded had been got away and losing his way, walked over to the Hun lines and was shot by a sniper. He had to crawl a couple of hundred yards to get back to our people, but I am told was very cheerful. At 6 pm there as Capt. MacGrath of 28 Fa was here I went up to Square Farm to help Lawrence who had been working there with Laurie. There were 5 stretcher cases and some walkers and reports that all the front was now clean of wounded. All our SAMC bearers who had been relieved in the morning had gone to the Prison at Ypres to rest, and I now released all unnecessary men retaining enough to carry on with. Those released included : 50 2nd SAI under Capt. Stein. I retained 1 Capt. and 14 men to TMB, 40 A and SH. At 8 pm I was surprised to see Capt. Liebson and Sgt. Huskisson and 36 of our SAMC bearers arrive, having been sent up by OC 28th FA though I had not asked for them. This means that these men have really had a tiring march to Ypres and back instead of the rest I had planned. The A and SH casualties were : Pte. MacMillan - killed and LCpl. Johns - wounded. The squad in which they were carrying was caught in a barrage and here Sgt. Edgar behaved with great gallantry going out in spite of almost constant bursts and rescuing the patient and wounded man.

22 September 1917. At 6 am I returned from Square Farm to Bavaria House leaving Lawrence and Liebson there. All the front is reported clear. About 6.30 a despatch came from ADMS to say Keep (7th. Seaforth's) report 20 2nd. SAI wounded lying out (sic). I sent Sgt. Edgar to get a squad from Square Farm to investigate. I had a report later from Capt. Liebson to say he had gone himself and the 7th.



Seaforths could only now indentify actually one man named Cole. Reports of stray casualties have come in from various sources and I have arranged for their collection, and asked for a few more bearers. 12 OR reported later on from Capt. Hancock. At 2.45 pm Capt. MacFayden reported all clear on his front. A few casualties have come in during the afternoon. At 9.30 pm reliefs for Capt. Hepple and his party arrived from 142nd FA so I have released him. About 10.30 Capt. Martin and 60 bearers arrived to take over the right sector and had had great trouble inposting his men as no guides had been provided, and as my work had been entirely the left sector I was unable to help him very much. He is still away. 1.45 am (Sept. 23)

23 September 1917. Capt. Martin returned from posting his men about 2.45 am. At 8.30 am order arrived from HQ. 1st. SAFA for me to return. I arranged for Capt. Liebson to be met at Ypres by a lorry and for Cpt. Godfrey to collect all possible of our wheeled stretchers and meet Capt. Liebson at Ypres.

25 September 1917. Winnezele. On arrival at HQs I found that I was to proceed at once in charge of about 40-50 of our men and 2 officers to look after the Division which was moving out to this place to rest.

28 September 1917. Arneke. We spent a more or less quiet day on the 26th. It was balmy and warm and all the Third bearers enjoyed basking in the sun on a nice green turf right away from all sound of the battle. In the afternoon I went back to see the Colonel at the Mill at Vlammerdinghe. There had been another attack and they had had a fairly busy time since 4 am. Having passed about 1700 or more walking wounded through, as well as a lot of severe casualties from shell fire in the neighbourhood. On my return I found there was a rumour that a move was contemplated the next day, and about 10 pm the ADMS came over to see me and said the Colonel would join us next day, and we should move to this place. Just previous to this Capt. Forbes and his party, who had been working at the CRS, arrived. Next morning the Hq party began arriving in cars and the Capt. Sampson and his party who had worked all night at the MDS turned up. The Colonel arrived about midday and said that after I left the Mill there had been a fresh influx until about 4 am bringing the total passed through in 24 hours up to over 2400. It seems that the 59th. Division who took their objective early and quickly and in fact overshot the mark somewhat, were ordered to fall back to originally contemplated line. Their retirement combined with enemy shelling set up a rot, and a sort of rout ensued, which was eventually checked by the aid of our 26 Bde. which had been left to act in reserve, and the line restored to its proper position. Most of the scattered elements of our ambulance were more or less collected by dinner time and we marched off to this place. On arriving here no one seemed to expect us (a not unusual occurrence of these occasions) and after a good deal of difficulty we found this old farm, and there "dossed" down for the night, all pretty tired.

1 October 1917. Arneke. The weather is continuing to be warm and dry, with just that nip in early morning air to remind one of the approach of Autumn. There is a full harvest moon, which means that aerial activity and much dropping of bombs by the Germans on the towns and railways and camps round about. The night before last we heard them hard at it and now hear that they dropped a bomb successfully in the Square at Poperinghe which was packed with troops. This one bomb caused nearly 200 casualties. As the planes pass through the rays of the moon it is quite easy to see them. The Germans seem well ahead of



us in this form of work as usual. Their great Gothas carry nearly a ton of bombs, whilst we seem to have nothing to employ similarly but out of date observing and battle machines, which only carry a couple of hundred weight at most. This means of course sending a great many machines to do what one Gotha will do.

#### BATTLE OF YPRES. 20 SEPTEMBER 1917

At the time it was difficult to do more than make scanty notes and now I want to set down a few more impressions, in amplification of the notes already made. On September 19th. the bearer party left the Mill at Vlammertinghe in lorries for the Prison at Ypres. Arriving there Capt. Laurie went straight on with his party to Bavaria House (see Map). Here they remained a short while and then went on to Square Farm where Capt. Lawrence (of 4th SAI) and Capt. Reid (2nd SAI) were ready to push on with their regiments as the attacks developed. I remained at the Prison with the remainder of the bearers and subsequently had orders attaching the 36 Inf. bearers to me, with instructions to start for my post at 4.40 am. All night our "heavies" boomed away and the German guns shelled us in return. During the night rather heavily but by the time we started off it was clear again. We had just reached Potijze when the barrage started. There then burst forth the most tremendous roar. There were 432 Field guns on our Divisional front alone and I believe a like number on either side of us. Our front was only about 900 yards. In addition there were battery upon battery of heavies. The whole extent of front involved in this battle was about 8 miles, and involved the greatest concentration of artillery yet employed in any one single part of the line. From Potijze we continued to march through this din with a good many shells busting on either side of the road with evidences every now and then of where they had pitched in the road and the debris hastily flung aside. My first post was a hastily made shelter covered with one layer of sand bags. This was alongside the Decauville track in Cambridge Road and not far from Mill Cottage where the Bde. HQ were located in the only deep dugout in the neighbourhood. As the light began to improve we could better see the shells bursting all over the place and it was not long before we had some close shaves. I continued to dress cases occurring locally and those among the walkers who required redressing before going on. We heard from the wounded that our objective had been carried out quite quickly. The 2nd and 1st Regiments did the attack and were supported by the 3rd and 4th on the left flank of the Division whilst the 27th Bde attacked on the right. The SA Brigade did very well as not only did they take all the block-houses or "pill boxes" as the Tommies call them, on their own front, but they also captured one on either side which were giving trouble and had not been captured by the 55th Division in the one instance and the 27th Bde on the other. These pill boxes were what had rendered the position so impregnable before. They were made by building a concrete block house inside an ordinary house. They therefore in the first attacks looked quite innocent, but afforded a secure place for machine guns from which the German were able to enfilade the whole position and make it untenable, and to take a blockhouse, which the artillery could not demolish, became the great difficulty to be overcome. And this is the plan by which we succeeded. As soon as the attack started 3 heavy batteries were allotted to each pillbox and smothered them with smoke shells, poison gas and HE. The creeping barrage for the attack crept steadily on until the infantry were abreast of the pill boxes. As soon as this was done the 3 batteries on the each pillbox, "lifted" and before the blinded and half suffocated defenders could rally our men closed in and flung smoke and explosive bombs down the openings for the machine guns,



with the result that the occupants were either killed or surrendered at once. I don't suppose there has ever been a better combination between artillery and infantry than this. Besides the difficulty of the pillboxes the terrain over which the battle was fought was really terrible. I first saw it when Capt. Laurie and I went up about 4 or 5 days before the battle to study the route of evacuation for the wounded. The road we took lead out of Ypres by the Menin Gate. Along this road for about 2 kilometres there straggled a string of houses terminating finally in the village of Potijze clustered about a chateau. All these buildings had long ago been razed to the ground and the trees battered down, the only semblance of trees being a series of seared jagged stumps. Beyond the ground was flat and swampy and had been churned up by repeated shelling. The shell holes were filled with awful smelling and fearful looking slime and close together as to render it almost impassable. In the worst places the road had been "corduroyed". About 1 1/2 kilometres beyond Potijze the road, which was now not more than a path, ended, as far as wheeled vehicles were concerned, at Bavaria House. This was a small pillbox from which the outer casing had long ago been shot away. The pillbox could only be entered by a small hole on hands and knees and could hold about 20 men crammed in. In the lee of this an elephant shelter had been erected in which the MD resided during his tour of duty. It was protection against splinters, but none of course against a direct hit. From this point a track over the shell holes led to Square Farm which was a more commodious pillbox. The ground along this route and in fact all around in every direction had been and was still being ploughed over and over again by huge shells, and fortunately for us owing to the dry weather was crusted over with a layer of dryish earth which you could feel as you walked, was simply floating on the mud beneath. In preparation for the attack a duckboard track was put down across this the day before but by midday on the 20th when I went up the last 400 yards had been completely blown away and within 100 yards of Square Farm I passed 6 of our men lying dead, and marking where the track had been. It was across this and similar ground ahead, that our bearers had to work, and the marvel is that more were not killed in doing so. Every time one went to Square Farm and along the road to Bavaria House, there would be shells pitching unpleasantly close. On one occasion I walked back with a padre and a 5.9 pitched within 5 yards of us, but fortunately we automatically dropped flat and were not hit. The ground was soft which was the saving of the situation on many occasions. Owing to the water level being so near to the surface there were no trenches nor was it possible to make any, and the infantry had to get into position by night and lie in shell holes until the time came to attack. I must say when I first viewed the condition of things I felt we were in for a very bad time, but somehow when once the attack began and we got to work a good deal of the sense of danger seemed to disappear. Owing to the impossibility of making dugouts, as soon as the cases became plentiful they had to be dressed in the open and it was a horrible thing at times to have perhaps 50 stretchers all around the pillbox, lying in the open and shells falling all around, with the very present possibility of the next one going plump into the middle of everything. However by sheer good luck we never had this happen, though many times a big shell landed within 20 - 30 yards and even less. The first rush of both walking and stretcher cases, was well got away by the middle of the afternoon of the 20th. Then came messages that there were a good many casualties away up in the front line. This information was brought to me by the Bde. HQ and with their aid we began to organize additional stretcher parties from among the infantry and other reserve troops, but as it was getting late and the ground impossible to carry



over by night, it was only possible to organize parties for the early morning. I therefore went up to Square Farm and saw Capt. Laurie and told him what plans I was making, both for the relief of his tired bearers and for the special work at daybreak. The arrangements kept me going till nearly midnight, and then I lay down for a time in the shelter near Mill Cottage, but had to turn out several times and finally about 8 am I went up to Bavaria House to see how things were going and found the clearing was going on well. We now managed to get some big cars as well as the Fords, which helped immensely to speed up the clearing from there to Potijze. The work went steadily on in spite of some rather heavy shelling being directed our way every now and then, and by the early part of the afternoon the rush was over again and reports that all was clear in front came along. During the afternoon a despatch arrived telling us to expect a counter attack by Huns. So I reorganised the bearers, to be ready for a fresh influx. The counter attack came just after my arrival at Square Farm and was on a fairly extended front, but it was not long before we heard that it had met with the same fate as the one on the evening of the 20th, when the intensity of the barrage broke up the attack almost as soon as it developed. An infantry officer of one of our regiments told me that no sooner did the Germans appear out of their trenches than they were swallowed up in a cloud of dust, smoke and flame. Some few who rushed wildly out of it, were either shot down by the infantry or threw their rifles down and hands up, and were taken prisoners. On the 22nd. there was not much carrying to be done, and our bearers had a comparatively speaking easy day. I spent this last night at Bavaria House. There was a lot of shelling during the afternoon and night and though many shells landed very close to our flimsy shelter and many flying fragments struck it, we escaped a direct hit. Early on the morning of the 23rd. my orders to return arrived and I handed over to our reliefs, who had come during the night.

1 October 1917. Continued from page 98 [p 114 line 12]. For bombing important points which it would be difficult to see by night the Germans come over by day, the Gothas protected by fast fighting machines which seem able to successfully repel all attacks by our aircraft. There is very little doubt that our airmen depend entirely for their success on their daring handling of machines which are on the whole far inferior to the Germans. Many airmen have told me that there is no comparison between the workmanship of the Hun plane as opposed to ours. The French still seem pretty well abreast of the Hun. They also have big machines for carrying bombs and good fighters, and one hears the same of the Italians. The general opinion now is that the order of merit is :

1. German
2. French
3. Italian
4. British

and personally I think this is about right. The bombing is so demoralising that there seems no doubt that all the combatants will make a point of developing it, and it will behoove us to do something to mend matters.

8 October 1917. Arneje. We have had orders to proceed to L'Epee Farm. I go with the men by train and the cars and transport go by road.

9 October 1917. Rerme L'Epee. We entrained at Arneke at about 5 pm and did not arrive at Poperinghe until 5.45 am, and then marched to this place to a most uncomfortable camp, which had been rendered still



more uncomfortable by torrents of rain in the night. During the day the Colonel and I visited the Main Dressing Station and ADS on the Ypres-Commines Canal called Duhallo.

10 October 1917. St. Julien. Orders came late last night whereby I was to come here with the bearers and the Colonel to Duhallo to run the Corps. ADS. Capt. Forbes and I with our bearers had to make our way here a distance of over 20 kilometres. We marched to the MDS got a lift in some lorries to the canal and marched on again from there. The roads along the last stage were just a sea of mud and full of shell holes and crammed with traffic, whilst heavy shelling was going on. Owing to the narrow roads and bad conditions, the rain and the shelling and general confusion, one of the horses in our GS Wagon managed to fall into a deep ditch and took us nearly 1/2 hour to get it out. It was almost quite dark before we got it unloaded and our kit piled in a heap alongside the pill-box we were to occupy as one of our stations. Then Forbes and some of the bearers had to push on to one of the further forward stations. All this time the place was being heavily shelled and the people we were going to relieve were busy, until we took over. After dark the shelling was worse, and the scene on the road just about 100 yards down was indescribable. Crammed with transport, HE shells plunging round and every now and then a huge incendiary shell. I saw one of these pitch right into a mass of wagons, guns and pack-mules, and for a moment the huge flare of the bursting shell lit up a scene of horrible confusion, flying fragments of timbers and struggling animals and men. Up to 3 am I was busy dressing until finally things quieted down, to some extent and I lay down for a while.

11 October 1917. St. Julien. At 5.30 am we were on the go again and were in hopes we should have a chance of straightening up things a bit before the battle on the morrow, but not a bit. The shelling was too heavy and the casualties came in so steadily that we could only just keep abreast of the work, and it was not until the early hours of the morning that we got a short rest.

12 October 1917. St Julien. At 5.25 am our barrage went up, with the usual roaring of guns in every direction, and in return our area was heavily shelled, though it had been almost constant since our arrival. My post was the nodal point from which two lines of evacuation radiated. On the left the forward points are Alberta (Capt. Warburton), Mont de Hibou (Capt. Forbes) and then by Hubner Fm (RMO), Winchester Fm to Burns House. On the right Janet Fm (Capt. Hancock) Von Tirpitz Fm to Albatros Fm (RMO). The shelling on the road to Janet was so bad that very soon 2 bearers were killed and the patient and another wounded and the road became so badly broken up that Hancock decided to give it up and established another line from a point on the Poelcapelle Road to Springfield and Von Tirpitz. There were no shelters along this route but it avoided the worst shelling. It rained heavily - cleared a bit and then set in steadily wet for the rest of the day and the bearing became truly terrible. All reserves had to be put to it and eventually about 450 bearers were at work on the two routes. All day they toiled until nightfall when carrying became utterly out of the question. My post was very small and only could shelter about 20 cases in a very inadequate manner, but by about 1.30 I had got them all away. This left no room for the worn and sodden bearers who had to huddle anywhere they could until it was light enough to go out again.



13 October 1917. St. Julien. This morning came the task of clearing the forward part of the line which the rain made a truly stupendous task. The bearers had been going all the previous day and owing to the very limited shelter in the few "pill boxes" available none of them could lie down to rest, but only squat, packed together and sodden with wind and wet. However there was nothing for it and the whole 450 had to go. So laborious was the work that it was late before the cases reached us here and then owing to the line being blown up by shells and the road being a sea of mud and hidden holes, the horse ambulances and cars had an extremely difficult time getting along at all. Soon my limited accommodation was quite swamped, and 20 or more wretched wounded men had to be simply laid in the mud outside in the pouring rain. The road too was crammed with traffic. The bearers became so exhausted that they simply dropped down asleep anywhere and everywhere around our dressing station and in the time I could spare from dressing I had to go round spurring them back to the work. If it had not been for the voluntary aid of Capt. Widowson N-Z MC, whose battery was near bye, and who worked steadily with me we would not have done half what we did. As the wagons came up we piled the wounded on board and also had squads struggling down the road carrying, until well after midnight all the cases were got away.

14 October 1917. St. Julien. Today had been comparatively quiet as regards casualties though a good deal of shelling. Our bearers have been able to have a quieter time, though very difficult to really rest. We managed to get dry socks for them which is something. A great many of our men are suffering from mustard gas poisoning.

15 October 1917. St. Julien. Today I managed to make a tour of our bearer posts at Alberta and Mont de Hibou and saw Capt. Forbes. They are all much jaded, but keeping up wonderfully under the strain, though I am sure the gas will tell its tale. Already about 16 have gone in this way or wounded.

16 October 1917. St. Julien. Capt. Forbes' party at Hibou had a bad doing of gas. All of us had a certain amount but they had it badly. Forbes and more men have had to go and our casualties now amount to nearly 40. In addition to this 300 infantry bearers were recalled and 100 fresh ones sent up.

17 October 1917. St. Julien. Today the Huns have given us a terrific shelling almost all day. Many huge fellows burst close round and one hit just over the door, but by good fortune I had just been out and had one of my periodical clearances and only one man was hit, across the other side of the road. These pill boxes are wonderfully strong, as this shell only knocked off a corner. The concussion is of course tremendous. The shelling has been a wonderful and awesome sight. The shooting has been wonderfully accurate when one remembers that the guns are anything from 8 to 9 miles away. Dumps of ammunition have been going up all over the place, all day long, the final touch as far as we are concerned being the landing of a shell just at the end of our pillbox, which set fire to a pile of German shells which had been thrown out of the place. However Capt. Hancock and Warburton watched their opportunity and managed to extinguish it before it got well going and so no doubt saved us from further special shelling for the time being. Some of the heaviest shelling was at the fork in the road about 150 yards away, and here there was an exciting time for a lot of unfortunate ammunition carriers who were being driven down the road by the heavy shelling and had to run the gauntlet of the concentrated



barrage at the fork. Limbers without drivers, and riderless horses and horseless riders came scurrying breathlessly through and though at times shells seemed to swallow a party in its burst there were surprizingly few casualties. What there were however kept me pretty busy and we had some exciting moments getting the wounded away in the ambulance wagons. On one occasion just as we were getting the last case in, the last of 4 huge shells, all of which had been within 30 yards, pitched in the ditch at the roadside only 15 yards away, sending up a huge shower of mud and not damaging anyone. Another yard to one side on the harder part of the road and most of us would have caught it.

18 October 1917. St. Julien. The shelling has gone on all night, and in the early hours of this morning we again had it all round and over our sturdy pillbox. It is an extraordinary thing to hear the shell coming from afar, the rush through the air getting louder and louder, until it swoops on to you with an awful crash, fairly making the place rock. This afternoon a big flock of huge Gotha's came sailing over, and as usual all our machines disappeared. The Gotha's then circled majestically round, only a couple of thousand up and dropped their bombs on chosen spots. The bombs cause the most tremendous explosions and do an immense deal of damage. This morning we saw one of our scouts come circling down evidently trying to make a landing but just when he was about 100 feet from the ground the machine burst into flames and he dived to earth with a tremendous crash. About an hour later the poor fellow was brought in here, horrible burned, but bearing his pain in the most heroic manner. Last week we saw a German plane hit by a shell which broke one wing. The machine turned over and over and finally flicked the observer out (he is not usually fastened in like the pilot), so that we could see him falling quite away from the remains of the plane. The Germans are still keeping up the shelling with unusual rigour which is most unpleasant as one has to watch ones opportunity very carefully before going away to any other post. On the whole we have not been nearly as busy and the men are beginning to pick up again.

19 October 1917. St. Julien. This morning as things seemed quieter and the prospects of casualties less, I went over to Alberta and on to Hibou. When near the latter place however the shelling started up again, so I had to come back, with Warburton whom I met returning. The shelling got very heavy indeed again. Artillery House, where Bde. HQs were was hit several times and they finally had to vacate it. We were kept pretty busy until quite late. The shelling has been so continuous and heavy ever since we have been here, that it has been impossible to do any outside work, with any degree of continuity.

20 October 1917. St. Julien. The shelling has been kept up all night and our guns have been retaliating, so that there is not much rest to be had, though I find I can sleep fairly well through most of it. This morning again about 11 am the German shelling was renewed with special intensity, but fortunately for us, was directed on the area commencing about 150 yards ahead of us. One of Hancock's posts was caught and Sgt. Peart of the 28th FA was blown up, getting very severely concussed and slightly wounded. One of the Corporals attached to my post was wounded early this morning, just after he turned out. In the afternoon the shelling subsided for a time and we were able to do a certain of sand-bagging and outside repair work. This is the 11th day we have been in this place, and all of us will be heartily glad to get out.



22 October 1917. St. Julien. The monotonous way in which the Huns are shelling, makes one day very much like another. They are evidently making a most desperate effort to resist our pressure, and are keeping up an incessant barrage of very heavy shells (5.9) over all routes of approach and smashing up the country as much as possible. Each day there is just a short lull in the very early morning hours, and then the crowds of ammunition and ration carriers swarm up and continue until back comes a salvo of big shells, usually killing and wounding a number before the congestion dissolves away and very little more can be done. This morning there was another attack of either flank of our position to capture ground that had not been taken in the previous occasion. From 5.30 am for a couple of hours the guns roared in thousands, and I hear a most successful lot of work has been done. Unfortunately it rained again in the night and continued to drizzle until about 9 am, when it cleared and the rest of the day was fine. I took the opportunity of a lull in the afternoon to visit Alberta and have a chat with the men. We hear we may be relieved tomorrow or the day after. This had been a long strain for all as the Germans are putting up a desperate struggle to hang on to the last of the high ground, which is now almost within our grasp. They have shelled us almost without cessation, ever since I have been here, using very big shells and huge numbers of them. One lives in an atmosphere of constant vibration and appalling crashes.

23 October 1917. St. Julien. No orders have yet come (3.30) so there is no chance of a relief until tomorrow. This morning things were moderately quiet, but about 1 pm the Bosch artillery concentrated on us with 5.9 shells, and since then they have been falling thick and fast all round. The pill-box on the opposite side of the road in which our men billet has been hit twice. A huge fragment from the second blew away one of the sandbags, with which I built a wall in front of the two doors of this place, only yesterday. He must have quite a number of batteries directed on to us as the shells are simply streaming over and the old pill-box rocking under the vibration.

24 October 1917. St. Julien. At about 5 pm yesterday Captain MacGregor of the 148th FA RN came up with a small advance party. The remainder of the new ambulance is due during the day and as soon as they arrive, we move out.

26 October 1917. On leaving St. Julien the party collected at the WWCP Irish Farm where we passed the night in great discomfort as the ground was soft mud and all the tents blew down. The following day we trained to Wormhoudt and "bussed" from there to Synthe, where the whole ambulance is once more collected together.

30 October 1917. St. Idesbalde. At Synthe we spent 2 nights, when we got very short notice to move and came here. This place is on the coast about 7 or 8 kilometres from the front line. The duties of the Division in this sector are to hold about 700 yards of front line, from the sea inland and also coast defence. So it is what is reckoned as a resting job. This is a small seaside resort of which there seem a number dotted along the coast. The seashore is flat and sandy, backed by dunes among which the houses are scattered. Our billet is a nice little villa, comfortably furnished and a great change from the squalor in which we have been living for the past 2 months or so. In fact we have never been in quite so comfortable a billet before.

Pringle went on 3 months leave to SA on November 12 and the command of



the unit now devolves upon me.

22 November 1917. Returned yesterday from leave extending from November 7 to the 21st.

23 November 1917. St. Denoeux. I joined the unit today at this place. They got here the previous day having been on the march from St. Idasbalde - a distance of 81 miles - during the previous week. The sad news that our nice friend Fritz the "unit dog" had been killed on the way down, by a car.

26 November 1917. Planques. Moved over here today in fine weather. It was a heavy journey over very steep hills. Power had orders to go with a tent sub-section to take over the Corps. (Xth.) officers rest station at Val Resteau. Here we have taken over a large farm, which has been more or less derelict for the past year. It is the usual type on rather a large scale. The whole place is very neglected and out of repair. Our first work is to clear the various out-buildings, which have been used principally as stables. Our orders are to convert it into a DRS, and at first sight of it looks a pretty uphill job. However the men are putting their backs into clearing it up and I dare say things will look more hopeful in a day or two. Pringle having gone on leave I am now in command. I have with me now Forbes, Beyers CF and Liebson (arrived today from leave) and Monaghan who has gone on leave today.

2 December 1917. Marched to Hesdin to entrain for Peronne.

3 December 1917. Arrived at Peronne about 2 pm and marched to Allaine and camped there.

4 December 1917. Marched to Havrincourt Wood and shared a camp with the 3rd. FA Guards Division.

6 December 1917. Marched to Heudecourt and camped in comfortable billets for the first time since our move.

7 December 1917. Nurlu. Marched to this place, with instructions to commence the construction of a main dressing station for the 7th. Corps. On the evening of December 4th. Major Power marched to Havrincourt with the bearers and took over the bearer posts from the Guards Divisions. Today has been a black day as 7 of our men were killed and 4 wounded by a shell which penetrated the aid post in Gouzecourt. 3 of the wounded are not expected to live. Unfortunately all of them are good men who have been with us all the time. Major Power, Capt. Liebson, Lt. Beyers and Lt. Smith of our ambulance all happened to have met there when the shelling commenced. They had just decided to take refuge in the cellar into which they had already ordered the men and were running across the courtyard, when the shell came. The cellar was a deep one and protected by a thick layer of sand bags with a hole for light and ventilation. The shell pitched exactly in the hole and did not burst until it reached the cellar. Only one of the men in the cellar escaped unwounded. In one fell swoop therefore we have had more men killed than during the whole of our career, though many a tough and dangerous time. At this place we have plenty of work in store as the site allotted is merely an area in a ruined village with a few tents on it.

Names of men killed :



Parfitt  
Cornhill  
Page

Boyce  
Chapman TB  
Farrell.

Verity  
Davy (MT)

14 December 1917. Nurlu. All very busy with the construction of huts and shelters for the CMDS.

25 December 1917. Xmas Day. Since we have been in this district we have been very busy, as in addition to clearing the front of wounded we have had to construct a hospital camp for the reception of wounded and sick. Our first orders were to construct a new main Dressing station for the III Corps. Later on this Corps. went back to rest and we now come under the VII Corps., and the MDS idea has been given up, and we are now converting what we have done, and finishing off a place suitable for a DRS. The men have all been working well and done a prodigious amount of carpentering, road making and building. The weather had been all against us too as it has been freezing hard and snowing and blowing ever since we came here. When we arrived in this area we found everything in the greatest confusion. The great attack by the "tanks" had been a success so far as it went, but then the fatal mistake was made in trying once again to employ cavalry. They did just exactly what they have done on every occasion in which they have been used. They simply threw everything into confusion and accomplished nothing entirely ruining the success gained on the first day by the tanks. In this way a whole day was wasted if not two, which gave the Germans time to bring up guns and reinforcements, so that when the infantry had to take up what the cavalry had failed to do, they had to do so in the face of organised fire and positions. To all but the Higher Command the use of cavalry in this war has been obviously stupid, and in spite of every occasion proving the truth of this, they fall headlong into the same old errors time after time. The infantry therefore had to fight fiercely for what further ground they had gained, and whilst the casualties were negligible at the outset of the "push" they became huge later on. The next great error in this affair was that no provision had been made to hold the flanks which represented the base of the salient, with sufficiently strong divisions. The Germans did the obvious thing, against which the most primitive rules of warfare would have made provision, namely to try and pinch the salient by attacking on both flanks. A heavy attack was made on the Northern Flank and was held at great cost by good divisions. A feint was made on the Southern Flank and here to their utmost surprise the Germans met with little or no resistance. A thing that fortunately has seldom happened in this or any other war occurred. The divisions holding our flank fled without putting up any resistance. They were all divisions that have done badly before, but this was the climax. An artillery man told me that the first intimation his battery had of an attack was seeing our men bolting back followed by the Germans. The Guards Division that had been fighting hard in Bourlon Wood and had just been relieved and were coming into Havrincourt Wood were turned out helter skelter to stop the rout. Their APM posted himself near a prisoner cage on the main road of retreat and simply turned our men and officers into it and then into a trench to defend it. In this and other ways and by the pluck of a few individuals the rout was stopped and the Germans driven back for a bit but the net result was that they not only drove us back from the ground gained in the original attack but from what we had held before, besides capturing as many, if not more of our guns that we had taken of theirs. The result of all this was that the rest of the salient became untenable and had to be abandoned, so that on the whole we are just



about where we were. It was five days after this small disaster that we arrived, and as I said found everything in the greatest confusion. No one seemed to know where to go and orders and counter-orders crossed one another. Our bearers followed the infantry into the line. No scheme of evacuation had been worked out, and owing to being without a definite camp it was very difficult to do much to work out a scheme. However things have gradually settled down, though the Germans did an attack again a few days ago and succeeded in driving us further back, so that now very little of the originally gained ground remains.



THE WAR DIARIES OF CHARLES MOLTENO MURRAY

BOOK 3 : FRANCE

1 JAN 1918 - 28 DEC 1918



1 January 1918. Nurlu. We enter a third new year since the mobilization of the ambulance. The men had a Xmas dinner in a newly constructed and not quite finished hut and had another dinner and concert tonight and all seem enjoying it.

2 January 1918. Nurlu. Lt. Richardson our quarter-master and QMS Gordge were mentioned in despatches on New Years day.

5 January 1918. St. Maj. Kimberley has been awarded the Meritorious Services medal.

10 January 1918. Nurlu. Ever since we arrived in this area the weather has been very severe. There has been almost constant frost, with one or two thaws accompanied by rain, which have only lasted a few hours with the result that the whole surface of the country is coated with ice. Last night there was another blizzard and much snow which collected in great drifts. The snow gradually changed to rain, which washed away the snow, laying bare the ice once more and adding to it. At present it is continuing to thaw slowly, but still very cold.

14 January 1918. Nurlu. After 2 days thaw it has commenced to freeze hard again. Ever since we got here we have been building all sorts of huts etc., and now have a hospital with accomodation for 250 sick and have 240 actually under treatment. The hard weather and trying conditions have caused a great deal of sickness.

15 January 1918. Nurlu. The weather has broken again, and this time badly. Torrents of rain and a 1/2 gale of wind from the SW. The result is a rapid crumbling of the ground which is now a swamp of soft mud.

17 January 1918. Nurlu. The wind increased to a gale during the night of 15th and 16th and did a lot of damage, blowing the roofs off two of our huts for patients. So we have had a specially busy time repairing the damage. I hear today that the trenches have become so hopeless that the front line has had to be evacuated. A patrol which visited the German lines found that they had evacuated not only their front line, but also their support lines. There is not a gun firing nor has there been one for the last 48 hours.

25 January 1918. Nurlu. Since the frost broke, the weather has got quite mild. At first very wet, but finally culminating in a glorious bright day today. There has been quite a growth of all the quick growing things and today I found a primrose in the remains of the old garden in which our mess room stands. While other things were in process of construction the officers have put in their spare time in building a home for themselves. Among the ruins I found an old garden with brick walls intact on three sides. In one of the angles we have built a room about 16 x 14, roofed with corrugated iron, and walls made of double roofing felt, and lined with hessian inside. A great feature of it is an enormous fireplace in which we can burn huge logs, of which there are plenty from the fallen trees. The cookhouse is on the outside of the garden wall, and a trapdoor leads into the messroom so that our meals can be handed through. I don't think we have ever been more comfortable. The hospital now consists of 4 wards - 2 Adrian huts, 1 Hospital Nissen and 2 Marquees linked, which accomodate 250 patients comfortably. Another Adrian Hut is fitted up as a dining hall and recreation room. Since we have come we have built the following : 2 roomy bays covered with broken brick for the arrival and outgoing



cases. 1 Adrian Hut; 1 Hospital Nissen; 1 Hut for offices, dispensary, hairdresser; a large cookhouse; a bathroom for hot showers, clothing store and ironing room; Bunked all the huts and bricked the floors, built fireplaces and made iron chimneys, laid down duck board paths and brick paths all through, erected a lot of earthen walls to keep out flying splinters from bombs, laid out a huge red cross, made numerous partitions in the QM Store hut, for office, mens quarters, drug store, rifle store, pack store, medical inspection room, dentists workshop, bunks for ward masters etc. Also many tables and much shelving. The tables seat 250 Men. Erected a stage and a canteen store. Also making stables for 40 horses and stands for our wagons and cars to the number of 21 vehicles in all. Made a shelter for patients to wait in on arrival until they have been sorted out. In fact this list only gives an outline of the work done, because all sorts of difficulties have been encountered in severe weather and storms. Today Gen. Smuts visited us. I met him at Div. HQ. He was en route for another part of the line and had no time to inspect anything.

31 January 1918. Nurlu. We are under orders to move and tomorrow we travel to Suzanne, a village of the banks of the Somme and just about where the French started their offensive in July 1916. Last night there was another Gotha raid on this village. About 60 - 100 bombs of all sizes were dropped all over the place, without effecting a single casualty. Some men were killed and wounded in a neighbouring village. Machines came over for about 1 1/2 hours. We shall be very sorry to leave the comfortable quarters we have made for ourselves and patients.

1 February 1918. Suzanne. Moved by rail and road to this place. The day was foggy and bitterly cold.

1 February 1918. Suzanne. We are now in a village on the N. Bank of the Somme not far where we took part in the first Somme battle in July 1916. This village was then in the French lines and not far behind. It has some fine buildings in it, which are a good deal knocked about but not entirely destroyed. Our abode is a fairly big chateau standing well upon a hillside and commanding a fine view of the River valley. We are "out" for rest and training. As usual there won't be much rest about it as we have a lot of work before us to get things comfortable enough to live with even a moderate degree of comfort. Apart from the scattered nature of our billets we of the ambulance are not too badly off.

10 Feb 1918. Suzanne. We are having quite a busy time training. We have a regular course of lectures fixed up for our own and the Reg. Stretcher Bearers and all seem keen. The day is filled up with drill, lectures, exercises and games. The rumours floating about are that the Germans are preparing a big attack all along the front and we are busy preparing to meet it. The process of attrition and gradual wearing down of the enemy seems slow work if he is able to take the initiative like this at will. The army is now busy with a scheme of general re-organisation. A Brigade is being taken from each Division, so making the Division a smaller unit and more comparable to the German Division. I am wondering if it is going to affect the Medical units in any way. The weather is still keeping wonderfully mild and quite springlike. Long may it keep so.

18 February 1918. Suzanne. Yesterday the Bde. marched to Delville Wood, and there held a memorial service. We were favoured by a beautiful clear frosty winter's day. There was not a cloud in the sky



all day. Starting from here about 8.30 we reached Longueval about 11 am and made tea and ate our lunch. At 12.45 the Bde marched over to the site on the edge of the wood which had been chosen for the erection of a wooden cross. They were formed in a hollow square facing the cross, near which the Chaplains took up their stand beside 2 big drums placed one on the other. The band of the 7th. Regiment stood behind the padre's whilst the SA Scottish pipers stood in the background behind the Cross. Just as the forming up was drawing towards completion - it took some time as the ground was very uneven due to the network of old shellholes - Major Baker (later Bde Major) Colonel Ward of the General Hospital and 5 sisters arrived. The sisters among whom were the Matron, Miss Schiener and Miss Thomson, brought flowers which brought a small element of softness into the otherwise stern and desolate scene around. The ceremony commenced by a "Lament" from the pipers after which followed the service, during which the three padre's each took part. Captain Hill for C of E, Captain Menzies for Presbyterians and Captain Ensin spoke in Dutch. At the close of the service the 3rd Regiment, which appeared for the last time as a separate unit, fired 3 volleys and the buglars sounded the last post. General Lukin then addressed the Brigade and presented ribands to those who have recently won honours. At the conclusion of this the Bde moved off, and were cinematographed as they marched past a point where General Lukin had taken up his position near the crossroads in Longueval. Owing to the indefiniteness of arrangements the 1st Reg. and ourselves left the ground by another route and did not come in for this part of the proceedings. Bathed in sunshine and overgrown with grass, the turmoil in Delville Wood looked less desolate than I have yet seen it. The salvage parties too have cleared away much of the debris and fallen trees. The unburied dead have been collected and buried in little groups alongside their own comrades. But even so the scene will long remain one of utter desolation. Not a single tree has been left living and most are merely stumps a few feet high. The SA Scottish have also erected a rustic cross to the memory of their dead. Two of the sisters who came up had lost brothers in Delville Wood and one of them was fortunate, by the aid of a plan sent by one of her brother's friends, in finding it. For the rest, unless one has some such information, it is worse than searching for a needle in a bundle of hay. After the Bde had nearly all left I met Major's Barnard and Welsh who had come all the way from Dieppe, but had been delayed on the road and were just too late.

26 February 1918. I managed to get my leave fixed up so as to leave France on 21st arriving in London on the morning of the 22nd. The next day Hilda and I went to George and Margaret's wedding which took place in the Presbyterian Church off Edgeware Road, and after at Palace Court. It was a very simple quiet wedding with just the immediate friends and relatives present. Margaret looked lovely as she always does and both were radiant.

10 March 1918. Haut Allanes. I returned today from leave extending from Feb. 21 to Mar. 8th. Going I went by the Le Havre route which means a long and most uncomfortable sea journey. Returning I managed to come back via Boulogne in order to call upon the Oc BRC Base Depot Major Paget. While on leave I saw the SA Hospital and Comforts Fund about getting new cars for the ambulances and have their promises to do their best. I also visited War Office and arranged for method of purchase. I visited the BRC London and saw Sir Ernest Clark in regard to gaining his help for getting the Field Kitchen which has been presented through Rev. Doyle, and hope this may eventually be



possible. While in London I had an interesting talk with Bourne on the reorganisation or rather the putting on a better footing the organisation of the SAMC units in Europe. Met Pringle looking very fit, having got back only 5 days late from his 3 months leave to SA. My return journey was an interesting one as I met a Major Kindersley who is an inspector of food economy in the Armies (L of C) in France. He kindly took me with him in his car and showed me the school of cookery at Etaples which was very interesting, and drove me on to the Gen. Hospital at Abbeville where I stayed the night. The Gen. Hospital had grown into quite a large concern, and by the help of various funds has now a very splendid outfit and doing excellent work. They are also gradually putting up huts in place of tents which is a vast improvement. I came on in the evening and stayed the night in Amiens, where a car fetched me the next morning. On reaching the unit here I found Laurie had been taken ill with fever and has gone to Hospital. The unit had moved here about 5 days ago and on the 12th. we go to Fins, and the Division goes into their old front which he held in December and January last. This is the first time we have gone actually into the same sector. We are relieving the 39th Division who originally relieved us.

19 March 1918. Fins. Maindressing Street. We marched up here and took over from the 132nd. FA 39th Division on the 12th. A great deal of defence work has been done since we were here 2 months ago. Trenches have been outlined about a foot deep, and wired in front. There is a succession of - I think - 5 lines of defence, 3 of which are behind us. We have also been posted in elaborate schemes of defence and exactly what to do in case of withdrawal. All this is very different to last year. Then we were all for attack and no thought of defence. Then we talked about having arrived by now at the winding up stages of the war. To be on the defensive now seems the abandonment of all hope of anything conclusive from a military point of view. I think no doubt the Cambrai disaster has waked the higher command up to the fact that it has been folly to be as unprepared for defence as up to the present. Leslie Wisely is with one of the RFA Bdes attached to the 39th Division, but I have not been able to look him up as we are too short handed. Power is still in Paris attending the Allied Medical Conference and writes that he does not expect to return until the 23rd. at least. Laurie is ill and so is Levisieur. McAustin is on leave and GA Beyers at a "course" at the army school. Since being here the weather has been simply wonderful. Mild and warm and pleasanter than one can generally hope for even in Summer. Today however there is a change. The wind has gone to the SW and wet and gloom have set in. However the general appearance is against a complete break up. Every few days we get a warning that the Germans will attack "next morning". They have been using considerable quantities of gas shells with rather disastrous results. The division on our left (2nd) has already lost some thousands temporarily disabled. We have had about a 100 or so up to the present all in two days. The gas used is mostly what the Tommies call "mustard gas". It causes great pain and inflammation of the eyes, and later burning of the skin, causing blisters and at the same time causing great irritation of the bronchial tract and lungs. The bowels are also affected and a good deal of abdominal pain. The last few days the symptoms are less as regards the eyes and more pronounced as regards the chest and abdomen. It seems likely that mixed gases are being used. The Germans seem to be aiming at chemicals which impregnate the ground and continue for days to emit poisonous fumes with the result that the area becomes almost uninhabitable. The bulk of the men got gassed merely by passing over the ground that had



been shelled a day or two before and where it seemed unnecessary to wear a mask, because the smell was so slight. Aeroplane work has been very active as far as we are concerned, and consequently we have seen less of the Bosch. There has been very little bombing but I have no doubt as the moon grows fuller we shall get the usual visitations. On my return I found letters from the American Med. Hqs thanking me for some notes on the use and application of my splint and inviting me to come and visit them as soon as I could find time. I hope to do so, as it would be interesting. Pringle returned on the 12th - the day we got here - so now we are back again to our former strength.

21 March 1918. Fins. This morning at 4.45 am we were roused by a furious bombardment, along an extended front, which seemed in the bulk to be north of us. This was the opening of the long expected German offensive. We were up and dressed not long afterwards. As it grew light cases began to come in and have continued to flow in all day, but not in very large numbers. The Germans used a great deal of gas which has caused a certain number of casualties. During the day a good deal of shrapnel has been fired over us and about a dozen large shells have landed in the camp, but fortunately have not resulted in any casualties. One shell pitched right at the entrance of the Receiving Hut, where the Sgt. Major (Kimberley) was looking at a motor cycle. The cycle was blown into the air clean over the hut and landed near our Dressing Room, about 30 yards away, and by a wonderful piece of good fortune the SM was not more than shaken up. Another shell tore up our water main. It has been difficult to gather exactly what has happened, but it seems that the 21st. Division on our right has been driven back somewhat. Our own division has driven off all attacks so far. I am writing at odd intervals and now at 11 pm some wounded who have come in say the 21st Division has counter attacked, and regained the lost ground, but whether they can hold it remains to be seen. During the day the German planes have been very active as they always are when it really counts. They destroyed the only 4 balloons we had up in a very short time and then came over reconnoitering on several occasions, but none of our planes put in an appearance to give them battle. Our air service seems lacking on important occasions, while an enormous amount of patrolling goes on during "peace warfare". Tomorrow promises to be a day full of interest. The bombardments are so terrific on both sides that it is doubtful whether we shall be forced to retire, as has been the case with the attacks in the past. The Germans have seldom stopped us at the start, though they have managed it in the later and more broken fighting. It would seem therefore that as they have not succeeded at the start they will find it very difficult to go on again tomorrow. So far it has always been held that the attacker can always gain at first by the weight of his bombardment and having the concentration just where he wants. Of course we have not yet heard what has happened elsewhere or how far the attack extended. This morning poor young Peacock was killed. He was recently acting as my batman, and is one of our star men who has been through all the battles unscathed. Paynter was also slightly wounded in the knee, but otherwise we have come off well.

24 March 1918. Bronfay Farm. As I hinted when last writing, things have been far more exciting than I anticipated then. To take up the thread of events and note them shortly. The weather has been mid-summerlike all the time. From the morning of 21st we were kept moderately busy but were able all the time to cope with the casualties, although we were dealing with walkers, gassed and serious. Reports on 21st showed that we (9th Div.) were holding off



the attack at a very great cost. On the 22nd the shelling got more vigorous round about us, and seemed to be creeping round to our right flank. About 4 in the afternoon we were warned by the RC's to be prepared to burn our huts that night so I went over to Nurlu to get news. There I heard that the 21st and 16th Divisions on our right were giving way and we were to fall back on the "Green Line". The Bosch were already advancing on Hiramont, which was only 3 kilometres away. On my return we packed up our things and moved away at once via Nurlu to Moislans and Hautallaines (more news came in relative to moving again. The Bosch seem to be still coming on.) 1.30 pm we are "standing to". I heard from the bearer officers ahead that they were temporarily clear of wounded. Instructions had been issued that from then on serious cases would have to be left. When I left about 5.45 the Bosch were coming over a ridge about a mile away, and I am afraid must have captured some of our guns I saw firing away to the last. After I left the place was set on fire. As we passed through the "Green Line" there were evidences of preparation for its defence. In the mean time we heard that the 21st and 16th were still in retreat. At Moislans I gave orders for our transport which we had sent back in the early hours of the day to move after me and then went on and fixed on a site for a bivouac for the night. This was in a gully near the point where the Hautallaines Clery Road crosses the Peronne Road. It was nearly midnight before all our unit was fed and lying down to rest. Luckily a beautiful summer night. At about 2 am Capt. Jack arrived with orders that we were to move at dawn as the Div. was under orders to fall back in conformity with a general move. So by 7.30 am we were on the road again and trekked to Combles, where we outspanned at about 11 am. It was then hot and bright, and we managed to have a bath in shell holes, which had been filled with water by the recent rain. As time went on the gunfire increased in vigour and we could hear shells coming the other side of the ridge we had crossed just behind Combles. Then we got a verbal order to go on again, but no definite objective. So we proceeded by Guillemont, Trones Wood and Longueval to Maricourt and so to this camp, getting here about 6 pm on 23rd. Laurie turned up from Hospital on 23rd and joined us at Combles and also G.A. Beyers. All the way back we have seen not a sign of any new line being formed, but latterly re-inforcing Divisions and Artillery have been coming up. One is hearing all sorts of rumours, but one thing that is outstanding is that the 9th Division has been the mainstay of the retreat and that the SA troops in particular have been the most conspicuous. Capt. Smith RMO of the 1st Regiment has just come in and says the Bosch have now got Clery and that we have fallen back on a ridge near Maurepas. So far we have repelled every attack and have only had to fall back in conformity with the Divisions on our right and left.

25 March 1918. Bray-Corbie Road. Since writing yesterday I have come on in charge of our transport and men not required in front, to a point about 5 kilo. beyond Bray. Yesterday afternoon the news came in that the SA Brigade in holding back the Bosch, had got surrounded. Rather than be party to the disgraceful retreat of the divisions on our flanks they decided to fight to a finish. A wounded man tells that after all their ammunition was done, Colonel Heale (the only battalion commander left) called on his men to fix bayonets which they did. He then led them in a last charge against the enemy. General Dawson and all his staff were with the Brigade, and it will go down in history that South Africans at any rate refused to fly before the enemy like the dispicable divisions on our flanks. The last stand of the South African Brigade was made at the Bois Marrieres on the Boucnavesnes Clery Ridge.



This battle has shown, what I have always feared, but never yet liked to express, and that is that English troops have no longer any real gut. Never have Scottish, or Colonial troops given in like the English, and I feel very little reliance can ever be placed in them again. All through the war it is the Scottish first and latterly the colonial troops that have done all the fighting. Our failures in every case have been due to the cowardice of the English troops. Our Press had lauded up their failures and condoned their lack of patriotism and courage by fulsome praise of paltry incidents, and feeble excuses. Until this nation as a whole is prepared to call a spade a spade and cease to gloss over our shortcomings, we shall never be able to regain our prestige. We have descended to vituperation and guttersnipe criticisms of our enemy, whilst we have not been able to hold a candle to them for real esprit-de-corps and patriotism. The only comforting thing in it all is that Englishmen who have gone to other parts of the Empire, like old seed transferred to new soil, have there maintained the characteristics of the old stock, and kept them fresh. The blow to English prestige is stupendous and worse by far than the smash up now going on. Here are colonial troops, ready to die beside their homeborne cousins, and to fight like men, whereas when it has come to the push they have deserted us like miserable cowards. When I came away last night the remains of our division was preparing to defend the line from Maricourt to Suzanne, whilst relieving divisions were going in to try and hold the line in front of Maricourt which we were still holding.

27 March 1918. Hennencourt Wood. Continuing from 23rd. When the Colonel and the rest of our men arrived at the camp we decided (here I had to break off). March 26th to go on for about a mile to a huge aerodrome which was in the process of construction for Hanley-Page machines, and was temporarily being used by a flight of our observing planes. Here we made ourselves most comfortable and thinking we were now so far back and that the line was going to be held, we all turned in and some of us got into pyjamas for the first time. However we had not been in bed more than about 1/2 an hour, when Capt. Rankins (DADMS) came in to say we must move at once to Buire sur L'ancre. So off we went again, leaving the airmen making preparations to burn down the beautiful new aerodrome. We reached our destination in the early hours of 26th. finding the village deserted. After waiting an hour or two and getting no further orders we made ourselves as comfortable as possible in the houses, from which the wretched inhabitants had fled leaving everything just as it was. About 10 am we got order to fall back on Henencourt, where we camped in the shelter of the wood, rigging up our tents to deal with wounded. There we spent the night of the 26-27th. During the night the German planes bombed heavily and after doing this flew low and emptied their machine guns along the roads, there being brilliant moonlight.

28 March 1918. Toutencourt. On the morning of the 27th we were told that the Bosch were now held up on the outskirts of Albert on a line skirting the Ancke back to Buire. Our orders were to take over the line, so Laurie and I went off to reconnoitre. As we came over to the Ancke Valley we noticed the shelling getting rather brisk and saw our troops falling back on the left. Our men who were coming back said they had been ordered to fall back on to the next ridge so there was nothing for it but to come back too. The Bosch then put up a fairly good barrage of 5.9 HE behind us and another of gas shells about 250 yards behind that again. As we passed the gas barrage I was walking with our GMS and Laurie about 10 yards behind, when a shell pitched



less than a yard from Laurie's feet, and spattered us all over with flying earth. By some marvellous chance Laurie was not hit. (Had to break off to move again).

29 March 1918. Frechecourt. Moved here last night. To continue the course of events. After Laurie's escape we made our way back to Lavieval, where we were to take over the dressing station from 28th. FA. As we drew near we met fresh troops forming up in open order to repel the attack. I spoke to Gen. Kennedy of 26th. Brigade. It seems it was his Brigade that was falling back owing to some misunderstanding, and that now they were going to stake their position in Dernancourt Valley. Shortly after reaching Lavieval orders came for us to take over and so we decided to remain there until our men came up. We had lunch with 28th officers, and had just finished when a 5.9 landed almost against the wall of the house, shattering all the windows and bringing down a shower of plaster from the ceiling. At about 3 pm (the hour by which we were to take over) another order came saying we were to come back and that an Australian FA would take over, so we returned to Henencourt Wood, where we found our people prepared to move off. We got to Toutencourt in the evening and lodged comfortably in a collection of huts of the army school there. On the way we passed no end of troops and guns both coming and going, and for the present the progress of the Bosch seems centred along the Ancre. However as far as our Division is concerned we have all along held them wherever it was necessary and only retired on orders to do so in conformity with the fleeing divisions on our flanks. Today the weather has broken and it is raining steadily.

Later - Since writing this morning we have moved again and are now at Raineville, and apparently on the way to getting well out of the battle area to refit. It appears that our Division will not have lost so very heavily after all as men are coming in from all sources, having become temporarily separated or cut off in the rapid retreat. I have just been reading an account of events in the Times of 26th which on the whole is fairly accurate but of course talks in the most fulsome manner about the courage of our troops. Undoubtedly there have been many brave stands, but there has been far too large a proportion of cowardice and unfortunately this seems entirely confined to the English regiments. In no single case were Scottish or Colonial troops driven from their positions, against which the Germans hurled their greatest forces, whilst in innumerable cases divisions like the 21st and 16th fled before even they were attacked and never fired a shot in defence. If we are to regain our prestige acts like these should be held up to the scorn they deserve and our army be purged of such vermin.

#### REPORT ON THE PART TAKEN BY THE S.A. FIELD AMBULANCE IN THE OPERATION DURING THE RECENT BATTLE FROM 21ST MARCH 1918.

12 - 20 March. Map Ref. 57 C - 62 C.

The unit took over the MDS at Fins V.18.C from 132nd FA 39th Division on the 12th. Since the occupation of this area by the Div. in December and Jan. last, a great deal of defensive work had been carried out, and plans in accordance with this, issued to units. Our instructions were to make arrangements for dealing with walking wounded, lying wounded and gas cases. In the event of an attack we were to have an officer and 30 men in readiness to reinforce the forward posts. The forward area was manned by the 27th FA. On the evening of the 12th we had orders to be prepared for an attack the following morning. During the day a considerable number of gassed cases came through. The great bulk of these showed typical symptoms of "mustard gas poisoning", the



absence of burns and blisters being rather noticeable. The clothing was very slightly and in many cases hardly at all impregnated with the smell of the gas. In accordance with instructions these cases were stripped of clothing, bathed in hot soap and water, swabbed with Chloralamine T, and eyes bathed with Boric Lotion and oil dropped in. Inhalations of a soothing mixture and hypodermics of camphor were also administered. Most of the cases expressed relief from these measures and were evacuated in moderate comfort. The great bulk of the cases were mild and none died at the MDS. Concurrently with this a fair number of walking and lying cases came through, but at no time was there any congestion. The evacuation and collection from forward posts at Queens and Fins Couzeavous was carried out by our own MAWO for the first 2 days, but after that arrangements were made with No. 3 MAC for 5 cars to be always in waiting to cope with the evacuations. Rather confusing orders were given in regard to the disposal of the clothing and equipment of gassed cases, which resulted in the accumulation of a considerable amount at the MDS.

21 March 1918. At 4.45 am the German Barrage was put over and the shelling of our region commenced. In accordance with HQMS instructions bearer parties were sent off as detailed.

22 OR to Queens

10 OR to Fins

8 OR to each regiment

As dawn broke cases of all kinds began to come in. As previously arranged reinforcements of lorries for the walking wounded and MAC cars came up to deal with the evacuation, which went on smoothly. The number of casualties was not great, and well with the power of our arrangements to cope with. Early in the day the camp was shelled. One shell landed in the bath house and cut the water main, but this was soon got under control by the RES. No great damage was done and no casualties occurred. Throughout the day shrapnel was burst over the camp. As the evening drew in the flow of casualties diminished and remained steady during the night. That day Pte. Peacock was killed while stretcher bearing near Tykedump and Pte. Paynter was wounded and evacuated. It was decided today that in a number of slightly gassed cases, where there were very slight eye symptoms, and no apparent impregnation of the clothing, that it was unnecessary to remove their clothing, and they were simply sent to the 28th FA for observation. At noon a tent sub-section of the 65th FA and 2 officers reinforced us at the MDS, as also Lt. Saunders MRC from the 28th FA.

22 March 1918. During the early hours of the morning the transport was sent in charge of Lt. GM Richardson to await orders at Moislans. 295 wagons and 3 Haws being retained for emergency purposes. There was a steady flow of cases of all sorts, but not so numerous as on the previous day. The point that was noticeable about the gas cases was that the eye symptoms were far less acute and the laryngitis and chest symptoms more marked, whilst blistering was even less marked. As the day wore on the bombardment of Fins with gas and HE became very heavy and the shelling seemed to be creeping round to our right flank as well, and more shells came into the camp. At about 4.45 pm order arrived from ADS for us to evacuate the MDS at once. I immediately sent off the wagons with our equipment and 3 lorry loads of med. stores, comforts, stretchers and blankets. Orders were then sent to Capt. Hancock at W8a17 and Capt. Hepple at Sorel-le-Grand to clear their wounded and fall back, leaving stretcher cases with food if unable to get them away. I then marched the main body of men across country via Manancourt to Moislans, leaving Major Murray with 2 MAWS to



clear the remaining wounded. This was carried out and Sgt. Benson (MT) remained in the hope that it might still be possible to get a car back to clear the residue of M2 stores, and assist in destroying the huts and stores. He came away about 8 pm, as no car could get back. When we took over the MDS there was a considerable accumulation of Med. Stores and BRCS material which we commenced immediately to sort out and return. On this day we utilized some of the lorries and sent away 2 loads of clothing and equipment from gassed cases to Peronne, but as no one would take it, it was dumped there. On finally leaving I took 3 lorry loads of Med. Stores, comforts, stretchers and blankets, away with me. During the day walking wounded and gassed cases were passed back and only lying cases dealt with. Sick were also sent back. Our order on quitting the MDS were to proceed to Hautallaines and as the village was overflowing with troops I bivouaced at I.2 d 4.4. The whole unit finally assembled there about 11 pm. In accordance with verbal orders of ADMS 2 lorries were sent back to help in the evacuation of Moislans. These lorries were accompanied by Lt. CF Beyers who was to report for duty at Moislans. Several stretcher bearers reported that night from the regiments.

23 March 1918. At 2 am Capt. Jack arrived with orders from the ADMS that we were to move to Combles at dawn and await further orders. The unit arrived at a camp about 2 kilometres beyond Combles on the Guillemont Road at about 11 am and there camped in bright warm sunshine, awaiting orders. Whilst there Lt. GA Beyers rejoined us having walked from Peronne and abandoned his kit at Ham., where he had been attending the army school. About 2 hours later Capt. Lawrie arrived from hospital having had to abandon part of his kit at Peronne. Our MAW's were at this time employed in evacuating Moislans in conjunction with the cars of the other FA's. At 2.30 pm we received order from ADMS to fall back on the neighbourhood of Maricourt, arriving at Bronfay Farm at about 6 pm. Here we opened up an Advanced Dressing Station in conjunction with 28th FA in the farm buildings, the next day.

24 March 1918. We spent the night at Bonfray (sic) Farm. Our MAW's were employed the next morning in evacuating wounded from the ridge between Combles Murepas, which the Div. was still holding, and later on as the Div. withdrew to positions in front of Maricourt and Montauban. About midday we received orders to send 40 bearers and an officer to Maricourt. These went off in charge of Cpt. Lawrie and Lt. GA Beyers. Just before they left Capt. Smith W.R. came in to ask for cars to bring away wounded as the SA Brigade was holding a position Bouchevignes-Clery. The whole party returned in about 2 hours with the news that the SA Bde. had been cut off and the Div. was falling back on Maricourt. That evening I received orders to send transport back along the Bray Corbie Road. I sent it off in charge of Major Murray, remaining with the bulk of the men at Bonfray Farm. Due to the stress of circumstances no records were kept at this post.

25 March 1918. About midday I received orders from ADMS to fall back on the transport on the Bray Corbie Road, eventually housing the whole unit in a newly made aerodrome about 6 kilometres behind Bray. Before leaving Capt. Lawrie was detailed with a party of bearers to proceed to Montauban, to clear the 26th Bde. and 1st. Cav. Div. Lt. CF Beyers remained at Bonfray Farm with the rest of the bearers. At 11 pm on orders from ADMS the unit moved to Buire-Sur-L'ancre arriving there about 3 am and standing by till daylight for further orders.



26 March 1918. Orders arrived at about 10 am to fall back on Henencourt and form an MDS there. On arrival the place was so congested that I decided to work under canvas and pitched camp in the valley to the west and in the shelter of Henencourt Wood. The MAWS and HAW's worked forward to Lavieville and Dernancourt and wounded were evacuated by MAC cars and passing lorries. This work was carried on throughout the night.

27 March 1918. On receipt of orders from ADMS to take over the forward area, I sent Major Murray and Capt. Lawrie to reconnoitre, and later on received a message from them that the Div. was falling back from Dernancourt, where they had arrived just as the retirement took place. They were awaiting further orders and preparing to take over from 28th FA at Lavieville. Later in the day on receipt of order I handed over the site at Henencourt Wood to the 4th Australian FA and moved the unit to Toutencourt arriving there about 6.30 pm.

Today General Tudor who was our CRA has been given command of our Division and General Blacklock who has only just been appointed to our Division has been given command of the 35th Division which is another of those who ran.

31 March 1918. Bonneville. All yesterday we rested at Raineville and were very pleased to do so, as we have had little or no rest and in addition it rained nearly all day. I spent most of the day drawing up a report of our doings in the retreat for record purposes. This morning we moved to this place, near which we entrain for the North. I think everyone will be very disappointed as Belgium is the worst part of the front and everyone who goes there devoutly hopes never to do so again.

3 April 1918. Seddon Camp near Vierstraat. On Monday 31st March we marched in the evening to Candas where according to programme we were to entrain at 9.20 pm. However it was about 2 am on April 1st before the train arrived. There were nothing but cattle trucks, and we spent a very jolty and smellie night trying to sleep on the floor, upon which many a load of horses had already journeyed. We jogged along all night and next day till 3 pm, passing through Boulougne and Calais and St. Omer until we detrained at Abeele. Here we were met by lorries which conveyed us to this camp which is about 7 or 8000 yards behind the line. The orders which have just arrived instruct us to take over the forward area, while the 28th takes the MDS and the 27th the Rest Station. Our ADS will be at Voormezele.

4 April 1918. Voormezele ADS. We moved up here today and are now in the IX Corps. We took over from the 3rd Australian FA. Power and Lawrie came up last evening and took over all the posts, which Pringle inspected this afternoon. We are now ensconced in the cellars of a shattered house, which are kept dry by pumping, but on the whole things are far more comfortable than one hoped for in this horrible part of the line. Our predecessors have all put in good work with the result that a fair degree of comfort and shelter has been evolved out of otherwise hopeless looking places. We presume that we are here to "refit" and that as all available divisions will now be required in the battle area, we could not do our "refitting" out of the line.

6 April 1918. Voormezele. Yesterday I made the usual tour of the trenches and as this is such an interesting sector a short description will be worth recording. This place must have been at one time the



centre of a small village. There is nothing now to be seen but the very shattered remnants of houses. Our Aid Post is rather a scattered affair. The central part is a series of cellars, which are protected by the debris of the houses above together with a medley of sand and sandbags. The cellars have been strengthened by supports and wooden floors put in. A good deal of water leaks in but there is a central bilge hole from which is pumped out every 1/4 of an hour or so. In these cellars we treat the walking wounded and also have our living quarters, and some quarters for men. On the opposite side of the road 3 elephant shelters have been erected and reinforced with concrete and earth, where we deal with the stretcher cases. A couple of Nissen Huts, banked round with earth against bombing, but not shellproof serve for the gas treatment place. Then round about are various dugouts and shelters beneath the ruins where the men sleep. Considering everything we are very comfortable. From this post to the next one at Spoilbank is about a mile. Spoilbank is at the end of a cutting where the Ypres-Commines Canal goes though a bit of a hill. The AID Post there is dug into the bank and quite well protected from splinters. A direct hit would penetrate. From Spoilbank we walked up the canal along a duck board track. The canal is now nearly dry and its banks are blasted by repeated shelling, out of all recognition. Dugouts penetrate it in all directions. As one walks along the top the scene is one of turmoil usual to intense shelling whilst here and there chimneys stick apparently out of the ground coming from the dugouts beneath, or perhaps a thin pipe emitting the exhaust of one or other of the petrol engines used in generating electricity or pumping water, thrusts its way from a heap of debris. We followed the canal up until it came to a point where it meets the railway or rather what is left of it. Here was the famous hillock known as the "Bluff" and the trench running along the railway Railway Trench. The rise in front is held by our outposts whilst the Germans are just down the other side. In this area are still numbers of dugouts in which lie the bodies of both our men and Germans who have died in hand to hand struggles. After visiting the RAP's here, we made our way back and having no guide and being unable to get reliable information we walked about Battle Wood until at last we met a party of men who really did know the country and from their directions made our way back to the railway and found the famous Hill 60. This has now been reduced to a wild mass of craters and huge shell holes and lies well within our lines. The hill is down by a railway cutting and the mounds on either side have been almost blasted away by the explosion of 2 great mines which were set off when the Messines Ridge was captured. The men now call it "Hole 60". From Hill 60 there is a good view of the country round and the Zillebeke Lake. The whole of the country is torn and blasted and nothing but stumps a few feet high, remain of what were once quite big woods.

10 April 1918. Voormezele. Since writing last the weather has been misty and damp, though not very wet. Things seemed pretty quiet here, but yesterday a very lively bombardment started up South of us. We got no news at all until late in the evening when we heard that the Germans had commenced another "push" on a front extending from Givenchy in the South to Fleurbaik in the North. Though news was scanty it seems that progress was made all along and at points to a considerable depth. The line is of course thinly held and our communiquees have kept telling us in the "intelligence" that no attack was intended. That such preparation as were going on were meant only to deceive and were pure camouflage and etc. Our division is spread out over a huge front considering the condition we are in, but even so I am sure they will give a good account of themselves. What will happen elsewhere is



impossible to predict in view of the hopeless way in which all but a few divisions have recently behaved. This morning the bombardment was renewed and spread up this way. This place came in for quite a heavy shelling, but fortunately we are pretty well protected and escaped any direct hits though quite a number were very close indeed. The shelling as far as we are concerned, lasted about 2 hours and was then directed elsewhere. It has been kept up steadily all along the front and tonight hear that Messiness has fallen. This will make it rather difficult for us to hold on here, and we are now rather anxiously awaiting events. As far as I can make out the Bosche attacked our outposts during the latter part of the day in sufficient numbers to drive them back on our front line. This we shall probably be able to hold unless of course the flanks are driven in again. The extent of new front that the Bosche is now operating on must be about 10 miles, so that he is attacking on something like a 60 mile front now. Some very interesting figures have come out in our communiques of the last few days. 87 German divisions were used in the first offensive on March 21st. The concentration was greatest on the north of the Somme where he used one division to every 2 kilometres (2400 yards). In our offensives we made use at Arras and Ypres of one division to every 900 yards and at that time our divisions were nearly 1/4 larger than the Germans. So it works out that he has used a concentration which is only 1/2 and in many cases only 1/3 of what we used. Added to this I think it is universally agreed that he had not nearly so many guns in concentration as we did. Yet in the face of this his troops were only driven back at great cost, whereas ours in many cases seem to have put up no defense at all. I can't make up my mind exactly where the fault lies, because I know enough of the men to know that well led they would never have given way. I am more than afraid that the whole onus of defeat lies on the officers and bad leading. I can't believe that the men who have faced what they have done in the past, would have broken had they been capably led. The success of our own SA Brigade has largely been due to a very careful selection of officers. Practically every one of them has had to serve in the ranks of the Bde., whereby they have got to know their men and be known by them. The Germans have shown many new methods in the attack. One of the main features was that they did not advance in "open order" as has usually been the case and still is with us, but came in small parties of about 50 and less. These all stuck together and advanced in short rushes. These platoons were preceded and followed by smaller groups of "specialists" who worked machine guns, bomb throwers etc. Another feature was that instead of waiting for whole batteries of guns to move up together, many of their field guns were taken forward singly and got into action as quickly as the infantry advanced. The result of coming in the way they did, was that it was almost impossible for our scattered formations to shoot down the whole of a party before a considerable portion had gained their objective, whereupon they immediately outnumber our men in that particular spot. To say that they greatly outnumbered our men all along the front I am convinced is a gross exaggeration. Wherever a regiment of our men with sufficient determination to hold a position, made up their minds to do so, they did it easily, and I am convinced that if it could have been instilled into the whole Army (as it was with our Brigade) that an attack by the Bosche gave them the very opportunity we have been looking for, and that so long as they stuck in their trenches and kept up a careful fire, an advance would be impossible, I am sure the German attack would have failed just as it failed before the French at Verdun.

11 April 1918. Voormezele. Last night everyone was fully expecting a



heavy attack this morning. All slow moving stuff was got away and we cleared out everything we did not actually need. This morning it broke fine but very foggy, and we soon heard that the attack was in progress. By midday we heard that our division had beaten off 4 attacks. Later still we heard that the SA Bde. which now has reinforcements making each regiment about 500 strong, had been moved over to Vulverghem. From this place they counter-attacked and re-took Messines, which had been lost by a battalion from the 19th Division, which has been placed at the disposal of our Div. Commander. They had heavy casualties in the counter-attack and were temporarily pushed out again, and handed it over to a relieving battalion and have now been withdrawn. We hear that the 1st Reg. has had 17 officer casualties, so I am afraid the Bde. will be very much reduced even from the slender proportions to which it has been reduced. The work done by them has added greatly to our security and unless the flank beyond Messines is driven back again we shall probably be able to hold on to our present position. We hear also that Givenchy has been retaken and 500 prisoners captured in so doing. There is no news about what is happening in the centre, but on the whole, the Bosch does not seem to be continuing to make headway on the same lines as he did in the South. All yesterday, last night and today there has been a pretty steady flow of cases, Most are walking wounded. Power's post at Spoilbank and all round there, came in for a good deal of shelling yesterday. We rather expected much shelling here today, but so far there have only been a few big shells near us.

12 April 1918. Voormezele. Today has been a glorious spring day. Late last night we got orders to be prepared for an increase of casualties today, but as often happens the day has passed comparatively speaking peacefully. During the afternoon most disquieting news has been arriving, culminating finally in the arrival of an officer on a motor-cycle, who had been sent down towards Steenwerk with his tunnelling company in order to help dig trenches. On arriving there he said he found everything in the greatest confusion. Our troops were streaming away, and hardly a gun firing, and not an attempt at resistance being put up anywhere. He was told to come back as it was no use trying to do anything. The Germans are pushing on with nothing but a disorganized rabble of soldiers and civilians in front of them. I am afraid my expressions as to the morale of English troops, written in the heat of feeling in the last retreat, are proving only too true. The men are all right but the officers are hopeless. They seem devoid of grit, courage and initiative and so have no control of their men. It is now 11.30 pm and a most remarkable telegram has just come in a part of which I shall note down as showing the gravity of our position. "Relieving troops are at hand. 1st Australian division is detraining at Hazebrouck to be followed shortly by the 8th Div. One French div. and French Cavalry Corps will arrive tomorrow. Our whole efforts must be directed to maintaining our present line and preventing the enemy from breaking through." It will be noticed - Colonials and French to the rescue once more. It is galling beyond measure to think of British troops having to be stiffened up and helped by any other ally. All yesterday our Div. beat off attacks, and we hear that the 1500 South Africans sustained 500 casualties in their splendid work of recapturing Messines Ridge. Our Div. has been spread out over a front of about 8000 yards or more in the work of bolstering up the faltering English troops and has accomplished the almost superhuman task of doing this. I don't think England as a whole will ever realize what she owes to Scotland and the Colonials. Without them I don't think even the French, splendid as they have shown themselves, could have coped with the task. The Germans have already pushed right in to St. Venant on



the road to Aire and if they get a very little further the whole British Army will be in a most serious position. It seems now that Hindenberg was saying what he really meant when he said he intended to smash the British Army. The whole weight of the available German Army is being thrown against us, and it seems to me only a matter of a few weeks, in which he will be able to carry out his threat unless the army will turn round and fight. As it is we have received a blow to our prestige which it will take an entire reformation of our "morale" to put right. A matter of a generation or two at least.

13 April 1918. Voormezeele. This has been a quiet day so far as we are concerned. The Boche (sic) has suspended his attack on our front for the present and is taking advantage of the break through in the direction of Aire, and directing all his efforts in that direction. The disheartening thing is that nowhere yet except at isolated points has he encountered any real resistance. A captured German officer yesterday said that officers (of whom he was one) have been told off all along the line to watch for signs of our men leaving the trenches and then immediately to attack. They did not intend originally to attack us here but saw the men of some of the Divisions on our right making off, though they had not as yet been attacked, and so according to plan, the Germans pushed in. It was at this juncture that our reserve battallions (notably the S Africans) were rushed into the line to stem the rot, and the Germans found themselves met by unexpected resistance. Further South the panic seems to have been even worse if possible than that which took place in the attack on the 21st of March. Divisions have run away long before the Boches could even get at them. The sum total of it all is that we have now shown ourselves on a par and possibly worse than the Italians, whom we criticized so freely last year. The report today says we have lost Merris which in last nights telegram was one of the points mentioned as of vital importance and not to be evacuated at any cost. I suppose the Australians did not arrive in time to take over the line from our flying troops. "Flying" as an officer who visited that part of the line yesterday said "from nothing". "There was no shelling and no Germans in sight even, and yet there was no thought of even looking for a position to take up". I see in todays report that the gallant 51st Division (another and the best of the Scottish) had evidently been rushed in like ourselves (in spite of our having been fighting since the 21st) and is holding the Boche on their front. That is the maddening thing. It only needs a few brave men to keep them easily in control. One of our RMO's came in today and says the SA Bde. has now only about 550 men left, as a result of the furious fighting they have done to stem the rot of the troops on our right flank. As a result of my appeal for motor ambulances from our SA Hospital and Comforts Fund, we have had a letter saying that they have been able to raise the funds to present these, and so we hope soon to get 4 large and 2 small which will put our fleet in good trim again.

14 April 1918. Voormezeele. Today has been a raw cold blustering sort of day, with cloud and haze but no rain. About 4 pm the Huns started bombarding this place and kept it up until about 5.30. Many of the shells were very close and one pitched on the stone doorsteps of one of our ruined houses, but as everyone was below ground no one was hurt. The news from the southern part of the attack is more reassuring. The arrival of the Australians and French troops has put a different complexion on things, and it look as if the rot has been stemmed once again. The Boche has attacked again in the direction of Aire but we hear has been held. The performance of our division has been a



somewhat remarkable one in the last 3 weeks. From the 21st to the 28th we fought our way back bearing the brunt of the fighting for miles of our front, with Divisions simply running away without firing a shot or helping in any way, constantly resulting in our being almost surrounded actually so in the case of the SA Brigade. From the 28th of March we spent in marching and journeying till we arrived in this area on April 3rd. The following day the 26th and 27th Brigades went into the line on a short front. All our officers were sent for by the Army Commander and told that the Germans had so exhausted themselves and had had such huge casualties in the battle from which we had just come, that it would be impossible for them to attack here. He also said that undoubtedly the Germans were trying hard to lead us to suppose that they intended to attack here, but that our intelligence work showed that all these movements and preparation were "merely camouflage". The SA Bde which has suffered so heavily and was now with reinforcements about 1500 strong was left to re-organize and be in reserve. So we all felt that though in times like these we could not be resting, we were at any rate in a quiet part. Things were quiet too until we found that the German "camouflage" had been camouflage indeed but not of the kind our "intelligence" had surmised. On the 10th came the attack, when it was found that the Divisions on our right flank were again beginning to run. It was then that they were promptly put under the orders of our Div. Commander but not before the troops holding Messines had done a bolt. To remedy this the S Africans were rushed off, unorganised as they were and re-took Messines. The Germans then gave it the most tremendous bombardment and forced us out but no sooner was it over than the SA's took it again. These manoeuvres have now extended our front till it measured about 10,000 yards (from the neighbourhood of Hullebeke to Vulverghen). Along this were regiments from about 7 divisions, and our own men were scattered in battalions whose main work seems to have been to go in and fight for the weaker elements in our line and prevent them running away. In this task they have succeeded and today the Army Commander has sent a message expressing his appreciation of the wonderful work of the 9th Division. I am glad it has been appreciated. It is one thing to fight your own battles, but quite another to have to fight alongside others who want to run away instead of standing by you. A few days ago we sent our transport back to Sevencote as the shelling near where they were threatened to be rather unpleasant. However this afternoon the Germans started shelling the area they have gone to and unfortunately put a shell into the men's hut killing 3: Lowe, Janssen and Holland, and seriously wounding Ward and Warrington. All these are men who came out with us originally and are experienced and good workers. Warrington is not expected to live. He has been a bearer in every one of the battles we have been through and curiously enough this is the first occasion on which he has been out of the line.

16 April 1918. Voormezele. Yesterday we got orders that it would probably become necessary to withdraw owing we presumed to pressure to the South. We were therefore to get away all our stores and outfit and be prepared to march out at dusk. This we did and by about 6 pm had nothing left but what we stood in and all our dressing and equipment away. Then came an order that we were to stand fast. The day had passed fairly quietly except for a certain amount of shelling. Last night was also quiet, but about 8.30 the Germans began a heavy bombardment of our area and to our right flank. This he has kept up all day and we have had a rather unpleasant time. He attacked our front twice but was beaten off on each occasion with heavy losses. The 21st Division ran off again in Wytschaete Wood, and heavy fighting has



been going on there all day. We hear that French troops have arrived and are going in to help the weaklings on our right. At dusk there was a very lively attack going on and we are in hopes that the French have retaken the lost position. Things are very critical as if the Germans succeed in taking any considerable portion of the ridge which runs from Neuve Eglise to Wytschaete and thence to the Neighbourhood of Hill 60, we shall have to withdraw. This was the scheme actually decided on yesterday and we hear that our Division asked to be allowed to hold on. If it can be held it is going to make a very substantial bar to the progress of the Germans. This afternoon I went out to reconnoitre a line of evacuation in case the retirement becomes necessary. The whole region has been very much knocked about. Unfortunately this place is at the junction of 2 roads and comes in for a great deal of attention, but otherwise it is very convenient. It is wonderful to see the spirit of our Scotch and S African troops. Though they have now been fighting hard since the 21st of March you never hear a complaint, though many of the wounded are so overcome with sleep, that even dressing of painful wounds only just rouses them. Many of the "Jocks" are quite apologetic at being wounded, and rendered unable to go on fighting and helping their mates.

17 April 1918. Voormezeele. We had a quiet night and heard this morning that the French have retaken the position at Wytschaete from which the 21st Division ran. Today has passed quite quietly which is a pleasant change after the doing they gave us yesterday. One of our MO's was with our Bde when it counter-attacked Messines a couple of days ago. He said that as soon as the Germans shelled the position, which was held by a composite formation of 19th and 21st Div, they ran. In one case one of our company commanders, a great big burly looking fellow, met the Colonel of one of these battallions coming back at the head of his men saying they had been shelled out of their position. The SA Captain drew his revolver and said if you don't take your men back I shall shoot you. The Col. went. This illustrates what has been going on and how it might be remedied. The SA Troops pushed forward and met the Germans coming over, but soon drove them back, causing them heavy casualties. Along our front now are all sorts of mixtures of units. Divisional commanders have sectors to defend, but as many as 10 different Divisions are represented by the troops in the line. There is no question of relief, but everyone has to fight on, until the French reserves can come to our aid. For the last 2 days we have not had a word of what is going on elsewhere.

20 April 1918. Remy. We came out of the line last night reaching this place about 2.30 am. On the 18 the day passed fairly quietly but during the night they shelled us very heavily indeed with HE and Gas. The new site for the cookhouse was blown in as also the Sergts. Mess and the little shelter used as a mortuary. There were shell holes dotted all over the place amongst the ruins that form the top cover of our underground camp. The shelling calmed down during the day of the 19th., except that a steady fire was kept up on the roads. In spite of all this there were very few casualties from either wounds or gas. On the evening of the 19th. we were just about to have dinner at 7 pm, when orders arrived that we were to be relieved forthwith and get away that night except one officer and 16 men at Voormezeele. So our things were all packed up and ready for a start at 9 pm. I went in charge of the men and 2 wagons of equipment. There had been no shelling for the past 2 hours, but as luck would have it, we had no sooner started than the shelling started again exactly along the road we had to go away by. We had nearly got through the worst of it when a message came from



the rear to say one of the wagons was stuck in a shell hole, and of course just exactly where most of the shells were falling. After a futile attempt to get it out, I had to take the main body of men on and leave a party of about 12 to unload. They rejoined us about 3/4 of an hour later, without mishap. From then on fortune favoured us and though we passed some patches that had just been shelled and were shelled again soon after we passed, we were not bothered again. This place was a CCS but is now being used as a MDS. A letter has come from Uncle Percy this afternoon, saying that George has been badly wounded by a shell splinter in the abdomen. This seems to have happened some time about the 5th, the news coming by letter from the Adjutant of his battery, but so far there has been no more news, nor can he be traced in hospital. It is most upsetting news as he must be bad indeed not to have been able to get a letter sent by someone in hospital to Margaret. Hospital arrangements like everything else have been chaotic in the 5th Army and all sorts of things may have happened.

21 April 1918. Remy. No news yet of George, nor is it possible for me to do anything from this end as we are at the Northern end of the line and the place I last heard of his division was right in the South. Our ambulance is now resting and very glad of it too. The division is not yet out of the line though some of the battallions have been withdrawn into reserve, which means a certain amount of rest, though not much as tremendous shelling and aeroplane bombing goes on all night. The following message was sent yesterday :

"The Corps Commander wishes it to be known that the Commander in Chief in course of conversation with him said that it was mainly due to the stubborn resistance of the 9th Division that the army was now in a position to hold on to the present line. If the 9th Division had not held on there would have been no alternative but to retire a long way back. He also stated that General Foch fully appreciated what had been done by the 9th Division."

There is very little news coming through beyond the fact that the Germans are not making any substantial progress. At this place there is a great collection of ambulances. Among others we have a French one alongside us. Their organisation differs from ours in that they have no stretcher bearers. This work is done by their "brancardiers" who remain always with their battallions, the ambulance simply forms Dressing Stations corresponding to ours, but are not concerned in the actual transport of the wounded from the line. I think there is no doubt that this is a better scheme for this style of warfare, and more economical in the use of men. None but men who are unfitted for fighting are allowed in the "Service de Sante", and a most curious looking lot they are. So long as we have the organisation we have, we must have first class men, as at any time our men may be called upon to do bearer work, which can only be done by the very fit.

22 April 1918. Remy. Tonight it is pouring. This is the first really heavy rain since the German offensive began. When the division was re-organized in February last, and each Bde. reduced by a battallion, the Scottish Rifles were sent to the 14th Div. Today they have come back to re-inforce us. From them I learned that on the 4th of April the 14th Division was fighting at the Bois de Vaire near Fouilloy due east of Amiens. I also got a letter from Margaret saying George was reported to have been wounded on the 4th April. So I have sent wires to the Hospitals through which he would have been likely to pass, and if I can hear any news I shall try and get leave to visit him. General Haig was up this way a few days ago, when he gave the message I noted yesterday. At the same time he said that if any Brigade could be



picked out from the Armies in France, for mention for special gallantry and good work it would be the South African Brigade.

23 April 1918. Remy. Today has come a letter from Uncle Percy bearing the distressing news of George's death.

25 April 1918. Remy. Yesterday evening there was a furious and prolonged bombardment which died down a little towards midnight. Then a number of Hun planes visited us and dropped a lot of bombs making a great disturbance. No sooner had they gone when the bombardment started up again with more prolonged fury than I think I have ever heard before. From about 2 am till about 10 am there was incessant and very intense gunfire, as well as hundreds and hundreds of heavies going too. News has come through at last. It seems that the French attacked in order to recover ground lost in front of Kemmel, at 2 am. They drove the enemy back about 1 kilometre. At 4am the Huns attacked and drove ourselves and the French back and the latest news is that they now hold Kemmel and the Hill of the same name. The line runs from there via La Clytte and Vierstraat. The left wing of the 9th Division is said to be still holding its former position so it looks very much as though the 64th Bde of 21st Division has done a bolt again. It is really awful to think our men have fallen so low in morale. The worst of this news is that Kemmel Hill is the key to the Ypres Salient and unless we can retake it, it will probably mean falling back on a line through Omer.

28 April 1918. Remy. For the last 3 days the guns have been much quieter. The position around Kemmel has remained "obscure", which generally ends up meaning that we have lost. As a matter of fact I see Gen. D Haig announced its loss in his despatch of 26th, though there were rumours even today that the French were still holding the Hill. A most furious bombardment which started about 7 pm is now (10 pm) just dying down. It sounded most intense just SE of Ypres, so I suppose the Germans have done an attack there for a change. We have now got the French alongside us, rushed up by General Foch to try and stiffen up our wavering or worse than wavering troops. On the whole the French soldier is a much taller and finer looking man than ours. Their methods are more like the Burghers, the men having much more individuality and initiative than ours, but paying very little attention to cleanliness or general orderliness. One of their ambulances has been working alongside us. Some of their equipment is good, particularly a very serviceable type of light tent, but they seemed slow and inapt in handling wounded, and rather lacking in system. They are being helped by American motor ambulances, which are all Fords and look most uncomfortable.

29 April 1918. Remy. About 2 am another extensive and very intense bombardment started. This was kept up until about 8 am, when it slackened a bit but has never really died down altogether or to what can be called normal. So far we have had no news whatever as to what it was all about. Shells have been scattered around the camp throughout, but luckily are going mostly short or over. We are now waiting orders to move as the division is going out of the line for a time. We have never experienced such bombardments before as the heavies seem almost as numerous as the field guns, and how the Boche manages to come through it I don't know.

1 May 1918. Camped Near Watou. Yesterday we were ordered to move into this area. Being unsuccessful in finding a Village or farm that was



not crammed with either our own or French troops we had to content ourselves with camping in a very bleak and chilly field. Yesterday the Corps Communique gave us a little information as to the great bombardment of two days ago. It seems that the Boche launched a very heavy attack along the whole of our Corps (22nd) Front, supported by the biggest concentration of artillery he has yet employed. We had in the meantime likewise increased our artillery and from information picked up, managed to shoot so successfully, that the attack was crushed. It is said that this is the most severe check the Boche has yet received since the offensive started. The pity is that this could not have been done before Wytschaete Ridge was lost, and as a result of this Kemmel laid open to assault. Very large numbers of French troops are now in the area, and very fine they look too.

2 May 1918. Haringhe. "Please convey to General Tudor and to all ranks of the 9th Division my deep appreciation of the great gallantry displayed by them during many days of severe fighting North of the Lys. In the stubborn struggle for the Ridge at Wytschaete with which their name will always be associated, as well as on many other occasions, they have shown the same high fighting qualities which distinguished them throughout the Battle South of Arras and have most worthily upheld the traditions of the British Army."

The above is a copy of the message sent to us yesterday, which puts in writing Sir D. Haig's verbal message recorded a few days ago. Yesterday we moved to this place which is the site of No. 62 CCS Bandachem as it was called. There are a number of villages in Belgium, whose names terminate in -Chem and 3 CCS's in this army which were established close together, called themselves respectively Bandachem and Mendinchem for surgical cases, whilst the place for medical was called Dosinchem. They are now all in process of shifting further back, in case the Boche shoves us further back. Today we have more news of the recent attack launched by the Boche on the 29th. From a captured order it appears that the attack was a double one. 4 divisions attacked the Belgians with Poperinghe as their objective. They were backed by 4 fresh divisions whose work was to push through the gap made by those in the line. Simultaneously 10 divisions attacked our Corps front, with its centre about Kemmel, also having the same objective, coming at it in this case of course from the South. This double attack therefore aimed at nipping our salient and all within it. The Belgians seem to have done well in repulsing the attack on their front. In fact this is the second heavy attack they have recently repulsed, so they have shown themselves to be made of better stuff than they were usually credited. In fact, with the exception of the Scottish, Colonial, and a very few English divisions, the rest of our army must be regarded of a very inferior type of fighting force. Captian W. Smith of our ambulance has been awarded an MC for his really splendid work with the SA Brigade. At the end of the 2nd. days fighting in the Somme Battle he was the only RMO left and continued to look after the remains of the Bde., when they formed a composite battallion for the rest of the battle. He was slightly wounded at Dernancourt by a shell which killed one and wounded the other of his medical orderlies who were walking with him at the time. He was also slightly gassed but stuck to his work through it all, and then went through all the recent heavy fighting here.

4 May 1918. Ferme Peenhof (M. Justin Blanckaert) near to Zeggars Cappel. We marched yesterday from Bandachem to this place a distance of about 27 kilometres. Here we presume the division is to rest. The SA Batt. is still in the line, but we suppose will follow soon. We



hear they have had about 120 casualties since they went in again a few days ago. This is a delightful spot. A large and prosperous farm, principally devoted to horse breeding. The type of horse bred here is a fine looking animal. He is called the Boulonnais breed, which is much like the Percheron, but rather lighter in the limb and shorter in the body. I should think they might be quite a good type for breeding from in South Africa, as they would tend to produce a little more bone and muscle, without the clumsiness of the Shire or Clydesdale. These have quite a dash of Arab blood in them. It is a great treat to be getting a good supply of excellent butter, fresh milk and eggs. We were in this district in September and early part of October last. The 28th FA was then stationed here.

8 May 1918. Le Rons. Yesterday we moved to this place. It was a long march as we covered in one day, what the remainder of the Division had taken 2 days to do. The morning was very gloomy and it rained heavily for some hours, but fortunately cleared in the afternoon so that the men arrived in dry. During the week the following officers have reported for duty. Capts. Reid, Levisieur, Van der Spuy and de Waal. So we are now 2 over strength and I shall be free to return to the base. It is rather a wrench to come away, but on the whole I shall be glad to get a respite from the ceaseless movement of front line life.

11 May 1918. Le Rons. Since we have been here the weather has been perfect. Bright and warm and most enjoyable. The day before yesterday I got a letter from the OC 44th FA saying that "Captain Murray was brought in to the collecting post Fouilloy (S.W. Corbie) on April 5th. Captain A. Scott RAMC who saw him on admission states that he was pulseless, collapsed, and incapable of giving any message. He had a shell wound of abdomen and died 10 minutes after admission. He did not wear an identity disc, and his particulars were furnished by the bombardier who brought him in. There was no clergyman at the Post to bury him, and his body was handed over to a Field Ambulance of the 3rd Cavalry Division on the night of 5/6 April. His personal effects were sent to the base on April 6th."

16 May 1918. No. 1 S.A. General Hospital. My orders to report to Oc No. 1 SAGH arrived on the 11th just after lunch so I spent the afternoon in visiting various friends, and said goodbye to Gen. Tudor and the various members of the Div. Staff and other FA's. On the 12th Pringle drove me down to Abbeville. Col. Ritchie Thomson is acting OC here. He tells me he knows nothing of my future movements. The hospital is being kept empty at present in preparation for any further push on the part of the Germans, so for the moment there is not much to do. I have been given charge of the pre-operation wards and am now spending my time on looking up recent literature in regarding to coping with "Shock" and particularly the value of "blood transfusion" in the treatment of great losses of blood. Last night the Boche visited the neighbourhood and dropped bombs about the town and camps, causing a fair number of casualties.

22 May 1918. No. 1 S.A.G.H. The day before yesterday I got a communication from the ADMS 3rd Cav. Div. to whom I had written. From this it appears that George was buried on April 5th in the churchyard at the village of Aubigny which is the next village east of Fouilloy on the road to Amiens. I am having a cross made and intend going there when it is ready. There was a letter from the padre who buried him, giving the map reference of the spot as 62D 02D 97 and a rough diagram of the position of the grave in the churchyard. It was No. 7 Cav. Div.



Bde. FA which took over from the 44th FA. The padre's letter says he was buried on the evening of the same day as he was killed. The padre's name is Rev. Captain A.L. Edwards of 7 Cav. Bde. On the night of the 17th/18th the Gothas paid Abbeville a visit and did a good deal of damage in the town. They came again last night and dropped more. Some distance away the bombs caused a huge fire which lit up the place for miles round almost like daylight, which gave the remaining Gothas a good view of their targets.

28 May 1918. No.1 S.A.G.H. Yesterday I succeeded at last in overcoming all obstacles, and visiting George's grave. Coming back from leave in March last I had the good fortune to meet Major Kindersley who kindly gave me a lift in his car as far as Abbeville. He is an Inspector of Messing and Economics in the Q.M.G. Service and has his office in Abbeville. Since I have been here I met him again. Through him I made the acquaintance of Major Wilson and Captain Fraser, both of the Graves Registration Commission. By their aid I got in touch with Major Goodwin the GRC officer at the 4th Army HQ's, and finally made arrangements for the whole journey. Major Kindersley sent me in his car to Flikecourt where I met Major Goodwin who took me in his car to the village of Aubigny where he left me for 1/2 an hour while I placed the cross I had made. The cross was made by Ptes. J. Tomlinson RE (11 Sunnybank St. Hashingden, Lancs.) and J.F. Smith RE (73 Holnscroft St., Greenock N13). The carving was done by Pte. Jas Marshall and the painting and staining by Pte. Tester SAMC. The cross is of seasoned oak 1 1/2 inches thick and measures 3 feet by 2 feet fixed on a pedestal of oak. The church lies on the northern outskirts of the village on the east side of the road. The accompanying plan shows where the grave lies. Everyone has been most kind in helping me in every way. The men who made the cross took the greatest pride in making it exactly as I wanted it and they have now nearly finished an exact model of it about 9 inches high.

(Plan of the site of the grave.)

The church is rather a quaint looking one quite small with walls built of alternate bands of red brick and white chalk blocks, now nicely toned down by the weather. The spire is simply a wood and slate erection. The building is not much damaged at present. From the eastern door of the church runs a little grove of young elm trees, which yesterday were clad in the new fall leaf, making a cool dark tunnel of shade down the centre of the graveyard. At the western end of the grove stands a crucifix and beyond comes the boundary hedge marking off the enclosure from the fields outside. At the N.W. corner is a gate and between this and the elm grove George lies between some others who fell in the same action. Despite the presence of guns, some of which were firing, and the noise of some shells coming into the lower end of the village, the scene was a peaceful one. A sort of oasis in the strife that was going on outside and I could not but help feeling thankful to think of George lying there in that quiet little village churchyard instead of one or other of the huge cemeteries now so common along the line. The oaken cross now stands at the head of the grave while the official one of the GRC is placed at the foot so that the grave is doubly marked in the event of the area being heavily shelled later on. It was a glorious bright day and the country looking its best. We passed through the outskirts of Amiens and most of the journey was through contry with which I am now quite familiar, but seen



under its brightest and best garb.

28 May. Continued. Last night the Gotha's raided us once more and seem to have done a good deal of damage. Just below our camp 300 horses and mules were killed and some slight damage was done in the ordinance workshops. One bomb fell in the hospital adjoining our, No.2 General.

2 June 1918. No. 1 S.A.G.H. The German Paris offensive seems to be developing with even greater rapidity than their first this year against Amiens. This time they have again attacked a part of the line where both the French and ourselves have divisions resting from the recent battles. This is exactly what they did in the North except of course that there were no French troops there. The attack again (as in the North) seems to have taken the Allies quite by surprise. The Germans again are developing their successes with great promptness. At the outset the attack seems to have been started by the addition of a very few re-inforcements to the troops already in the line and that as soon as they found they were not being resisted, they have flung in more and more divisions to keep up the advantage once gained. On the 29th and 30th of May the Gothas visited us again and did great damage in the town. One bomb fell in the principal square and worked great havoc in all the houses around. One fell in the hospital but luckily went into a carpenters tent where the ground happens to be soft, so that its damage was very limited indeed. It was about 30 - 40 yards from my hut, but did not cause much disturbance.

4 June 1918. No. 1 S.A.G.H. The sky has been overcast today all day for the first time for a long time past. The wind however is still NE and there has been no rain as yet. Today I saw the Birthday Honours List and see that Barkley has got a CB. Oswald Barry a DSO, myself, Col. Dawson, Majors Hanau and Hemming DSO's. The Boches have not paid us a visit the last two nights. Since I have been here I have had some trout fishing in a stream near by. One fish I caught weighed 1lb. 14oz. which is supposed to be nearly as big as they go in this stream. Some friends took me over to fish in the Bresle near Blangy two days ago, but though it is full of fish they were not feeding keenly and I only took 2, one of the others 2 and the 3rd 8, mostly small ones, which seems to be a sign that the fish are not keenly feeding. The German offensive in the South against Paris, seems to be gradually being brought to a standstill in the region of the Marne. It is early however to be too sanguine about this.

12 June 1918. No. 1 S.A.G.H. 3 days ago the Germans launched another attack between Noyon and Montdidier. There are none of our troops on this front and though the Germans have made a certain amount of progress it has not been as marked as in their previous attacks. The weather has remained fine ever since I wrote last, with the exception of a little rain and mist one day which was not enough to wet the ground.

27 June 1918. No. 1 S.A.G.H. The weather this summer is really wonderful and one can scarcely realize that it is the same country in which we experienced such continuous bad weather last year. The Austrians have launched a great attack on the Italians by whom they have been repulsed with heavy loss. Last week we proposed an attack in the neighbourhood of the Forêt de Nieppe, but on the very day fixed there was a short break in the weather with rain and cold wind, added to which a widespread epidemic of influenza so depleted the Divisions



that the attack had to be postponed. The way in which the elements were against us is becoming more than a byword. Now that the attack has fallen through the weather is perfect again and on top of this we hear that the Germans are massing again for another attack. Certainly the superstitious can have every ground for drawing the conclusion that the Almighty is not on our side and very much on that of the Germans.

10 July 1918. No.1 S.A.G.H. Two or 3 days ago Monaghans' name appeared in the casualty list as having died of wounds whilst a POW in Germany. It was only about a fortnight ago that we had any news of him at all. The last time we saw him was a few hours before the SA Bde. was cut off on March 24th. Some time ago a letter was received from one of our stretcher bearers who was with Liebson. He wrote from Germany and said Liebson had been killed. Col. Dawson also wrote that Liebson was reported killed. He must have been killed on March 22nd as he was seen on the afternoon of that day by Capt. Smith, and no one saw him after that. The weather has become thundery the last two days and some wet warm showers have fallen. The country needs more and it looks as though we may get it. I heard from Pringle lately who says that the ambulance has been having an easy time since I left. Two days ago Levison went to rejoin them to replace Lawrie who is in England for treatment, for a gland in his neck. During the last few weeks we have had a very large number of influenza cases through the hospital. The epidemic seems very widespread throughout the Army.

16 July 1918. Today we hear that the Germans have started another offensive this time on a front extending from near Chateau-Thierry to Verdun. There is only scanty news at present. The weather still favours them, as such rain as there has been, has been merely heavy showers, which have laid the dust and not been sufficient to hamper in any way. The centre of their attack is along a part of the line, along which there has hitherto been no fighting of any importance, and was regarded as being well nigh impossible for any big offensive.

25 July 1918. The German offensive has been successfully resisted. At the outset they made a little headway here and there and then the French launched a vigorous counter-attack on a big scale which has been most successful, driving the Germans back along the greater part of the sector of attack and are now continuing to follow up their advantage and are driving the Germans steadily out of the salient they made originally between Soissons and Reims. This is the most successful repulse the Allies have succeeded in making since they began. In addition a number of minor operations have been carried out all along the front enabling us to take possession of favourable ground and secure our line. Yesterday Pringle came down and brought Forbes. They stayed the night and it was nice to see something of them again. They had just taken part in a successful local operation in which the old 9th. Division attacked on a 4000 yd. front and took important positions. Captain Van Der Spuy was wounded by a bomb which dropped near the Regimental Mess, killing the Major who was sitting next to him at lunch. Two of our men were wounded.

4 August 1918. After gradually slowing down and almost coming to a deadlock in their counter-offensive, the French have once more attacked vigorously aided by American re-inforcements and today the Germans have been driven back to the Vesle, which is not far from the main line of the Ihsive. Today reports have come in about a German retirement around Albert, but as yet it is not known to what extent they are carrying this out. All yesterday and the day before it has rained very



heavily, but this evening it is brighter. A flight of 9 Handley-Page machines has just passed over. These are the biggest and best of our bombing machines. They have been in use along the front for a long time but not in any numbers and I have never seen more than one at a time before.

2 September 1918. No.1 S.A.G.H. On August 31st I returned from 3 weeks leave spent mostly at Glen Lyon with Hilda and the children. Quite the best break since the war started. Whilst on leave I visited the War Office in regard to the arm splint and there met Col. Stiles, Col. Gray, Col. McMann and Col. Brackett (American). They all approve of the splint and it is now to be universally adopted in the army. The American Colonel said they had found it most satisfactory, and are also making it universal in their army. During the month our offensive has been developing most splendidly and the Germans are now on the move on a front nearly 120 miles, which looks as if they meant to fall back on their old lines. I find the hospital very full and have been plunged into plenty of work. I have 3 wards with about 120 cases, and about 1/2 are serious and require much work.

29 September 1918. Alice Holt. Before returning to Abbeville from leave I saw Colonel Stock in London who told me that he was making arrangements for me to be sent to Bordon. About 10 days after my return the orders came but as I was acting CO in the absence on leave of Col. R. Thompson, the ADMS told me I should have to wait until either he or Colonel Ward came over. Colonel Ward arrived on September 13th. I left on the 15th. and came straight to London, where I put up at the SA Officers Club in Grosvenor Square. Here I met Pringle as previously arranged and together we visited Colonel Stock on the morning of the 16th. The object of our visit was to bring to his notice certain matters that required re-adjusting in the SAMC units in Europe. The next day I went down here and reported at Bordon and have arranged to live here whilst doing duty there. This is an extraordinary piece of good fortune and I can scarcely realize that I am not only just on a spell of leave. On September 24th Colonel Stock came down to visit the camp at Bordon and see in what way things could be improved. Bordon is the SA Discharge Depot through which every SA man has to pass on his final discharge from the army.

28 December 1918. Alice Holt. On Xmas day I received the following letter from George's batman, whom I have at last succeeded in getting in touch with.

"At the time of his death I was Captain Murray's batman. The bombardier you mention I do not know anything about as the only NCO who left the battery in the ambulance car was a Sergeant who I believe died shortly afterwards. This is just what happened. We were in action on an open road at Viller's Bactoncaux and we were covering some American troops. At about 5 o'clock in the morning SOS was signalled. Your brother was in bed fully dressed so you can guess he was one of the first out. Half an hour afterwards he asked two of us to go out and carry ammunition as the men were having rather a rough time of it. We were still carrying the ammunition at 8 o'clock when there was a salvo dropped right in amongst the battery, a piece catching your brother full in the stomach, also killing one man and wounding 4 others. At the time this happened your brother was stood (? standing) on the outside of an old house. After he had been hit your brother was carried into the cellar, where everything that was possible was done for him. It was sometime after that the doctor came to give him an injection, and that was the only few minutes that he allowed me to



leave him. It was quite 2 hours before we managed to get your brother away as the shelling was the worst I have ever seen, and I have said ever since that delay was the cause of his death. All this time your brother was giving orders to the battery how to carry on when he was gone as the other officer had been knocked out with shell shock, which left us without an officer in charge. Your brother was the bravest and most respected officer in this battery and I am sure that all join me in expressing our deepest sympathy at your great loss. His last thoughts were of his wife saying these words just before we put him in the ambulance "But for my wife I would not mind", which shows he was nearly gone. If there is anything more you would like to know I will do my best to tell you. I am, Yours obediently, Gunner S.G. Kite 706290, D/47 Brigade RFA. France 18/12/18."



"C" SECTION TENT SUBDIVISION

Major C.M. Murray	O I/C of Section
Capt. Dyer	O I/C of Tent S-D
Q.M.S. Johns R.	Nursing Duties
S.Sgt. Davies C.	Dispenser
Sgt. Moore J.	Steward
Sgt. Porter G.A.V.	Clerk
Cpl. Symons F.J.	Cook
Cpl. Daves H.	Packstore Keeper
Pte. Day H.V.	Nursing Duties
Pte. Benge F.W.	" "
Pte. Mathie H.E.	" "
Pte. Hudson E.	" "
Pte. Mann J.	" "
Pte. Bartle G.H.	" "
Pte. Gibb R.J.	" "
Pte. McLaughlin A.E.	Clerk
Pte. Honeybun D.	Cook
Pte. Reeve J.D.	Washerman
Pte. Brooke S.E.	Semaphore Sig.
Pte. Byram P.B.	Carpenter
Pte. Grant J.A.F.	

"C" SECTION BEARER SUB-DIVISION

Captain Welsh

Bugler Jeffreys F.E.	
Sgt. Chapman T.W.	Sgt. Gen. Duty
Cpl. Brink W.H.C.	Wagon Orderly
Pte. Stanbridge S.H.	" "
Pte. Tucker	" "
Pte. Smith H.D.W.	
Pte. Mathews W.M.	
Pte. Ward G.V.	
Pte. Nelson R.W.	
Pte. Goodrick W.J.	
Pte. Frost E.P.	
Pte. Healy A.G.	
Pte. Skea J.	
Pte. Flee E.S.	
Pte. Lilford H.	
Pte. Wright H.	
Pte. Rees H.G.	
Pte. Fair W.R.	
Pte. Johnston J.	
Pte. Tester S.	
Pte. Gibb R.T.	
Pte. Chapman G.P.	
Pte. Tomsett R.	
Pte. Geall H.R.	
Pte. Huskisson V.A.	
Pte. Dawson E.S.	
Pte. Fock R.	



"C" SECTION BEARER SUB-DIVISION

Pte. Barrow H.W.  
Pte. Drury J.A.F.  
Pte. Boden T.H.  
Pte. Chapman D.R.  
Pte. Chapman C.L.  
Pte. White F.  
Pte. Aspelting R.L.  
Pte. Bruyns J.F.  
Pte. Robertson G.R.  
Pte. Thow J.M.  
Pte. Huskisson L.S.  
Pte. Gimber D.J.  
Pte. Lupton B.  
Pte. Boyce E.H.  
Pte. Elrick W.S.

REINFORCEMENTS

Pte. Hartford H.N.  
Pte. Heydenrych S.  
Pte. Hill W.H.  
Pte. Hirst H.C.  
Pte. Jacobs C.I.  
Pte. Kinsman J.B.  
Pte. Knox G.R.  
Pte. Le Sueur F.  
Pte. Meldrum J.C.  
Pte. Moyle S.H.  
Pte. Woolgar C.S.



NOTES OF THE APPLICATION OF THOMAS' SPLINTS, EMPLOYING THE MINIMUM OF ACCESSORIES.

REQUIREMENTS

1. GOOCH SPLINTING is supplied in rolls 36" long, made up of 80 parallel strips each 1 1/2" wide. The roll is sawn through at a point 14" from one end thus dividing it into 2 smaller rolls of 14" and 22" in length respectively. Pieces can easily be split off with an ordinary "Jack" knife, as required. A suitable width is 10 strips (approx. 5"), which gives 8 splints from each roll without any waste.
2. Triangular Bandages.

THOMAS KNEE SPLINT

1. The attendant steadies limb by holding the foot firmly by the heel and toe, and making extension.
2. Slit trousers at the site of anterior wound. Pass loose dressing inside trousers to cover posterior wound. Place loose dressing over anterior wound, lap trouser firmly over dressings and secure with safety pins, thus holding both dressings firmly in position. If pressure is required pass a bandage over outside of trousers.
3. Tie clove hitch with knot over outside of ankle, leaving tails equal.
4. Place splint in position. Clear scrotum from possible nipping. Pass hand around inside ring to smooth out folds in the clothing and skin, paying special attention to the comfortable seating of the ring in apposition to the Tuber Ischii.
5. Secure extension by fastening the Triangular bandage over splint and into the notch as indicated in the diagrams. N.B. This method is preferable to arranging for an equal pull on either side of the ankle, as it tends to counter the eversion of the foot, and so makes it possible to obtain a satisfactory position without the use of the foot piece, which so easily gets lost in the turmoil of forward area work.
6. Place suspension bar in position and suspend the splint by passing a triangular bandage in manner indicated.
7. To ensure proper application of the Gooch Splinting :
  - a) Attendant holds 22" length in position indicated.
  - b) Secure upper end temporarily by passing triangular bandage to form an adjustable sling as indicated.
  - c) Secure lower end in same manner, but by pulling on or relaxing the ends of the bandage accurately centre the limb in the splint as shown.
  - d) Loosen upper sling. The hip joint is now a fixed point above the fracture, whilst the lower sling has created a fixed point below. It is quite easy therefore now to so adjust the upper sling, that almost perfect alignment is obtained and secured. An anterior splint is not only unnecessary but unscientific.
8. Tighten extension to the required extend as shown using wooden slip from Gooch Splinting.



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MAJOR C.M. MURRAY, DSO, of 7th MBFA &  
29th F.A.

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Boer Rebellion; GSW African Campaign and W.B.  
1914-18

This very valuable record of Capt/Major Murray's service in the above campaigns was most kindly donated to The Liddle Collection by Dr. Robert Murray of 6 Dundas Terrace, Melrose, Roxburghshire, TD6 9QU.

It consists of 3 books, the contents of which are as follows:

Book I	Boer Rebellion and GSW Africa	11.11.14-10.8.15
Book II	France & Belgium	3.1.16-25.11.17
Book III	" "	1.1.18-28.12.18

At the back are lists of personnel, and notes on Thomas' Splints.

These books give comprehensive and minutely detailed accounts of his day-to-day activities, descriptions of terrain and wildlife, information about divisions, conduct of FAs, up-dates on the situation at the fronts, observations and comments of all sorts, together with amplification of his already excellent accounts of the battles of the Somme and of Ypres.

He is awarded the DSO in the Birthday Honours of June 1918, having been mentioned in despatches in June/July 1917. His brother, George, was hit by a shell and subsequently died on 5th April 1918 and was buried at Aubigny.

He expresses his dislike, in common with many others, of fighting in Belgium. He also expresses himself very forcibly in connection with Divisions who "run", and is warm in his tributes to both Scots and S.A. troops.

At the end of these volumes he is at Bordon, at the SA Discharge Depot.

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CAPT. CHARLES MOLTEÑO MURRAY, 7th M.B.F.A.

Boer Rebellion & German SW Africa

BOOK I. Boer Rebellion and German S.W. Africa (11.11.14-10.8.15)

11.11.14	Left Cape Town, attached to 7th M.B.F.A. for to Bloemfontein.	<u>Bloemfontein</u>
13.11.14	Reported at Tempe. "A fair number of wounded came in during the day."	Wounded
14.11.14	Maj.Usmar took over Civil Hospital. Complete absence of ambulance wagons. CMM sees to conversion of light wagons.	"Conversion" Ambulances
15.11.14	Over 60 wounded & 14 sick; very busy. Visited Nat. Memorial to women & children who died during the war. "Fine simple structure."	Nat.Memorial
16.11.14	Mil.Hospital for Convalescents opened at Tempe.	Convalescents' Hospital
to	Received wounded from fight at Virginia. CMM	
17.11.14	operated. Details of fight at Virginia. (P.2) Van Niekerk (wounded) tells how Col. Toby Smuts shot him at Mushroom Valley. CMM operates on Col.Brand (acute appendicitis) who is ADMS. He was brought in by a young medico called Swanepoel who recounts a brush with the rebels on pp.2/3. Rebels use dum-dum bullets; destroy farms and stock.	Virginia battle (P.2) Col.Smuts  Col.Brand Rebels/destruction
18.11.14	Operating on limbs shattered by the dum-dum to bullets. CMM is having splints made: "it is	Dum-dum wounds/splints
21.11.14	hopeless to wire the bones." "The old carpenter is working well." First mess night. Jan Steyn - President's son - invited. 6 wounded rebels arrive: "I have never seen a more wretched looking lot of fellows. The absolute scum of the country deluded no doubt with all sorts of promises and prospects of loot."	Mess night  Rebels/comments
22.11.14	Lt.Fraser (wounded) gives an account of the Mushroom Valley fight. P.4	Mushroom Valley P.4
23.11.14		N.H.I.
24.11.14	CMM has talked to one of the wounded rebels who tells of his enlistment, crit. of Hertzog. Pp.4/5 CMM praises the enthusiasm of the burgher commandos "to wipe out the stain on the name of their race" as they put it. He refers to various shot wounds and their effects.	Rebel's story pp 4/5 Burgher commandos  Wounds
29.11.14	Moved to Tempe. Desc. P.5. Was a big camp, but now a "skeleton".	<u>Tempe</u> Desc. P.5
30.11.14	Comments on how quickly de Wet has been knocked out. Praises & desc. burgher commandos; lifestyle. Filth makes wounds go septic. None are professional fighters.	Commandos/desc. P.5



BOOK I Cont'd

- |          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| 1.12.14  | Sleeping in the Col's bungalow; beds in the garden. They want to get on trek as, owing to the rush to get men into the field there has been no time for training; MOs go off with their columns without any clear idea of what is expected of them. He explains the scheme, adapted from the R.A.M.C. (P.6) & explains the duties of a F.A.  | Need for training<br>Explanation of plan adapted from RAMC. P.6<br>F.A.duties |
| 3.12.14  | He is able to avoid a move to Cape Town.   | N.H.I.  |
| 4.12.14  | News of de Wet's capture   | de Wet  |
| 5.12.14  |  | N.H.I.  |
| 11.12.14 | Regular routine work. There is a dentist as well as Col.Knapp and "we three". The dentist, Brothers, has retired from regular practice. Most patients are sick now. CMM is in charge of the surgical ward. News comes of rounding up of the last rebel commando.<br>There have been heavy rains for some days now. Desc. seeing meercats "different to the Karoo kind" - birds - Duiker bok. | Dentist<br><br>i/c surgery.<br>Last roundup<br><br>Weather<br>Wild life       |
| 15.12.14 | Col.Knapp to leave for Cape Town tomorrow. Hospital to be run down   |   |
| 16.12.14 | CMM went to Pretoria on Bde. business. He describes the odd outfits worn by burghers guarding bridges and culverts. Desc. inspecting various ambulance vehicles. P.8 Visited the Union buildings. Plans are to clear the hospital and proceed to Wynberg to open a training school for officers & men prior to embarking for G.S.W.  | Ambulances P.8<br><br>Future plans  |

Report on official visit to Pretoria

Details of:

1. Plan for training at Wynberg
2. Ambulance vehicles
3. Motor vehicles
4. Duty of Brigades
5. Water bottles

Strictly Confidential Information

- |          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| 23.12.14 | Arrived Wynberg Training Camp. CMM describes.                                   | Wynberg    |
| 26.12.14 | 1 death and 2 injuries from lightning; Col. Lukin escaped with ripped breeches. | Casualties |
| 29.12.14 | CMM detailed for work in office of Lt.Col. Buist, R.A.M.C. (S.M.O.)             | New post   |



BOOK I (Cont'd)

26.1.15	He remained with Col. Buist until Jan.16, when he rejoined his unit at Green Point. Orders for G.S.W. came on Jan.23rd. (List giving idea of size of their unit). He is on the 20th troop train to leave in the course of 36 hours.	Size of unit  Troop trains
29.1.15	Arrived at de Aar on 27th, where CMM performed an operation in the morning.	<u>de Aar</u>
30.1.15	Arrived at Upington, on the Orange River. He describes walking along the river; finding some commandos encamped: "I foresee we shall have great difficulties with these....they have no discipline and do what they like when they camp..." Desc. terrain and town of Upington; beautiful spot in which they are to camp.	<u>Upington</u> Desc. Commandos/crit.  Desc.camp
2.2.15	Maritz is brought in to arrange terms. Details events leading up to this. P.14 (Failure to take Upington caused Maritz to ask for terms). Orange River is so flooded that it can only be crossed by petrol launch. Desc. They sleep in the railway carriages where temp. is 105°.	Maritz (Events P.14)  Orange River  Heat
5.2.15	During this period scarcely anyone has had any idea of what their duties are. They were then ordered to leave for Cape Town on 3.2.15. Now, having got as far as de Aar they are waiting for further orders. (He discusses the advantages or not of wearing clothes in the intense heat; the fact that this heat does not cause sunburn as on the coast - one need fear "no serious sunburn" if due care was taken.) Desc. of the train journey; how his dog, Tempe, was run down when the train moved out.	<u>de Aar</u>  Sunburn  Journey/dog's death
24.2.15	After 3 days at de Aar they moved on to Cape Town, and camped at Green Point Common - "always dusty and windy." Embarked on 23rd on Galway Castle. Escorted by "Armada". "The ships with the horses and transport are not in sight. I suppose it is not considered necessary to worry about them so long as the men are protected." He says they are "a good crowd" on board; some have never been to sea; "they are certainly having a v. pleasant first experience."	<u>Green Point</u> "Galway Castle" "Armada"  Cynicism  Morale
27.2.15	Arrived at the whaling station at Walfish Bay. Desc. Visited Clearing Hospital. Lunched with the men off bully beef, raw onions & biscuit which CMM "found excellent though some made rather heavy weather of it..." "They will all have to get to like it soon."	<u>Walfish Bay</u>  Simple Lunch enjoyed!



BOOK I (Cont'd)

27.2.15 Cont.	Desc. of unloading on the beach; floats; men catching soles (troops fed for 3 days on the fish sometimes); terrain, etc. PP 17/18	Desc. of Wal-fish Bay landing etc. PP 17/18
28.2.15	Comments on climate; rainfall at Swakopmund. Men spear soles. Preparing to move on to Swakopmund.	Climate
2.3.15	Riding. Past lagoon with thousands of flamingoes. Desc. terrain. V. cold at night.	Terrain P.19
4.3.15	Began trekking yesterday, along beach. OK while tide was out, but then they were forced uphill. The burghers had overloaded the mules, and on reaching Rand Rifle Siding it was discovered that no arrangements had been made to have water sent on, and the burghers ahead had drank it all. 2000 gallon tank was sent out from Wal-fish. He desc. the scenery - vegetation etc. Camped for the night. Comments on the infestation of flies. Camps stretch all round town; thousands of horses picketed.	Burghers/problems Flies Camps
5.3.15	Desc. Swakopmund. Fine buildings but sand streets; Germans laid wood footways & narrow gauge railways. Desc. town more fully; circs. of Germans leaving.	Swakopmund Desc. PP 20/21 Circs. of evacuation PP 20/21
6.3.15 to 13.3.15	Temperature rose to 110° on the 8th - burning wind. Still waiting to move.	Temp. variation
16.3.15	Rode to railhead. CMM concerned about their mules which are doing about 66 miles on one drink, and short feeds, for each time they make this journey.	Mules
17.3.15	Orders to leave tomorrow	
19.3.15	On trek. Left Swakopmund yesterday. Desc. preparations. Surface of ground just hard enough. Motor cycles do v. well - flying along.	Trek/preparations Ground/motor cycles
20.3.15	"A huge, straggling camp" Waterhole about 4m down a gorge and thousands of animals to be watered. CMM was one of a small party ordered to trek on. No guide was provided: "Keep the Southern Cross on your right." Finding a spoor leading SW they followed it. He comments on being in a new country, in the neighbourhood of the enemy, and not sure of the road: "a typical instance of the way our...army goes to work..." Arrived on a hill over valley where Germans were firing big guns. Desc. their <sup>own</sup> position and those of the guns of both sides. German guns were eventually silenced. P.24	Husab Watering Navigation Criticism/orders Firing area/long desc. P.24
23.3.15	Collected wounded. Germans had left.	



BOOK I (Cont'd)

25.3.15	Evidence of considerable German losses. Much valuable equipment obtained. GMM ordered to remain here - at Riet - with 19 men, to establish a non-Dicted (sic) hospital. Edmeades arrives with 15 men. GMM comments on how well Edmeades has done in spite of considerable difficulties. P.25.	Riet Edmeades/ tribute P.25
28.3.15	He refers to the 2nd M.B. - news of what happened to them. Comments that Commanding Officers should make M.O.s fully acquainted with their plans. He continues to stress the importance of maintaining supplies to desert troops. He says that as far as the fighting goes the Germans have v. little chance; "our only enemy is the country". (There follows a long, beautiful, geological description of the country."	2nd M.B. P.26 Criticism. P.26 Desc.of country
2.4.15	He is at the farmhouse at Riet, which he describes. Repairs have been made, and a Red Cross flag put up at the entrance to the 2 acres. Tents have been erected for patients and for operating. They are using the lucerne which grows there as a vegetable: "some of the troops are beginning to suffer from the continual bully..." The force here includes Rand Rifles and burghers; a Maxim Gun section; a section of S.A.E.C. and an Intelligence section. He describes an incident in the desert concerning 3 British soldiers and some Germans on patrol. later thought to have been afraid of each other.p.28	Riet farmhouse/ Red Cross Lucerne Rand Rifles Other units Desert incident
3.4.15	Desc. going with Col. Wylie - now in command here - to inspect and destroy a mine. Desc. of position and purpose of mine, which was duly blown up.p.28/29	Col. Wylie Mine blown
4.4.15	Desc. riding along the slopes of Langer Heinrich with Capt. Redlinghuis; terrain, flora & fauna. GMM has called his horse Cato as he is both a philosopher, and also an orator when meeting other horses. He goes on to describe characteristics of the animal; "a splendid fellow for a campaign, and I hope when it is over to manage somehow to keep him."	Desc. of ride & observations His horse, "Cato"
5.4.15		N.H.I.
6.4.15	Visit of inspection to Modder fontein. Desc. of situation. p.30	Modder fontein p 30
7.4.15		N.H.I.
8.4.15	Account of "mystery" surrounding Lt. Dampers of Uys' Scouts ("our patrols seems to be unlucky or careless.") Resting, on the way back from a long patrol, they started shooting which frightened the horses which had to be chased by the 2 men. On their return they found Lt.Dampers shot dead. There were many unresolved questions - details on P.30.	Shooting mystery P.30 (Lt. Dampers)
12.4.15	The first instalment of the Field Hospital arrives. Desc. of ride up to Salem. Evidence of camels: "Capt. Uys says the Germans have gone in quite extensively for camel breeding in the Southern regions ....	Field Hospital. Salem (desc.) Camels



BOOK I (Cont'd)

13.4.15		N.H.I.
14.4.15	Patrol incident where large German camp was sighted. Returning, they rode over a mine, and only 14 of 30 survived. P.32	Mine incident P.32
16.4.15	Following reports of a patrol being attacked. CMM goes out in the motor ambulance. Long desc. of the incident, P.33, at Sphinx, during which men and horses were shot by Germans. CMM collects wounded and comments: "...the most cold-blooded affair to date in this scene of operations"; 23 Germans V. patrol of 4.	Sphinx attack on patrol Casualties. P.33  Comment.
17.4.15	The "German camp" referred to on 14.4.15 turned out to be a group of farm buildings visited by German patrols. CMM has wired for a second motor ambulance.	"German camp"
18.4.15	Desc. of local trees and fruits. P.34	Trees, P.34
19.4.15	Motor ambulance is not forthcoming and CMM says nothing else will do. He says they are "of inestimable value." The scouts go out from 20 to 35 miles, and wagons are useless.	Motor ambulances needed.
20.4.15	When his lamp is lit it's bombarded by insects, some of which bite. He deplores the non-arrival of another motor ambulance. He knows that in Swakopmund there are no less than 5 doing nothing.	Insects  No Motor ambulances
22.4.15	In spite of cooperation from Col. Stock, no	" "
23.4.15	motor ambulances have yet arrived.	
27.4.15	CMM has a touch of ptomaine poisoning, probably from some bully beef. German camp located, acting on info from patrol. Waited for night attack which never came. Commenting on "incidents" out here, he says that whereas passwords, sentries and all the circs. of war were most rigorously in force in Cape Town, they have become of less and less consequence the nearer they have come in touch with the enemy. 'So far they have treated the Germans "as children." Cites instances P.36	Ptomaine poisoning  Security neglected at the front P.36
28.4.15	On the alert, following an attack on Trek Kopjes held by Col. Skinner. P.36. Para on birds. P.36	Instances, P.36 Trek Kopjes P.36 Birds P.36
1.5.15	On trek. Lack of water. Overtook Division at Horibis. Digging for water. Trek continued.	Water Horibis, P.38
2.5.15	Desc. Horibis, P.38. Passed scene of mine explosion: "Rather dreadful..... I shall not be surprised if the men take some fearful reprisals...." P.38. "Our division under General Brits consists of the 1st and 2nd Mounted Brigades, about 5000 strong...." CMM is with the rearguard. Short of rations, CMM is shooting steenbok.	<u>Dorstriviergund</u> Mine casualties P.38 Reaction Divisional strength Ration supplement



BOOK I (Cont'd)

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|---|---|
| <p>6.5.15 Here he recaps on the last few days. No more rations, but Col. Lemmer said they could have some goats and must arrange grazing as best they could. Ordered to discard everything they could do without. P.39<br/>Reached Bulloolout on 4.5.<br/>Trekking on without water, trying to find game to shoot, without success.<br/>CMM comments that on arrival in Karibib they were all glad to sleep till daylight: "I had a most refreshing sleep and in spite of long trekking and little sleep was quite fresh again this morning."</p>   | <p><u>Karibib</u><br/>Goat meat<br/><br/><br/>Fitness</p>   |
| <p>9.5.15 He says that when they reached the town they weren't sure that it was Karibib. However, they were near a hospital, on waking; a native hospital "in connection with the large Flemish nursing station here."<br/>He thinks the inhabitants were nervous as to how they would treat them, expecting "we should treat them as their countrymen have done the Belgians and billet our soldiers on the townfolk and levy a war contribution from the town...." In fact Gen. Botha ordered surrender of arms &amp; ammo and made them give their parole. P.40<br/>Desc. of Karibib. P.40. (All facilities.)<br/>Took over run-down military hospital, living in.<br/>Shot a "fine cock ostrich" which they gave to their native drivers. Food still v. scarce; men were offering 1/- a piece for a biscuit from those who had been able to hoard some.<br/>Desc. site of town; mine casualties in the area. P.40<br/>"Great credit must be given to our engineers &amp; others, <sup>who were</sup> set the task of locating mines."<br/>He says the men went for 9 days before reaching Karibib on 2 1/2-day rations; the animals had the poorest of grazing.</p> | <p>Flemish nursing station<br/><br/>Inhabitants' fears P.40<br/><br/>Desc. of town P.40<br/>Mil. Hospital<br/>Food shortage. 1/- a biscuit<br/>Mines area P.40<br/>Tribute to engineers Fortitude</p> |
| <p>13.5.15 They have trekked here, only to be told they are to return to Karibib. CMM expresses his astonishment: "...the finishing touch to a casual campaign." He refers to "a move of this magnitude having been planned and put into effect" without acquainting the General of their intention.</p>  | <p><u>Etiro</u><br/>Reversal of plans. (Criticism) P.41</p>   |
| <p>15.5.15 Arrived back at Karibib on 14th.</p>   | <p><u>Karibib</u></p>   |
| <p>22.5.15 Desc. nights on trek; big fires; a meal; valises; brilliant stars or moonlight; no wind.<br/>Desc. Usakos P.42.<br/>Aukos is a farm.</p>   | <p><u>Aukos nr. Usakos</u><br/>Outdoor life<br/>Desc. Usakos P.42</p>   |
| <p>24.5.15 Desc. on Pp.42-44 going by car on a game shoot, "rather eventful".<br/>Later they shot game with the intention of making biltong to carry with them.</p>   | <p>"Eventful" game shoot Pp.42-44<br/><br/>Biltong</p>  |
| <p>25.5.15 Mail has got through to them.</p>  | <p>N.H.I.</p>   |



BOOK I (Cont'd)

28.5.15	A biplane goes over. CMM comments that so far our planes haven't been much use. He writes at length about the system of appointing officers - no penalties for the non-fulfilment of orders beyond an occasional mild remonstrance. Discipline is absent. P.45 He cites numerous instances.	Aeroplanes Appointments/crit Lack of discipline P.45
1.6.15	He describes a "hanging tree" outside Karibib; used for "quite trivial offences." He says the Germans seem to have acted brutally towards the natives, and the latter are against them now. He refers to the casual way things are done, and gives an example of failing to post sentries at night, with the result that a German patrol, wanting to surrender, had to wake the camp up. P.46	Aukos Hanging tree Casual regime P.46
2.6.15	They are now getting more bully, but old, lean and dry.	Bully beef
5.6.15	To Karibib to discuss new medical arrangements. CMM is to be in charge of a Clearing Hospital in spite of his wish to remain, with Van Collier, where he is. He was told that Med.HQ were "sick of protesting" and had left the responsibility with the combatant staff.	Advised of move/ protest P.47
10.6.15	In spite of another attempt to have his transfer countermanded he is forced to capitulate. P.47 Van Collier and CMM get leave and go to Windhuk. Desc. of Windhuk. Visit to power station, and lengthy desc. of same. He expresses considerable regret that the ambulance they have worked for is now to be split up, and the life of the unit has come to an end. CMM is to take over Clearing Station B.	Windhuk Leave Desc. town P.48 Power stn. P.48/9 Regrets
14.6.15		N.H.I.
15.6.15	Desc. of watching the aviator fly; plane. 49/50	Plane 49/50
23.6.15	CMM is told to sort out what is wanted for the 2 Clearing Hospitals. There is not nearly enough. P.50. He proceeds to Omaruru with Nortje; takes over suitable buildings; school & barracks. Desc. finding food; getting equipment up; 70 patients arrive. P.51 His horse has been stolen on the way here.	Hosp. equipment insufficient. P.50 Omaruru Settling into hosp. P.51 Horse stolen
25.6.15	V. busy. Desc. of hospital. P.52 Wire telling them to be ready to move.	Hospital, P.52 (desc.)
26.6.15		N.H.I.
29.6.15	Account of developments re move; wires, etc. CMM is short of everything he needs; "all very disheartening."	Problems P.52
2.6.15	No further progress. P.53 No transport.	N.H.I.
3.6.15	Maj. Rose will supply transport. CMM went for a shoot.	N.H.I.
8.6.15	Went off in motors. Desc. journey - shot pheasants & guinea fowl on the way.	Otarifontein Desc. journey P.53/



BOOK I (Cont'd)

8.6.15 Cont.	News that Germans had sent in for terms. Misunderstanding involving Gen. Myburgh who hadn't heard the news. P.54. Later. Germans asked for an extension.	Armistice. Misunderstanding P54 (Extension)
9.7.15	News that the Germans have decided to surrender unconditionally.	Surrender
10.7.15	Account of the final stages of the campaign. Pp.54/55 CMM says it has been "a most brilliant piece of generalship...only accomplished by troops capable of getting every ounce out of their animals without killing them..and men not afraid to face the prospect of fighting for their water after doing all this." Gen. Francke asked Gen. Botha what breed of animal did such wonderful trekking.	Final stages of campaign P54/5 Tribute to men & animals
11.7.15	Gen. Botha has allowed the regulars to surrender with "honours of war"; seems to mean they will be allowed to go to Aus carrying their rifles.	Gen. Botha's generosity
12.7.15	He says he knows Gen. Botha is "delighted beyond measure to have brought the campaign to a close with little loss of life on either side."	Gen. Botha
13.7.15		N.H.I.
17.7.15	Hard at work. Most wounds had gone septic. He has to amputate one leg close to the hip joint. Unfortunately the man is phthisical & v. thin, but cheerful, "and that is half the battle." Major Botha (brother of the Gen.) recounts experiences in the 3rd Brigade. P.56/7.	Sepsis Amputation Maj. Botha/ 3rd Bde. Pp.56/7
22.7.15	Waiting for the ambulance train. Account of a day hunting for game; steenbok, gemsbok, ostriches etc. Bagged one steenbok.	Game shoot
28.7.15	To Guchab on 23rd to investigate a charge of shooting a native. The accused was the engineer in charge of a mine. He has been arrested. P.58 Goes shooting with Maj. Whitehead (O.C. ambulance train) & Maj. Russell. Long account of stalking game; killing a gembok.	Shooting charge P 58 Game hunt Pp.58/9
29.7.15 to ) 31.7.15 )		N.H.I.
1.8.15	CMM shot 2 hartebeeste. This was his last shoot.	Last shoot
4.8.15	Long desc. of trip up to Tsumeb; fortifications, signboards, ranges marked out. "Tsumeb is the 'Rand' of S.W.A. Huge copper mine. Here the military had their main Supply & Ordnance.	<u>Tsumeb</u> Desc. P.61 (copper)
10.8.15	Back to Otarifontein to pick up sick, and made, by train for the ship "Ebari". Train crashed into another en route. Eventually they boarded.	"Ebari"



BOOK II FRANCE

3.1.16	Marching orders received on 28.12.15 at Farnbo-	<u>At sea</u>
to	rough. Embarked on 2.1.16 at Devonport.	
10.1.16		
13.1.16	Arrived Alexandria. To camp at Mex.	<u>Alexandria</u>
to		
27.1.16		<u>Mex</u>
28.1.16	He has heard of an engagement with 4500 rebel	Bedounis/
	Bedounis; Capt. Walsh of Natal killed.	skirmish
5.3.16	CMM gets leave with Usman & Walsh and they go to Cairo.	<u>Cairo leave</u>
12.3.16	Still inactive. News involving the Senussi who he	<u>Mex</u>
	has never heard of. Gives the history of this reli-	Senussi P.65
	gious sect. P.65.	
	They discuss the probable future course of the war in	War in East.
	the East. P.65/66.	P.65/66
15.4.16	Embarked on Oriana at Alex on 13.4.16.	<u>At sea</u>
to		
23.4.16		
24.4.16	Arrived Marseillaise on 19th. Due to a case of ty-	Marseilles.
	phus on board they were sent to camp at Le Valentine.	<u>Le Valentine</u>
	Marching on cobbles was "trying" for some men.	Cobbles
	Townpeople have them a great reception.	Welcome
29.4.16	Disinfecting the regiments. Quarantine extended due	Disinfecting
	to a second case of typhus.	
	Desc. the country; vegetation, trees, plants, fruit,	Desc.country
	houses, etc. P.67	P.67
2.5.16	He comments on the coloured troops he saw in Mar-	Comparison/co-
	seilles: "...Indians perhaps the best, but they are	loured troops
	miserable looking compared with even the worst Euro-	
	pean...lack stamina & intelligence..." "The Zulu is an	
	altogether finer looking specimen of humanity."	
11.5.16	Before leaving there was a public reception & march	<u>Abbeville</u>
to	past. Crowd so great that police lost control.	Send-off
17.5.16	Mayor distributed champagne at the station.	
18.5.16	Visiting trenches, and other visits in the locality.	<u>Steenwerk</u>
	Their Div. (9th) has been withdrawn from the trenches	29th F.A.
	and "we only take over from the 29th F.A. "	
1.6.16	In billets.	<u>Strazeele</u>
2.6.16	To Morbecque, and on 3rd to Les Tourbicis. On 4th to	<u>Eemy-St. Julien</u>
	<del>Eemy</del> - St. Julien for field training.	
16.6.16	He is ordered to put up a temp. hospital for sick here.	<u>Saissermont</u>
18.6.16	To Corbie to join the 29th F.A. In Chateau Corbie.	<u>Corbie</u>
		29th F.A.
23.6.16	They are to form a Corps Rest Station. More details.	Corps Rest Stn.
	Great activity everywhere. (P.70)	P.70
26.6.16	Visiting posts along front in spite of bombardment. P.70.	
	"All the young medicos seemed cheerful under the trying	Morale
	conditions they were working in."	
3.7.16		N.H.I.



BOOK II (Cont'd)

- 10.7.16 He goes up to one of the A.D.S. and to Maricourt village; sees casualties. He says that with the noise of our guns and the German bombardment he felt scarcely able to think. "I then found Pringle and the others who all looked as if they were going through a horrible time." He describes the scene of battle from a hill: "a wonderful and horrible sight." Desc. P.71. Their bearers were evacuating from Bernafray Wood, under heavy shellfire. Lt. Nimmo Brown and 5 others k. by a shell. Visit to front Casualties & comments Scene of battle/ desc. P.71 Bernafray Wood Casualties
- 12.7.16 He visited Cambridge Copse outside Maricourt. Talks to Capt. Walsh who describes his experiences in Bernafray Wood P.72. (2 orderlies succumbed to nervous breakdown). "The fighting is furious all along the line and the casualties are terrible." Col. Jones, S.A. Scottish, was killed standing near the Dressing Stn. Capt. Russell shot by a sniper... "A v. difficult job has fallen to the lot of the S.A. infantry." Bernafray, P.72 Nerves Fierce fighting. S.A. infantry.
- 14.7.16 Comments again on Bernafray Wood. "Stiff. Sgt. Walsh is reported to have done phenomenally good work.....for 4 nights and 3 days. In fact he only returned on being told he was 'under arrest.' He says the men have all worked splendidly and gained praise on all sides. "The fighting has become simply furious and the casualties on both sides are too fearful to think of. All we can do is to wade through the masses of wounded." Tribute to Stiff. Sgt. Walsh Ditto to men Slaughter/comment P.72
- 17.7.16 He says events are moving so fast that it is impossible to keep up with them. He is now, in conjunction with the tent divs. of 2 other ambulances, running the Corps Main D.S. and working in shifts. Says the fighting is beyond description; 1 bearer killed and 22 wounded. "The holding of the captured positions is where the heavy losses come in; losses in S.A. Bde. have been extremely heavy." Nearly all officers in the S.A.I. have been killed or wounded. P.73 He comments on the terrible wounds, and the patience of the men: "one seldom hears a groan..." He says the whole of the 9th Div. has suffered very heavily, losing about 25,000 k or w before attacking on the 14th in place of 30th Div. Dives Copse Corps Main D.S./ shiftwork Losses in captured positions heaviest. P.73 Patience of wounded P.73 9th Div. casualties
- 18.7.16 The Official List of S.A.I. casualties amounts to 114 officers; "our Div. has lost about 6700 men." The Germans have been using poison gas shells. "All speak in the highest praise of our bearers.." One officer, buried 5 times, and a man "of iron nerve" is "a total wreck for the present." Official casualties Poison gas shells Praise for bearers Nerves
- 20.7.16 Continual influx of wounded. 6 MOs at work. He says they are losing immense numbers in holding the ground once gained, sticking at no sacrifice to hold it, which may be demoralising to the Germans. Account of the part his Div. has played. P.74 (Trones, Delville etc.) Casualties on secured ground 9th Div. P.74



Capt. C.M. MURRAY, 29th F.A.

BOOK II (Cont'd)

20.7.16 Cont.	Off duty he visits Fricourt. Comments on obliteration of villages. Bearers to be relieved, having been working unendingly for 21 days in momentary risk of their lives. Some have broken down "which is only natural, the wonder being that more have not succumbed in the same way."	Breakdowns/ bearers
22.7.16	Bde came out of action. CMM rode with the General to Happy Valley. Germans shelling at Billou Wood. He comments on the traffic as crowded almost as in the Strand streaming steadily on; when a shell strikes a wagon it is pulled aside and the hole filled in, while the traffic continues, unless stopped by a military policeman.	Traffic under- terred by shell holes
25.7.16	Coming here he visited the S.A. Gen.Hospital at Abbeville.	<u>Magnicourt</u>
28.7.16	Resting. He says that the latest return shows 2900 k or w out of the 3500 who went into battle. CMM regrets not having been able to record more of what he has seen and heard. He says most of the wounds were caused by shells. He recounts stories told to him P.76/7. (Many v.near misses). 5,000,000 shells are said to have been fired by our guns alone. He says their list of officers k or w is 98. Col. Thackery of the 3rd Regt. while holding Delville Wood was hit 6 times by spent fragments of shell which did not cause wounds. Col. T said the Germans were very clever in the wood - were not got rid of. One was dressed in dirty trousers, brown sweater, and leaves attached at intervals. Clothed like this they lay motionless, and then fired. Desc. difficulties of moving wounded P.77; fears for future wounded in present-day warfare. "A man's strength or skill is going to profit him nothing" in face of such a deluge. P.78	<u>Fresnicourt</u> Cas.records  Related ex- periences P.76/7  No. of shells  Colonel Hit 6 times & unwounded  Camouflaged snipers  Removal of wounded P.77 Fears for the future P.78
29.7.16		N.H.I.
7.8.16	On 5th Gen. Sir C. Monroe inspected and complimented the S.A.s.	Gen. Monroe
(Notes on the rescue and evacuation of wounded at the Somme. Pp. 78/79) Conditions at the time; gunfire etc.; main dressing stns; dressing stns. for walking wounded; rest stns; purposes & operation.		
8.8.16	He has dinner with two other medical officers, both Cambridge and Guysmen of the same period	Old acquaint- ances
9.8.16	The Div. is to move to the Mt. St.Eloy (sic) sector. CMM reflects on the capture of Vimy Ridge. It's re-capture by the Germans must, he says, have thoroughly disgusted the French who had sacrificed so much to win it.	Vimy Ridge/Comment
15.8.16	Estree-Cauchie. Desc. dressing stn. Lawns & flower	<u>Estree-Cauchie</u>
18.8.16	beds. "One of the show places along the line."	



BOOK II (Cont'd) PAGES PP.80 to 87

There follows an account of the work of the S.A.F.A. during the battle of the Somme, compiled from the accounts and notes of various officers and men. (Composition and functioning).

This account covers the following period:-

- |         |  |  |
|---------|--|--|
| 18.6.16 | Tent Div. joined that of 27th FA to form CRS here, at Ch. Corbie. Desc. Shelter for 300 patients. Began taking in.   | <u>Corbie</u><br>CRS   |
| 30.6.16 | Deployment of personnel to other stations. <sup>from 29th</sup> Bombardment starts on 25th.  |  |
| 1.7.16  | Desc. difficult terrain.   |  |
| 3.7.16  | Desc. first wave of attack on 1st. Work of the bearers before moving up to Trigger Valley (S.A.Bde.) Desc. of valley.  | Trigger Valley   |
| 4.7.16  | Clearing trenches at the Briqueterie.  | Briqueterie  |
| 5.7.16  | Difficult march for bearers to Maricourt.  | Difficult march  |
| 6.7.16  | Volunteers called for burial parties. Cleared a considerable part of the trenches before Montauban.  | Burials  |
| 7.7.16  | Clearing wounded from Glatz Redoubt to ADS on Peronne road; day & night.   | Clearing wounded   |
| 10.7.16 | SA Bde moved forward in support of 30th Div. Shell-fire caused casualties; difficult carrying work; trenches often too narrow for stretchers, while in the open, wire and shellholes made stretcher-bearing a "performance which called for great steadiness of nerve as well as physical strength." Decision to move to Cambridge Copse.  | Montauban<br>St. bearers   |
| 12.7.16 | At Cambridge Copse the men had to burrow holes, soon surrounded by French & British guns moving up, which then drew enemy fire. Lack of sleep and heavy strain brought on breakdowns.<br>2 Corps of the S.A.I. took over some front line trenches at Bernafay Wood on 8.7.16. Many casualties, but impossible for outgoing units to clear their casualties. "It was during these days that much splendid work was done by all who took part." Recounts Capt. Welsh's experiences from 9.7. to 11.7. returning to the wood after 16 hrs. at work, with volunteers, stumbling through tear gas for more than 3 hrs before they could take away more wounded..<br>11.7. Narrow escape of Sgts. Damp & Mathews. Tribute to Stff. Sgt. Walsh for his work in Bernafay Wood.<br>Capt. Rev. Cook killed in Bernafay/Trones area. Praises Cpl. Latham & Pte. Tobias. | Cambridge Copse<br><br>2 Corps S.A.I.<br>Casualties/Bernafay Wood.<br>"Splendid work"<br><br>Capt. Welsh's experiences<br><br>Escapes/Chimney<br>Nr.<br>Trench<br>Stff. Sgt. Walsh,<br>Rev. Cook killed,<br>Tributes |
| 17.7.16 | Tent Div. moved here on 15th. Desc. work running the MDS.<br>Desc. attack on 14th; pushing Germans out of Longueval into Delville Wood. Desc. chain of evacuation, and personnel deployment etc.<br>Long a/c of appalling difficulty carrying from Longueval to Bernafay Wood.   | <u>Dives Copse</u><br><br>Desc. MDS work,<br>{ July 14<br>Attack<br>Personel deployment<br>Appalling difficulties  |



BOOK II (Cont'd)

S.A.F.A. work (cont'd)

	"M.O. covered with grime & mud, carrying a stretcher with a kilted Scot. Then a tall parson unrecognisable under a coating of mud, with a stretcher bearer for a partner, whose orders he obeyed implicitly."	Padre mucks in
20.7.16	He points out that elsewhere things were as bad, and mentions Train Alley. Refers to a new type of gas shell here. Capt. Grainger, in charge at Train Alley, was continuously at work for over 60 hours at one period. "Consequently he was partly gassed, and sent down to the MDS."	Dives Copse Train Alley Gas shells (new) Capt. Grainger/ workload/ gassed.
22.7.16		
23.7.16	Bde was withdrawn on 19th. On 22nd they went into rest.	
<hr/>		
The diary then continues here:		
27.8.16	He moved here on 24th, running the 9th Div. DRS. (Himself, Capt. Gordon, 25 NCOs and men.)	<u>Caucourt</u>
4.9.16	Lord Derby distributed awards and honours.	Awards/Lord Derby
5.9.16	CMM made a tour of aid posts. Desc. P.88 Some trench mortars were at work: "they hurl a bomb of about 60 lbs. I believe, and the explosion is v. heavy." Desc. watching one of our planes flying low (? to get photos). In one place the remaining stump of a tree, about 25 or 30 feet high, has been replaced by the REs by a steel tower painted to look like the stump; "...a splendid observation post for the artillery. The ruse seems quite unknown to the Germans at present..." Says the area under cover of the ridge is so extensive and the fighting so severe that last year's dead still lie out.	Tour P.88 of PAF. Mortars  Low-flying.  Dummy tree stump
25.9.16	They are told this is to be their "Training Area".	<u>Gouy-en-Ternois</u>
2.10.16	Moved here on 30.9. CMM dined with Gen. Furse (WT), Div. Commander.	<u>Grand Rullecourt</u>
6.10.16		<u>Bonnieres</u>
9.10.16	By a fleet of buses (French) to this HQ a few miles from Albert. The whole Div. (500 buses) embarked.	<u>Lavieville</u>
12.10.16	"Our ambulance is acting as the 'FA in Reserve'". Desc. deployment of personnel. Desc. horseback ride to Fricourt: camps, troops, terrain: "...utter desolation." Working in 8 hr. shifts. Captured documents record exhortation to German airmen to do their utmost to attain ascendancy of the air "if only for 2 hours a day." Another implores no wastage of ammo through nervousness".	<u>Dernancourt</u> Personnel deployment Desc. ride to Fricourt  German documents/ plea to airmen/ gunners
14.10.16	"This encampment of CCSs is called Edgeaill. Refers to their failed attack on the Butte de Warlen-court.	Failed attack



BOOK II (Cont'd)

14.10.16 Cont.	He describes riding up to the lines; crater of a huge mine between Becourt & Contalmaison, said to have buried a good many Tyneside Scottish. As well as 9" Hows he sees "a single monster of 15 ins which throws a simply huge shell."	Mine crater 15" gun
18.10.16		N.H.I.
23.10.16	He walks to Contalmaison and describes what he sees. Describes batteries firing: "The range is so great that they appear to be firing almost straight into the air, so that it is no uncommon sight to see huge guns firing apparently straight across a road packed with traffic, from no more than 50 yds. away." He passed little mounds with wooden crosses; pools of blood in shellholes; says they often get cases which have laid in holes for as much as 8 days - still alive to be rescued. Desc. one of the German "strong points" P.91 Desc. HQ(ambulance) - "palatial German dug-out in Fricourt, P.91. He sees a howitzer being towed back from the front with the following words chalked on the barrel: "Done Her Bit". He adds that the Tommy never ceases to see the humorous side of things.	Desc. walk P.90 Range of guns Aftermath of battle German "strong points" P.91 & dug-out Humour
26.10.16	Desc. shelling around Dernancourt. P.92	Shelling, P.92
27.10.16	He says the gun firing on Dernancourt yesterday did so from a range of 26,000 yds and was using 9.2 inch shells.	<u>Lavieville</u> Gun (9.2)
30.10.16		<u>Wanquetin</u> N.H.I.
(Typescript mentions MAP here)		
22.11.16		<u>Maizieres</u> N.H.I.
6.12.16	He was sent here on 2nd to take over the ADS from 107th F.A. German line is 1500 yds from centre of the town. Desc. Arras; damage, P.93. They are in the Ecole Normale. (Shattered panes replaced with calico and blankets let down at night.)	<u>Arras</u> Desc. p.93
22.12.16	He describes the sector - canal system (Scarpe); gun positions. P.93	Desc. sector P.93
28.12.16	He is woken by a gas alarm; lost no time putting on his mask. He says "...we all collected together feeling rather stupid as one feels rather like a rat in a hole." This gas attack was followed by another. Patients had to wear their masks for 2 hrs. A number of gas cases came in; several deaths were reported.	Gas alarm/feelings  Casualties



Capt. C.M. MURRAY, 29th F.A.

BOOK II Cont'd 1917

8.1.17	More gas on nights of 4th & 5th as well as big shells.	Gas
11.2.17	Regular routine has almost caused him to forget his diary. He says he has never been more comfortable since coming to France. Weather dry. He is in charge of a working party converting dug-outs behind the front line for use as an ADS. Desc. construction of these P.94 He has found a frozen swimming bath and skates on it: "It is rather a curious experience to be skating so near the front line." Occasionally pieces of shell rain down. (He mentions George who is now nearby; having visited him several times in this diary. (Brother)	Comfort  Converting dug-outs P.94  Skating near the line
22.2.17	CMM & Capt. Joubert are now living in the dugouts they have prepared. Desc. P.95. He is to deal with all the casualties in their sector. These dugouts were originally made by a N.Zealand tunnelling coy.	St. Nicholas Dugouts P.95
24.2.17	Great activity; guns everywhere; new trenches. "The preparations seem far more elaborate and perfect than were those for the Somme."	Many guns
26.2.17	A birthday party for 4. Shell lands in a working party; 25 cases treated, most of which were "horribly mangled". "I had to amputate above the knee in one case." Total casualties from one shell: 31, of whom 12 were killed and several others likely to die. All were from Tyneside Scottish regiments.	B'day party. Casualties. Amputation Total casualties. Tyneside Scottish.
3.3.17	He was told by the ADMS to take command of the CRS here on the 1st. Here he finds Capt. Argo of the 2/1 Highland Fld. Ambulance of the 57th Division. It is a nice site; accommodates up to 1200 men; a new station. He expects to be v. busy.	Savy-Berlette Desc. of CRS P.96
7.4.17	Bad weather has held up work on the CRS. Gives more particulars of this camp. In addition, they have fitted up huts in Aubigny as a Rest Station for 30 officers. He complains of a shortage of timber which has been "doled out v. slowly." He says the time approaches when "the next great battle will be fought", and "everyone is waiting for the word to go. The preparations are on a stupendous scale...probably about 4000 field guns and several hundred heavies to every mile...." Much air activity.	" " Rest Stn./Aubigny  Timber shortage  "Stupendous" preparations
10.4.17	Desc. successful attack by XVII Corps. P.97. "Like clockwork". Prisoners, objectives, taken. V. few casualties. The officers captured said it was "a complete surprise".	Attack P.97
11.4.17	Bad weather. Reports on news from the front. P.97	News reports P.97
12.4.17	Reports on Corps summary. Casualties coming in now. Says conditions at the front must be truly horrible; "one wonders how the human frame can endure such hardship."	Casualties Corps summary P.97 Compassion



BOOK II (Cont'd)

12.4.17 Cont.	"Our Division is reported to have done splendidly throughout".	Div.success
13.4.17	Bad news - that "poor Welsh had been badly wounded". He died at St. Nicholas the same day. "This will be a great blow to everyone in the unit, as undoubtedly he was the most loved officer in the unit, by all ranks."	Capt.Welsh d.o.w. "Great blow"to all
14.4.17	He goes with Pringle to St. Nicholas, but finds that Capt.Welsh had been too seriously wounded to be moved from Fampoux RAP, where he died at 2 am on the 13th. The road is too bad for his body to be brought down at present.	Capt.Welsh d. on 13.4.17 Weather delays burial
17.4.17	Weather horrible, and Capt.Welsh has been buried "somewhere between Athie and Fampoux, near the RAP." CMM says "in the confusion of the battle one hardly realises that he has gone and it will only be when we piece ourselves together once more that we shall fully realise the loss to our unit."	Capt.W buried near RAP  Deferred mourning
21.4.17	Weather "continued vile" until the 20th. Bombardment all along the line.	
23.4.17	Sudden escalation of bombardment: "one continuous and mighty roar...like a convoy of lorries with their engines going just outside my hut." Above this the sound of heavies (Hows and Naval Guns).	Escalation of bombardment
27.4.17	Not much advance now, but Huns counterattacked in masses, mown down by our artillery as they came. He says the S.A. Bde has suffered more badly than other Bdes in killed and wounded. CMM has orders to remain in charge of this camp as long as his division remains in the Corps. The Surgeon General visited and expressed considerable satisfaction.	Counterattacks Casualties  Orders. Visit by Surg.Gen.
1.5.17	Good weather. Col. Symons, AIMS has been killed by a shell while walking along a road behind the line. CMM says he will be a great loss...a most capable man and v. much liked... He says the Div. and especially the Bde. is seriously depleted. The Bde. has gone in only 1 Battn. strong; remnants of the other Battns. being joined with fatigue parties, bearers, etc.	AIMS killed Tribute  Div. depleted
8.5.17 13.5.17	Bombardment. Attacks.	
19.5.17	There is some confusion about the position now, which the Corps communique describes as "obscure." Heavy losses claimed by either side. "George" has had a "stiff time" - is acting Adjutant. CMM hopes he will be able to come away and rest with him.	Situation "obscure"  Brother George
25.5.17	The 51st Div. which replaced them have been in some stiff fighting, capturing & consolidating. Officers who have come down say position is v. favourable for another attack. A young pilot says he was attacked by 2 Hun Hal-	51st Div. Success  Halberstad planes



BOOK II (Cont'd)

25.5.17 Cont.	berstad planes "which are their fastest and their best." They far outclassed his machine. He and the observer took the machine gun off their plane when they landed behind the German lines. They found a British plane - pilot & observer lying dead - which had been missing for 2 days, took it's identity, fought off 8 Germans with their gun and managed to get to our own line, among the Canadians. Their info helped the Canadians to attack the next morning and advance. About a week later the same pilot was shot down; his plane snapped in two at his seat, letting him fall uninjured to the ground. He and his observer lay in shellholes about 140 yds in front of the German line before getting back to our lines. This lad took CMM for a flight. Desc. of this P.101. CMM was v. impressed. "A most thrilling (Long account) experience".	Airmens' escape  Valuable info. obtained
	He receives his leave warrant.	Second escape
12.6.17	He had leave from 28th to 7th (May/June).	CMM's 1st flight P.101
20.6.17	He is trying to contact George, having had no word for some time.	<u>Leave</u> <u>Savy-Berlette</u>
28.6.17	Desc. a visit to Saignies. P.102. Old lines; villages. Desc. how roads intended for constant use were staked at close intervals on each side with either wood or iron stakes to prevent the traffic swinging off the crown of the road, and also the accumulation of mud. There were also pockets of spare roadmaterial at intervals. Tea in Bapaume at a place run by the E.F.C. which also provided beds. CMM has been able to arrange concerts "which the men enjoy immensely"; one by the 27th F.A. and the other by the "Thistles" (the 9th Div. troupe.)	Brother Saignies P.102 Visit  Staked roads  E.F.C.
2.7.17	Another show, by the "Follies" of the 4th Div. , the original troupe of this kind in France. Desc. fitting out the theatre. P.104. He says his mention in despatches has led to a mistake, as the Guys Gazette has got him in among the DSOs and several people have written to congratulate.	Concerts  "Follies" Theatre P.104  Mention in despatches
5.7.17	He has been to No. 3 Canadian Hosp. at Doullens to see George who is "improving" and feeling better. He hopes to get away on leave soon. Desc. of the hospital in the citadel. P.104 He says the French are much delighted by the arrival of American troops. "We hear that they are quite sufficiently trained..in fact better trained than the Allied troops were at the beginning of the war - which is not saying much." "The medical corps have already taken over several hospitals."	Brother  Desc.Hospital/ P.104  Americans/Fr. delight
10.7.17	Ernest came to the camp. He is stationed at Acq.	Ernest (? relative)
12.7.17	Lunch with Ernest, and a ride to Souchez. Desc.P.105	Ride. P.105
14.7.17	Ditto, and another ride to ridge above Notre Dame de Lorette. Desc. P.104 Wonderful view from top, to most of the front.	" P.104



BOOK II (Cont'd)

14.7.17 Cont.	He describes watching "a battery of 6" Hows bombarding a group of huge tanks in connection with some factory of sorts. Each time before firing a phone message came up to the observing officer." A German plane attacks a balloon with fire bullets, and the smoke trails looked like wires connecting plane & balloon. P.105. This balloon was only a decoy; CMM doesn't envy observers their task although they have parachutes. "We sat for about 1 hour watching this scene which I don't think I will easily forget."	Guns/balloon/ Observations (Desc.P.105)
25.7.17	It has been decided to close this camp at Savy Berlette although it is a good one and the new camp is only 5 miles away at Bus. With Ernest he watched another shoot - an 8 inch How battery at work. "The shooting was not v.good but the observing officer said the guns had only just moved into position and could not expect to do much until they had settled down." Relates "nasty experience" of 10th F.A. near Arras, P.106.	Camp to close  Guns need to settle down  10th F.A. P.106 (shelled)  N.H.I.
28.7.17		N.H.I.
3.8.17	Arrived here yesterday. He says there has obviously been "wanton destruction" by the Germans here; churches blown down; dynamite put in the vaults; graves opened and rifled.	<u>Bus</u> Germans' "wanton destruction"
6.8.17	He went on a foraging expedition. Long desc. of ground he goes over; litter, equipment, wire; little marker crosses, and here and there with names, steel helmet or fifle. Desc. P.107	Desc.Exped. to Saily & Combles P.107
15.8.17		N.H.I.
27.8.17	Told they are to move to Achiet-le-Grand. Desc. being given a lift by Capt.Fenton who wanted to visit 4th Army HQ at Malo-Les-Bains. Desc. beach; shelling of Dunkerque. He sees a "huge aeroplane" belonging to the French, and was told it could carry the equipment of 23 men. It is being used as a bomb dropper, escorted by fast scouts on its raids. He says the Germans have better planes than we do, but they are not so numerous, "nor are they such reckless fighters as our men." Comments on the state of affairs in the front P.108. He says the difficulties of fighting in Belgium are enormous and depend v. much on the weather. Roads are causeways to be kept along. Comments that the failure of the 5th Army has been a rebuff to the whole offensive. Passing through Bailleul they met two of the Ducros brothers who are running a M.A.C. (The Ducros of "Dunlop Tyre fame).  30.8.17	Lift to 4th Army/ desc.Dunkerque bombing. New "huge" plane   Compares German/ Brit. planes  The front P.108 (Armies) Belgium/fighting  5th Army failure  Ducros (Dunlop)  <u>Achiet-le-Grand</u>
	Camp. flattened by storm. Shot 11 partridges.	



BOOK II Cont'd

- 1.9.17 Desc. most interesting drive. Bapaume/Albert road has been "splendidly remade". Comments on fighting for the Butte de Warlencourt, P.109  
The site of le Sars is marked by notices. Near Thiepval is a large cross put up to the Australians who fell there.  
At La Boisselle the crosses were thick. "Hundreds at a time". Past Mametz Wood, Longueval & Delville Wood the ground has been churned up and is covered with weeds and grass. Where the wood was dense in 1916 it is now a mass of stumps. They recall places and incidents, P.110.  
On their return, via Sailly-Saillies to Bapaume, and having seen most of the Somme battlefield, CMM says: "It is a scene of the utmost desolation, and will be more or less uninhabitable for years to come. In fact places like Delville Wood it would seem better to leave as they are. A monument to those whose remains lie crowded there."
- 14.9.17 They were at Achiet until the 12th spending time training and in sports. Entrained for Godewaersvelde and marched to this camp. (A 6 cylinder Wolesley had been smashed on a level crossing a few hours before).  
He visits the Mill at Vlamertinghe which is the Corps Combined Post for WW. "This the ambulance will take over tomorrow."  
He is told he can't be spared at present, and explains why; the Germans have a strong position, and a number of our picked Divs. have been assembled to make a special attack. P.110.  
He says those who have been here some time say it is too exposed for ADSs to do much more than transport the wounded back as quickly as possible.
- 16.9.17 Casualties started coming in. CMM is to be in charge of bearers and look after Brigade.  
Desc. drive to Ypres. In the vaults of the old prison will be HQ for the bearers for the whole of the Div, CMM's with them.  
Walking back he describes Bavaria House - pillboxes; construction; elephant dugouts; advantages & disadvantages. P.111.  
Desc. of "wildest turmoil of shell holes"; foul fluids and horrible stench on the next stretch of ground.  
He goes on to describe the scene. P.112. Desc. Square Farm, destined to be another aid post. Nowhere is there any shelter.
- 17.9.17 He recaps here. Mentions bombing with huge "Gothas". He says time goes v. fast what with air raids, shells, attending to casualties, making plans & thinking about supplies and equipment.  
2 American officers come to look round. One is interested in splints and is v. pleased with the one suggested by CMM - the arm splint. The American wants to cut down the number of types used to a minimum. He says he will adopt it as the standard type for their army. "It has taken nearly a year to get it even noticed in ours."
- Butte de W.  
P.109
- M.C.M.  
Cross/Australians  
Crosses
- Sites unrecognisable  
Past events
- Reflections.  
Thoughts on Delville Wood
- Abeele  
Wolesley
- CCP for WW
- Preps for attack P.110
- Exposed position
- Vlamertinghe  
CCPWW
- Prison HQ
- Pillboxes P.111
- State of ground  
Scene P.112
- Square Farm
- Gothas
- Time filled by activities
- Americans/  
Splints/CMM's  
comment



BOOK II (Cont'd)

17.9.17 He adds, of the Americans: "With the usual American  
Cont. acumen they are going about among the ambulances and  
those who do the work instead of applying to HQs."

American acumen

Battle of Ypres

19.9.17 CMM takes up his post at Mill Cottage; Lt. Spyker  
to Bavaria House; Capt. Laurie to Square Farm.  
Bombardment started. A shell fell on the soft  
ground 30 yds from CMM. "The softness of the  
ground was the saving of the situation...."  
Prisoners started to come in. They were taken to  
Bde. HQ close by and handed over, after searching,  
to the stretcher bearers. "all day we continued in  
this way, so that valuable help was given."  
The trains were being run by a S.A. Railway Section,  
"v. pleased to be working with us.. each train  
brought up a petrol can of hot tea for ourselves  
and the wounded."  
Desc. of shells landing nearby; casualties P.113  
Stretcher cases streaming down.  
He says the drivers of the Ford ambulances did  
splendid work - shells just grazing them all day all  
the way.  
Desc. of ad hoc arrangements for wounded from hour  
to hour. Pp.113/4. Lists 6 casualties P.114.

Mill Cottage

Bombardment.  
Shells land in  
mud

Prisoners/help  
from bearers

S.A.R'way Sectn.  
brings tea

Shells P.113

Trib./ambulance  
drivers

Casualty names  
P.114

21.9.17 Moved to Bavaria House where Capt. Hepple of 28th FA  
is also stationed.  
Gives details of deployment of bearers etc. P.114  
Capt. Laurie shot in the thigh while checking the  
front line for wounded. He crawled back and was  
said to be "v. cheerful".  
Details of those now released from duty. P.114  
Mentions A & S.H. casualties. P.114

Bavaria House

Capt. Laurie w.

22.9.17 Reports of stray casualties coming in. Records  
coming and going of bearers etc. P.115.

A & S.H. casual-  
ties

23.9.17

Bearers'  
activities  
P.115  
N.H.I.

25.9.17 CMM is told, on arrival at HQ, that he is to  
proceed in charge of 40-50 men and 2 officers to  
look after the Division which was moving here to  
rest.

Winnezele

New orders

28.9.17 Told to move here. Details of movements etc.  
Due to overshooting the mark, the 59th Div. had  
had to fall back. 2400 casualties in 24 hrs.

Arneke

Casualties/59th Div

1.10.17 Harvest moon brings aerial activity. Bomb in Pop  
caused nearly 200 casualties. CMM watches the  
planes fly across the moon. He comments that we  
have to send a lot of planes to do what one Gotha  
can.

Aerial activity

Harvest moon

Gothas

Battle of Ypres, 20th September 1917 (Amplification of notes already made)

This passage is essentially the same as that covered  
from 19.9.17 to 28.9.17 Pp.113/5, but in much more  
detail, and with reference to the map.  
He desc. how the S.A. Bde. took all the pillboxes on  
their own front and 2 more, and the method they  
used. "I don't suppose there has ever been a better  
combination between artillery & infantry than this."

S.A. successes

Artillery/infantry  
combination

P.116-118



BOOK II (Cont'd)

Battle of Ypres (cont'd)

He says that when he first viewed "the condition of things" he felt they were in for a v. bad time, but when the attack started and they got to work "a good deal of the sense of danger seemed to disappear."

Anxiety quelled  
by action

Owing to the impossibility of making dugouts, as soon as the cases became plentiful they had to be dressed in the open. "...horrible thing at times to have perhaps 50 stretchers all round the pillbox, lying in the open, and shells falling all round.."  
By good luck they didn't receive a direct hit.  
(Organisation of the whole thing is gone into in detail.)

Str. cases lying  
in the open

Details of or-  
ganisation.

Referring to planes, he commends the Gothas. Our airmen say there is no comparison between German planes and our own. General opinion now is that the following is the order of merit:-

German  
French  
Italian  
British

He remarks that this is about right: "The bombing is so demoralising that there seems no doubt that all the combatants will make a point of developing it, and it will behove us to do something to mend matters."

Diary continues:

- 8.10.17 Orders to go to L'Epee Farm.  
9.10.17 Entrained at Arneke; arrived Pop and marched here - a most uncomfortable camp. Visited the MDS and ADS "on the Ypres-Commines Canal called Dulhallow."  
10.10.17 CMM came here last night to run the Corps ADS. He and Capt. Forbes had to make their way here, in bad weather, and heavy shelling. After dark the shelling was worse, and the scene on the road "in-describable". One huge incendiary bursts into a crowd of guns, wagons and pack mules. CMM was dressing until 3 am.  
11.10.17 Casualties coming in steadily: "we could only just keep abreast of the work."  
12.10.17 His post is the nodal point from which 2 lines of evacuation radiate. (Lists other posts). He also lists MOs i/c; methods of trying to avoid shells. P.119. He says 450 bearers were at work on the two routes. No shelter for the "worn & sodden bearers waiting until it was light enough for them to go out again."  
13.10.17 Task of clearing the front line. Wind, wet; sea of mud and hidden holes. CMM's limited accommodation became swamped and men had to lie out in the mud, in pouring rain. Bearers dropped asleep everywhere. CMM had to find time to go round "spurring them back to work."

Arneke  
L'Epee Farm

St. Julien  
Pp. 119  
Account  
of  
Atrocious con-  
ditions  
Shell victims

Heavy workload

Details of FA  
posts P.119

450 bearers  
(shelterless  
mostly)

Clearing front  
line.  
Conditions.  
Exhaustion.



## BOOK II, Cont'd

13.10.17 Cont.	He says that if it had not been for the voluntary aid of Capt. Widowson, N.Z. MC, whose battery was nearby and who worked steadily with him, they could not have done half what they did. As the wagons came down, wounded were piled aboard; squads struggling down the road carrying, until well after midnight.	Desc. Capt. Widowson, NZ. (tribute) P.120
14.10.17	Quiketer. Bearers able to get some rest, and clean socks. "A great many of our men are suffering from mustard gas poisoning."	Clean socks for bearers. Mustard gas poisoning
15.10.17	He tours the bearer posts; all are jaded, but "keeping up wonderfully under the strain." He thinks the gas will "tell its tale. Already about 16 have gone in this way or wounded."	Morale Gas victims
16.10.17	Capt. Forbes' party at Hibou had a particularly bad dosing of gas. "Forbes and more men have had to go, and our casualties now amount to nearly 40." 300 infantry bearers were recalled and 100 fresh ones sent up.	" at Hibou
17.10.17	Terrific shelling. One hits CMM's pillbox by the door, but he was out. He says how wonderfully strong the pillboxes are; this shell only knocked off a corner. The concussion is tremendous. He describes ammo carriers running the gauntlet of a concentrated barrage; limbers without drivers; riderless horses & horseless riders. In spite of the shells, there were few casualties. Nevertheless CMM is kept busy and there were some exciting moments getting the wounded away. PP.120/1	Strength of pillboxes Chaos on roads P.120
18.10.17	Shelling has gone on all night and is still continuing. Desc. hearing approach of the shell before explosion. A fleet of Gothas went over "and as usual all our planes disappeared." Bombs did immense damage. Desc. 2 plane crashes. Not quite so busy. "The men are beginning to pick up again."	Shells Gothas
19.10.17		N.H.I.
20.10.17	Guns all night, but CMM says "I find I can sleep fairly well through most of it." This is the 11th day they have been in this place "and all of us will be heartily glad to get out."	Ability to sleep Had enough
22.10.17	Monotonous Hun shelling makes one day v. like another. Incessant barrage of 5.9s. He says this has been a long period of strain for all as the Germans are putting up a desperate struggle to hang on to the last of the high ground "...one lives in an atmosphere of constant vibration and appalling crashes."	Monotony 5.9s Stressful period
23.10.17	He thinks there must be quite a number of batteries directed on to them as the shells are streaming over, "and the old pillbox rocking under the vibration."	Targeted by enemy
24.10.17 26.10.17	Capt. MacGregor of 148th FA RN came with advance party. Relief by 148th FA RN. All collected at Irish Farm; next day trained and bussed to Synthe.	FA RN



BOOK II CONT'd

- 30.10.17 After 2 nights at Synthe they moved here.  
They are on the coast, 7 or 8 km from the front line. Div. duties are to hold about 700 yards of front line from the sea inland & also coast defence. "So it is what is reckoned as a resting job."  
Billeted in "a nice little villa".  
Pringle has gone on 3 months leave to S.A. and CMM is now in command of the unit.  
CMM goes on leave from 7.11. to 21.11.
- 23.11.17 He rejoins unit. "Our nice friend Fritz, the "unit dog" had been killed on the way down by a car."
- 26.11.17 Moved here today. This is a large, neglected farm. They are to convert it into a DRS. Lists officers here with him. P.123
- 2.12.17 To Hesdin. Train to Peronne; marched to Allaine.  
to Marched to Havrincourt Wood & shared camp with  
6.12.17 3rd FA Guards Division. Marched to Haudecourt to comfortable billets.
- 7.12.17 Instructions to construct a MDS for the 7th Corps  
He says Maj. Power marched on 4th to Havrincourt to take over bearer posts from the Guards Div.  
"Today has been a black day as 7 of our men were killed and 4 wounded in the aid post in Gouze- court which was penetrated by a shell. 3 of the men are not expected to live." He then names Maj. Power, Capt. Liebson, Lt. Bayers & Lt. Smith - all having met there when the shelling commenced. They had already ordered the men into the cellar and were running across the court- yard to take shelter there when a shell pitched exactly in the hole which lit & ventilated it, and did not burst until it reached the cellar. One man escaped unwounded. "In one fell swoop we have therefore had more men killed than during the whole of our career...."  
Lists names of men killed.
- 14.12.17 V. busy constructing the MDS.
- 25.12.17 They have been clearing the front of wounded and constructing the camp. They now come under the VII Corps. The MDS is now to be a DRS.  
They found everything in confusion here. He refers to the successful tank attack, which had been ruined by the cavalry. "They did just exactly what they have done on every occasion in which they have been used....threw everything into confusion & ac- complished nothing...ruining the success gained by the tanks on the first day." He continues on P.124  
"To all but the Higher Command the use of cavalry in this war has been obviously stupid...same old errors time after time". Points out that it<sup>is</sup> then harder for the infantry to regain ground.  
He continues that no provision had been made to hold the flanks representing the base of the sa-
- St. Idesbalde  
Duties.  
Resting job.  
In command of unit  
Leave  
St. Denoeux  
Planques Farm/  
Conversion job.  
Officers.  
Nurlu  
"Black day" (GOUZECOURT)  
Casualties  
(Officers named)  
Circumstances  
P.123  
Worst loss to date  
Names men k. P.124  
Change of plan for hosp.camp  
Crit. of cavalry in tank action  
(P.124)  
Opportunities lost



BOOK II Cont'd

25.11.17 Cont.      Salient with sufficiently strong divisions. So the Germans predictably attacked on both flanks. Continues P.124. Comments P.124

An artilleryman told CMM that the first intimation his battery had of an attack was seeing our men bolting back followed by Germans. "The Guards Division that had been fighting in Bourlon Wood and, relieved, were just entering Havrincourt Wood, were turned out to stop the rout. Their APM posted himself near a prisoner cage on the main road of retreat and simply turned our men and officers into it and then into a trench to defend it." In this and other ways, "and by the pluck of a few individuals, the rout was stopped and the Germans driven back for a bit....." Guards stop rout, using prisoner cage.

He says the net result of all this was that the rest of the salient became untenable and had to be abandoned. P.124

CMM says it was 5 days after this disaster that he arrived, and there was confusion everywhere. There was a German attack a few days ago, and now v.little regained ground remains. Confusion

BOOK III

1.1.18 Xmas dinners for men, and concert. Nurru

2.1.18 Lt. Richardson, WM, and CMS Godge were mentioned in despatches on New Years day. Mentions in despatches

5.1.18 Sgt. Kimberley has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Award

10.1.18 They have been having v. bad weather; constant frost, with rain, so everywhere is coated with ice. Bad weather

15.1.18 They have now built a hospital with accommodation for 250 sick, and have 240 under treatment. There is a lot of sickness due to the bad weather. Sick patients Hospital

17.1.18 He has heard that the trenches in front line "have become so hopeless that they have had to be evacuated." No guns have been firing for the past 48hrs. Trenches evacuated Guns silent

25.1.18 Weather is now mild. The officers have built a home for themselves from an old brick wall intact on 3 sides, roofed with corrugated iron; walls of felt & hessian, and a big wood fire in the fireplace. Trapdoor to cookhouse. "Home built" (officers)

Desc. the hospital they have built. P.127 Desc. hospital P.127

Gen. Smuts visited. Gen. Smuts visits

31.1.18 Under orders to move, which they are v. sorry about.

1.2.18 Moved here, to the banks of the Somme. Suzanne

They are in a chateau on a hillside; out for rest and training.

10.2.18 Busy with lectures, drill, exercises & games. Preparing for the rumoured attack. Army scheme of general reorganisation. "A Bde is being taken from each Division - more comparable to the German Div." Training

Reorganisation of Army



BOOK III (Cont'd)

- |         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
| 18.2.18 | <p>Yesterday the Bde. held a memorial service at Delville Wood. Desc. P.129</p> <p>The Bde were "cinematographed" as they walked off past a point where <u>Gen.</u> Lukin had taken up his position near the crossroads in Longueval."</p> <p>He says the S.A.Scottish have also erected a rustic cross to the memory of their dead.</p> <p>Two of the sisters who came had lost brothers in Delville Wood, and had obtained a plan with which to find it. "Unless one has some such information it is worse than searching for a needle in a bundle of hay."</p>   | <p>Memorial service<br/>Desc. P.129<br/>Cinematograph</p> <p>S.A.Scottish cross</p> <p>Sisters find wood<br/>with aid of plan</p>   |
| 26.2.18 | <p>CMM has had leave, and attended brother George's wedding.</p>  | <p>Leave/brother's<br/>wedding</p>  |
| 10.3.18 | <p>Desc. visits made in London &amp; Boulogne in connection with requests for equipment, ambulances, etc. P.129</p>   | <p><u>Haut Allanes</u><br/>Requests P.129<br/>for equipment.</p>  |
| 19.3.18 | <p>Took over here from 132nd FA, 39th Div.</p> <p>A great deal of defence work has been done here in the last 2 months.</p> <p>He says they have been told what to do in case of withdrawal - v. different to last year when all the talk was of attack. "To be on the defensive now seems the abandonment (sic) of all hope of anything conclusive from a military point of view."</p> <p>He thinks the Cambrai disaster has woken the higher command up to the fact that it is folly to be unprepared.</p> <p>He says the Germans have been using considerable quantities of gas shells with "rather disastrous results". The 2nd Div. has already lost some thousands temporarily disabled. (Mostly mustard gas). Desc. effect of gas P.130.</p> <p>He thinks the Germans may be using mixed gases - penetrating the ground and emitting fumes for many days. The bulk of the men were gassed by passing over the ground which had been shelled a day or two before, and it was not thought necessary to wear a mask.</p> <p>He receives letters from the American Med. HQ thanking him for his notes on his splint and inviting him to visit them when he had time.</p> | <p><u>Fins</u> 132nd FA.</p> <p>Defence work</p> <p>Different slant on<br/>instructions</p> <p>Gas shells<br/>(2nd Div.)<br/>Effects P.130</p> <p>Invitation from<br/>US Med.HQ</p> |
| 21.3.18 | <p>Bombardment - long expected German offensive starts. A great deal of gas used. Shelling. Sgt. Kimberley has lucky escape.</p> <p>German planes have been v. active "as they always are when it really counts." "Our air service seems lacking on important occasions..."</p> <p>Today "poor young Peacock" was killed. He had been CMM's batman recently, and had come unscathed through all the battles.</p>  | <p>Offensive starts<br/>Gas</p> <p>Enemy planes/com-<br/>ment<br/>Cf. our own</p> <p>Batman killed</p>  |
| 24.3.18 | <p>On 22nd they received orders to fall back on the "Green Line". Later instructions were received that serious cases would have to be left.</p> <p>21st &amp; 16 Divs. also in retreat. Desc. retreat to camp beyond Maricourt on 23rd. P.132</p> <p>He says the 9th Div. has been the mainstay of the retreat "and that the SA troops..have been the most conspicuous."</p>   | <p><u>Bronfay Farm</u></p> <p>Retreat P.132</p> <p>Trib.to 9th Div.</p>   |



BOOK III (Cont'd)

- 24.3.18 "So far we have repelled every attack and have only  
Cont. had to fall back in conformity with the Divisions  
on our right and left." Div. pride
- 25.3.18 Here, on P.132, CMM tells of the SA Bde holding  
back the Bosch and being surrounded. Deciding to  
fight to a finish Col. Heale called for fixed  
bayonets and led his men in a last stand. Gen.  
Dawson was with the Bde. "...it will go down in  
history that South Africans..refused to fly before  
the enemy like the despicable divisions on our  
flanks." The stand was made on the Boucnavesnes  
Clery Ridge at the Bois Marrieres.  
He goes on to say what he has always feared...that  
no longer have English troops any real gut. "Never  
have Scottish or Colonial troops given in like the  
English, and I feel v. little reliance can ever be  
placed in them again" He continues in this vein,  
referring to "cowardice", and expresses him<sup>self</sup> very  
forcibly indeed; also referring to Press covering-  
up; descent into vituperation against enemy while  
not having an ounce of their esprit-de-corps.  
He consoles himself by reflecting that Englishmen  
who have gone abroad have sown the seeds of the  
"old stock" and maintained English prestige.  
Finally he refers to colonial troops ready to die  
beside their homebourne (sic) cousins who have then  
deserted them. Bray-Corbie Road  
Last stand of  
SA Bde. P.132  
Anger with other  
Divs.  
Scathing re Eng-  
lish P.132  
Strong condemna-  
tion P.132
- 27.3.18 Continued back to a huge aerodrome being built by  
Hanley (sic) Page, and being used by observer  
planes. Having put on pyjamas they were turned  
out to move on. Hennencourt Wood
- 28.3.18 Told to take over the line on the Ancke (sic)  
valley, but subsequently had to fall back again. Toutencourt
- 29.3.18 There is a lot of coming and going, and new  
orders. "The progress of the Bosch seems cen-  
tered along the Ancre."  
Later. They are now at Raineville, on the way to  
refit. Their losses are not so great, since men  
are rejoining them having become separated or cut  
off in the rapid retreat.  
He has read an account of the retreat in The Times  
of 26th "...fairly accurate, but of course talks  
in the most fulsome manner about the courage of our  
troops". CMM says there have undoubtedly been  
brave stands, but far too large a proportion of co-  
wardice...entirely confined to English regiments.  
He says that "divisions like the 21st and 16th fled  
even before they were attacked," and he refers to  
"such vermin." Raineville  
Rejoined by "lost"  
men  
"Times" article.  
Criticism.  
"Cowardice"  
(Strong language)

Report on the part taken by the S.A. Field Ambulance in the operation during  
the recent battle from 21st March 1918.

12-20 March. Map.Ref. 57 C - 62 C More details during this period

21 March. More details

22 March. " "

23 March. " "

24 March " "



BOOK III (Cont'd)

25th March. } More details.  
26th }  
27th }

Today Gen. Tudor who was our CRA has been given command of our Division and Gen. Blacklock who has only just been appointed to our Division has been given command of the 35th Division which is another of those who ran.

31.3.18	Near here they will entrain for the North. He thinks everyone will be v. disappointed as "Belgium is the worst part of the front and everyone who goes there devoutly hopes never to do so again."	<u>Bonneville</u> Dislike of Belgium
3.4.18	They entrained at Candas on 31st March in cattle trucks in which horses had previously travelled. Detrained at Abeele and marched to this camp. Orders to take over the forward area.	<u>Seddon Camp</u> (Vierstraat) Filthy trucks
4.4.18	They are now in the IX Corps. Took over from 3rd Australian FA. They are in the cellars of a shattered house kept dry by pumping, and fairly comfortable thanks to their predecessors. He believes they are here to refit which can't be done out of the line as all divisions are required.	<u>Voormezele ADS</u> Accommodation Refitting
6.4.18	Desc. of this "interesting" sector; aid posts here and at Spoilbank; canal; RAPS at Railway Trench; Hill 60 (now called "Hole 60"). P.138	Desc.sector P.138 "Hole 60"!
10.4.18	News of another German push, Givenchy to Fleurbaik. He says their Div. is spread out over a huge front considering the condition they are in, but he knows they will give a good account of themselves. "What happens elsewhere it is impossible to predict in view of the hopeless way in which all but a few divisions have recently behaved." Shelling here. Boche have taken Messines, and now attacking on something like a 60m front. He quotes "interesting figures": divisions, distances. He says the enemy have only been driven back at great cost, whereas we, in many cases, seem to have put up no resistance at all. He goes on to express his opinion again that our men are led badly. He says there has been a v.careful selection of officers in the SA Brigade; they know their men and are known by them. He says the Germans have new methods of attack; not now in "open order" but in small parties of 50 & less, in rushes; preceded and followed by "specialist" groups. Instead of waiting for whole batteries to move up together, many field guns are taken up singly and get into action as quickly as the infantry advance. Therefore almost impossible for our scattered formations to shoot down the whole of a party before many had gained their objectives. If determined to hold a trench it can be done easily. He cites the SA as an example.	German push. Faith in own Div.Pp,138/9 Divs/distances P.139 Crit. of how are men are led. SA officers carefully picked Enemy methods of advance P.139 Advantages Trench-holding P.139 (SA example) Determination required



BOOK III (Cont'd)

- |         |  |   |
|---------|--|---|
| 11.4.18 | Account of German attack, and SA counterattack from Vulverghem, taking Messines again. P.140<br>Mostly walking cases are coming in.  | Attack & counter-<br>attack P.140   |
| 12.4.18 | Arrival of an officer on m/cycle who told of confusion towards Steenwerk and troops streaming away - no attempt at resistance. CMM continues here to vent his feelings about the way in which the English troops are led. P.140.<br>He refers to a "most remarkable telegram" advising that 1st Aus.Div. (and 8th), 1 Fr.Div. & cavalry will arrive tomorrow, and comments "Colonials and French to the rescue once more." "It is galling beyond measure....."<br>He says that the 1500 SAs sustained 500 casualties in their splendid work of recapturing Messines Ridge. He continues about "the faltering English troops" and what England owes to Scotland and the Colonials. He says it could only be a matter of weeks before Hindenberg's threat to "smash the British army" is carried out: "...a blow to our prestige which it will take an entire reformation of our 'morale' to put right....." | Steenwerk confusion.<br>Comment on leadership.<br><br>"Colonials & Fr.<br>to the rescue"<br>P.140<br><br>SA casualties/<br>Messines<br>England's debt to<br>allies. P.140<br><br>Blow to prestige |
| 13.4.18 | A captured German officer said their officers had been told to watch for our men leaving the trenches, and then attack. Where they saw some making off, although not yet attacked, they advanced.<br>He says things have been even worse further south, with divisions running away before the Boches could even get at them.<br>He says we have shown ourselves on a par with the Italians.<br>Commenting on our "flying troops" an officer replies "flying from nothing." No shelling or enemy, yet no thought of even looking for a position to take up.<br>Here he reads of the 51st Div. ("the best of the Scottish") being rushed in and holding the Boche. "It only needs a few brave men to keep them easily in control".  | Germans told to<br>watch for re-<br>treating Brits.<br>P.141<br><br>Divisions fleeing<br>P.141<br><br>Comparison with<br>Italians<br><br>"Flying from<br>nothing" P.141<br><br>51st Div. ("best") |
| 14.4.18 | Better news from the south.<br>Account of the performance of the SA Div. P.142.<br>Army Commander has sent a message expressing his appreciation of the wonderful work of the 9th Div. Lists names of 3 men killed by a random shell at Sevenscote when out of the line.   | Account/SA Div.<br>P.142<br>Message from Army<br>Commander.<br>Casualty names (Seven-<br>Core)  |
| 16.4.18 | Orders to withdraw at dusk. Heavy German bombardment. "The 21st Div. ran off again in Wytschaete Wood....French troops have arrived and are going to help the weaklings on our right."<br>The Div. has asked to stay on. He refers to the spirit of the Scotch and S.A. troops - fighting hard since 21st March, but never a complaint - falling asleep while their wounds are dressed - Scots apologising for being wounded and unable to help etc.   | 21st "weaklings"<br>P.143<br><br>Attitude of SAs<br>and Scots<br>(tribute) P.14   |
| 17.4.18 | Fr. have retaken Wytschaete. He again refers to the 19th & 21st Divs. which ran on being shelled. One of the SA Coy.Cdrs. "a great big burly fellow" met the Colonel of one of the "running" bttns, coming   |   |



BOOK III (Cont'd)

- |                  |  |   |
|------------------|--|---|
| 17.4.18<br>Cont. | back at the head of his men saying they had been shelled out of their position. The SA captain took his revolver out and threatened to shoot him. The Colonel went back. CMM says "This illustrates what has been going on and how it could be remedied." The SAs went on and pushed the Germans back.   | SA commander threatens Colonel  |
| 20.4.18          | They are now in reserve, and resting. This place was a CCS, now being used as an MDS. An uncle writes to tell CMM that his brother, George, has been badly wounded in the abdomen by a shell splinter. This must have happened about the 5th, after which G's Adjutant wrote to the family, and this worries CMM.  | <u>Remy</u><br><br>Brother badly wounded<br><br>Late notification             |
| 21.4.18          | Announcement from the Corps Commander. The C-in-C in conversation with him said it was mainly due to the stubborn resistance of the 9th Division that the army could now hold on to the present line. He also stated that General Foch fully appreciated what had been done by the 9th Division. There is a great collection of ambulances here. The French organisation is different from ours, in that they have no stretcher-bearers. The work is done by 'brancardiers' who stay with their btms; the ambulance forms dressing stations similar to ours, but are not concerned with transport of the wounded. CMM says this is more economical in the use of men. None but men who are unfitted for fighting are allowed in the "Service de Santé", "and a most curious lot they are". | C-in-C compliments 9th Div.<br><br><br>Fr.scheme for wounded "better" (P.144) |
| 22.4.18          | A letter from his sister-in-law says George was wounded on 4th April. He adds that General Haig, when speaking (above) said that if any Bde could be picked out from the Armies in France for mention for special gallantry and good work it would be the S.A. Brigade.  | Gen.Haig/SA Bde.  |
| 23.4.18          | He is informed by his Uncle of George's death.   | Brother dead  |
| 25.4.18          | Terrific bombardment. Action to and fro at Kemmel. Details P.145   | Action at Kemmel, P.145   |
| 28.4.18          | French troops have been "rushed up". CMM comments "On the whole the French soldier is a much taller and finer looking man than ours...methods more like the Burghers...much more individuality and initiative than ours, but paying little attention to cleanliness and orderliness. Commenting on one of the Fr.ambulances: "...some of their equipment is good, particularly a v. serviceable type of light tent, but they seem slow & inept in handling wounded, and rather lacking in system. They are being helped by American motor ambulances which are all Fords and look most uncomfortable."   | Desc. of Fr.soldiers P.145<br><br>Fr. ambulances<br><br>US ambulances         |
| 29.4.18          | Heavy bombardments.  |   |
| 1.5.18           | Explanation as to recent bombardment. P.146  | <u>Camped nr. Watou</u>   |



BOOK III (Cont'd)

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|--|--|
| <p>2.5.18 Copy of message from Sir D. Haig in appreciation of the gallantry displayed by the 9th Div. They are now at the site of No. 62 CCS once called "Bandachem". The reason for this was that there are a number of villages ending in "chem" and 3 CCSs established close together called themselves respectively Bandachem and Mendichem for surgical cases, while the place for medicals was Dosinchem. He now explains the attack (a double one) by the Boche on 29th, repulsed by Belgians: "...shown themselves to be of better stuff than they were usually credited."<br/>"Capt. W. Smith of our ambulance has been awarded an M.C. for his really splendid work with the SA Brigade." Gives circumstances.</p> | <p><u>Haringhe</u><br/>Haig's tribute to 9th Div.<br/><u>No.62 CCS</u></p> <p>Explanation of "Bandachem"</p> <p>Attack on 29th P.146 (April Belgian troops</p> <p>Capt.W.Smith M.C. (Circs.) P.146</p> |
| <p>4.5.18 Batt. still in the line; suffered 120 casualties in last few days.<br/>This is a "delightful" farm - prosperous - devoted principally to horse breeding; the Boulonnais breed, like the Percheron but lighter in the limb and shorter in the body; dash of Arab blood. They are getting butter, fresh milk &amp; eggs here.</p>  | <p><u>Ferme Peenhof</u><br/>Nr. Zeggars Cappel</p> <p>Boulonnais breed of horse</p> <p>Dairy produce</p>   |
| <p>8.5.18 More officers have reported for duty and CMM says he is now free to return to the base "...rather a wrench to come away, but on the whole I shall be glad to get a respite from the ceaseless movement of front line life."</p>  | <p><u>Le Rons</u></p> <p>New officers</p> <p>Feelings about poss.move to base</p>  |
| <p>11.5.18 CMM receives letter from OC 44th FA giving medical details of his brother's death. There was no clergyman at the post to bury him, and his body was handed over to a FA of the 3rd Cavalry Div.</p>   | <p>Details of brother's death<br/>P.147</p>  |
| <p>16.5.18 Orders received by CMM on 11th. Drove to Abbeville on 12th. Hospital being kept empty at present. CMM has charge of pre-operation wards; he is swotting up "shock" and "blood transfusions".</p>  | <p><u>No. 1 S.A.General Hospital</u><br/>Swotting for new job</p>  |
| <p>22.5.18 He hears from the AIMS, 3rd Cavalry Div. George was buried on April 5th in the churchyard at Aubigny. The padre who buried him has sent a map reference &amp; diagram (given here). He says it was 7th Cavalry Bde which took over from 44th FA, and gives the padre's name. CMM is having a cross made.</p>  | <p>Brother's burial. Details of grave at Aubigny<br/>P.147/8</p>   |
| <p>28.5.18 He succeeded at last in visiting George's grave. He is helped by Maj.Kindersley of the QMG service, and through him by Maj.Wilson &amp; Capt.Fraser of the Graves Reg.Commission. Maj.Goodwin drives CMM to Aubigny and leaves him for half an hour while he places the cross on the grave. Desc.the cross, made by 2 Privates (named), of oak. He encloses plan showing site of grave. The men who made it "took the greatest pride...and they have now nearly finished an exact model of it about 9" high".</p>   | <p>Visit to grave. Assistance (details)</p> <p>Desc. of cross</p> <p>Plan of site</p> <p>The men who made <sup>the</sup> cross</p>   |



BOOK III (Cont'd)

28.5.18 Cont.	He describes the church at Aubigny, and its surroundings. Despite the guns "the scene was a peaceful one ...thankful to think of George lying there in that quiet little village churchyard instead of one or other of the huge cemeteries now so common along the line." He says the oaken cross stands at the head of the grave while the official one of the GRC is placed at the foot, so that the grave is doubly marked in the event of heavy shelling later on. Gothas' raid does more damage. 300 horses & mules killed. Bomb fell in No. 2 General.	Desc.church & ch'yard.  Thoughts  Marked with 2 crosses  Animal casual- ties
2.6.18	Ref. to German Paris offensive P.149 More damage by Gothas.	German/Paris offensive P.149
4.6.18	He lists names in the Birthday Honours. He has got a DSO. Getting some trout fishing. (Details)	Awarded DSO Fishing/de- tails P.149
12.6.18	Refers to German attack between Noyon & Montdidier.	German attack.
27.6.18	Mentions the influenza epidemic which "so depleted the Divisions that the attack had to be postponed".	'Flu epidemic
10.7.18	Ref. to "Monaghan" last seen on March 24th; died in POW camp. Ref. to "Liebson" probably killed on March 22nd.	News of ca- sualties in March
16.7.18	News of another German offensive.	
25.7.18	Above has been resisted: "the most successful re- pulse the Allies have succeeded in making since they began." Pringle visits and brings news of 2 officers killed by a bomb while at lunch in the mess.	Allies' suc- cess  Lunching ca- sualties
4.8.18	Comments on Handley Page aircraft flying over: "the biggest and best of our bombing machines."	Handley Page
2.9.18	CMM returns from leave. While at home he visited the War Office in connection with the arm splint he de- signed, and which is now to be universally adopted in the Army (the US army). His hospital is now v. full.	Adoption of splint by US Army
29.9.18	CMM left No. 1 General on 15th. In London he dis- cussed with Col. Stock "matters requiring readjust- ment in the SAMC units in Europe." He is now at Bordon, while living here. Bordon is the SA Dis- charge Depot for every SA man.	Alice Holt SAMC matters Bordon appt. (Discharge De- pot)
28.12.18	He quotes from a letter received on Xmas Day from his brother's batman, telling CMM exactly what happened: "shelling was the worst I have seen....delay was the cause of his death..." He pays tribute, and quotes brother's last words. P.152. (Gunner Kite - details). "But for my wife I would not mind."	Batman's details of brother's death. Pp.151/ Letter. 2  Last words



Capt. C.M.MURRAY, 29th F.A.

LISTS OF NAMES

'C' Section Tent Subdivision

'C' Section Bearer Subdivision

Reinforcements

NOTES OF THE APPLICATION OF THOMAS' SPLINTS, EMPLOYING THE MINIMUM  
OF ACCESSORIES

Thomas Knee Splint

Thomas Hinged Arm Splint

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