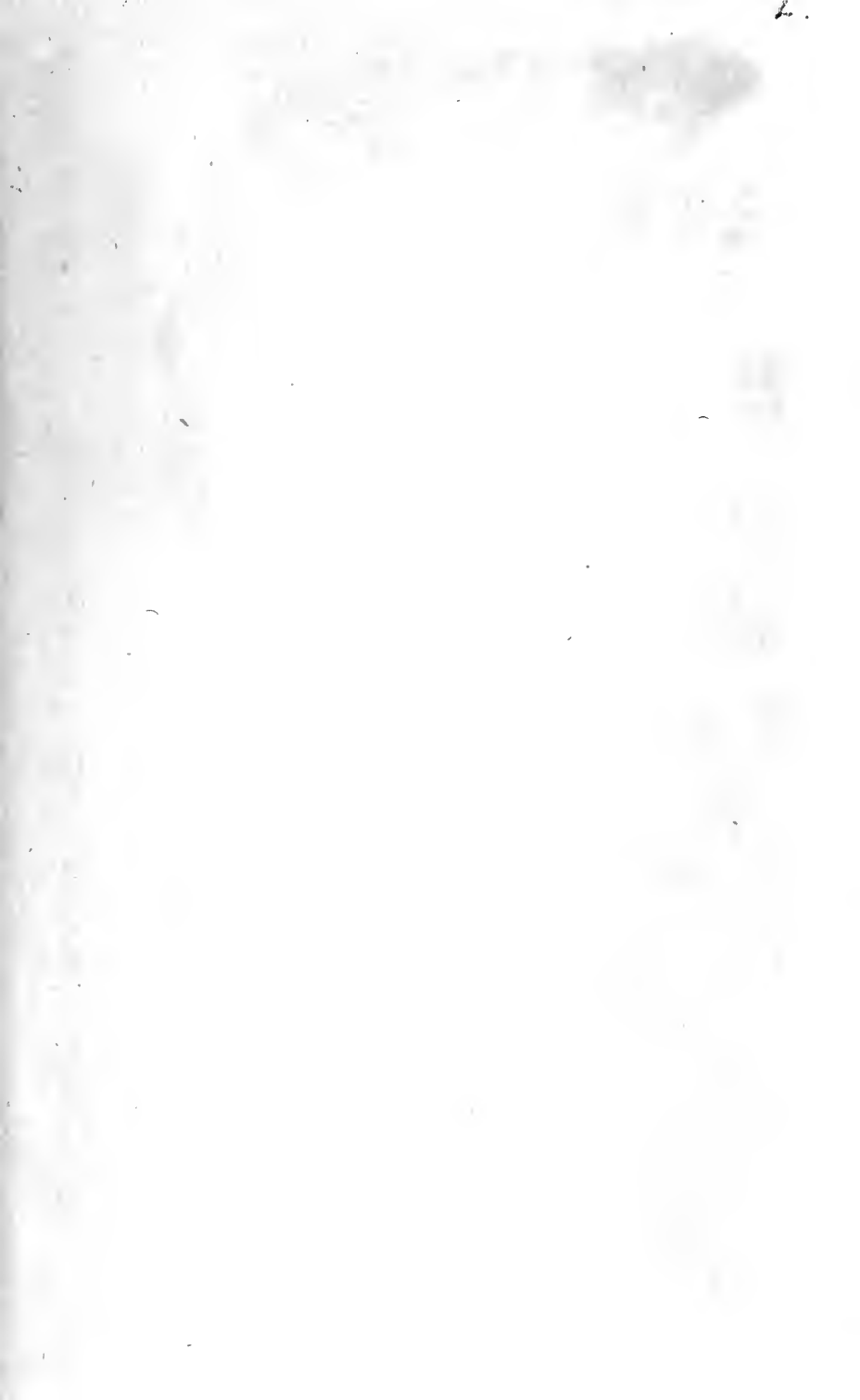


ANDREW R. BUXTON

THE RIFLE BRIGADE



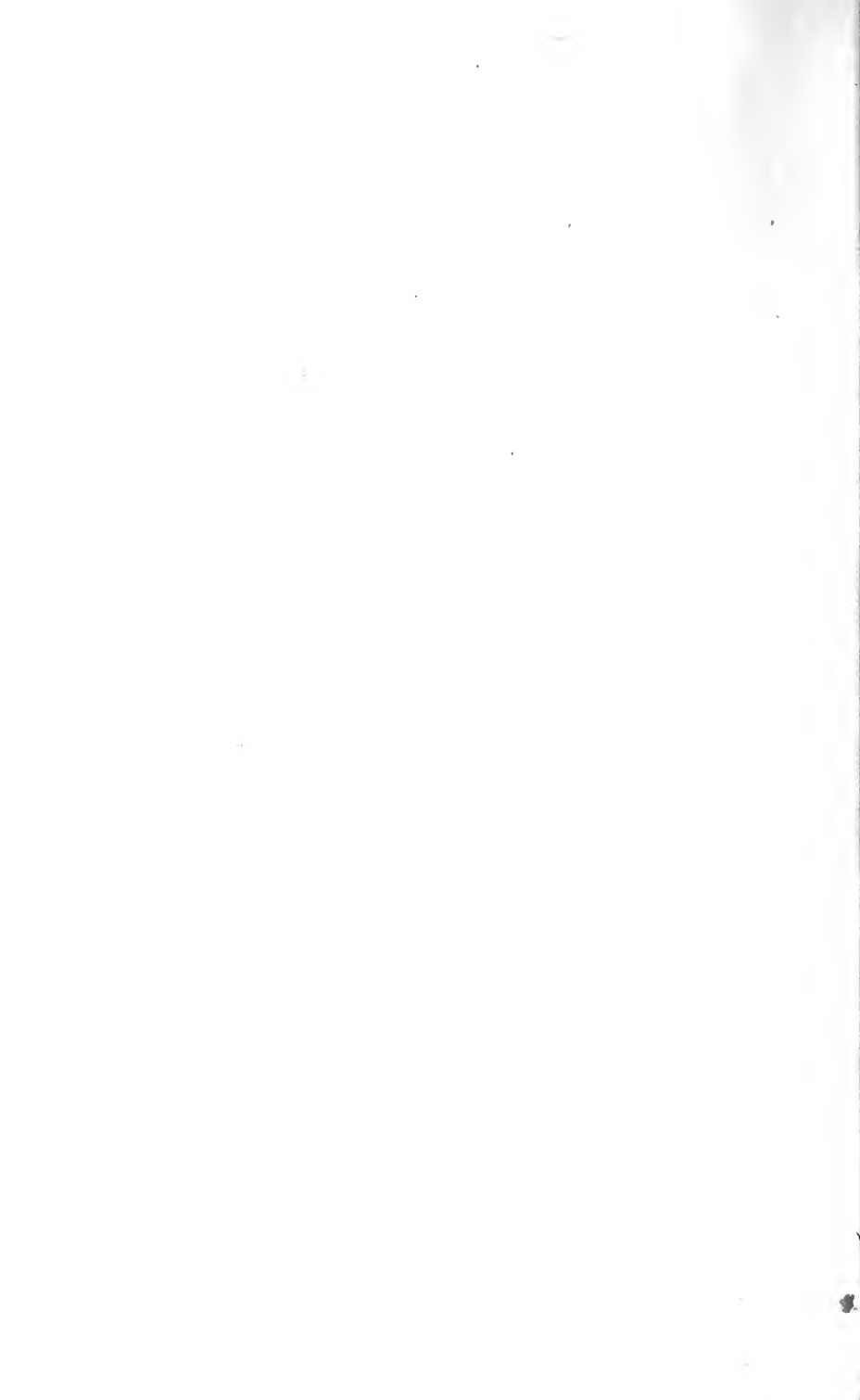


Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/andrewrbuxtonrif00buxt>



ANDREW R. BUXTON







[Frontispiece

*Andrew R. Buxton.*

# ANDREW R. BUXTON

THE RIFLE BRIGADE

A Memoir

EDITED BY

EDWARD S. WOODS, M.A., C.F.

Author of "Knights in Armour "

"DO IT WITH THY MIGHT "

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT  
ROXBURGHE HOUSE  
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

MCMXVIII

*All rights reserved*



## PREFACE

THE following account of Andrew Buxton's life and War experiences has been put together, in the first instance, for the benefit of the very large family and clan of which he is a member and for an immensely wide circle of friends; both family and friends having expressed a keen desire to possess some permanent record of what he was and did. It has been felt, however, that what he wrote from the Front has an interest that is not confined to those who knew him personally, and it was therefore decided to publish this account rather than print it for private circulation. The letters make no claim to being literature, nor have they the artistic or imaginative interest of some other war books. On the other hand, written as they are by one who had a habit of minute observation and who took pains to record what he saw and experienced, the letters present a wonderfully vivid, detailed, and accurate picture of trench life and warfare as it was in 1915 and 1916—times that are now (November, 1918) beginning to seem remarkably remote. It is, moreover, not impossible that the book will appeal to many on other grounds than these. The story of a Christian gentleman, one of the many thousands who have given their all in the great Cause, will always touch an answering chord in the hearts of those who have their faces set towards the same shining goal.

The quotation on the title-page, "Do it with thy might,"

is the motto of the Buxton family, and may stand as a not unfitting summary of Andrew's life and character.

To compile the Memoir has been a labour of love ; but the work would not have been possible without the unwearied and affectionate co-operation of Andrew's immediate family, and especially his mother and sisters. Their sacrifice in sharing with others, what is to them so sacred and intimate, will surely bring its own reward in an unmeasured extension of the influence of him they love.

E. S. W.

*All Saints' Day,*  
1918.



## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	v
I EARLY YEARS . . . . .	1
II THE MAIN FACTOR . . . . .	10
III WORK AND SPORT . . . . .	21
IV JOINING UP . . . . .	37
V THE FRONT: FIRST EXPERIENCES . . . . .	56
VI THE FRONT: FIRST EXPERIENCES— <i>continued</i> . . . . .	95
VII BACK TO THE SALIENT . . . . .	132
VIII STILL IN THE SALIENT . . . . .	148
IX FAREWELL TO THE SALIENT . . . . .	167
X ON THE SOMME: THE BATTLE OF GUILLEMONT . . . . .	197
XI VIMY AND LOOS . . . . .	217
XII STAFF WORK WITH THE 73RD BRIGADE . . . . .	235
XIII VIMY RIDGE . . . . .	248
XIV MESSINES RIDGE—AND THE END . . . . .	268
XV POSTSCRIPT . . . . .	286



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Andrew R. Buxton . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Aged 8 . . . . .	<i>To face page 5</i>
Shooting on Tarvie Moor . . . . .	,, ,, 27
Easneye . . . . .	,, ,, 53
In Belgium . . . . .	,, ,, 81
In Trenches near Wieltje . . . . .	,, ,, 107
With Hazlerigg Nieces at Noseley Hall. . . . .	,, ,, 121
With his Brother, H. F. Buxton . . . . .	,, ,, 129
With H. F. B. at Easneye . . . . .	,, ,, 145
Fishing the Garry from Urrard, 1914 . . . . .	,, ,, 159
With Zenith at Easneye . . . . .	,, ,, 171
With Nephew and Nieces at Noseley Hall . . . . .	,, ,, 185
Fishing the Tarvie Burn with Zulu . . . . .	,, ,, 203
In his Study at Easneye . . . . .	,, ,, 237
Hunsdon Bury . . . . .	,, ,, 249
Portrait . . . . .	,, ,, 293



# ANDREW R. BUXTON

## I

### EARLY YEARS

ANDREW RICHARD BUXTON was born at Hanover Terrace, London, on August 19, 1879. He belonged to the large Buxton clan, his father being John Henry Buxton, and his grandfather Thomas Fowell Buxton of Easneye. His Quaker ancestors included Elizabeth Fry (great-grandmother) and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (great-grandfather), who shared with Wilberforce the honour of securing the emancipation of the slaves. His mother (a daughter of the late Captain Richard Wilson Pelly) describes him in her "Children's Book" (written at the time) as "a fair curly-headed boy . . . a delicious happy baby"; then, a little later on, "a most amusing mischievous child, never still for a moment and always into every piece of mischief he can find. He hardly ever cries and is always bright and happy with a roguish face." His governess, Miss Newport, writing since his death, says: "When I first saw him he was three years old, and must have altered little in character since his childhood. I always think of him as a sunny, generous, contented child, very keen on all outdoor life, delighted to go shooting with his father or fishing with his grandfather. What made the most lasting impression on my mind was his almost loverlike devotion to his mother as a small boy; so much so, that she rather

checked it, saying, 'it is not good for him.' He was always a manly little boy, retiring and never assertive, always ready to join in all games and enjoy them. A very happy nature and very tender-hearted. I remember he used to say he would like to go to Town like 'Uncle Fred' or 'go to Central Africa as a Missionary.' " All his childhood and boyhood were spent in the happy country home at Hunsdon Bury, near Hunsdon, in Hertfordshire. Life in that family circle (there were seven children), with its strong and simple piety, its keen love of games and sport, its healthy interest in everything and everybody, and its abounding family *esprit de corps*, was a good soil for growing an English gentleman.

One of Andrew's most marked characteristics, his passionate love of nature and all animal life, began to develop very early. At the age of five he writes to his mother: "How many grouse has father shot, and does he shoot hares and rabbits and wild ducks? Aunt Maud and I went fishing this morning and caught 6 fish." Similarly to his father, when he was still only seven: "I saw some wood pigeons walking on the cedar-tree stem. When Dawes (coachman) was going to his bees he saw in a bed of stinging nettles a blackbird's nest with one egg. The hedge-sparrow's nest where Clover caught the bird has been taken. I saw a cuckoo and a woodpecker all the same day. I saw some blackcaps to-day. I saw a woodpecker about five yards from me on the grass. I am going fishing this afternoon."

As quite a boy he was an excellent shot with a catapult and astonished shooters at the number of rabbits and birds which he thus killed.

From very early days his special hobby was spiders. His mother writes: "He had a good knowledge of them and used to collect them in various ways from under dead leaves in woods, or from farms and gardens, delighting in finding any new or rare specimens. Once, seeing a letter in a daily

paper on Spiders from a man in Trinidad he answered it, asking if some live ones could be sent. His unknown friend kindly tried to do so, but, alas! they arrived dead. He tried again and this time they were alive—to my horror! Large poisonous ‘Mygales’ and some smaller house spiders. These Andrew kept for years in glass cases in a palm-house—one living as long as eight years, which was a record for England. He gave away many of their skins, and Harrow boys will recognize a specimen in the School Nature Museum—also some are to be seen in the Natural History Museum, London.”

He writes from his private school (St. David’s, Reigate): “There is a female kitchen spider in an old tree here which I have been trying to get all the term, and there is another simply tremendous one in the ivy. I can’t see what sort it is as it is so awfully quick when I put a fly in its web”; and again: “Thanks awfully for that lecture in the paper by Dr. Dallinger on Spiders, it was very interesting. . . . I met with a spider a little time ago with eyes like this [here he gives a drawing]: two pretty big eyes, and then two very big and then four very small. I don’t think I have ever seen spiders’ eyes like that before.”

This love of wild life was almost a passion with him. Many years later he wrote from the Front: “When we first advanced I watched four partridges get up in front and fly straight over. I thought our barrage must kill one by a direct hit, but it didn’t.” He even competed from the Front with one of his sisters in England as to which would see the earliest migratory birds. He writes on different dates: “Saw first blackcap—willow-wren—chiffchaff, swallow,” etc. Again he writes: “Saved three young mice; lot of weasels about—whistled one of the weasels up to me.”

After three years at Reigate, he went, in 1893, to Harrow (Mr. H. O. D. Davidson’s House). He never was brilliant at his work; indeed in the earlier years of his school life

he often found considerable difficulty with his lessons. A part cause of this may have been the constant headaches due to concussion of the brain consequent upon a blow from a cricket-ball. He always felt the handicap of these headaches; in a letter to a sister, written in August, 1915, he says: "My trouble in life is that I have read and do read so little and am of generally such an unintelligent turn. I shall never forgive doctors for not explaining the reason of my continual headaches at school and Cambridge." His first-cousin, J. Gurney Barclay, who was with him at Harrow, records that "'Rep' was always a trial to him, even when it was English poetry. I remember his coming to me for explanations of meaning. One day it was 'Nose, what are 'broad-words'?'—it was some Scotch ballad he had to learn. He had pored long over the expression, and was much relieved when I suggested that he should read it 'broad-swords.'"

But, characteristically, he was always a "plodder," and stuck to his work with an undiscouraged persistency. His first schoolmaster (Rev. W. H. Churchill) wrote of him in December, 1889: "Little Andrew smiles so happily. He is not a Leonard at work yet, but does his best." And again, in 1893: "Andrew is most conscientious and plods bravely. These are the qualities that make a good man."

His devotion to natural history did not prevent him becoming a keen player of games. Football was his special game (Harrow football, and, later on, "Soccer"), though he was fond of cricket as well. "It was a proud moment," his mother writes, "when he won his 'Fez,' and became later Captain of his House Football XI. Still prouder was he when his 'House' won the 'Cock-house' match under his captaincy. . . ."

She adds: "It was at Harrow that he was branded 'Curly,' a nickname which I had hoped would not continue from St. David's. But I knew it was to be, when watching







*[To face page 5*

AGED 8.

a 'Footer' match I heard from all sides the cries, 'Well played, Curly!' 'Go it, Curly!'"

But throughout his school days and afterwards, of all interests and hobbies natural history and sport came easily first with him. His letters are full of these things; here are a few typical extracts: "There is the rookery just outside our window and it is ripping seeing them making their nests. . . . I think I shall give that spider skin to the Harrow Museum. Are the beauties' legs beginning to grow yet? . . . I have lost the lizard. I had him at 11 o'clock yesterday and I put him in his usual place on my dressing-gown, from which he never goes. I have hunted everywhere, but I can't find him. . . . If you are having me a new suit made, could you please have rabbit pockets put all round the coat?"

Quite the most characteristic thing about Andrew, from his earliest years to the day of his death, was his religion. Some attempt will be made, in one of the chapters that follow, to describe and interpret the Christian factor in his life and character, and its far-reaching influence on a whole circle of friends. As a preliminary to such an account it may be pointed out here, in this brief record of his boyhood, that Andrew's religion had its roots very deep down and far back. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the results for an individual of generations of God-fearing ancestors, such as Andrew had; and, from his very earliest years, an exceptionally keen spiritual instinct was always more than ready to assimilate the loving and earnest Christian training which was bestowed upon him. It may not, however, be amiss to tender a word of caution to any readers of this Memoir who did not know Andrew personally and have no first-hand acquaintance with the kind of religious *milieu* in which he was brought up. It is, that in reading what he wrote as a boy, or what his mother and others wrote of him, care should be taken to discern the

profound sincerity of spiritual experience lying beneath and behind religious phraseology that may have something of an artificial sound. Without this kind of sympathetic probing for reality no man can understand the secret of another's life.

His mother's account of him records: "When he was nine I wrote in my 'Children's Book': 'Andrew and I have had several serious talks on Sunday evenings; he is a very sensitive child and asks a great many questions. He cannot keep from crying when we speak of Holy things. At the same age after a very bad thunderstorm late one evening I said to him 'Did it make you nervous?' as he could not sleep. His reply was, 'I was frightened at the first two claps,' then He spoke in my ear and said, 'Be not afraid, I will be with thee.' After that I wasn't a bit frightened, not even at that great clap.' I ascertained that no one had put this verse into his mind."

The following are also extracts from the same book: "He has a great love for Missionary work, liking to hear and talk about it and tries in every possible way to earn a few pence for his Missionary box. Our Sunday evening talks are full of interest. He asks very deep questions—some on the Second Coming of Christ.

"In 1891, when twelve years old, he expressed at one of these talks a desire to give up his beloved catapult as he felt it might lead him to being too fond of and occupied with it, so putting holier things out of his heart. . . . Another Sunday I noted words from his prayer 'I thank Thee for giving me something that has helped me. . . . Let me go forward quickly.' In 1893 he said, 'I must be a missionary, mother.'

"At Harrow," his mother continues, "he took a definite stand for Christ, and in April, 1895, he told me that he first really knew the Lord as a personal friend with constant intercourse with Him. When he first went he keenly

realized the importance of prayer, but not in such reality as came soon after he started his Public School life. He had much to contend with in the questions put to him by other boys and told me he found it difficult to answer them. He, with others, started a little Sunday meeting for the boys, about fifteen attending it. It was not an easy time and he had to endure much persecution for the 'stand' he took. But many were helped by these meetings and after his death letters were received, even from utter strangers, testifying to his influence at this time. His old matron, 'Mary,' wrote to me after his death: 'His simple Bible reading—how tried he was and yet stuck to it all that time of trouble and went through it to help purify the House. I may say he came to Harrow with the mind 'I will serve my God whatever happens.'"

And here is the witness of an old Harrovian, who was at Harrow with him:

"I write as a stranger to you, but having lost the best friend I have ever had, I know that the tribute of an unknown friend is sometimes sweet. I was in Daver's house at Harrow with Curly, and there was no boy in the House for whom I had a greater admiration. He was two years my senior, which means a lot at that age, but I have vivid recollections of his continual kindness to me. I never knew him do or say an unkind thing. I have never known a boy who practised and professed Christianity as he did, and I well remember he suffered for it, but he was always cheerful in himself and ready to give cheer to others. I think the greatest outward expression of his real goodness was his universal kindness to small boys; a very unusual virtue in Harrow boys of my day."

Bishop Welldon, sometime Headmaster of Harrow, wrote of him:

"As I think of him in the old days at Harrow and of

his beautiful noble life even to the end I feel proud of my relation to him."

Here are some extracts from his own letters :

" We have a most awfully good chance of being ' Cock ' house—we are drawn against Colbeck's house first on Thursday. Have you had any partridge driving at Mundesley? *What an awfully good sermon that was mother sent us this morning.* I do wish some one would preach a sermon here on the same subject. I believe there are some chaps who it would rouse up; it is wonderful how exactly the Prophecies are coming true. . . ."

" Yesterday the School played Bowen's Eleven and won by 1 run. We had a splendid meeting this morning, 12 came—one entirely new and C. . . . I am very glad Job [in the Scripture Union daily portions] ends now as it is rather hard. . . . The true happiness of being on the Lord's side seems to become more evident every week. How can any one do without Him? "

" We were 11 at the Meeting again to-day, which is awfully good, 2 or 3 quite new chaps which I am sure is in answer to our prayers. Gilbert Smith was there. . . . Has the starling's nest by the conservatory hatched yet? "

" Harrow, 1895.

" Please give Toby (his brother Arthur) my best wishes for a happy term P.T.O. (*Private.*) Please tell Toby that if he takes God at His word, namely, ' Whatsoever he shall ask, believing in His Name ye *shall* receive,' if he asks that he may not mind going back to school, I expect he will find it will be answered. It certainly has with me these last two or three terms."

" On Thursday we had a *most* delightfu meeting from Mr. A. (David's tutor). He took Joseph, a type of Christ chiefly; we had 15 chaps there—to-day there were only 7

—I suppose on account of the rain. I was taking it. . . . I have only had one trial yet, viz. Algebra. Have you seen Archie McLaren's score for Lancashire *v.* Somerset, namely 424, which is a record in First-class County matches, and the innings of the whole side was also a record, viz. 801. He was in the 'Eleven' here for a long time."

*To his Mother.*

"I enclose the tickets for you and father for Chapel (for his Confirmation) in case we should not meet before Chapel by any chance. I can't say how I have enjoyed my preparation and last night I had a most delightful private talk with 'Daver,' as every one does. . . . Do please pray for me in this solemn time and also for 11 boys who are being confirmed in this house."

## II

### THE MAIN FACTOR

IT will be evident, from the letters in the previous Chapter, that the mainspring of Andrew's life must be sought for in the region of personal religion. Before continuing the story of his life as revealed in his letters, it may be worth while to attempt to give some kind of interpretation of his religious outlook and experience. If "mystic" means a person who has a peculiarly direct consciousness of God and God's presence, then Andrew was a mystic. For no one who knew him could be unaware that the outstanding feature about his whole life was his extraordinarily keen sense of God. There are not a few genuinely religious people who do not in fact enjoy this vivid sense of the nearness of God. It may be that temperament and heredity, and possibly other and unknown factors, count for more than we suppose. Most lives, however many the subsidiary motives and influences, are usually governed by one or two main impulses, operating in the subconscious as well as the conscious realm. Those who knew Andrew intimately know beyond all shadow of doubt that the dominating factor in his life was a radiant certainty of God and a constant conscious sense of His companionship, with all that meant of guidance, control and inspiration.

Yet there was nothing about him of the religious professional. He was a most gloriously human and practical mystic. To see him bringing down a pheasant (and he



shot wonderfully straight), or working his retrievers, or playing a fish you would never have guessed that a minute before he may have been (as he probably was) speaking with God as friend with friend. It was not simply that he was a Christian and a sportsman; a good many people have combined those rôles. The thing was that with him his sense of God was *interwoven* with everything he was and did. His faith was quite remarkably simple and natural. Indeed it was largely instinctive; the intellectual element in it was relatively small. Andrew had a clear mind and used it, but he was not chiefly a "thinker"; intellectual interests did not for him hold a predominant place.

Prayer was for him less a duty than a necessity; it was something he was quite unable to do without.

"All his life," his mother records, "he had beautiful simple faith in prayer, and his prayers were very characteristic and manly. 'Let me be made of the right stuff and do my duty,' he prayed as he went off to the War; and again: 'Help me to stick it.'

"I have found the two following prayers written out for his own use:

"'Almighty God and Father, Thou knowest my need to-day; give me Thy Holy Spirit that I may live it aright in having victory over temptation, and grace not to be ashamed of Thee.'

"'My Almighty God and Father, I thank Thee that Thou dost love and care for me. Hallowed be this day—may I in no way bring dishonour to Thee.'

"His prayers," his mother adds, "were informal, at all times and in all places, always before returning to school, college, or the Front; in a dug-out or on a hill-side. One of his last was by his own request with me in the wood, and one of his last thoughts to me on Prayer was: 'Speaking to God is just thinking your needs and wants in His Pres-

ence.' 'I believe,' he once wrote to a friend, 'I believe that God wants us to tell Him everything that is in our hearts without necessarily making definite request in connection with any matter.' "

Mrs. Eric Crossley writes of him as her child's Godfather :

"I have often thought of him kneeling by himself by the very old Saxon font after the rest of us had risen, and thought then that his prayers were the real sort of prayer and that he was earnestly thinking of the little mite."

If prayer was as the breath of his spiritual life, the Bible was its daily nourishment. His mother writes :

"His great love for and knowledge of his Bible was very striking from childhood. His pig-skin bound copy was his constant joy, and he often expressed his regret that it was too large to have in France, and he had to be content with a small pocket one. He wrote inside the cover of his large one, with his address, '£10 if returned,' which in itself shows the great value he put upon it. Also he wrote in it 'Death for self—enterprise for God' as his aim in life coupled with 'The establishment of the Kingdom of God in the World.' "

A friend writes after his death :

"His name is on the title-page of my Bible (and will remain there for future generations long after I am gone) as one who taught us [himself and his wife] to read it."

An old groom says :

"He gave me a Bible in 1912 and read it with me—and he used to go next door to old Mrs. M. and read to her, perhaps for an hour, and say, 'Never mind if I am late for dinner,' "

Yet with all this there was about him no touch of religious unreality, nothing of "un-humanness"—to coin a word to describe something entirely distinct from the ordinary meaning of "inhumanity," nor anything of a self-conscious purpose to "do good to" other people. Of these kinds of elements or characteristics, which may after all be found in people who deserve to be called "good," there was no trace in Andrew. There was not a shred of "make-believe" about his mental or spiritual composition. He was splendidly and gloriously "human"; you could not be in his company five minutes without knowing him for a *man* through and through. Yet to say that there was no unreality in him and that he was a very human and very "manly" sort of person, is only a small part of the tale of what he was. If I were to try and choose one word with which to convey some description of his personality I should take the word *radiant*. He was one of those people—there are not too many of them—who radiate sunshine. There was a light in his face, in his being, which could not be hidden; his body, his physical presence, revealed the soul within. He shone on you, and you felt better for it. I believe he was almost entirely unconscious of this personal magnetism. He never could understand why people liked him, if, indeed, he could be persuaded to believe that they did like him. This radiance of his was a natural gift; but it came to be wonderfully interwoven with all his faith and service. He believed in deliberate "witnessing"; utterly aware that Jesus Christ was indispensable to himself, he could not but endeavour to share his secret with other men; and there are many to-day who owe a big spiritual debt to what they found in and through Andrew. Some one once defined a "Saint" as "one who makes it easier for other people to believe in God." Andrew would hate to be called a "Saint"; but there is no doubt at all that there are many men and women,

who, because of what he was, have in fact made a new discovery of God.

In 1898 Andrew went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, spending three happy years there till 1901, when he took his degree in Zoology. He always regretted afterwards that he had not qualified to be a doctor, but what knowledge he had he used effectively at the Front; he would also give interesting lectures on Anatomy, etc., to his Club-men. Earlier interests continued and developed, as the following extracts from his letters indicate:

“What is our Hunsdon Bury Estate total? It is very good getting 55 pigeons. . . . How awfully good getting 30 or 34 rabbits ferreting. I expect you got some more yesterday. . . . The C.I.C.C.U.<sup>1</sup> addresses are very good. —Dr. White I thought excellent. I do long to have that ‘Abiding in Him and He in me’—the secret, it seems, of Christian success.”

“On Tuesday, as you know, I went by the 10.45 train with A. G. H. to see dear old Miss Marsh; there were Mr. and Mrs. O’Rorke there and we went up to her sitting-room and had a ripping talk till lunch. After lunch we went up again and had a short Bible-reading and then more talk till we left at 3. I can’t tell you what that hour or two with her was like, it was speaking to and hearing from one absolutely hand-in-hand with her Saviour. When she gets on the thought of seeing Him and praising Him with all above she is wonderful. I do wish we could get her to Hunsdon; you can’t explain Miss Marsh!”

“On Saturday Uncle Bar, Arthur, Gurney and I had some good games of ‘fives.’ I took our B.R. yesterday; we had a very good one. Wasn’t it excellent winning the Soccer match 3 to 1? I have played two or three times this week.”

<sup>1</sup> I.e., Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union,

“ We have had Talbot Rice for the C.I.C.C.U. to-day, which has been awfully nice. . . . The Master of Trinity took a combined Bible-reading of all the years in the Lodge this afternoon. Next Sunday is the last this term, I am afraid ; we shall have just been through 1 Peter ; it has been most interesting. . . . This week I have not had very much in the way of footer, we have a match again on Tuesday. I do long for some wind to be able to play a little bit, but I do believe that even in these small things God has some reason for them, and when we understand Him above we shall see how each little thing has fitted in with His great plan. We are having grand weather now, it is lovely hearing birds again. The ‘ Backs ’ are full of wood pigeons. . . . It will be delightful to get home again.”

“ . . . I am very disappointed as I would so have liked to have been with you for your Silver Wedding. . . . May I give you what Paul was given—‘ My Grace is sufficient for thee ’—for each detail of life ? ”

In the summer vacations he was a frequent helper at “ Camps ” and “ C.S.S.M’s.” The “ Universities’ Camps for Public School Boys ” are, or rather were (for they have naturally lapsed during the War), holiday camps for boys officered by men from the Universities ; their main features consisting in a rare opportunity for ten days’ joint outdoor life and sport, and a strong element of masculine and “ common sense ” Christianity. The main purpose of the Camps movement indeed is to demonstrate that a *man* and a Christian are not the incompatible terms that they are sometimes thought to be. The “ Children’s Special Service Mission ” pursues a similar aim in somewhat similar fashion ; a group of ‘Varsity men settle in for a few weeks at a seaside resort and divide their time and energies between informal Services on the sea-shore and “ running ” sports,

games, picnics and the like for all and sundry. It is an indisputable fact that quite a number of men and women of what used to be known as the leisured classes trace what they have of personal religion to something that came to them at the "Camp" or "C.S.M." of their younger days. Portrush, on the North coast of Ireland, was for many years a favourite place for these seaside Services; and on several occasions Andrew was one of the party.

Andrew writes from Universities Camp, Mertoun, N.B. :

[*Undated*]

" . . . I was very sad leaving Portrush; there were a tremendous lot of people on the platform to see us off, which was awfully nice. Thanks very much for your telegram about speaking. I made use of it by speaking at the Children's Service on Wednesday on the rocks, and the open-air on Thursday night. We had a most awfully fine Missionary address on Wednesday night in the Town Hall from Miss Etches. It has been most delightful being at a Mission, it has been an invaluable time to me. I didn't feel as nervous in speaking as I expected. . . . It will be awfully nice seeing you all again at Dunmore [Argyllshire]. . . . I am so enjoying Sir A. Blackwood's life, and what makes it far, far more interesting is to come here and find Miss Marsh, who was used so much for his conversion. She is an awfully dear old person, simply splendid stories she has, and a most lovely face. It preaches one a sermon to look at her. She is about 80. We had a Prayer Meeting about Camp last night. I expect it will be a great success. . . . Now going to put up tents.

" You don't know what splendid work there is going on amongst the boys! We are about 110, including Officers. We have the sing-song in the evening, and after that we have the meeting—you can just feel God's Presence speaking through the Officers and His Presence in the midst of

us most wonderfully. It is awfully sad in a way having to leave so soon after having made friends for such a short time, and perhaps never to meet again in this world. . . . We had the 'Sports' on Monday; they went off awfully well, the Steeplechase was the best I think, first through a wood of nettles, then under a net, then over the Suspension Bridge, then swim back over the Tweed; of course they had no wind in them after the run, so could hardly get across the river."

" . . . Major Pelham-Burn is splendid—he speaks awfully well and is very much liked. On Sunday we all went up to the house and Lord Polwarth spoke to us in the Hall, and then Miss Marsh. I do wish you had the very slightest idea of what Camp is. If you had been at our 'testimony meeting' you would have found out, I'm sure. I have never heard anything so wonderful as some of the testimonies; some fellows had made bets that they would not become Christians here and yet the love of God *has* constrained them. I don't believe there is one chap gone away from Camp to-day unconverted. It is simply wonderful how the Spirit of God has been at work in our midst. Our prayers have been more than answered about the Camp. . . . I had tremendous sport yesterday, spearing eels with forks joined on to sticks; with Mr. S. We got 15—one a ripping big beast."

One who was present at this Camp has written (since Andrew's death):

" . . . I can remember now, as if it were yesterday, one day at the first Mertoun Camp. Curly and I were talking and he said, 'Isn't this glorious!' and I have never before or since seen a man's face literally shine as did his then—when he was about 15 or 16. That vision of his face lighted up has been with me ever since."

After "Camp" or "C.S.S.M." was over, the remainder of the holidays would be spent with the family, often in Scotland, with shooting or fishing to his heart's content. He writes :

" . . . . You have doubtless heard of our great Conger eel fishing. You never in your life saw anything so funny. We three went out to catch bait to set the lines with. We had a board across the stern of the boat which we three sat on, facing aft, each sitting on two rods and each with two or three white flies on, and when we got into a shoal it was great hauling them in. Once I got three on at once on one rod. . . . Most of the day I spent on Handa Island sketching and hunting for beasts on the rocks, etc. There are swarms of beautiful jelly fish of every size—the water is very clear indeed."

" . . . I have just had the grandest morning imaginable—got a 15-stone stag with good head after splendid stalk.

"I have slain my first salmon. . . . I am sending him to you. I also poached 6 more sea trout and lost 2 or 3, which is no wonder as we did not take a net and I had to drag some ashore as Rob and the gillie were trying for a salmon lower down."

"Hunsdon Bury.

"I caught a *Geophilus Phosforeus* at Hunsdon on Friday night. It is a centipede which gives off phosphorus. It left a long trail of light behind it as it walked."

"Trinity College, Cambridge.

"February 12, 1899.

"I must write you a line. It has been most sad not having you with us to-day, as you would have enjoyed it immensely. . . . We were 16 to lunch in Gurney's room, at which Uncle John came, and R. and A. H., and I had arranged to have sent him some things from the grocer's, and while we were in his rooms a basket with a cat came,



and a box with a lot of straw and two white rats ; two other things consisting of a big box with a box of sardines, and a barrel with one pound of margarine were stupidly not brought in, but left outside. We wanted to fill up his room ! He had most splendid presents, and it was a most lovely one F. and M. gave him. H. and I each gave him one of Thorburn's pictures of partridges. In the afternoon we all went down to see the 'Varsity crew go out. . . . Five of us have just been having dinner with Gurney and been enjoying ourselves with a considerable amount of noise."

[*Summer, 1900.*]

"I am playing for Trinity Second Six at Lawn Tennis, so am having most rattling games every afternoon against other colleges, always playing with new balls, and having tea in the middle on the ground. I am getting quite good for me. On Friday I played for 1st Six, and had one set of 13-11 games ! . . . I have got a Labrador, 'Oscar,' though have not seen it yet."

This Chapter may conclude with an extract from a letter written, since his death, by one who was with Andrew both at Harrow and Trinity :

"I was not in the same house as 'Curly' at Harrow, and the two chief points that remain in my memory of our time at Harrow are that one always felt the better for a conversation with him on any matter, however trivial, and that he was one of the *very* few people who could give what we irreverently named 'a pi-jaw' at Harrow.<sup>1</sup> I know 'Curly' was beloved in his house. At Cambridge we were both at

<sup>1</sup> The only two other people whom it has been my fortune to come across who could do this with good effect and without offence were Dr. Butler and the present Dean of Manchester, both old Headmasters of Harrow.

Trinity and 'Curly' was Captain of, and played 'back' for the 'Trinity Harrovians,' while I kept goal, and every match and many times each match did I appreciate his brilliant tackling, untiring perseverance, and skilful captaincy. One match (January 1901, I fancy) was particularly impressed on my mind; we were playing 'Trinity Rest,' a very strong and unbeaten side; it was a beast of a day, some snow lay on top of a sodden ground and it sleeted with an east wind all the game. 'Curly,' used to the clay at Harrow, was in absolutely irresistible form and cheered us all on to such an extent that we won the match by 3 goals to 2, to our great content! At Cambridge he was extremely popular and his influence there, as everywhere, was a great asset to the College. 'Curly' was of that very rare type of man who was always doing good, whether at work or at sport, who was always at his best."

### III

## WORK AND SPORT

**I**N August, 1901, Andrew began his business life, first learning banking at Barclay's Bank in Lombard Street, and then moving to various branches till he was made Local Director of the Westminster Branch in 1909, from which he enlisted in 1914. Many letters from the Manager and from Clerks and others, bear witness to the help he gave them in different ways.

A Clerk writes from a Base in Egypt :

“ I had worked under him at Westminster for some years and knew him from the time he entered Lombard Street. Believe me his character stood out amongst those with whom he worked as a fearless Christian, and in that spirit I am confident he met his death. Everything with him was done from the point of view of duty, and I remember him discussing the very point of ‘ joining up ’ and as to whether it was his duty or not.”

His first-cousin, Major R. L. Barclay, O.B.E. (a Director of Barclay's Bank), contributes the following reminiscences of Andrew's banking life :

“ If Andrew had a fault it was that of diffidence. Even that is a good fault, though it often cost him positions and glamour which more self-assertive natures would have gained. As a man of business therefore he made his mark

rather slowly, and most people only gradually realized his sound judgment. Hence when he entered the Banking world on the staff of Barclay's Bank he did not at once stand out above his contemporaries, but made his way gradually by persistence and hard work. We who watched his career wondered whether he would not make a better country banker than 'City' man. He settled down in the end to work in London, although no one felt the physical confinement and indoor work more than he did. . . . His general management was excellent and he always gave the impression of a desire to do his utmost for those with whom he came in contact. This is the first qualification of a banker. The old law that he who would help himself must first help other people holds good, as a permanent principle, in business as in other affairs of life.

"Imagine a small manager's room with a big writing-table and desk, very orderly, with papers and paraphernalia associated with business. Andrew sitting at it with the serious air of a man with other people's interests in his hands. His face lights up with a warm welcome as you come in, and you notice that in one corner rests perhaps a catapult, in another a treatise on trapping vermin, or perhaps a parcel which contains a prize won at the Retriever trials. All these were matters which Andrew turned to in his spare moments, but they were never allowed to interfere with the main business in hand. But the odd thing was that though they were to him only by-play, he was probably as good an authority on his subjects as any one alive. Not the least interesting of his hobbies was the study of spiders, but I am not aware that he ever let loose any of his deadly tarantulas in a London office. It might not have been good for business if an important customer had died from the bite of a tarantula which had escaped from its cage in Victoria Street. Nor did he, so far as I am aware, use a catapult in London, in spite of the many

inviting sparrow targets, but I do know that he was a nailing good shot with one, and that its use was one of his chosen methods of training his dogs.

“Imagine also the dusty vaults of the Bank when the tedious work of counting gold was in hand. Accuracy is everything, and Andrew is just the man for it. All has to be carried out in the confined atmosphere of the safes, and lifting and counting and weighing heavy bags of sovereigns is no light work. One bag, after being counted, bursts and the contents roll over the floor and into every available corner. They are all picked up and a weary clerk says, ‘We need not count them again, need we?’ Only one answer could come from Andrew. Even if it meant additional hours of work and the breaking of important engagements, the work must be thorough. ‘Yes, count it all again, I’ll lend you a hand.’ Or, with one eye on the clock one of the party remarks, ‘Let us do the rest to-morrow.’ But he gets no encouragement—the job of the day must be completed before adjournment.”

Lord K. writes :

“In all my life I have never met any one I ‘took to’ so much as that dear boy. I had heard much about him and his Labrador, but had never met him, until one day I found myself penniless in Victoria Street and saw Barclay’s Bank at the corner, so I went in to beard the formidable Manager and borrow money. I was shown in and to my joy Andrew made himself known. So we met first, and have often met since to my great pleasure. His gentle sympathy and keenness were so attractive.”

All through this time he lived at home, except for his summer holidays, which were usually spent in Scotland. On two occasions he went on trips abroad ; one of these

was to the Black Forest with his sister Rosamond in 1911, and the other to Canada in 1913.

During this time at home, first at Hunsdon Bury and then at Easneye, he took great trouble and interest over his lads' and men's clubs at Hunsdon and St. Margaret's. Later on he started another club at Waters Place and a Men's Service at Stanstead Abbots. It must often have been a very great effort to him after a long hard business day to get a little supper and then bicycle off again on dark winter nights to the Clubs, returning late and tired out; but he never complained, although he must have longed for a quiet evening at home. He took special interest in the "Shovers' Club" in Stanstead Abbots. One of the members of the Club wrote after his death:

"As to myself, no one knows what it means to me, as I looked upon Mr. Andrew's influence in this village, with the young fellows especially, as something to be proud of. Only the last time I spoke to him he told me he did so hope, if anything should happen, I would try and run the Services that he started. I am quite certain that his influence in the Army must have done a power of good, and we who knew and loved him realize that we have lost a friend whom we were proud to look up to."

Despite these local claims on his spare time, he contrived to render valuable assistance to various other efforts and movements of a Christian kind. Amongst these may be mentioned the London City Mission, on whose Committee he served from 1906, the Home for Working Boys in London, the Spanish and Portuguese Church Aid Society, and the "Cambridge University Missionary Party," of which he remained the Treasurer until his death. He used constantly to visit his special friends about Easneye—in particular the bedridden "Billy" Stone (on his way from the station),

also writing to him from Canada or France. On one picture postcard he wrote :

“ Fret not—He loves thee.  
Faint not—He holds thee.  
Fear not—He keeps thee.”

Others he specially visited were the old shepherd's wife, Mrs. Butt, who died a few hours after one of his visits, aged nearly 100 ; and a poor man and woman dying from cancer, for whom he had a “ Specialist ” down from Town to see if anything could be done for them.

Here are some extracts from letters of this period :

*To his Mother.*

“ Letterfinlay,  
“ Invergloy,  
“ August 18, 1905.

“ . . . We are enjoying this place so much. Our trophy is, as I expect you have heard, an 8½ lb. brown trout on a minnow in the loch. I expect that will make Arthur's mouth water ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ Hunsdon Bury,  
“ April, 1907.

“ Very many thanks for your most welcome letter at the Bank this morning. We have had a very good Easter, though your absence has been very sad. Father, Harry and I had a game of ‘ fives ’ on Saturday afternoon, and yesterday fished in the morning, catching four pike, walking round the wood and did a little cutting in the afternoon ; and then drove to Easneye for tea, where a few people and Harry and I walked back along the river with a rifle and shot two rats and a sparrow. . . . Tell Arthur his rabbits spent a very happy Bank Holiday morning on the

island of the pond. . . . Zulu's (his favourite retriever) first birthday to-day."

*To his Mother.*

"Easneye,

[*Undated.*]

" . . . I was awfully disappointed with Zulu who never sat still for a single rabbit or hare, though otherwise he worked magnificently. If I could have a week with him here shooting rabbits alone I believe I could get him right, but it cannot be, and I am afraid I shall never do any good with him, though I hope I am mistaken."

*To his Mother.*

"Tarvie, Pitlochry,

"August 19, 1907.

" . . . I have been out all day on the middle beat with Uncle Robert and Gurney. We got 15½ brace and 3 hares. . . . To-morrow are the games at Pitlochry, and on Wednesday at Kirkmichael. . . . How I wish you were up here, with the refreshment of the air and view; the hills to-night most beautiful across and up the glen with the setting sun on them."

*To his Mother.*

"Hunsdon Bury,

"October 31, 1908.

" . . . I went down to the Boys' Club in the village last night, which I found to be going most successfully, thanks largely to Mr. G.'s kindness and interest.

"I am going to have made some pulling boards such as we had at D.'s at Harrow for a tug-of-war, sitting down with bars to get your heels against, as the boys require some means of letting off animal energy! This afternoon I have been playing a game of football with them in the Warren, since when I have been training my three dogs







SHOOTING ON TARVIE MOOR. *[To face page 27*

with a duck which I brought from Cromer. Sultan has grown a great deal and will, I think, turn out very handsome and a good dog, though longer in the leg than I care for. They are now all three helping me write in the new room; there is no need to tear up letters as Sultan so efficiently does it, but does not, alas! return them to the paper basket."

*To his Mother.*

"Tarvie, Pitlochry, "

"August 24, 1908.

"We are such a nice party here and having such a nice time. On Saturday Uncle Robert, Harry and I walked up the east side and shot 12½ brace grouse, and to-day Harry, Tom, Gilbert and I went up the west side to the top of Ben Vuruch and got 12½ brace again. It was a most lovely walk, and I took the left, following the Clunskeagh burn the whole way, which is most lovely; bright green moss on the stones and banks, with the clearest water coming down and a good many small trout about and two or three water ousels. I got a snipe on the top of Ben Vuruch, and Harry got a woodcock. . . . The heather is in full flower and the pollen quite covers you. Zulu gets quite grey at times. The smell is often just as strong as a bit of heather honey. We usually go out shooting rabbits with rifles in the evening, which is great sport. . . . F. says Zulu is 'too fat.' He is doing very well and finds the grouse splendidly, but has, I regret to say, run a few blue hares."

*To his Mother.*

"Cromer,

"January 9, 1909.

". . . We are just in after a most delightful day at Trimmingham, getting over 130 pheasants and 12 woodcock, of which we saw no end. . . . I did long for you along the

cliffs by the sea coverts, with their jolly depth and wild waste appearance of the land slips with the roar of the sea below. . . .”

*To his Father.*

“ 1 Whitehall Gardens,  
“ January 26, 1909.

“ Events have taken a rather important turn for me at the Bank. I saw the General Manager yesterday, who tells me that they are short-handed at Pall Mall and he wishes to know if I would be agreeable to take C.’s place at Westminster, with possibly the title of Local Director. I shall be pleased to accept it.”

*To A. G. H.*

“ 95 Victoria Street,  
“ February 10, 1909.

“ . . . I have got the sack from Lombard Street, either because they are tired of me, or because they want to be kind to me, or else because they cannot hit on any one better suited to take charge of this great branch. Anyway, I started here as Manager on February 1, and the Branch is still existent! . . . I shall no doubt shortly be known as the Victoria Street Banker and Financier.

“ A rare nice office next door to the Stores, and business of a nature which I much look forward to, for a period which may easily find me with a bald head and a stick in each hand.

“ I do indeed congratulate you on the splendid result of 857 from your coverts. My day with you was delightful.”

*To his sister Rosamond.*

“ Tarvie, Pitlochry, N.B.,  
“ August 30, 1909.

“ It is the day before your twenty-first. Accept the tip top of best wishes. What a stage has been achieved by you, the last of us, having come of age, but nothing to be

sad about, as time must slip on—being quite impervious to any orders to sit still—and our point of view towards it must be to subject the use of it to the laws of God (Rom. viii. 7), the basis of which is the abiding life of John xv.

“Well, my Ros, my best wishes for many good days’ fishing and other enjoyments for your body, delightful thoughts and books for your mind, and unseparated walk with God for your soul for all the future of this life.”

*To his Mother.*

“Noseley, Leicester,

“January 9, 1910.

“. . . It is delightful being here and most refreshing to have the babies to play with. We have just been a walk consisting largely of guesses as to what I had brought in my bag. ‘It’ consists of a box of chocolates, which will be looked for after lunch.

“. . . A best thought for to-day (from Gillian’s journal): ‘It is sometimes so hard to keep first things first, and not let God’s Presence be swamped by pots and pans and other pressing household necessities!’ This applies to banking and to every other vocation to which a man is called, but I am sure if the first things are kept first and are themselves the incentives for doing duties well, those duties are much easier done in consequence.”

*To his Mother.*

“Isle of Mull,

August 20, 1911.

“. . . Uncle G. got here yesterday, and almost at once got a wire telling of Aunt Buxton’s death.<sup>1</sup> He is now trying to make arrangements to get away from here for the funeral. You will feel her death immensely, and

<sup>1</sup> Lady Buxton, of Colne House, Cromer, widow of Sir Edward North Buxton, M.P.

I do too—it is such a huge event, the last of that generation having gone and the centre that she and Colne House have been coming to an end. A chapter of our family history is now closed.

“ We had a splendid long walk yesterday spying some ground for deer all the morning without success, and then shooting 4 brace of grouse in the afternoon. I also got a ripping right and left of duck, which we saw sitting and I went and squatted for while they put them up. The farmer here is a very good fellow—he has quantities of sheep and now is sorting them up, dipping, etc., which is most interesting, and I hope to get some time with him to-morrow. I should like a week with these men to understand sheep, also the working of dogs, as I would also like time with a good many people of other trades, but it seems impossible to get it, alas ! The shepherds are so nice, and a talk with them is very refreshing. I went this afternoon into one of the crofters’ houses with dear old occupants, one old lady quite blind, the house full of peat smoke.”

Bank life in London could not fail to be irksome to such a passionate lover of the country as Andrew was ; and he was therefore particularly glad of an opportunity, in August, 1913, to pay a visit to Canada and the United States. He always hated travelling, especially sea journeys, but, on this occasion at least, the miseries of the journey were amply compensated for by his experiences on the other side.

His was a nature that loved to share things, especially good things, and he wrote home long and detailed descriptions of what he did and saw. Extracts of his last letter may be here appended :

“ *January 4, 1914.*

“ MY DEAR ARTHUR,—

“ . . . No being has ever had such a journey as I ; splendidly fit all the time ; seen everything I wanted in Canada and America ; people awfully kind to me, and lost

nothing but an old umbrella in Victoria which was a comfort to be rid of. The experience has been of greatest value, having met so many people. I weep though for God's Kingdom out there. I may have fallen on unusual chance, but the Churches I saw appeared dead, and the Kingdom had made no start in the minds of men I spoke to, or, as Hosea would have said, there is no knowledge of God. With such unbroken sequence of people, most of course English or Scotch in Canada, the question whether one's convictions were a myth irresistibly arose, and in the ordinary course a man who goes to live there who has not previously lived a life of faith must fall, at any rate to indifference."

This chapter may fitly conclude with some further account of Andrew's interest in sport, in particular of his success as a trainer of retrievers. He was a remarkably good shot, but his pleasure in shooting was always second to his pleasure in living animals. He would spend hours in going after a wounded bird or rabbit, and he was never happier than when training his dogs. One of his sisters recalls that during the shooting seasons prior to the War he began more and more to dislike shooting, except for a sporting pigeon and such like shots, and would, on the occasions of a day off from business, prefer to work his Labradors for picking up other shooters' game than take a gun's place himself.

His mother writes that :

"He could never bear to see a wounded creature of any sort ; he always followed them up even if it were only a sparrow hurt by his catapult. This he specially taught his nephews to do in after life.

"When in France he once astonished the occupants of a French café by untying the legs of the chickens which were lying alive on the floor ! And he would feed the

starving dogs and loosen the chains of those tied up, or shoot one with a broken leg. He was also especially careful to examine the horses' oats, fearing lest German 'hooks' should have got among them."

His cousin, Major R. L. Barclay, who frequently shot with him, writes of their sport together :

"Of course it goes without saying that a character such as Andrew Buxton's was a delightful asset in any party for sport or games. He always added to the spirit of any fun that was going on, and never 'played for himself.' Many a pleasant day have I passed with him, and fond are the recollections of the sport we have so often shared.

"He and 'Zulu' (his Labrador retriever) spent some time with us at Glenbrittle in the Island of Skye five years ago. All kinds of sport were to be found there, from deer-stalking to spearing crabs on the bottom of the sea. It was possible to kill a stag, shoot a grouse, catch a sea-trout, and land a net full of sea-fish on the same day, although indeed bags were never heavy. A typical day was one which started with Andrew trying to teach his famous dog to choose which kind of game he was to retrieve when more than one kind were to be picked up. So grouse and rabbits were hidden and hunted for, certain orders were given to the dog and he certainly learnt what was expected of him, but I cannot say performed this difficult operation without mistake. This went on until in pouring rain we went off to look for snipe, and found quite a number along the river. It was the most wonderful thing in the world to see Zulu find and bring the killed and wounded. No time wasted, yet no rushing about, always straight on the scent and back at a gallop. Now and then the immaculate Zulu would do something of which his master disapproved, and out would come the catapult, and a buckshot landed on his flank re-called him to the strict path of duty. But it



was always a treat to see how master and dog worked together. Up get suddenly two ducks—long shots—but Andrew bags both with a beautiful right and left, only remarking how sorry he was that the chance had not gone to me—and he meant it. The day wore on with a cast or two in the river for a sea-trout, and then came, by arrangement with the shepherd, an exhibition of sheep-driving by his dogs—one master dog-breaker seeing another at work and thoroughly enjoying the other's success. We watched the shepherd send his dog across the river and bring some sheep down from behind the sky-line on the opposite hill. There were other sheep within sight, but the dog was not to bring these, nor was he to drive the sheep quickly lest they should be injured. All this was done by whistling signals, and the unseen sheep were herded up from the other side of the hill, brought gently down it and driven across the river to our feet.

“All this was sheer delight to Andrew, and, just because he enjoyed things so much, it was always pleasant to be with him; and I really believe he enjoyed things more when other people had the luck than when it came to himself. The only thing that really made him angry was when the day was spoiled by bad management, selfishness or laziness. ‘Don't do it at all unless you do it well’ was a fixed principle with him. He did not mind when bad shooting spoiled the day or when other people's dogs were uncontrollable, always provided intentions were good. But he felt it keenly when sport was spoiled by temper, selfishness, or want of keenness. He himself had a beautiful eye and played all games well, but he was always ready to make allowances for those who did not, always ready to help those less well off in any respect than himself.”

In 1910 Andrew won the retriever trials with “Zulu,” the Labrador mentioned in the foregoing reminiscence.

This victory of his beloved retriever was a huge delight to him. He writes to his sister Dorothy :

“ Upton House, Cromer,

“ *November 6, 1910.*

“ Thank you and Arthur so much for your wire. Isn't it awfully delightful to have been given the Championship prize and cup ! I never dared expect anything but a possible 'place,' and to have first is very gratifying. We were in most beautiful country on the Wye Valley with heavy snow on the hills, fallen on Wednesday night, and a lot of our shooting was on rough, open ground with bracken. Zulu was in very good order, i.e. thinner ! and did some very good work, though, till the result was given, I could not believe he had beaten one or two of the other dogs, who were fine. I find he jolly nearly missed it through killing one pheasant. I stayed with Mr. G. K., a most delightful man with the magnificent house and place we were shooting over. We were a 'bachelor' party in the house of about 12.”

The *Field* of June 16, 1917, has an interesting record of the Trials which may be inserted here :

“ THE LATE MR. ANDREW BUXTON.—There are not many south-country retriever men who at one meeting or another in the early days of district trials did not meet Mr. Andrew Buxton, whose death at the age of thirty-seven is reported. . . . We had letters from him while he was undergoing training in Surrey, for he had always something interesting to say about the breaking of retrievers and shooting ; his pride in winning the championship stake at Gwern-y-fed in 1910 with the Labrador 'Hunsdon Zulu' being quite pardonable. The dog was of what most men called 'unfashionable' blood, for neither of his parents was on the register of the Kennel Club, but who that saw Zulu run at either of the two district gatherings at which he

competed in his first season could fail to see real merit in his work and excellence in the methods of his owner? Mr. Buxton was quite in the front rank of amateur handlers, as was seen when he piloted his charge to second position at the Gaddesden meeting of the Kennel Club in the early autumn of 1910; he was fairly beaten by Mr. Archibald Butter's peerless Peter of Faskally, the Labrador which subsequently won the Scottish stake at Strathord. Behind Peter of Faskally and Hunsdon Zulu at the Gaddesden gathering were Park Darkie, Sarratt and Katya, in the order named, a trio good enough for any competition, it must be admitted, and when a few days later Mr. Buxton's retriever won the Eastern Counties stake over the Woolverstone ground of Mr. C. H. Berners, the forthcoming championship over the late Capt. Glen-Kidston's shooting in Breconshire became of special interest. Only nine dogs competed, but with Colonel Weller's Mecu, Mr. Butter's Peter of Faskally, Capt. Glen-Kidston's Juniper, Major T. B. Phillips' Kaal and Katya, Capt. J. H. Dutton's Sherborne Togi, Mr. M. P. Page's Dock, Mr. Kenneth McDouall's Logan Lorna, and Mr. Buxton's Hunsdon Zulu in the running, Mr. W. Arkwright, Captain Harry Eley and Mr. E. Wheler-Galson, who judged, had a task which was not envied by a single member of the crowd present. It was a glorious meeting for Capt. Glen-Kidston, and his keepers Anderson and Stark had mapped out ideal ground; in addition there were water tests quite equal to those in Lord Dunraven's park at Adare—used a few seasons later, and looked on by many sound judges as perfect—but a fly in the ointment was the absence of Mr. Butter, which meant the handling of the favourite by a stranger. We soon saw that Peter was not working in his usual form, though Charles Frost, who was entrusted with the charge of him, did all that man could do and did it well. Not once, but several times, it was noticed that though roding

and gathering as quickly as ever, Peter of Faskally was looking for the only man he had ever really worked for before, and Frost had to be both firm and persuasive when prompt delivery meant so much. The Scottish winner was beaten, of course, for he was placed fourth to Zulu, Juniper and Katya, an excellent award beyond a doubt, for Mr. Buxton's retriever showed great form. That was his last appearance in public, but it will be a long time before Mr. Buxton and his field trial retriever are not talked about where and when shooting men get together. The loss of so good a sportsman at the age of thirty-seven is another tragedy of the war."

An old shooting friend supplements the above paragraph as follows :

"A sportsman-naturalist, with an intense love of nature, he was one with whom it was always a delight to shoot or fish, but he will be best remembered by readers of the *Field* as the owner and trainer of Hunsdon Zulu. He had little time in the midst of his work in Barclay's Bank for training his dogs, but his methods were to some extent unique, his patience was inexhaustible, and the results were well-trained retrievers and excellent companions. Andrew Buxton was also an authority on spiders, and kept for many years, with great success, poisonous mygales from Trinidad. At one time he organized a competition, with valuable prizes, for the best and least cruel rabbit trap that could be made, which caused much interest and experiment among gamekeepers and others."

## IV

### JOINING UP

SEPTEMBER, 1914—JUNE, 1915

FOR Andrew, as for millions of others, the War came down upon life with relentless and decisive force, completely closing one chapter and opening another, with new and strange things to be writ therein.

His father had taken a Scotch Lodge (Urrard) that August (1914), hoping for the usual large family party ; but Andrew, like many other men in those days, was facing the vital question of enlistment. Of the difficulties in his way his mother writes :

“ First, he was over age at that time. Secondly, it was a most critical business time and he was responsible for his Branch of the Bank. Thirdly, the medical officer, after examination, refused to pass him and wrote privately to his father as follows :

“ ‘ May I write a confidential note to say that your son, who has just been up for medical examination before me, cannot be fit to become a recruit. . . . It is hateful to decline any recruit, and I write this private note with much regret.—C. B. G.’

“ The same doctor wrote after his death :

“ ‘ *June 13, 1917.*

“ ‘ I, at any rate, knew of his great keenness at once to do his duty to his King and Country when War began,

and how he resented my turning him down, when, from the facts before me, I could do nothing else from my standpoint of right. Had he not been as true as the best tempered steel he could perfectly have accepted my verdict, and no one could have gainsaid his action, but he elected to let nothing stand in his way, and surely his honour is thereby doubly great.—C. B. G.’”

Andrew himself writes :

From 95, Victoria Street,

“ August 7, 1914.

“ We live in exciting times in the financial world. A ‘ moratorium ’ has been declared. . . . How dearly I should like to enlist at this moment, but it is impossible to leave the Bank at so critical a time. . . . The summary actions taken by the War Office, etc., are all good. I have just heard of a man driving with carriage and pair to a Surrey country station and having his horses commandeered and so left stranded ! In this office we have several amusing incidents in the form of offers from aged (quite safe !) spinsters offering to help if it will enable the clerks to enlist. The question of enlisting is very difficult, both as to myself and the clerks. I am bound to drag on, anyhow for a few days, and see how the Bank will be able to manage with smaller staff.”

*To a Sister.*

“ County and Station Hotel,

“ Carlisle,

“ Sunday, August 30, 1914.

“ I smoked my first cigarette since Friday after supper, here, and sweet indeed it is. It has been hard work not to have a smoke before, but I must now get fit for military duties, which I am confident are incumbent upon me, unless a very different turn takes place from the German awful move onward.

“ I pray that each day as it comes you may be an exemplar of Christ’s nature, and that you may have real fellowship with Him. Pray then for me too as I fail to get real fellowship, which, if I had, the events of life which tend to care would not so affect me.”

“ *Monday, August 31, 1914.*

“ The topic of conversation and discussion in London appears to be whether Russian troops have come through England—Sandy (keeper) here confirmed it! I know you don’t want me to enlist, but I cannot help thinking it my duty from every point of view (including example) to do so soon—say next week or the following. I am not a born soldier, but I am a bachelor and I have an idea of rifle shooting, and with every available man being required I cannot stand out. There is a Corps called ‘The Artists,’ which rather attracts me, as I should not, I think, try for a Commission. It would, no doubt, mean three or four months’ training, and then choice of volunteering for abroad or not.

“ Bank Rate 8 per cent. this afternoon. Martial Law in Germany, and the Stock Exchange closed to-day. I am much better for my time with you and it will be a long-remembered holiday (one week at Urrard). I am glad I arranged it.”

“ *September 4, 1914.*

“ I have not yet enlisted. I went up last night to Lord’s Cricket Ground where a good many of the Artists are quartered on the practice ground and sleep in the booths, etc., all round where tea parties usually reign supreme. It was a strange contrast to the Harrow and Eton Match! Of course my intention is to join the ranks and not try for a Commission. This will be all right, provided I get in with nice men. I am now using every endeavour to get men I know to arrange to come into the same Company with

me. . . . I hope the Germans will now get a bad smash outside Paris—how thrilling it would be to be there! The disadvantage of waiting to enlist is that the probability of going to France is more doubtful. This, as you can imagine, I should wish to do.”

On September 24, 1914, he managed to pass a Doctor (another one, who knew nothing of his previous rejection), and enlisted as a private in the Public Schools and University Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, then quartered at Epsom. His mother records that in his first billet he drew lots with the two “Tommies” as to which of the three should have the two beds in a tiny room—and the lot fell to him to sleep on the floor. Within a few days of enlisting he writes to a sister:

“The Croft, Ashtead,

*September 27, 1914.*

“Do you think the front, or national military service, which we are both in for, may lead to the front in missionary service for God? This might be a way and time opened by God.

“I feel my course has been right, and if not taken, to be endlessly regretted, though how to shoot or bayonet a German will, I think, continue an endless problem till the time comes, and then it has got to be done, even though conscious that he may have a mother who loves, in some degree, as mother does! Am I sentimental too much? I fear I am. You must put me right.

“Did I tell you one doctor absolutely refused to pass me, and with greatest trouble I had to manoeuvre for another to do it? L.S. agreed to my sticking to it.

“P.S. Passed my medical, and sworn in to-day after considerable trouble, one doctor refusing to pass me in spite of L. S.’s second letter. I parade in Hyde Park at 1 o’clock to-morrow, and am billeted at either Ashtead



or Leatherhead for training at Epsom. I much want to hear how you are getting on. Best of love."

An aunt (and great friend) who lived near Epsom and saw a good deal of him at this time contributes the following reminiscence :—

"To any one who only knew Andrew at home or at the Bank, it would have been a revelation to see him during the time he was training as a private in the 'U.P.S.' in billets at Ashtead, Surrey.

"I had the joy at that time of seeing him constantly, and I can only say that the energy and determination he put into his work was amazing, when one remembers that soldiering was entirely new to him, and that he was no longer a boy, though indeed his 'joie de vivre' and wonderfully youthful air often deceived people as to his years.

"He was always ready to make light of any hardships and laugh at the difficulties they experienced, saying that the training, though sometimes irksome, was 'most valuable' and that it was quite right that they should go as far as possible through every detail of what they would have to expect of their men in the future, when they themselves had got commissions. Having a bad circulation, I think Andrew did at times feel the cold and damp of that winter pretty severely, though he never mentioned it except to remark, 'Well this is good—better than digging trenches or lying flat in the mud'—when having walked over after a long day he found himself sitting in front of a cosy fire, with, however, the prospect of another muddy tramp back to his billet and an early start the next morning. When I look back on that time, I think that what struck me most in Andrew were, his wonderful power of sympathy (which made him the most perfect *listener* in the world)—his extraordinary unselfishness—and his iron will to carry out what he had made up his mind was right and best, which

was sometimes quite a surprise to those who had only seen the gentle side of his character. Once convinced that a thing was his duty, or the best thing to do, nothing would turn him from his purpose ; but with this he had a very broad-minded tolerance of other people's views, especially of those who had not had the same up-bringing as himself ; and it was the greatest help at any time to talk things over with him and ask his advice, which was given with great earnestness and his whole attention. He was never too busy or too tired to help, if he could, in the difficulties of others, and took a real intense interest in their joys, in every detail. Combined with these characteristics was a quite exceptional humbleness of mind, a humbleness which made it genuinely impossible for Andrew to realize that he was loved for his own sake ; it seemed to be a constant surprise to him that any one should take trouble on his behalf, and the smallest service rendered, or least thing done to give him pleasure, was always met by far more gratitude than it deserved. He was always more than anxious to avoid giving any sort of trouble. It goes without saying that the charm of this unusually beautiful character made itself felt by a large number of people, though Andrew himself was completely unaware of it, and though some failed to understand him just because of his diffidence. His great devotion to his mother is mentioned elsewhere in this book, and one of the little things I specially recollect at Ashted is the infinite pains he took over the designing for her of a locket with the badge of the Rifle Brigade, when at the end of his training he received his commission, and his pleasure at the family's admiration of it. His love for children was one of his most attractive qualities, and as for children's love of him, it amounted to hero worship, and his memory will be an inspiration to many of them all their lives. No trouble was ever too great to take for them, whether it was (in my own children's case) walking

back to the shop at Ashtead after a long and tiring day, to search for something he knew they specially liked or taking them for a delightful country walk to learn about birds' nests or spiders, or later on in France, sitting in his dug-out in the midst of the incessant din, writing to them by the light of a candle. One could write many more recollections of Andrew, but no words can ever express what he was. To those who have known and loved him his friendship is something to thank God for all their life. In thinking of him the words that always occur to my mind are those lines of Kingsley's:—

“ Can we forget one friend, can we forget one face  
That cheered us towards our end, that nerved us for our race?  
One presence that has made us know to God-like souls, how  
deep in debt,  
We would not, if we could, forget.”

Here follow some extracts from his own letters of this period :

The Croft, Ashtead,  
*October 10, 1914.*

“ This is a strange life, and I feel I am back at both Harrow and Cambridge mixed up in one, with drills corresponding to ‘ schools ’ at various times, and more or less a Cambridge life with others in this house. One sore toe is the extent of my ailments so far, though this becomes a big thing with long road grinds ! ”

“ Billet, The Croft, Ashtead,  
*October 12, 1914.*

He writes of the idea of building a sufficient number of huts to accommodate the whole Brigade of between 5,000 and 6,000 men, and goes on to say : “ The King came down to-day and walked round informally ; ” and then continues : “ When I was in Canada my great grief was to feel incapable of attempting to put up a simple wooden

'shack' which every one seemed able to do for himself, though I tried hard to learn the system of it, and so you can imagine I delighted in this chance of experience in what is just similar work. The site is a splendid one, high up and looking on to the Grand Stand of the Race Course."

" *October 15, 1914.*

" This morning I had, for some unknown reason, an honour paid me in being ordered with one other man to fall out with the Non-Commissioned Officers and told they would like me to become one. I am glad to say I was able to get out of it, though at the time I did not think I could work getting off. I hope you think I was right. Non-Commissioned Officers have already had a lot of training and the responsibility of being in charge of fourteen men has duties which I do not consider without previous training that I was able completely to fulfil. . . . We have often in the afternoon 'extended' drill, which is interesting. It is considered of considerable importance to heave yourself on the ground and get up for the next sprint as quickly as possible as casualties chiefly occur at these times. An afternoon of this sort is splendid exercise. I am glad to find I can usually get up quicker than others and have a considerable lead. I am also glad that my clothes so far need no mending. . . . Probably khaki uniform to-morrow. This morning we had a lecture on 'Tactics!' "

*To a Sister.*

" The Croft, Ashtead,

" *October 18, 1914.*

" I have your Weymouth Bible you gave me at Quinish, 1911, and enjoy it extremely—just now I am reading 2 Cor. I told you what I pray for yourself and myself, and 2 Cor. ii. 15 gives the state and the aggressive result of it: 'We are a fragrance of Christ, grateful to God in those whom He

is saving, and in those who are perishing ; to the last named an odour of death predictive of death, and to the others an odour of life predictive of life."

*To his Mother.*

" Billet,

" *November 12, 1914.*

" . . . We fall in at 7.50 (after breakfast), which makes the day with the same work all the time seem a long one ! You will, though, be glad to know that we knock off at 10.45 for a quarter of an hour to get what we want from the Canteen arranged in one of the huts. My military efforts I still put in terms of other experiences, especially in the matter of marching with rifles in which the feeling is that of going up a Scotch hill to get to the moor to shoot, and of digging trenches to the inevitable digging-out ferreting. A military nature will no doubt soon occur."

*December 13, 1914.*

" No uniforms yet except cap and puttees, which latter are useful for wet days, and a pair of boots which seem to fit well and to be good ones in spite of simply ' drawing ' them by size only. It would have tickled you too when drawing boots, when of course the record of doing so is kept, to have just the two questions asked—1st, what religion you are—then size of boots, as it did me, but I am getting used to the many strange ways of conducting things here. They ask us every few weeks what religion we are, and I hope will soon have the record. Atheists and agnostics are apparently classified as Church of England ! "

*December 18, 1914.*

" This letter brings the prospect of an event in my life (the Rifle Brigade accepting him). Now I am taking steps to get a transfer to the Cambridge O.T.C. as a Private."

*To a Sister.*

“ The Croft, Ashtead,

“ *December 29, 1914.*

“ I shall value them (the socks) immensely, both for what they are, and then for the remembrance each time I wear them of you and your love and interest, especially in this war life in which I am occupied. We have had such a nice Christmas at Easneye, though of course more or less quiet. We appear to be in for digging trenches all this week.”

“ The Croft, Ashtead,

“ *20. 12. 14.*

“ I expect you feel as I do—just overwhelmed with the immensity of this war, and with the terrors of it. Big things sometimes come to a sudden end, and perhaps we may see it in this. Are we and our Allies nations of righteousness to whom God can give victory in response to next Sunday’s day of prayer? It seems to me interesting and critical. . . . It is a joy to know that you and W. have me in mind in this really awful war.”

“ *26. 12. 14.*

“ If nations aimed at attaining a Kingdom of Christ instead of temporal national interests only, I cannot think that this war would have occurred. I am frightened whether we are a nation honouring God, and hence whether victory will be ours. I wish there was more sign of men turning Godwards.”

“ Billet,

*January 2, 1915.*

“ The feeling I have is entirely like being back at school. . . . Jocelyn Buxton<sup>1</sup> is thinking of the Rifle Brigade. I therefore hope both he and others I know may be in the 6th. We had a rotten day going early to W. with an

<sup>1</sup> Missing (later presumed killed) 1916.

inevitable full half-hour wait at Ashtead Station first—and about 11.30 knocked off owing to the rain and marched to the station, where we waited from 12.30 till 3.30 for a special train. It was driving rain all the time and a very great number of men had to stand on the uncovered part of the platform. I was very fortunate being under cover and having a *Times* to read. I always have something of this sort with me in view of frequent waits to which we are subjected. All day was very cold and draughty and I was so grateful for your present. If you really intend to give me the pair of long mittens some day which I shall wear under M.'s mittens (which have no fingers) I shall be provided for till I get to Berlin! The wait yesterday and this afternoon free seem very strange when I think of what my life would, in the ordinary way, be at the Bank these few days at the end of the year!"

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"The Croft, Ashtead,  
"January 6, 1915.

"What a tremendous victory over the Turks in the Caucasus in to-day's paper, but how strange to have it spoken of more in the strain of being satisfactory than in the number of casualties as ranking as one of the biggest battles in the world's history. How awful, how frightfully awful from a humanitarian point of view the news is each day."

"January 12, 1915.

"As I told you I now possess a uniform as outward and visible sign of being a full 'private!' I am told that my hat does not fit and I look like a 'bus driver! . . . This morning we had a lovely sky with the remains of the waning moon near Sirius and some star."

"January 13, 1915.

"Have heard from Major C., which means that I may be

discharged from here any day. I shall then have to report on 22nd at Sheerness and arrange for a three weeks' O.T.C. course at Cambridge. Victor wires me that Jocelyn can get into the 6th, which is splendid."

Prior to receiving a Commission in the Rifle Brigade he went to Cambridge for the O.T.C. course. It was a great joy to him to find himself once more in rooms in Trinity College and "returning to old ways, cooking buttered eggs for breakfast with the bed-maker fussing about."

He writes in letters :

" *January 18, 1915.*

"The Kit is really the most wonderful bag of tricks you can imagine. It includes haversack, kit bag, trenching implements, water bottle, bayonet, etc., and without previous instruction could not be put together. I have just tried to count the number of buckles that are attached and they appear to be thirty-seven!"

" Cambridge,

" *January 29, 1915.*

"Patrick Buxton joined me in the middle of breakfast. A great number of men have come up and are mostly at Pembroke where I wish I were also, as it is there we fall in for parades, and also lunch and supper and lectures, and as our programme is most strenuous with very short intervals between parades there is no opportunity to get back to one's rooms."

*To his Mother.*

" Cambridge,

*January 31, 1915.*

"How I wish you were here to-day to have a peaceful talk and day together. I think specially of your love to me and of the fact that God has the same love and care for



us both. We thus seem to have God a uniting centre for the love that we have to each other. I have had a hard time of faith-testing lately with things on hand and mind to worry my nature, and I fear I have worried and hence not glorified God. I am pretty confident that God is not going to (He cannot do so or life would become ridiculous by our having no need for decisions) show us the right course to take in business or other material decisions of life, but He is all the time wanting to give us His Spirit whereby we shall have the right motive in everything. Lately I have missed this, to-day I recognize by receiving His Spirit that this sickness is from Him, also that worries have lately been given that I might show a peaceful spirit in spite of them."

*To his Brother Arthur.*

" Cambridge,

" February 7, 1915.

" I write to ask whether you will do me and the nation a favour by lending me your field-glasses? They are very difficult to procure, in fact only a French make can be got, and as I believe you have a pair, cannot resist suggesting it. Will you, however, take the risk of their being lost if I am shot, or if they are lost and I am not shot, of accepting a new pair in their place? Strange being here in 'C.' New Court. The instruction is good, but very strenuous, and it is hard to find time for anything. You will of course say me 'nay' re the glasses if any hesitation. J. B. is here with measles."

*To a Sister.*

" Trinity College, Cambridge,

February 18, 1915,

" Mother's piece of ham is delicious. Why is it that everything that mother provides is bigger and better and nicer than anything obtained elsewhere? "

“ Cambridge,

“ *February 18, 1915.*

“ One night we had a march, not getting in till 1 a.m. This was all right, but it started with nearly an hour's wait before moving off, which to me is the hardest work of any, but from T.'s description of the 'Front,' which I have written to R., is no doubt useful training. I expect to leave here on Wednesday and wrote on Tuesday to the Adjutant to ask for instructions and whether I could have till over the Sunday before joining at Sheerness. The Military Hospital here on King's Cricket ground has 1,200 men in it.”

In March, 1915, he was given a Commission in the 6th Rifle Brigade as a 1st Lieutenant.” He proceeded to join his Regiment at Sheerness.

He writes from Sheerness :

“ Sheerness (Billet).

“ *March 2, 1915.*

“ I got here all right last night and have had three drills to-day and a lecture. I have seen Col. Dawson, but not to speak to yet. Charles Werner <sup>1</sup> is very kind and I have seen others whom I knew were here. Thanks, I think, to C. W. I have a very nice billet next door to my Company Office—occupied by a friendly old retired Marine and his wife who are anxious to do anything for me. I have a very nice, as far as I can yet judge, servant called H., who has been at the Front and is back shot in the ankle. The Mess is very nice, and of course I have all meals here and a nice room to read in also, so I have no need of provisions and thus can save you any thought of them. J. B. is in C. Coy., which I am sorry for.”

<sup>1</sup> An old Cambridge friend, who was an assistant-master at Harrow when War broke out. Killed 1915.

“ Sheerness,  
“ *March* 8, 1915.

“ I wrote you a card yesterday and told you that I was on Orderly duty, or rather supernumerary for the purpose of learning the job. The day was extremely strenuous as I did not get to bed till 6 a.m. (so till 11.30 to-day I have slept). The Orderly duty consisted of at 12 (noon) attending Commanding Officer's orders, i.e. Col. D. for seeing defaulters, after which going round to the three hospitals and seeing all 6th R. B. in the wards had all they wanted, then to the prison. After lunch I saw the start of a football match of the 6th v. Crew of H.M.S. *Albemarle*, then to the parade square to see drills were all right. At 4 to mounting the Guard in Alma Road and sending them to their different stations; at 5.30 a tour round to the six kitchens—one to each Company—to see everything was clean and in order. The men, or as they are called ‘Riflemen,’ are billeted and fetch their meals from the kitchens. From these to the Q.M.S. store to supervise the giving out of rations for 24 hours. Everything of course is exact measurement, such as 20 lb. 2 oz. cheese, 3 lb. 13 oz. tea, 10 lb. butter,  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. mustard, 4 tins milk, 24 tins herrings and tomatoes, packet of pepper, etc. I wished you were there, also for the kitchens, as you would have been much interested! At 9.30 p.m. dismissing the Orderly Sergeants, at 10 dismissing the Billet patrol. The Billet patrol goes to all billets and sees the men are in. At 12.15 a long trudge round till 2.15 to the three guard pickets outside the town—a very muddy and difficult walk and extremely dark night, challenged of course by all sentries en route. Turned out and inspected each guard and questioned sentries on their duties. They are all instructed to look out for pigeons—one described looking out for ‘pigeon-carriers’! He may or may not have known what was meant! I thought R. would probably be better at seeing them than the sentries—

probably the authorities do not know what it means to see a pigeon in the dark! At 4.15 a.m. a similar inspection of the three guards in the town, then to bed at 6 a.m. It made quite a strenuous day, especially after two quite hard morning parades of physical and other drill, but I need hardly say I am nothing but very fit."

*To D.*

"6th Rifle Brigade, Sheerness,

"*March* 18, 1915.

"Here we progress well. The officers are a really nice lot of fellows; a great many quite young. This week we sent out seven, of which Archie Pelham Burn was one. The 5th Battalion also sent out seven the same day, the requirement being no doubt due to this last engagement.

"This morning I have had a long three hours on a Court-martial for the purpose of my own instruction in this business. You have no idea of the amount of work and bad effect on others that a few indifferent characters give to a company. It would be the best possible thing for the army if such men were dismissed."

*To his Father.*

"D'Abernon Lodge,

"*April* 18, 1915.

"I have been able to accept an Officer's (by name B.) invitation to motor with him from Sittingbourne to Redhill, by which he could drop me at Kentwins. We came through Maidstone and near Sevenoaks and got to Kentwins about 11.45 a.m and saw Dorothy and Arthur, who came with his anti-aircraft motors. About 3.30 A. took me to Redhill on these motors, which was magnificent. Rolls-Royce cars weighing  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons without men and on pneumatic tyres (4 behind). We went into Camp on Thursday which is much more satisfactory. At present I have a tent to





[To face page 53

EASNEY.

myself. Arthur (brother) came for Thursday night, which was very nice, and it was satisfactory that as he left the station the anti-aircraft guns there shot at a Taube which was steering towards the Dockyard. It felt just like a partridge drive and as though standing behind some one who was shooting. Unfortunately the shooting had no effect except to turn the aeroplane back—after it turned it looked much as though it was coming down, but no such luck.”

*To Rosamond.*

“ 6th R. B., Sheerness,

May 6, 1915.

“ How sad the number of deaths just now of people we know ; Birchall, Alan Fowler, Cheny Garfit's son, Alan Ronald's brother, and dear old ' Chip.'<sup>1</sup>

“ I started early this morning to get out about seven miles along the sea for field firing practice with targets in hedges, etc. It might easily have been Scotland, and my thoughts were once more on cross-lining and winch-mending, and the many other remembrances of that place now so impossible of repetition with John Trotter and Chip gone.

“ If England and her officials would recognize the Kingdom of God the effect on events of the war would, I believe, be, under God, at once in our favour.”

*To his Father.*

“ Queenboro',

“ May 10, 1915.

“ For the Range shooting I, apparently, got 114 points and thereby got what is called a ' First Class Shot,' for which 95 points is sufficient.”

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Trotter.

“ Queenboro’,

“ May 17, 1915.

“ I am sorry to say that Charles Werner, who was in the 2nd Battalion with W., is, like him, missing. This Battalion seems to have been fearfully cut up in the engagements of the last fortnight. The programme here this week for Officers, after the afternoon drills are done, is—to-day signalling; Tuesday, bayonet-fighting; Wednesday, map-reading and use of compass; Thursday, bayonet-fighting; Friday, ‘general work.’ This is such a strange place—a very big pottery, which continues manufacturing, but we take a number of their large rooms, etc.”

“ Queenboro’,

“ May 18, 1915.

“ I have orders to go to Winchester to-morrow. I know not what for nor for how long, but anticipate that it is owing to a shortage of Officers there and a large number of new men coming in. Winchester is the R. B. Depôt, and we get our drafts of men from there. The Y.M.C.A. hall here is well used and I went in this evening and took the few minutes of prayers with which they close each night. . . . I did not respond to the request for a speech on going away to-morrow! The *Gamekeeper* paper which I take in appears much appreciated by all as a variety from war topics! I feel very sorry to be leaving here as I am just getting to know my platoon.”

“ Winchester,

“ May 31, 1915.

“ (*In the train.*) Now 9.30 p.m. on my way from Queenboro’ where I have to-day taken a draft of men. I was Orderly Officer, but they appeared to want me for this draft and I left at 11.30 via London and getting to Queenboro’ at 6.15. I marched across from Waterloo to Victoria as I just missed a S.E. train at Waterloo. How little I had



ever thought that I should be in command of men marching down Victoria Street !”

*To his mother, before taking a draft of men to France.*

“ Queenboro’,

“ June 22, 1915.

“ I parade at the Camp at Sheerness at 4.30 p.m. and leave about 5.30 for Folkestone and Boulogne with another Officer.”

*To his Mother.*

“ France,

June 23, 1915.

“ It is quite difficult to write as I know you like details. . . . I must comply with censorship regulations.

“ I paraded at Sheerness yesterday and marched the men to the station accompanied by the Band. . . . At Folkestone we got on to what was said to be a bigger boat than usual, but it was a rotten little thing, and we had 900 men on board (other drafts joined us at Dover and Folkestone). There was none too smooth a sea, but it did not upset me, though some men were bad. We were escorted across by destroyers and got in about 11.30 p.m., when it took a long time sorting up the men, and we then marched up to the Camp about 2½ miles from the station. When we got to camp tents were allotted, 12 in a tent, and I drew a blanket each for the men from the Quartermaster. I was responsible for fifty men and had papers respecting them given me at Sheerness which I had to give to the Embarkation Officer at Folkestone, also at Boulogne, and also here at ‘ this ’ place. After the men had got into tents it began to rain hard, by which I suffered a bit, having a search for my kit-bag, fishing-bag, and Burberry, all of which I had sent on in a motor at the station. These had been put in an Orderly tent and it was a bit of good fortune I found them at all. . . .”

## THE FRONT: FIRST EXPERIENCES

JULY—AUGUST, 1915

ANDREW received his orders for France in July, 1915. He writes to his mother from Sheerness:

*July 6, 1915.*

“Just a line before Mess at 8 p.m. to tell you what I fear you will be sorry to hear, that I fully expect to be now ‘on the list.’ This is the current expression for a list of Officers put up in the Orderly Room whom the Colonel has recommended to the War Office as suitable for the Expeditionary Force. . . . The probability is that I shall go abroad in two or three weeks’ time, but it may be longer or shorter. Anyhow I expect to have 24 hours’ notice and should be extremely surprised if I went within 10 days from now. I am afraid you and father will mind when the time comes for me to go across, but you must on no account do so. It will be of extraordinary interest to put into practice what I have been attempting to learn for nearly nine months (since September 24, 1914) and as I fully anticipate getting through without harm you need not fear. I was Orderly Officer yesterday and got back from visiting the guards at 2.10 a.m. It was so jolly as I went into my tent to have a lark get up close by and announce the morning with a ripping song.”

*To his Mother.*

*“ July 12, 1915.*

“ I now go off to the Front. . . . There are six Officers going from this battalion—Captain Prescott Weston; Capt. Campbell; 2nd Lt. Johnstone; Capt. Tatham; 2nd Lt. Wilson; and self. . . . . Geoffrey Barclay<sup>1</sup> is, I hear, badly wounded. He was in our 1st Battalion, which I expect to go to, and which has been so very badly cut up.”

Not long after he left, Mrs. Brennen wrote of him from his billet at Sheerness :

*“ August, 1915.*

“ With you we hope and pray he may be spared. . . . He did look fit and well and ready when he left us and said, ‘ You may rely on me to do my best,’ and we know he will. I bade him ‘ au revoir,’ and when his smiling face had vanished, woman-like, I had a good cry. . . . He will come through, please God. He is steady and capable, you will hear good things of him.”

Despite all the horrors of modern warfare, he was wonderfully happy at the Front; indeed it makes for happiness, or at least for contentment, as thousands have discovered in these years, when a man finds use for every quality, mental, moral and physical with which nature has endowed him. Like many another good Officer, Andrew excelled in looking after his men; it came naturally to his intensely sympathetic nature to care for their every need, and he was indefatigable in his visits to lonely sentries. The day before he was killed, as one of his corporals afterwards related, “ He himself carried, in order to save his men,

<sup>1</sup> Major G. W. Barclay, killed in action July 28, 1916.

four petrol tins of water slung round his waist ” ; and added, “ He was always like that, trying to save the men and doing the hard jobs himself.”

His medical knowledge came in very useful, and his men said of him, “ He’s better than either Padre or Doctor.” Another who was with him at Messines has recorded that when he returned to the Company the men said, “ Now we shall get some medicine. The Captain always has his medicine chest.”

Another Officer who was bleeding to death was saved by Andrew’s knowledge of First Aid.

His mother notes that “ he *once* wore a steel waistcoat, but would not again as he disliked being differently and more safely clad than his men. Possibly if he had done so when the fatal shot was fired it would have saved his life. We have since read in his Diaries of the many very narrow escapes he had during his time in France, viz. ‘ Nearly done in ’ ; ‘ Badly sniped at ’ ; ‘ Shell exploded exactly on the spot where I stood five minutes before ’ ; etc., but he did not enlarge on them to us at home.”

It was characteristic of him that he found or made time to write an extraordinarily large number of letters to his family and friends at home. To his mother he wrote very nearly every day.

He was posted to the 3rd Rifle Brigade. He writes from France :

*To his Mother.*

“ July 17, 1915.

“ I have less luggage than any one, but feel splendidly equipped. The equipment which goes on my back I am awfully pleased with as everything goes on so well. . . . Very interesting to see Indian Cavalry.”

*To his Mother.*

“3rd R.B. 6th Division, B.E.F. [at Rouen].

“July 18, 1915.

“ . . . Huts are much preferable to tents—they are long-shaped, wooden-framed things covered with canvas. Here we are not blessed with beds, but if I get blankets under me as I can here I really don't mind. . . . I am just back from Church Parade, which was a nice service taken by a Presbyterian Minister in the open. He preached on Ps. xxiii. very well, with his broad Scotch accent, and so many Scotch Officers and men here I felt like being in a Scotch service in Scotland. . . . How I wish you could see this abode, as it would interest you so much and to be able to picture the lie of the land, but unfortunately I cannot even get a snapshot to send you showing a bit of the Camp, as cameras are not allowed.”

*To his Mother.*

“July 20, 1915. [Rouen].

“I am just wiring you to say I got orders, as also Capt. T. and 2nd Lieut. W., to report at the station here this afternoon at 5 and to leave by the 6.5 for the Front (i.e. the rail-head). A very instructive morning again to-day. It is most exciting now really moving on.”

“3rd Rifle Brigade, B.E.F.

“Wednesday, July 21.

“I hope you got my wire yesterday to say I had orders to leave last night for the Front. The train left at 6.15 p.m. and I am now writing at 12.15 p.m. It is indeed strange to be at last going to the Front and passing the places whose names one has associated with it. The journey is not swift, and it is further strange not knowing where we are bound for, and shall be turned out. T. is O.C. and we three are in one carriage, also another nice

Officer. We have our valises with us, and all of us slept a certain amount. It was very tantalizing to find ourselves at Etaples at 8.15 this morning, and then pass outside Boulogne by Wimereux, and not see either Leonard or David. We had a sandwich and boiled egg for breakfast and badly wanted a cup of coffee, but no such luck! We have though just got at a stop some hot water, and made tea and cocoa. (This from mother's delicious peptonized cocoa.)"

3rd Rifle Brigade, B.E.F. [at Poperinghe].

*Thursday Evening, 22nd.*

"MY DEAREST ROS,

When Tatham, Wilson and I got to the rail-head we were met in style by an Orderly riding, and a gun-carriage on which we put our valises, and ourselves on top. I sat behind with legs hanging over, and you can imagine on an appalling cobble road, full of holes, the two miles we sat them was bumpy. We got off at some large sheds and Army stores and worked on, still East, then to the right after about a mile, and for another mile across country into the wood where we are now comfortably placed. The huts are very good, about 12 ft. square, with wooden floors. I am in a hut with my Captain, by name Swan, and 2nd Lieut. Knight, both very nice, and I am lucky. Captain S. has been out ten and a half months, and never been hit or sick. He is, I should think, about 28 or 30. Oh, how I wish you and all could look in and see my abode. If you looked in at our hut, you would ask what tramps' abode it was, with sundry goods hanging round; a good deal of straw on which odd blankets, sleeping bags, valises, kits, etc., are, and one corner with a mixed supply of provisions. Meals we have at a table behind the huts, except tea this evening, which we had on the floor of the hut as it was raining hard. Eggs and bacon for breakfast are

cooked within a few yards on a stick fire. There is a far too ample supply of things of every sort ; tinned tongues and meat, chutney, cakes, sugar, jams; chocolate, biscuits, etc.

“ The country right up to here is very like England except for the fields of very tall vines. I am absolutely amazed at how well cultivated it is ; everywhere beautiful crops of every kind and in splendid order ; a more than ordinary (English) number of farm houses, most of which appear occupied by our men for some purpose. We have a gramophone here, and the men keep in very good spirits. After I got here yesterday evening there were two or three hostile aeroplanes about, though not directly over us. It would have interested you, as it did me, to see the shrapnel being fired at them. Each burst remains as a little white cloud for a long time so that you can count twenty or thirty altogether. The shooting seemed very bad, but no doubt the ranges were big. I saw about forty shots at one. After dark it is interesting to see at a distance the endless sequence of flares sent up by either ourselves or the enemy ; also hear artillery from time to time. This morning our Company had practice of attacking trenches. Some companies have been doing bomb throwing, which is disturbing to the peace of the camp. I looked at the different kinds of ways of working them. The fuses are usually started by loosing a spring, or somehow mechanical, but you can light them. Some are hand-made out here of jam tins. It is quite a dangerous proceeding, but no doubt all necessary practice to get the men accustomed and confident.”

“ There are five Officers away from the Battalion sick. There is a strange thing called ‘ trench fever,’ which a good many seem to get, and certainly one of ours has it ; high temperature with shivering, etc. I do trust I do not knock up. It would be the limit, as I am now awfully fit, and very happy indeed. The Battalion go into the trenches again on Tuesday for sixteen days (namely till the following

Thursday fortnight). Then we have eight days off, then another eight days in and eight off. We have seven miles to get to this trench, either through a much heard of place, or, if it is being shelled, just skirting it to the north. I have this afternoon been served out a helmet to go right over the head, and also a mask to go over the mouth and nose. A bottle of stuff to renew the chemical is provided. Under the effect of chemical changes caused by gas the former mask keeps its value about two hours, the latter  $\frac{1}{4}$ -hour. It was a bit of luck joining my Company just as they were out of the trenches, and being able to look round instead of going straight there from the train."

*" Friday, July 23, 1915.*

" Just had breakfast and finish this sitting on my bed, which is, I think you would agree, in better order than the rest of the hut, which is strewn all over deep with papers, bags, clothes, food, kit, mattresses, parcels, letters, and decorated with fly-papers, for which beasts I feel heartily sorry. There is also an ample supply of mud all the time brought in owing to the heavy rain of yesterday and last night. Nothing gets tidied up, but this is all to the good, as otherwise things would get mixed up more, and I told my servant to leave my things alone. My sleeping-bag is just right, and will prove most useful, and probably, as it rolls up, I shall take it to the trenches, though little can be taken, as we only have a handcart for the Company, on which mostly supplies are put. The valise has proved very comfortable to lie on, as it is nice to have an end to shove feet into. My Captain goes on leave in two days, so that Knight and I will be the only Officers in the Company. I shall therefore start trench work in charge of the Company, which is a big move! To-morrow, I understand, we are going to be gassed in order to show the men that there is nothing to fear with the helmets on.



“ We have a family ‘ sea ’ waistcoat, and I want to get a ‘ land ’ one too. Several here have them, commonly called ‘ funk ’ waistcoats, being a sort of armoured thing which would, no doubt, turn a slanting bullet and protect from shrapnel or splinters.

“ Small girls and women come round the huts selling chocolate and cigarettes. The huts are arranged in a square shape, the distance across being about 100 yards. I am reminded here, with the wood and camp, of camp-life in Canada. A lot of chaffinches in the wood, which are very jolly, also a few other birds. S. has got a good Mauser 303 rifle, with telescopic sight, with which he has done some very effective sniping. Water is scarce, and is brought up in Army water-carts. I manage though to have a tub in my bucket each morning outside the huts.”

“ *Saturday, July 24.*

“ This morning we practised going through chlorine gas in trenches with helmets on, which worked all right except in the case of the Captain who was working it, who had a defective helmet and so was quite badly hit by it.”

“ *Sunday, July 25.*

“ Now going to have some lunch of tinned duck and green peas, by which you will know how we live. Personally I should much prefer Army rations as reasonable and in keeping with a campaign life, and all this overdoing of fancy supplies is a great mistake. This morning, soon after 9.30 I took A Coy. to do an attack on some trenches by the Captain’s instructions, after which, at 11, I began to pay out the Coy. and continued it at 2 o’clock. I have 4,000 francs for the purpose. At 11.40 I went to a nice Communion service in a hut, during which a heavy thunder-storm, and also an accompaniment of distant gun-fire ; aeroplanes, both our own and German, come out from tea-

time to dark. . . . I am now going to give my men some First-Aid hints. . . . The First-Aid has been quite successful, and I talked to them about Spiritual matters too. . . .

“ Well, I have written a lot, but I am sure you do not realize the extraordinary interest and responsibility that I have in practically at once finding myself in command of A Coy., owing to S. going for leave for five days. There are many duties that come along, besides leading and instructing them in practice much as we had this morning. Endless matters of discharge, leave, etc., also this afternoon trying to gain information of men who have been reported missing, by instruction of the War Office in response to requests by their relatives. But at the moment, and far above this, is the fact of starting trench life in command of the Company. Of course there is a certain routine laid down, and I more or less know the procedure, but I have never done it, and it is very big, especially as we are so frightfully short of Officers, in that I have only one young Subaltern, Knight. I have just been having supper, and discussed with him how we shall divide the Company. I decide to have Nos. 3 and 4 Platoons in the firing line the first night, and Nos. 1 and 2 in the 3rd and 4th line of support trenches. If my Company is in the trenches we expect to be in, the German trenches are a long way, about 600 yards, off. I shall then probably send out the listening patrol to lie out all night during dark somewhere between us and the enemy. Then probably I shall have to send Orderlies for water, ammunition, etc. All men work all night at repairing trenches, putting up wire, etc. The Coy. will come in after dark on Tuesday, but as Coy. Commander I shall probably try and get in Tuesday morning in order to take over from the Regiment we are relieving.

“ Well, you will say this is a strange Sunday ; the morning spent by practice followed by a Communion Service ; this evening a Service in the open, a lovely bright, warm

evening, during which all the time the guns were banging eastwards, shooting at aeroplanes, and it was a novelty to sing hymns and listen to a sermon, and at the same time watch shrapnel fire at the aeroplanes—also a football match 100 yards off.”

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,  
“ 26. 7. 15.

“ MY DEAREST R.,

“ I feel greatly excited going up to the trenches to-morrow. A Coy., if in the same place as before, are in quite a fairly decent bit of line which does not receive such a dose of shelling as other parts. I don't a bit want to be killed or wounded, anyhow till I have had a considerable amount of this novel experience of fighting!

“ The censoring of letters is a nuisance; they are of an extraordinarily uniform type, though some are amusing, especially one man's 'furious' love letters—he was up on a charge before me to-day at Coy. orders! As he was suffering so badly I let him off! Yesterday evening I gave the men a First-Aid lecture, and took the opportunity of a sort of young sermon for their souls too!

“ I feel a real brute to be going to the Front, and you and all not getting a chance even to be there for a few minutes, as, though I try to mention facts in my letters which I hope will somewhat make the life of things clear, nothing but to be seeing it can be really satisfactory.

“ The horrors are very great, and I have no wish to kill mankind, but to see the Front is of real interest.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Tuesday, 27. 7. 1915.

“ Your letter of the 21st came last night. How applicable, your staying by the stuff and my going up to battle. I am glad to think that something of a soldier's spirit is

rising in me. I only beg that should I by chance get shot, which though I do not somehow the least expect, neither you nor any one else will mind, but just carry on as though I was with you, as indeed I think I should be, otherwise we shall all be unhappy! Death is looked on as such a small thing out here, but I know it is harder for one's own to look on it thus and to 'carry on' with one shifted from sight. This is, I think, very much ahead of time, as I expect to go to a pretty quiet trench and do not know that anything special is likely to occur."

" 3rd Rifle Brigade, B.E.F.,

" 28. 7. 15.

" MY DEAR FATHER,—

" I must get you a line to-night by the post, as the last twenty-four hours have been in reality a novel experience.

" My servant has just asked me (3.30 p.m.) what time I will have lunch. I expected instead the question to refer to tea, but in trench life meal-times are no more, and you have a meal when hungry and call it what you will.

" I am not yet hardened to trench warfare, and find it easier to write now in the Officers' Mess—a place about seven feet wide, ten feet long, and five feet high, with sand-bag sides and corrugated roof with one layer of sandbags on it—than when we or others are being shelled. They have given my Coy. two or three bouts to-day—now two shells almost simultaneously on about the 2nd line, by which a little stuff was thrown in here; also other shells on each side. The shooting is extraordinarily good, and they know our trenches to a nicety except the back one, which I do not think they have yet found. This morning I watched them start on the Regiment on my right—first shell about fifty yards short, then plum into trench throwing up huge mass of earth (though the shells are small ones

comparatively and called ' Little Willies '), then they would drop shell after shell into that line of trench, varying it with one on us, or on some support trench.

" I was walking round the trenches this morning, seeing the Platoons when they were making it pretty hot for my Coy. You hear the shell coming, and have just time to duck your head, and possibly put it in a dug-out. It is really amazing how few casualties occur when you have these things heaving up the place. I hardly dare to think what heavy shells or a heavy bombardment can be like.

" Yesterday and last night, with such a new experience, though not different from what others had stated, will truly be a day to be remembered, increased greatly by being in command of the Company.

" The Coy. Commanders and C.O. left the huts where the Battalion had been resting for eight days for this place, all riding, I on Captain Swan's horse, so that I have been exposed to other danger than warfare! It was very awkward riding with equipment on, and when the horse's ration bag, which was tied on to the saddle, got twisted round a hind leg, I thought we should part company. We rode for about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles, through a town [Ypres] about 4 miles east of our railhead, and left the horses with the grooms (who had gone on) about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles beyond this town where the road crosses the railway.

" That road and that town were a wonderful sight, the latter practically knocked to bits, and the former a wonderful show of heavy transport and troops. Gunfire at aeroplanes, and rifle and shell fire (heavy) more or less continuous along the whole front.

" I never had a hotter walk, and ending up by about 20 minutes' quick walking up a communication trench with a haversack on each side, by which I became too wide to walk down it without holding one forward! I was

properly hot when I got to our Brigade Headquarters in a low dug-out and sandbag place. We had a lengthy demonstration of trenches on maps, after which I walked round some of them to my own.

“The men of the Battalion were due to arrive behind about 9.45 p.m. and I fixed up guides to go back to them from the Buffs (whom we were relieving), and also my Coy.-Sergeant-Major who had come up with me. Fortunately the Battalion have been here before so know the lie of things, though, after making arrangements in the huts, it confused matters to be told that my Coy. had to hold a new and forward trench, about which I went to Headquarters and was glad to know it was wrong. The men got in and fixed up all right about 11.30 or 12.

“You can have no idea of the difficulty of keeping direction and getting a proper idea of the lie of the land and of trenches in the maze that masses of trenches, dug-outs, communication trenches, appear when you first get into them.

“I felt like a return to the City, with names of communication trenches—Threadneedle, Moorgate, Aldersgate, Cornhill, Liverpool Street, etc. What added to the interest of taking over was being told by Headquarters that it was very possible the Germans might make an attack in the early morning. This, however, did not come off.

“After dark the rifle and machine-gun fire (with, of course, bursts of shell fire) is continuous, and it is absolutely extraordinary that men walking on top of and round trenches do not get more hit by unaimed bullets. Work has to be done all night all round on top. The men seem not the least to mind bullets whizzing all round them, and I hope I may get to the same, but I certainly did not enjoy the experience this my first night. The shell fire is, at present, preferable to me.

“The rifle fire at night is just like being on a rifle range

when continuous very heavy fire by a great number is going on.

“ I have got a very nice and safe dug-out to which I turned in about 4 a.m. with my sleeping-bag, which has answered perfectly with the straps round it, and in which I could put some things. The handcart on which this and the Company things came up broke down, but the men got everything here all right, including all provisions. Mother’s chicken, bacon, bread, and chocolate, also chocolate and hard biscuits, gave me a much needed and *delicious* meal. During the night from time to time the ‘ wind ’ was raised when the rifle fire on all sides was absolutely terrific, and on which occasions of course I had all the men stand to arms, as there was no knowing if an attack was coming. I had nothing to disturb me till about 11 a.m. and I slept well in the Jaeger coat and sleeping-bag with Burberry on top, except for some pretty heavy shell fire : thereupon I got up, and I am sorry to say two of my men (machine-gunners) got hit by shrapnel just near my dug-out. I took one into the Officers’ Mess (almost opposite the dug-out) and sent for the stretcher-bearers, and we bandaged him up. He had three wounds in the back. He looked bad, but I do not know how deep they were. I believe he walked back all right to the Dressing Station. The other man got it in the shoulder and was not so bad. My trenches are much the best as such and not so forward as some others, much safer, but there is a very great deal to do to them, especially to the support trenches. I hope for sandbags to-night to get started on the work.

“ We have just been giving them some proper heavy shells on our left !

“ How I wish you could see this in all its awfulness for a short time.”

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ 29. 7. 15.

[In the trenches East of Ypres.]

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ I was ashamed to send you such a bare postcard this even, when I had intended to write a letter, but fear I left it till too late, when necessary things to see to made it impossible to write in order to get it off at 9 p.m., i.e. after dark, when the ration party go out, and take letters with them.

“ At 8 p.m. each night I have my four Platoon Sergeants and Knight here to receive ‘ detail,’ i.e. orders for the night’s work, which they take down in note-books.

“ The Germans are a long way off here, their forward trench being nearly 600 yards off, and in the ordinary way we do no shooting or sniping, but my C.O., whom I went to see this morning about certain matters, told me to do some firing to-night after dark, i.e. when they are above ground digging, and with carrying parties out. I told the C.O. of the Leinsters (who are on my right) the times when I would fire, which were going to be at 9.15 and 9.30 and again after their and our patrols had come in before dawn. At 9.15 I ordered one platoon to fire five rounds ‘ rapid ’ with rifles sighted to 1,200 yards and of course the point to fire on, and also a machine-gun to fire with them. The machine-gun jammed straight away, so we got off about 200 rounds less than I expected in the few seconds which this takes. The Leinsters, who seem most hopelessly casual, sent back word after this that they had a patrol out, so I stopped further firing. Still I hope we stirred the Germans up a bit ; anyhow we produced a lot of flare balls from them, which were pretty ! The result of any special firing or action on our part almost inevitably produces retaliation by shelling on the part from which it came. I



expected it at once, but perhaps we did not make it heavy enough, or they may wait a bit.

“ The line is of course very far from straight, with advance trenches, and others of odd shapes. ‘ A ’ Coy.’s line (and, of course, the whole more or less) is across the open, and not following the hedges or ditches. I suppose we are down about three feet, and about three feet more above ground, the whole thing built up with thousands of sandbags. There is no hiding the lines from the Germans, as they are a vast dug-out place, and I appreciate a rabbit’s life better than I did.

“ The German line in front is just the same, and I was looking at it this afternoon with Len’s ripping good glasses with a view to to-night’s shooting. They soon see, and try to snipe, but are too far off to do any good.

“ The N.C.O. of the Patrol I sent out this evening till 2 a.m. is a splendid fellow of a most fearless type. At Armentières he went out one night into a German trench and brought back what he could find in an Officer’s dug-out.

“ We have a pump and well just in front of my back line, from which we get our water supply. This afternoon I moved my back platoon into other trenches.

“ Last night we had off the roof of the Officers’ Mess, and lowered it four sandbags in height in order to be able to put more stuff on top. Unfortunately to-day one of our beams, on which is corrugated iron, broke with the weight and the roof nearly gave way.

“ We have some prime looters, and I have sent some out to-night to find another beam in one of the knocked down farms. Each platoon has also men out to get bricks, etc., as protection to the tops of dug-outs, etc. We have of course also every night to send out parties to bring up barbed wire, sandbags, etc. Also ration parties from each platoon.

“ Strangely enough, since writing this, I have had tele-

phone message from Headquarters to send 20 men for sand-bags and foot-gratings (these for the bottom of the trenches for dryness' sake). There is hardly any wet in the trenches, only a few sticky places, but wooden footboards are necessary.

" I am now well settled down, and getting the hang of things, and enjoying it immensely in all its strangeness, chiefly I think because I am so awfully fit. To go to bed at 4 a.m. and get up at 11 suits me well.

" We are having gorgeous weather, and lovely moonlight nights.

" The firing on our left all last night was absolutely terrific, and they must have let off tens of thousands of rounds. I suppose each side was trying to catch working parties, but, as likely as not, not the slightest good was done.

" The N.C.O. of my patrol has just come in, 2.15 a.m., and reported to me. They went out about 500 yards to within 100 yards of the advance German trench. He brought back two of our rifles he found in a ditch, both of course rusted up; magazines full and with an empty round in the breech. He found the bodies of two Dublin Fusiliers, which he buried, and of one Canadian. The only identification was the man's pay-book on one of the Dublins. This is of course about the place of the German first gas attack when the Canadians did so well. There is a bunch of broken-down limbers between us and the Germans.

" The shell fire is interesting. What are called ' Whizz-bangs ' are small shrapnel shells, which do not give time to duck, giving two almost simultaneous noises which their name describes. The only other two so far which I have experienced are shrapnel and ' Little Willies,' both of which you hear coming, anyhow if fired from a decent distance (owing no doubt to the high trajectory). You cannot see the shells, but when firing over us at back trenches or

farm-houses, etc., you can know the course it goes by the sound. You soon get to know whether a shell is going well over, or going to fall pretty near, but only when it is quite near, giving just time to duck down if necessary! The strange thing about bullets going over is that you seem to hear them before they get up to you, which is of course not the case, and is due, I suppose, to the noise following on slower behind.

“Our Battalion are having a ‘quiet’ time compared to what is often experienced, and so far we have had one other man hit beyond the two I mentioned in my last letter. The Leinsters, who join me on my right, yesterday had eight men hit with one shrapnel shell.

“I think very possibly we shall be only twelve days here, and then six out. I feel so well established and happy that I shall feel quite sorry to shift, but I haven’t experienced a heavy bombardment yet, when perhaps I should think differently.”

*To a Sister.*

“3rd R.B., B.E.F.

“30. 7. 15.

“MY DEAREST ROS,—

“I have since Tuesday more nearly approximated a rabbit in the Little Park hole at Hunsdon Bury than ever before!

“We begin work about two in the afternoon; as far as we can making good the sides of trenches, etc., and at dark, when the Bosches cannot see us, we get above ground and make good the parapets, put out wire, etc. I cannot tell you why we do not have casualties from the bullets going past, nor what the men are made of at not flinching at the ‘crack’ which follows them!

“Last night a long way to our right we apparently lost a bit of ground, owing, I should judge, to the Germans

exploding a mine. About 3.30 a.m. I saw a big cloud of black smoke go up, which looked like a mine. In consequence, as I suppose, a counter attack, with most terrific bombardment, went on for some hours. Huge eruptions of earth thrown up by high explosive shells and tongues of fire as shrapnel burst.

“ I went a trudge round to the trenches on my left, and somewhat in advance of my line, round a farm, battered, of course, to ruins, which the trenches encircle, all the way in communication trenches, in order to see exactly how our line lay, with a view to being safe in any shooting I might do to my half left. Up there they are very near the German lines which look like (because you do not see their depth) five foot high banks of newly-turned earth stretching endlessly and in various rows with square holes at intervals for machine gun emplacements. Of course their big guns are a long way behind, one to three miles, and they had one dropping shells on the part where I was walking about. You hope you are walking away, and not towards, where the next will drop! I have a tremendous lot of work on hand, and to walk round and see what is going on is a big job, but most interesting—endless building up and strengthening with tens of thousands of sandbags.”

*Later.*

“ MY DEAR ROS,—

“ I would sacrifice I know not what to have had you all, and every single person in England, with me for the past 5 or 6 hours (in particular). It is absolutely beyond me to describe the marvellous sight that it has been. At dusk heavy rifle fire on all sides always begins, and we got to-night also some very nasty machine-gun fire along the top of our line, intended to catch any one unduly walking about. I retaliated with some from one of our machine-guns, and also some rapid rifle fire, and the letting off of a

few rifles which I had sighted on to different points, and fixed while it was light. . . . After this, in the most gorgeous moonlight night the 'sight' began on each side of us about one to two miles away. The Germans were evidently attacking at both places, and the splendour, as I saw it walking about (seeing the different things on hand, one of which was repairing the roof of the Mess in which I assisted for about an hour) on the top of our trenches, was something beyond what any one who has not seen war can imagine. There were many phases, but all along the gun fire has been vibrating into us, and the fact that we were an unattacked part gave me a wonderful though awful sight, as many men have doubtless been killed. The sound has been like a thunderstorm, and you get the 'rolling' sounds just the same. Shells going over and across sound like an express train, i.e. of rushing nature, or only just heard, according to the distance they are off. I timed how long you could hear this afternoon, as they were firing at something some way back over us, and often the time was about twelve seconds before you had the explosion, which is the report of the gun just previous. I expect what happened on our right was that we did a successful counter attack (as per the beginning of my letter) and the Germans were counter attacking us.

"They were firing up both red and white ball flares, always several up together. Their guns, some way behind, were sending heavy shells past us intended for our guns behind us, to which our guns were replying also with big stuff, probably 12 inch. You would not believe the noise a big gun makes when firing straight over you, with a wind in the same direction. Our guns firing from a long way back over our heads sometimes just as though a shell had exploded close by.

"At about 2.15 I had the Coy. stand to arms as the fighting was so terrific it seemed possible for anything to

develop. I was a bit nervous about my patrol, as they had not come in at 2 o'clock as ordered, but they came in soon after, and I then ordered five rounds rapid at the German trenches. I do not believe in getting the wind up unnecessarily, but a small burst like that would not have that effect, and it is good for the men to have a loose off. We had though just before had some very nasty shells dropped on a farmhouse about 100 yards to the right of my back line, which made me nervous, as I had got a good many men foraging there for material—bricks, doors, beams, etc.—for making dug-outs. K. came to tell me that an N.C.O. and one man had really extraordinary shaves, just being clear of three or four shells as they moved about, and one falling a dumper (not exploding) at their feet. They appear to have stuck to their job, and to have duly unearthed and brought back a door!

“I do not suppose you can the least picture our trenches as they are; the front line is a kind of network of passages built up with sandbags, on an average about six feet high, and into the sides of which are various dug-outs. Walking about on top it looks like deep and wonderful preparations for the foundations of a house. Very possibly and reasonably you may picture me in a kind of ditch, which of course might be the case if it were not such stationary warfare as it is here. Anyhow, walking about on this and all round generally—including inspection of barbed wire defences in front—with these fights on each side, with a lovely moon by which the few trees in the hedges stood up well, also the high upheavals of smoke and earth from the high explosives, and all the time in the midst of an extraordinary roar of guns, Maxims and rifles, and the ‘Very’ lights thrown up with their trails of light behind them, which looked like fireworks, — the experience is very great.”

*To his Mother.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ *July 31, 1915.*

“ We had a quieter night (i.e. the night of July 31–Aug. 1) last night, though heavy firing again on our right. Captain S. got back about 11 p.m. from leave. He did not look well, and said he had come from two days in bed.

“ I shall now therefore be more with my Platoon, and shall enjoy to have now a bit of ‘back to the land’ with work on building up parapets, deepening trenches, etc. Till now I have only been able to spare time for a little, as I have had so much supervision to do. The distances to be walked down the trenches make a hole in time.

“ I have the men begin work at 2 p.m. each day in two hour shifts, and this morning, being Sunday, got my Platoon to sit in a bit of the trench (rather a squash, but dug-outs on each side made some room) and read them some of the last Chapter of Revelation and had prayer. I made it voluntary, but they came well, and it was nice, as a Sunday service. We had no shelling on that way near at the time, but rifle bullets whizzing over us.

“ One of my men is just drawing out for me on a board about the size of this paper ‘EASNEYE HOUSE,’ which is to be stuck in to my dug-out. You see we make ourselves quite at home, though in the matter of peacefulness it is severely different! How I can picture you [his mother] now (6 p.m.) and what I would give for a walk round, above ground, in the wood with you!

“ In the fighting which I described to R. on our right, I fear we lost in casualties very heavily. The 8th R. B. 600 men and 19 Officers and the 7th R.B. 270 men and 12 Officers. This may, however, be inaccurate. Anyhow I fear we have lost a great deal of ground, and failed to take it again.”

*To a Sister.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.

“ 10 p.m. 2. 8. 15.

“ MY DEAREST ROS,—

“ We are leaving these trenches in 24 hours' time to go back, probably, to billets for a night or so, after which we shall take part in an attack. You know, doubtless, what an attack means—hundreds of guns tearing up every inch of the enemy's lines for about half-an-hour, after which they stop, and at an exact certain time we advance, and have to lie, after taking the trench, for perhaps several hours without cover, as everything is torn to bits, while the guns bombard us preparatory to their counter attack ; and so it may continue.

“ So far I have only experienced small shells falling round, and nothing of the awfulness of the big ones, which tear the vast holes which are to be seen round here !

“ I am therefore at the moment living in a very big day, and a real privilege to look forward to being one who took part in the battle of . . . , but in doing so I have got to go through what can only be described as hell, I fear. Fancy me in command of the Coy., and only one young Subaltern with me, but, as likely as not, before long a junior Corporal may be in command of the Battalion, or of himself, if there is no one else ! I must not say what troops are to take part in this, but it is big.

“ There is quite an idea of Scotland here from time to time—the effort to snipe Germans is not unlike rifling rabbits in the evening at Tarvie, and in many other ways I am often reminded.

“ I get so angry at the appalling waste here, chiefly of ammunition. There must be millions of rounds unnecessarily wasted. It is lying about everywhere where English soldiers have been. In the trenches you dig up and find no end of it. A Sergeant told me just now that in altering



one parapet further south, they found a basket with 4,000 rounds in it. K. found two box-fulls (2,000 rounds) left in a field, and picked up 300 loose rounds on a short walk across country. If clips of cartridges, containing five each, get dusty or wet, a great many men would throw them away, and just get another from the supply. This supply is really under the control of Sergeants, but it is impossible to keep proper supervision. At the moment I have a row on, as I ordered a box of cartridges to be put into the bag of each fire trench, and for the wooden lids to be opened, but for the hermetically sealed tin inside to be, of course, left intact. I find one tin has been opened, and a bandolier full (50) taken out.

"I am glad to say that I think my men have been taught a lesson, and are now very different to the ordinary run of them. When I took over these trenches the whole place was littered with rusty cartridges and bandoliers full, which have now, as far as possible, been collected and cleaned up."

"3rd R.B.,

"August 2, '15, 4 a.m.

"Last night I had the novel experience of taking a patrol out to see if I could gather what the Germans were doing who are about 600 yards away, armed with a revolver. So strange to walk through cornfields and up hedges, prepared at any moment to shoot, and always the big possibility of the Bosche doing the same, and by lying up getting first. The men with me had rifles and bombs. We did not come in with any Bosches.

"I had a very nice little service with my Platoon this afternoon, squished up in the bottom of a trench. The news is, I think, bad, and the nation must get on its knees or we may go under. How pessimistic you will think me! The faith though of a few can, I believe, have tremendous results and we must stick to it together,"

The references in the next few letters are to the Battle of Hooge, where we recovered some 500 yards of trenches which the Germans, using *Flammenwerfer* for the first time, had taken.

“ August 3, 1915, 4 p.m.

“ It is a day to live for ! I do indeed hope we move them, though I do not suppose the scheme is to do more than get back the lost ground on a front of about 500 yards. Posts will be irregular after this comes off, so don't expect me to write or ring you up ! A certain place has got to be re-taken. How grand to be turned on to it ! I am troubled to think you may be nervous, but just remember that ‘ Through the love of God my Saviour all, all is well, ’ and to have helped in an important bit of work is great whether through with it oneself or not.”

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.

“ August 3, '15, 6 p.m..

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ As I am writing to R., we got out of trenches to-night preparatory to a big move. We are in huts to-night, and no doubt quite shortly are in for a big thing, so look out in the paper for a move towards a certain place which wants re-taking. I must not write more now, as there is a lot to arrange in the way of moving.

“ You gave me a Daily Light portion ; I will give you Ps. 23. Great peace of soul in David the warrior—‘ He leadeth me beside the still waters. ’ I shall be in for a noise, but thank God for the peace that none the less reigns. Do read the Psalm with this thought in mind.”

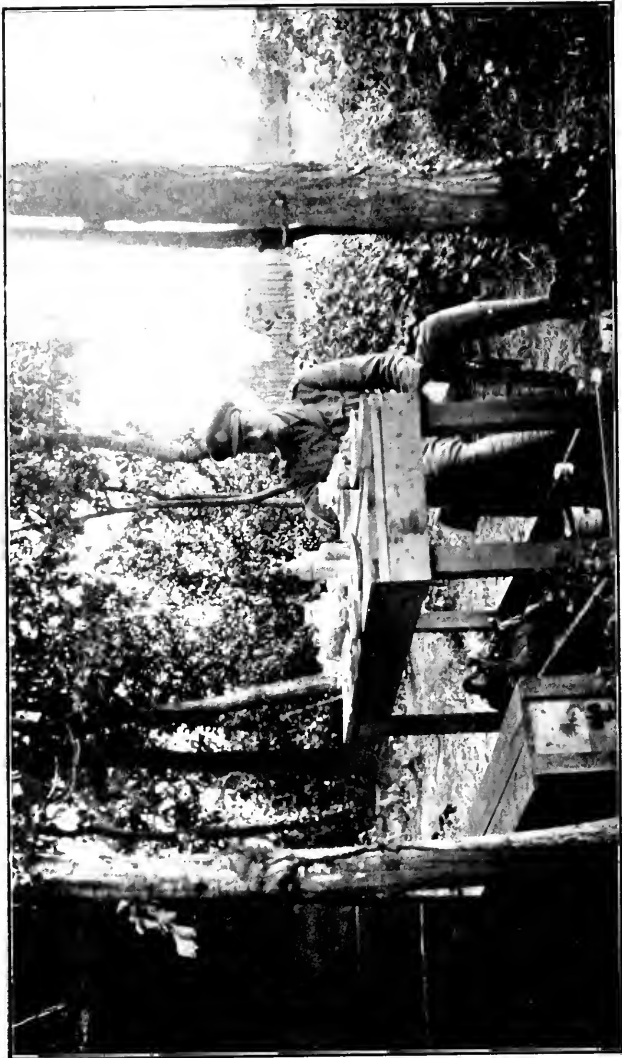
“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ 2.30 p.m., Wednesday, August 4, 1915.

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ I am writing in a hut behind the firing line, so you can





[To face page 81

IN BELGIUM.

feel happy, unless by chance they should drop a shell on us!

"I always have to think in my letters before I talk about 'last night' or 'yesterday,' as for the most part we sleep in the morning, and work at night.

"I was going to say we got here last night, but it was about 4.30 a.m., the relief of our trenches taking a long time. Such a different type of Officer in the relieving regiment to what the R.B. has! We have to send back guides to bring them up after dark, after which there is a good deal to fix up. They struggled up through about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of communication trench, laden with packs, rations, etc. An officer came ahead in the morning to look round and remarked at Headquarters, 'I suppose you will stay in the trenches till we get in.' Imagine such a question! I hope to goodness they don't lose the trenches.

"We marched back to these huts to the west of a certain well-known place [Ypres] and passed within a few yards sometimes of our guns, which were firing—the most terrific explosions, and bright light from explosions. It is extraordinary that the teams of horses and mules in the limbers, which have taken rations to the firing line, ever get to stand it, but those I saw hardly minded.

"It is interesting Dor mentioning the loss of 500 yards of our front near Hooge—I hope she will again look at the papers early next week!

"The goose en route is very great. I am wondering and hoping that Knight and I will eat it in what are, at the moment, German trenches! I have already started getting up my dinner party. Every one accepts!"

"3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

"4 p.m. August 6.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

". . . To-night a great part of this Battalion act as a carrying party of stuff up to where we shall soon be

going, which is about seven miles off, so we shall have a fourteen miles' toddle. A lot of men and some of the Officers are more or less laid up with what the doctor calls dysentery. He is trying to trace the cause.

“ Last night I went a bit of a walk with Tatham and Wilson.”

“ 12 Noon, *Saturday, August 7.*

“ Just a line more to say I had my walk last night, which was quite a hard bit of work. We had to carry up a lot of heavy stuff to the firing line—one thing (a trench mortar) was much too heavy, and I had to hunt round for a handcart. The guide sent to guide me said it was quite impossible to get this thing up the communication trench of about two miles, also it was deep in water. So I went to see the Brigadier, who told me to take the things up to another point, which I had never been to before, and the guide did not know. It was along a main road [the Ypres–Menin road], and a heavily shelled bit. After about a mile from where we picked up the stuff the road became practically impassable—one of the main roads of this country, and you could hardly get a handcart up it! The men, I am afraid, did not shine, two or three times saying they could not get on. The trouble with the road was huge shell holes, trees down, barbed wire broken down, and over it. I was very fortunate in that there was no shelling on it, and I got to about 200 yards of my destination, i.e. the firing line, without any such addition to our difficulties—no rifle fire either directed on the road, only stray bullets round.

“ It was impossible to get on further, as well as being exceedingly dangerous on this open road, should they have spotted us, when we should have been shelled to bits. This was, too, very possible, as German flare-lights were going up round us. Where I was, a communication trench ran along to the right, and I met an Officer with a patrol

at that point, but he did not know where the Regiment was I was looking for, so I went along the trench, and found the Headquarters of the Regiment I was going to, and also Knight, whom I had sent with supplies for another regiment. I did not know where he would have to get to, and was never more amazed in my life than to hear him call my name.

“ It proved to be the second line of the Regiment I was after, and I left my stuff with the Officer who was there, though he knew nothing about it. He was one of those casual people who won't move, and it took him an endless time to come, walking very slowly, and see the dug-outs which I had found, and into which I had put my stuff. I was very much pressed for time in that my men were in a very dangerous place, and also that I was short of time to get back the seven miles before light, so I did not over-bless the chap.

“ We went back the same way as we came, through the town, over which I nearly wept. Can you picture marching into a place at 9 p.m., all the outskirts knocked by shells, then gradually up to the ‘Square’ with the Cathedral remaining just sufficient to show it was a Cathedral, then by it the huge Cloth Hall in a similar state, and all round devastation and waste, and without inhabitant. It was a very dark night, but it could all be only too easily seen.

“ The only shelling I came in for was when about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the huts here, and was a regular bit of shelling which is given just at that place twice a day. I was shoving ahead to try and get there just before it came, but just got properly into it—about the second shell fell very near, and the men more or less spontaneously fell into the ditch we were going along. The shells were all falling just in front in rapid succession, tearing the houses, and what remained of them, to bits; so I halted until they had finished. The men were frightened, and I had trouble

with them, and this afternoon on parade I intend to speak to them about it ; viz. without orders there is on no account to be such a thing as getting into the ditch, and that proper formation must invariably be kept—they wanted to slope along the walls, etc. ! If they are frightened in this way at casual and small shells, I am myself frightened at what they will do in a bombardment, which any day now we may have to encounter, so must try to impress a clear understanding.”

*To his Mother.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ August 8, 1915.

“ . . . Captain Reeve, whom I knew at Sheerness, has taken over this Company, I return to Platoon Commander, which in many ways is preferable.

“ We had a very nice Service this morning in the open. It is great luck to have the Rev. Neville Talbot here as Chaplain, he is such a good fellow and liked by all men. He has just been to tea with us three in our hut and Tatham comes to supper to-night—so we are having much entertaining. The only things we want are a table and chairs, even boxes are not obtainable so we have to sit on the floor and have the food there too! . . .

“ Talbot went up a few days ago to where his brother was killed and at night got out to him through some long grass and took certain things. He deeply regretted since that he had not buried him, so went again last night and managed it all right. I am so awfully glad for his and his people’s sake. . . . I have been doing revolver practice and am glad to say I can shoot straight, but I should prefer my gun at home and wish I could use it with some big shot.

“ 10.30 p.m.

“ I think the attack will begin at 3.15 a.m. to-morrow. We are, you will be glad to hear, not in the front line, but



with instructions to be ready at any time. Officers and men have been served with 'iron' rations, bully beef, Oxo tubes, tea, sugar! We carry water-proof sheets, and I have Burberry and a few other things, in fact I have all that is necessary in everything for a month except food. I have your Brand stuff and three Oxo's; no razor, brush or soap or other such luxuries. I treat myself to taking off my coat and boots to-night.

"Oh! with what mixed feelings I turn in with several hundred of our guns prepared to send every German in certain trenches to Eternity."

To R.

"3rd R.B., B.E.F.

"August 8, 1915.

"A man this morning wanted to send home his New Testament, as it was a pity to have it getting spoilt here. He looked on it as a War relic like the Queen Alexandra boxes. I suggested he might like to read it.

"We are apparently, more or less, in reserve, for which I am very sorry. I should have liked the front line for the attack, and as it is very probable we shall have to follow on, and hold and consolidate, under, no doubt, though I don't say so except to you, heavy fire. But nothing is known, so don't be perturbed!

"Monday.

"We have taken four lines of trenches. We probably go up sometime. A splendid 17-inch shell just landed half a mile off."

"3rd R.B.

"8 p.m. Monday 9. 8. 15.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

"You will no doubt see in this evening's papers that we have successfully made good the lost ground, though,

as you know, the trouble is not so much taking trenches as keeping them, and a counter attack on the part of the Germans will, no doubt, come. Well, we were not up in the attacking line, which really was a great disappointment to all, after so fully expecting it was to be so. We were held in readiness, and have, as yet, not been wanted. It may be that we shall be wanted to hold the line against counter attack, which will be a far bigger thing, in all probability.

“ After dark to-night we go up there, but more, I think, as a carrying party. This will probably involve considerable excitement, as they are certain to be shelling heavily.

“ We have been giving these trenches very heavy shelling for several days, but there was no mistaking the commencement of our bombardment at 2.30 this morning, shaking these huts ; our guns belching forth light, and shells tearing along to the spots arranged.

“ No doubt the Germans picked up the time fuse of a shell from one of the big guns by us here, and so got the range, as they have been vigorously shelling them to-day with both shrapnel and heavy 17 inch stuff.

“ I was just this moment speaking to K. and asking him to come and see one or two of the holes these shells have made, which are about 12 feet deep, and 20 feet wide (so I'm told, but I can hardly believe the depth) when another came apparently plum on the place we were going to, so we consider the place unhealthy, and I continue my letter instead !

“ The explosion is a great sight, with a huge mass of dense black smoke.

“ We are here outside, to the south, of a certain town, in the midst of excellent cultivation ; potatoes, crops now being cut into sheaves, roots, etc. The inhabitants seem few, and how they manage to get through with them I don't know.

“ I went a stroll round last evening with Wilson, and saw two or three such dear old dames outside their isolated, and fortunately untouched, cottages.

“ It was a sad sight coming back from the carrying party the other night when they began shelling this town just before dawn, as we were coming in, to see eight or nine small children with old women and men coming out of the place away from it, the children crying at being turned out of bed. There are scarcely any inhabitants left.”

*(Telegram.)*

“ Sans origine,”

“ August 10, 1915, 7.35 a.m.

“ Going Strong. Love. Andrew.”

“ 1.15 p.m. August 10.

“ I sent you a wire last evening, as I thought you would like to know that I am all right, and am glad I did, as I have missed the post to-day.

“ As anticipated, we had orders to shift from our huts yesterday, and also to act again as a carrying party. We therefore left at 7.30 last night to go east to a much shelled town [Ypres], where the men left their packs, and next day rations, in the deserted (except for Army traffic) street, with a man to look after it, and went on east with a guide to a dumping ground to pick up sandbags and trench foot-boards, and take them to the firing line. It was a most difficult bit of country across which we had to go, chiefly down second-rate roads which were made less than second-rate by the traffic, and by huge shell holes. Our transport tried to get along the same, getting rations, water, etc., to dumping grounds of various regiments near the firing line ; one big waggon nearly came over as it passed by me, one wheel getting into a shell hole ! They use mules a lot, but mostly horses, usually four to a limber, sometimes

six. The strange thing is that things and troops seem to work out their purpose all right, as the continued question of both transports and men is as to where certain regiments are, and it is equally one which no one can answer.

“ We got the stuff and carried on, after which the guide lost his way, and we lost much time wandering about, sometimes getting into trenches, of which there are numerous ones about, but all unoccupied, and sometimes above ground. We fortunately came on a dugout in which was a telephone and an Orderly who could direct us, and we continued in the direction he indicated, sometimes in trenches, and sometimes above. Captain Reeve was in command, and, I thought, took big risk in getting above, as there were lots of shells and bullets about, but we were no doubt getting late. What is an awful nuisance is the number of telephone wires across fields, roads, trenches, anywhere, and at every height, the wires just run out by Sappers, into which each of the men, of course, get. We eventually got to the dumping ground, and left the stuff, a very straggled company, and as things were left the men were filed into a trench till all came up. This bit up here, and while waiting here, was the hottest time I have been in; continuous shelling all the time, and rifle fire, though not at us. It was really amazing that we did not lose a man, and indeed a mercy that they did not see us with their lights all the time up. If they had, we should sometimes have had a good chance of being wiped out with shrapnel and machine-gun fire.

“ We left this place above ground at best pace possible. I brought up the rear, and got some distance back, when we had our first casualties, two men being shot by the same bullet; one through the thigh, and the other higher up. On the track we had passed a stretcher on wheels about 100 yards, which was most fortunate, as our stretcher bearers, as well as a number of other men, had got lost.

A little further on was a motor ambulance, so we were in luck's way.

" These ambulances are splendid, getting down these tracks ready for work. Of course last night, with casualties from the attack, and still more from shell fire after taking the trenches during the day yesterday, they were in great numbers fetching the wounded, a thing which can only be done at night.

" R. came on one poor fellow in a trench who had been wounded about 24 hours with three wounds which had been bound up by some one who then had to leave him. We reported it, and hope he got down all right.

" A real complication of these little evening excursions is that a few men always knock up, either faint, or sore feet, or a twisted ankle. One man last night had this last, and we had to more or less carry him for two miles, till we crossed a road, where fortunately were three or four motor ambulances standing. I arranged for him to be taken back to 'the town.' We got back to this much-shelled town about 3.30 a.m. where we are billeted—the men in a big sort of tramway stable which provides a fair roof, and the Officers in houses opposite, we three of this Company together. The walls and roofs of the houses are all right, otherwise they are battered, and with everything stolen from them. Somewhat strange to walk into people's houses without leave and without payment! They have a few relics of peaceful life—a knocked to bits perambulator, aviary, greenhouse, etc.

" Out in the garden behind are long lines of hothouses, with grapes carefully trained, but the houses and glass all to bits. The hot water pipings torn up, and frames some down and some still up. The bunches of grapes unripened hanging down in the usual fashion.

" They gave us a lot of shells quite near this morn. I fear our casualties during yesterday, after the attack, were

heavy, but this is the usual course nowadays. An attack on one or two lines of trenches is made almost a certainty by shell-fire, and the Germans are too demoralized to do much harm, but the losses come when they begin shelling us in what we have taken.

“ This letter will now go back by the ration cart, I hope.”

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ *Tuesday* 10. 8. 15.

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ I meant to tell you that I had a splendid and most safe attack yesterday morning in the shape of a *rat hunt* for an hour, down some hedges by our huts. A Corporal has a splendid little fox terrier taken from some Bosche trenches, who works a hedge splendidly ; we got two, digging one out, and the other after a top-hole half-hour's run up and down a thick hedge. This was thoroughly refreshing, and I wish you had been there, though, if only just arrived, you would have been more interested in the music of the guns, and in seeing two German look-out (tethered) balloons.

“ We are in for another carrying job to-night, at which no one rejoices. My Coy. have got to take 20,000 sandbags to the front line. The night is not likely to be a quiet one, but the mercy is that we ought to easily find the way, as it is to the same place as last night, though we go a different way.

*Later.*

“ We did the carrying work last night all right, and much quicker than before, as we knew the way. Except for four or five men who fell out with various troubles, and one man who either got hit with a shell or else somehow damaged himself, we had no casualties, though a very warm time again. I am sorry to say Tatham's Coy., who followed on behind us, had casualties of one killed and five wounded ;

a shell landed among them as they were dumping their stuff. I had a near shave with a heavy bit of shell flying past close by my head as I was going along a trench, but a miss is as good as a mile! They were also giving us some rather nasty stuff as we were going out along a main road running east from a much-shelled place [Ypres] (where we are billeted now) to where fighting has been. The road is straight, and these shells were coming straight down it. You can hear them coming for a short space of time, and bliss if they fall before or behind. 'D' Coy.'s work last night was to take up stretchers along this road and bring back wounded. They had two casualties in doing so, and were apparently lucky to get off with that, as they came in for very heavy fire. Yesterday two stretcher bearers brought a man down this bit of road in daylight, and were shelled the whole way with about 150 shells and never touched—a truly remarkable thing."

" 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

" *Thursday, August 12, '15.*

" MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

". . . . In the attack the other day it was, I fear, found out from prisoners that they were going to make a further attack in a few days, and in view of this had collected a great number of bombs, which our men found most useful in applying versus them, when they got to the trenches. In every Coy. a large number of men are definitely trained as bombers. They carry these bombs in bands round their shoulders, carrying about ten, and when they get to the trenches work along them, throwing them in front round the different turns. With machine gunners, bombers, and other men with special work, the ordinary rifleman will soon become rare! The bombers do not carry rifles, but are getting instead weighted clubs, so that we are gradually returning to primitive warfare.

“ One of the shells which were dropping round the Cathedral yesterday killed, I fear, about 20 men. I don't quite know why, but when I walk through here and into the Square with the Cathedral battered to bits, and every house in ruins, I always think of dear old Bishop Handley Moule and picture how deeply he would be moved by it.”

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ *Saturday, August 14, '15.*

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ Well, here I am in the trenches again [at Hooge], having come up last night. Some one from each Platoon, or anyhow Coy., when relieving should be up in the trenches to get all information before the Coy. arrives, but all that was done was our C.O. came up yesterday and then back to where we were billeted. He had a conclave of all Officers and told us what information he had got and arrangements for relieving made. He said we appeared to be in for an interesting time as we did not know where the Germans were and they did not know where we were, and the trenches were bad. We got here all right and ‘took over.’ The Platoon Officer of the Platoon I relieved was much surprised at my full inquiries respecting the position, the work they had in mind to do, and other, in my opinion, obvious questions. My Platoon is across a bit of wood which joins up to the east with quite a big wood by a narrow neck just  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile S.W. of the village where we are. The trenches cannot be called ‘trenches,’ just a sort of path through the wood with a few rough sandbag dug-outs and a certain amount of digging in the much torn up ground. An oak wood, most trees cut in half with shells and all indented and torn about. The experience of our Regiment is to usually find on relieving that the Regiment they relieve have been content to take things as they find them and let them remain thus instead of



putting them in order. Here we found everything in more or less of a mess, and above all no decent 'fire' positions. Now after about 24 hours we have cleared the place up, got 'fire' positions, though they want completing and extending and the whole trench wants organizing.

"We have, for one thing, started splinter-proof for the men when under heavy shell-fire. This afternoon for about an hour they shelled us heavily from every direction, but fortunately thought apparently that we were about fifty yards further forward than we were, and we only had one man slightly hit.

"The waste of ammunition is absolutely monstrous, the men having no consideration. When on a digging party two nights ago we came on to, in the bottom of a trench, three unopened boxes of 1,000 rounds in each. In the 100 yards or so in which my Platoon is the ground was littered with bandoliers full of 50 each and clips with five each, besides loose ones—also stuck into parapets, etc. We have cleared up all that are visible, though as you dig you unearth them all the time. The other Regiment had collected a certain number and with these we are sending back to-night, at a rough guess, 20,000 rounds and many rusted up rifles. I have not much time or particularly much news, except that I am sharing a dug-out with K. We have only what we could bring on us last night. We shall get rations for the day and water each night about ten o'clock by transport, who dump it about half-a-mile to the rear and we fetch by platoons. They also bring up sandbags and other necessary materials. Since last night we have therefore each had only what we could bring of water in our water-bottles, which of course allows of no washing. Whether any additional will be possible at all I cannot say. I cannot say how long we shall be here, but there is every possibility of a week without a wash or taking off clothes. We have to be ready all the time

and times for sleep are very intermittent. I turned in at 4.30 a.m. and had to be up at 6. Usually you work all night—stand to at about 3, after which the men have breakfast, then start working at 6 a.m., working in relays of two hours. When I was O.C. Coy. I did not start work till 2 p.m., but night work is not going to be so much done here. Rifle-sniping by night, though, is very heavy. . . . This is a pretty rotten place. It is no joy to be in a salient and at the head of it, as you are shot at from all sides. Some particularly nasty ones have just been coming from behind the way our trench faces. Dearest love, this life is a real joy as I am so fit and enjoy organizing the trenches.”

## VI

### THE FRONT : FIRST EXPERIENCES

(continued)

AUGUST-OCTOBER, 1915.

“ 3rd R.B., Trenches, B.E.F.,

“ 11 a.m. *Sunday, August 15, '15.*

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—

“ I must begin by saying how magnificently fit I feel, specially this morning. I feel I have indeed got to, from one point of view, the type of life which for so many years I have longed for, but never thought would be possible—away in dug-outs and clear of black coats and white collars. If you want to see trench life I should like you here for 24 hours. We came here to find the baldest suggestion of trenches or a line, a quite different thing altogether from where we were before. The men have just knocked off for two hours to get their dinners, which they cook for themselves in their canteens with splinter wood which has to be cut up very fine or they make a smoke which cannot be allowed. I should very much have liked to work in a short Service (though I do not believe a single man knows what day of the week it is), but the Captain does not think well of the idea. The Coy. could not all get together as they must keep at their bit of trench, and also many men must not get together for fear of shell fire, but voluntary ones by platoons would be possible, and I shall probably have one to-night. . . . We had some very heavy shelling

yesterday afternoon and one shell which fell just in front of line where I had an advance post sentry I feared would have left nothing of him. I went up to see and found him unhurt, but the poor chap was dazed with terror. In the evening about 9 we were told to wait and not send our carrying parties back as our guns were to open fire and men were to get shelter in dug-outs—not much shelter completed here yet! We opened fire, but as far as I could judge the Germans did so much more—anyhow they gave us a nasty time with every kind of shells and terrific rifle sniping through the wood. I went round during this noisy time to see the sentries were all right—double sentries at night—i.e. two on at a post together, and then got into this dug-out where we were a happy little party of four Officers. Everything quaking with the shell-bursts, but in time it eased down.

“How I would rejoice if it were possible for every battalion to have in command one of such Officers of which we have several. Our Major is a really splendid man. When I first had to take the Coy. into the trenches it was comforting to have him say to the Officers—‘You want no military knowledge!’ his organization is excellent. By day I do not think the Germans are nearer than 800 yards, though they may draw up to a certain part at night a little nearer. The sniping at night is nasty—bullets, unaimed, whizzing through this wood and smashing into trees and, unfortunately, men too! Last night we had four men wounded—one within five or six yards of me—one also had a bullet through his water-bottle hanging by his side. A sentry had the barrel of his rifle spoilt by a piece of shell which went bang against it. These bits of shell are too hot to hold when they arrive.

“Fortunately the man who was wounded close to me—shot through the side—was properly cared for as a Doctor, who had come up with men of another regiment to search

the ground in front of us and bury the men killed last Monday, was standing just by him. . . . The Coy. Runner was shot through the stomach last night by a stray bullet when going with my servant to fetch water and rations. He asked for a drink, which fortunately was not then available, but would have been given him if possible. I only hope he got into the hands of some one who knew better before he obtained any. Hardly any men have 'First-Aid' knowledge . . . the ration of a water-bottle a day is just all right, though sometimes a second cup of tea would be rather nice, but Supply says 'No.' I must stop—I shall put up some more wire before dark and again before light. I hope you don't mind my talking of men being hit so. I continue to try and heal up people with your charming medicine case.

"I have just had a nice Service for a few minutes in a dug-out; about 30 came. Heavy shelling, but none very near. They are now, and have been for three-quarters of an hour, giving absolute hell to a well-known crater 500 yards north of us. It is too dreadful to see the places being torn to bits. I do not think any man in it can survive, but hope it may be otherwise; probably they mean to re-take it to-night. The last three-quarters of an hour they have averaged about ten shells a minute into it; at times vast numbers, three or four together, besides having worried it all day."

*To his Father.*

"3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

"August 16, '15.

"All goes very strong, but it is some misfortune to hear that this platoon has to-morrow to move further to the left. We have completed splendid shelter-proofs and everything is getting into first-rate order, and now we have to shift down, but this is all in the day's work, though sad.

I had a sleep from 5.15 to 6.30 just now and had no idea whether it was 6.30 a.m. or p.m. when I woke. Sometimes work can be done by day ; sometimes only by night. Here it is more or less necessary to do both, so that sleep also is in bits. Knight has been shifted away from me."

" The Ditches,

" 10 a.m. *Tuesday, August 17, '15.*

" We were working early this morning, and then knocked off to give the men a rest, because we shall move to our new ditches about 60 yards to our left to-night, and shall be working all night, and probably to-morrow. A most lovely day to-day, and most peaceful so far—hardly any shells, except one or two of what the men call ' Good mornings,' and those not very near, and very little rifle-firing. The ' sniping ' at night from behind is really bad where we are. I cannot make it out, as from the direction it must be coming 2,000 to 2,500 yards, and yet their trajectory is still very flat.

" Yesterday we had a heavy thunderstorm, which made the ditches absolutely vile, and in several places several inches deep in water. We have had pumps, which are useful, and the worst of it has been drained away—just a touch of the pleasure of winter coming along ! As my boots were wet I took them off for the first time since coming here on Friday, and put on dry socks to sleep in for a few hours last night. I like to be ready at any time for a German attack ! I practically never put on a coat, but am day and night in shirt-sleeves, and when wandering round inspecting rather than working myself, with a rather charming round staff, which I originally got for the purpose of putting through wire coils for them to rotate upon when unwinding—now quite useful in the slipperiness of late—no cap, and sleeves rolled up, so now you can picture me.

" There are still birds in this wood, if wood it can be

called, the greater part not having more than the smallest sign of green, the trees having, I suppose, been mostly cut down by shells before the Spring. The wood is a mass of stumps torn off at various heights. I was watching starlings this morning working up the stems for insects in the bullet-holes—one or two wrens are also having a gay time. What was really ripping yesterday was a turtle-dove cooing. It was peace in the midst of war. Except for the shelling we get from time to time we do no firing from this wood, so it is quiet.

“ I have not been up to the main road <sup>1</sup> at the point due north of us, which is about 400 yards off, but very heavy bombing goes on there each night. The road is not distinguishable there, as it has joined in the general upheaval.

“ Giving our bombers clubs instead of rifles is going back to primitive ideas. If only shot and shell could cease and we got to clubs or fists only we would soon make things move here I think.

“ Your carriage candles are splendid, but at the moment I am wondering how long I can carry on as I only have  $1\frac{1}{2}$  left. To-night I am sending a message back by transport to try and get some up, or you may possibly be enclosing two or three. My electric torch and a re-fill are, though, a last resource, and then bacon dripping and string, so I am not lightless yet !

“ A Ditch in Flanders,

“ 1.45 p.m. *Wednesday, August 18, '15.*

“ Last night was, I think, the nastiest I have spent. Our position is now across an open bit of rough grass and is a ‘ trench ’ which no doubt has been occupied in succession by ourselves and the Germans, German rifles, etc., being in it, as well as several of ours, and other things, including the inevitable thousands of rounds of ammunition

<sup>1</sup> Ypres-Menin road.

rusting in the parapets and in the mud at the bottom in bandoliers of 50 each. Fortunately no unburied bodies.

“It is a great compliment to our Regiment being given the work to do of making line trenches out of what are at present valueless, either for shooting from or for protection; but strenuous to have to do it.

“7 p.m., 18. 8. '15.

“The Bosches have just given us a big bombardment of hundreds of shells on the whole line, to which we have, and still are, replying. What is upsetting is to have these aeroplanes flying without hindrance over our lines. No doubt they cannot bring our anti-aircraft guns so far up.”

“10.30 a.m., *Thursday*, 19. 8. '15.

“My birthday! and a very happy one, as I sit here at the back of my dug-out, with ripping sun, looking out over the 3-foot-wide trench on to the 7-foot parapet wall, the bottom part about 3 feet deep (i.e. dug down into the ground on the bottom of which level I sit) and, on this, sandbags, of which I can see about five layers. So I am well protected, though the view from my smoking-room window only embraces country a yard wide by two high.

“I told Miles it was my birthday, and asked him how old he thought I was, to which he answered 38 or 39. I asked him why he thought I was this (as almost without exception every one takes me for 26!). He said I did not look 38, but he was going by the way in which I always insisted on things being done as I wanted, and there was no talking me round, whereas most young Officers did not mind!

“The Union Jack flag painted by Rachel at Noseley I have at the entrance to my dug-out, which makes it look very nice and gay.



"The men are very happy. It is interesting to hear them discussing the War. I have just overheard the question of whether it is civilized warfare or not, also the number of the Germans. One man said 'Ten million. . . .' There is good English competitive spirit among them. I said to one young fellow that I believe the Germans tried to come out yesterday, to which he answered 'Ay, Sir, but they soon went back. They thought they had one of Kitch's brigades here, not the 6th Division!' (We are the 6th 'Division!')

"We behave here very like children. This afternoon we have been giving them a hot bombardment, no doubt because they started the one yesterday!

"There are some very jolly little mice about the trenches, but, unfortunately, none in my dug-out."

*To his Mother.*

"A Trench in Flanders,

"Monday August 23, '15.

". . . It is a recognized saying 'Leave the 3rd Rifle Brigade and your luck goes.' It is quite remarkable how fortune has favoured them all through. They had seven months at Armentières, where they more than made themselves comfortable, the trenches and dug-outs being most elaborate, with beds and other luxuries, and Armentières providing all necessaries and entertainments. There is very jolly singing all the time in the trenches, and one or two mouth-organs about. One man now singing 'Better a poor man with a contented mind than a millionaire like me.' All sorts of joking too.

"I have two small shell cases and some time fuses which I picked up last evening round the trench, and am a bit oily, as I have been polishing them up with rifle oil, also polishing my boots with the same. I shall probably get my servant to take them to England and post them to you when he goes on leave early next month. Mementos are

the great idea of the men here, and I have caught the infection."

To his sister Rosamond he writes on the same date :

" Young fellows cannot stand the strain of shell-fire. K. is quite upset in nerves, and another very nice young fellow, D., both especially so if there is any shelling and they are alone in their dug-outs. May be that what I have gone through with business strain has seasoned me, anyhow at present I see nothing but the reverse of upset nerves ! . . . Oh ! how often I think of you and of old things and times—rabbits just coming above ground at Hunsdon Bury and stamping on their burrows when they spotted us ! Oh ! what days to remember and to hope for soon again ! "

*To his Mother.*

" Trench in Flanders,

" August 24, 1915.

" My Platoon had nine spades handed over to us when we came into these trenches ; we have now about 37, thanks to unearthing what our predecessors had left."

*To his Father.*

" Huts in Flanders,

" Wednesday, August 25, '15.

" We were relieved at the Front about 11 o'clock last night, and we then came here independently by Platoons.

" I took my Platoon south of a much-shelled place, thus to avoid that place, and also the main road [the Ypres-Menin road] running into it from the east. Maps here are very bad, being inaccurate and unintelligible, and as also engineers have made new roads, and made good what were lanes, the difficulty of planning a route by map is considerable. Unless anything unforeseen occurs, we shall be here a fortnight, so they treat us well. . . .

“ The Ypres Salient has always been a questionable strategic matter. I should consider it is just sufficiently wide to continue holding it, though, as I said, it is rather disconcerting to have fire from almost all sides. Of the casualties we had, almost all were from rifle fire from the rear.

“ The soldiers’ French runs for the most part to two expressions: that is, ‘ bon ’ for ‘ good ’ and ‘ na poo ’ for anything which no longer exists. I suppose it is their quotation of ‘ Il n’y a pas plus ’? For instance, coming through a place yesterday a 17-inch shell had landed on a house, making about a twelve-foot hole in the ground by twenty feet wide, and all round it a pile of débris, which produced the remark ‘ na poo ’ house. . . .

“ It has been a comfort to get clothes off after 12 or 13 days, and to have a sponge down, though in a small bucket only of very black-coloured water ! ”

“ August 26, '15.

“ I have just seen, and had walk with, Humphrey Barclay, who is Chaplain to the 9th Lancers, who are also in huts in this wood. I am going to lunch with him—really nice to find him here.

“ The Brigadier-General has congratulated us on the work we have just been doing as being well done, and of a much more arduous nature than that entailed in doing the attack.”

*To his sister Rosamond.*

“ 3rd R.B.,

“ Huts in Wood in Flanders,

“ August 29, '15.

“ My prayer for you on your birthday is that God may be more and more a reality to you. It is, I think, a help to practise the consciousness of Him as an unseen Presence Who is conscious of all that comes across us, as David : ”

'The Lord is on my right hand,'—this being the expression of safety, as the man on the right held a shield in his left hand to protect the men on his left.

"I must close the poorest of poor birthday letters. For a birthday present, the two shell cases, which I hope will arrive, and which I hope you will like. I think they are French 75's. Perhaps you may prefer them to something from England."

"Huts in Flanders,

"August 28, 1915.

"As Orderly Officer yesterday I recommended that the pond from which the men get washing water have some paraffin in it to kill gnat larva, with which it is thick. To reduce the number of gnats would add to the comfort of the Camp. The Doctor is going to look at it to-morrow. . . .

"You ought to look at the centre page of the 'Daily Mirror' of the 27th, with aeroplane photo of Ypres. It gives a fair idea, though not giving the masses of débris or shell-holes. The last time we had to go through this town we had to go by the by-streets as the Square had been bombarded again with shells, and so cut up that it was impassable.

"Sunday, August 29.

"We have an open-air Service here at 11, which I look forward to, and a Communion Service after. I shall picture you at Stanstead Church. . . .

"I seem to feel Ken's death more and more, also Charles Werner's probable death (a young Harrow master); both such good friends and so charming. Two nights ago I dreamt I was having a race with W. and a general rag, in which I had the legs of a roe."

"August 29, 3 p.m.

". . . I agree with you that I have no wish to possess

a German helmet. I want, though, a good German rifle, if possible, but it is one thing to get these things, and another to get them home. Whether the shell cases I sent have arrived I do not know, but the difficulty of getting them here, and then on, is considerable. [All arrived safely.]

“ Next time you take a Scotch place, or move with provisions, do remember the value of sandbags to take things in or to pack up with.

“ We have now been given a new type of helmet to wear in the event of gas, and the old respirators taken back. To see through it has two round glass-covered holes, and a valvular mouth-piece.

“ We have in Battalion Orders that ‘ The Army Commander has expressed his appreciation of the excellent work performed by the 17th Infantry Brigade during the recent operations at—— and the consolidation of the position there ; and he wishes it to be known that their services will not be forgotten.’ ”

*To his Mother.*

“ Huts in Flanders,

“ 7 p.m. *Wednesday, September 1, '15.*

“ . . . I wrote a postcard last night to say I was going to be out this morning, but, like all Army Orders, this was altered to the afternoon. Representative Officers went from each Battalion in this Brigade (about five from each Battalion) to certain Divisional Headquarters by London motor-bus to see maps and hear information from a Brigadier as to what was going in the War and the position generally. Every conceivable size and scale of map prepared for various purposes and including portfolios of maps showing results of daily aeroplane reconnaissance. How father would have enjoyed to have been there ! Unfortunately I am unable to pass on anything of news.

“ These Headquarters were in a big house, with long

drive up to it through ripping woods, and jolly lake near it, also well-kept flower beds with begonias, etc. ; two or three ripping little terriers having a hunt in the wood by themselves. It was really refreshing to see a house again, and did me a world of good !

“ After we had finished I picked the Brigadier’s mind as to the position opposite the trenches we go into on Friday (which are the same as those I went into first and which you heard of from Dick Trotter at ‘ Easneye ! ’). I also got a large scale map from him.

*To his Father and Mother.*

“ Trenches in Flanders,

“ 3.30 p.m., *Saturday, September 4, '15.*

“ Here we are again in trenches ! and a proper experience of them. . . .

“ It rained very heavily from about Thursday mid-day till Friday evening, fortunately more or less clearing up as we marched off from huts for about a seven miles stretch. Everything was soaking wet, and roads deep with mud. We had also to turn off the road at one place as they were whizz-banging along it rather badly to catch such beings as ourselves or any other of the numerous ‘ game ’ that pass along it, which made very heavy and sticky work.

“ We got to the dumping ground about a mile behind where we are now, after the usual number of stops, which are exceedingly welcome, though the pace is very slow. (The regulation stops are five minutes after half-an-hour, then ten minutes after each succeeding hour. . . .)

“ At the dumping ground we had guides to meet us from the Regiment we were relieving, for each platoon. Our guide, which is more than usually the case, lost his way. The men seem to have no idea of observation, and though this man had been up here for 16 days, no trees or landmarks conveyed anything to him.





*[To face page 107*

**IN TRENCHES NEAR WIELTJE.**



“ I knew all would be bitterly cold, so fortified myself with two or three of your splendid chocolate slabs, peppermint lozenges, and biscuits, medicine case, and brandy. The last two I almost always carry, and the others I brought up in my haversack. Every one’s teeth were chattering, and in fact I think I was about the only one warm, having moved about more. Two men were really quite seedy, one having just fainted at his post. It was the natural state from being hungry, wet and tired. I gave these two men some brandy, and one or two of them who cared for it some chocolate too, which were quick and effective cures. Others were very glad of chocolate and lozenges.

“ It is a very fortunate thing that when life is uncomfortable an English soldier is always cheerful and jovial ; when comfortable he grouses.”

“ 11.30 a.m. *Sunday, September 5, 1915.*

“ We look like a lot of tramps coming up to the trenches, things hanging all round, waterproof sheets round shoulders, sandbags round legs, and every mortal and conceivable device for carrying, by the men at least, all worldly goods possessed out here, also canteen and food ; and endeavour to keep dry.

“ I have felt since I got here not so much like a tramp, as like a cow, who is solidly plastered with mud on the quarters after a peaceful night’s rest on land which resembles the composition of these trenches.

*To his Mother.*

“ 5. p.m. *Monday, September 6, '15.*

“ . . . Some men from my old platoon at Sheerness came out and joined us the day after we got here. I was really thankful for their sakes it was not the same day. One of their letters I have just censored. He says to his wife : ‘ I felt a bit what-oh ! When on sentry on Sunday they

began shelling me with whizz-bang ; they don't half sound. We had a very long march to get to trenches, in pouring rain, and it didn't come down, I don't think ! We all got swamped, also covered from head to foot with clay, ugh ! I fell over about five times with my full pack on in the dark, and slipped down again when I tried to get up. We were up to our knees in clayey water. That took some of our nervousness away. We had to sleep in our wet clothes, in fact for two days as it still rained. You ought to see me now, covered from head to foot in clay. I don't think you'd fall in love with me, what with hardly any hair on my head, and whiskers on my face, and having no wash. It is no use washing, as water is as scarce as gold. Am getting used to it now. When the guns go off, they go off, not half. Talk about thunder—Well, it is something like it ! ' ' "

“ 3 p.m. *September 8.*

“ This afternoon I have greatly enjoyed a read in Acts, and also seeing the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic*, which had been left in my dug-out, but I had not made time to look at before. Both so refreshing, and true mind and soul tonics, though the dramatic side is still no use to me ! It is very strange in these days to have to make a new prayer that I may not hesitate, if opportunity occurs, to let off revolver or rifle. I find that the best course is to look at this life from a sporting point of view, and, hard though it is, to make myself oblivious to the fact that the efforts are against the same type of flesh and blood as myself.

“ I am lately back from a really good spy round through the loopholes of my parapet with Len's splendid glasses, all long Bosche parapets, etc., so exactly like looking for a stag in the heather in a corry in Scotland.”

“ 9.45 a.m. *September 9.*

“ These chance shots at night, when men are above ground, are bound to cause a certain number of casualties, and also, when heavy, put the wind up in men working, whereas the Germans, for the most part, do their work without being disturbed. You can so clearly see the order given to them that their men are to stop shell and rifle fire on our part by giving back far more than they get from us. This, as far as I am able, I reverse. Why should they not be sniped when they show themselves in their trenches by day, and be sniped and worried by night? The German marksmen are told off for no other work than this sniping, but of this sniping, which is right and is an acknowledgment of a good shot, we do nothing, and since I have been out here the Coy. has practically not fired a round; lately, however, I have given my Platoon a good deal. I am now trying to get on to our Machine-gun Officer M.B. by telephone, which is just two yards from my dug-out, to get him to give me a gun to-night, as I can get it on to a bit of ground just opposite me where the Germans are working all night. I am sure to worry them has a great moral effect, if nothing more, which is of more than trifling value, as well as also setting back the work they are on. We have a working party of another regiment to help us with the digging each evening. Anything from 100 to 800 men. Yesterday our Chaplain came along the trench. He described my bit of line as a *place d'honneur*, and, later, a Staff Major and a Lieutenant with him. Having no military knowledge, I thought it well to tell him my opinion of the position here, especially of a certain danger, as I thought! I also showed him how the trenches were arranged on his map. The line I was in before this was really much too long for my Platoon and up here on one side I am left in the air. It is a place of

importance, and is recognized as being of a tricky nature. We are near the Bosche. Their saps come up to within eighty yards of our saps. This means frequent trouble with their and my 'posts,' and patrols meeting. . . . It is exciting work having *bombing encounters* so near. They, or we, creep up to each other's posts on stomachs. . . . A great difficulty in the listening is that the hedges and fields are crammed full of rats, which of course you hear all the time, as also our working parties so near. Every night except last night a German patrol of bombers has come up and there has been a row. The noise of the bombs is tremendous. I go out from time to time and see that all is right, and wait with the men a bit, listening. The night before last, just after I had got up to one post, there was a noise in the rough corn and grass, which might easily have been a man crawling. We threw a bomb, but with no apparent result. I think the Germans are very scared at the game, as, after crawling some way, they get up and run forward, throwing some bombs, and then bolt back. The first night our Coy. was up when Knight was Officer here we lost by one of our own bombs one of the most valuable men in the Battalion. He was a man of a quiet temperament, but as near as any man I ever knew in not knowing what fear is. There had been a bombing row on, which to him was an irresistible necessity to go about fifty yards in front and see what was up, and join in. He must have gone out beyond the patrol, without all the men in the patrol knowing it, and been bombed when he came back. He has been out since the start, and has done most valuable work for the Platoon. The Germans generally throw short in their haste to get away. Last night they sent a trench-mortar bomb, which fell near a patrol, but did no harm."

“ Trenches,

“ 5.30 p.m. *Friday, September 10.*

“ I really must get this off to-night, but not without telling you of a real big experience the past twenty-four hours. . . . In the afternoon R. and I let off some rifle grenades at the German sap for the purpose of ranging and then using at night. ‘ B ’ Coy. on my right also let off some ‘ Tobies ’ at the same time. The last are trench mortars, and throw what looks in the air like a big, oval-shaped thing, tumbling about aimlessly; weight about 60 lbs. . . . At dusk I just saw from one bit of my line a working party of about twenty-five Germans, starting along their bit of the trench, in which I put five rounds with a rifle. I had also asked for a machine-gun, and later ‘ traversed ’ this bit of ground with it. . . . After dusk there occurred what sometimes had been, but was new to me, a shout starting from the south of the German line of ‘ Hoch! Hoch! Hurrah!’ and gradually taken up all along it. Previously you heard the working parties digging, hammering, and talking, when near them, but to have a general shout was indeed strange. We of course answered with such calls as ‘ What’s the matter?’ It appeared they had had news of some success, possibly the Zeppelin raid I hear you have had, but in the early hours of this morning, when the bombardment was on, I felt pretty convinced they had been informed that they were to do an attack on us. One of the ‘ posts ’ I have out sent for me about 10.30 p.m. to come and take note of the German work on their sap, and the direction they were taking. I stayed out there about an hour, and by flares sent up from a certain part of our line from time to time, and the German flares themselves, saw pretty much what I wanted to know. The post threw one bomb while there at what they thought was a German patrol crawling up, but which was probably nothing but rats, but about five minutes after leaving

the post, Bosche or Bosches threw a bomb at the 'post,' which did no harm. I have, of course, a revolver on these occasions. When fit as I am, I have not the nervy feeling I would have feared if I had thought of what the work involved before coming here. The risk I run in going out to the posts is the minimum, but it is my duty to see all is in order, also to learn such information as I can. 'B' Coy. one night had a man come near, and call out to their post 'Hi! Soldier!' probably wishing to surrender, but in this ghastly world such might easily be done with intention of ascertaining where the post was for bombing it, so the only answer was a bomb, though no harm was done him, I think. At about 4.30 this morning, Friday, as I was just thinking of turning in, being pretty weary after a hard night's work, sometimes baling water with the men from the trenches for about an hour, and then building up the new trenches with splinter-proofs, etc., our heavy guns opened fire, and I thought were probably going to give some real retaliation for the Bosche shooting yesterday, so I ploughed along to the right of our line, map in hand, where I had a good view of the country as the distant ground rises. It was interesting to see whether they would make good practice on the German lines, but they did not keep it up long. I returned and rolled up in my dug-out for about half-an-hour, when the Bosche opened on us with whizz-bangs and high explosives, but not bigger than five or six inches; the biggest fuses you have, which I sent home, belong to these shells. Sometimes five or six together, all more or less in the same place. The whole place rocked and whirled with it, and a rain of earth and debris covered everything, or rather swished in torrents of shrapnel like thousands of rockets cutting the air.

"Oh, how you would hate it all! This loveless land, in which there seems nothing of God, nor indeed of man,

but only just of the Devil. Every ingenuity to kill. I should not mind so much if it was left to fists and clubs, with half the numbers, would be all right, but the helplessness before guns and rifles is rotten ! It is either Tuesday or Wednesday that we go back to rest, and next time up we shall probably be back in trenches, which will be a mercy."

*" Tuesday, September 14.*

" I have never really told you about Friday's bombardment. After our guns had stopped, the Germans opened fire, for a bit rapid rifle fire, then gun fire again, a slight pause, then more gun fire. In all, about three and a half hours. Men who have been out here all the time consider it the heaviest bombardment they have experienced. It was true terrors, though I am thankful to say I did not mind it nearly as much as most. The cook at our Coy.'s Headquarters was killed, and several men in the Battalion killed or wounded, but only one man wounded in my platoon. It really was marvellous. The C.O. says he considers they were firing 200 shells a minute, for, in all, about three and a half hours, on a 500 yard front. Several of my men were a bit damaged by earth falling on them. Of course the trenches were in many parts knocked to bits. Our telephone wire was broken, and an attack after it was to be expected, so it was an exciting time. The men are badly upset by shell-fire, whenever anywhere close, and of course with this bombardment frightfully so. It is very troubling to find these fellows shaking all over. We had no attack after it, but there was a lot of trouble about, as I got certain messages of Germans crawling up to my line, etc. . . . I send some of the telephone messages I have been getting, which make life strenuous. (Such as : ' Information from—— points to possibility of flame or gas attack, as Germans have been seen carrying tins on

their backs. Warn all patrols to be vigilant.' 'Information received. Possible that Germans contemplate an attack this morning, preceded by bombers. Extra vigilance will be wise.' 'Warn all ranks about smoke helmets tonight owing to east wind.' 'Report that seven Germans crawled up in grass to "Forward Cottage," but that five have now gone back; but two are still there. Keep your men all on the alert.'

"One frequent mode of German attack is to get into a bit of trench with a few men, by means of gas, fire, and bombs, and, if satisfactory, attack in force."

*To his Mother.*

"3 p.m. *Wednesday, September 15, '15.*

"I think it clear that the enemy in front of us were relieved by fresh troops two nights ago, which accounts for their quietness. Possibly they are shifting troops very considerably. Their habits the last few days have also changed. . . . Every one will be right glad to get out of trenches to-morrow night, probably about 11 p.m. . . .

"If only things were moving, I think the strain, which in this life is on so many, would not be so great, but to be endlessly digging oneself in, and then shelled each day when there is nothing but to sit still and hope the shells will not land on top, is truly hard work for any men! . . .

"The Germans are now putting over our heads in this line some big stuff, probably about 9 inch. These big shells go very slowly, sort of toddling their way over, if such an expression describes a sound! then a vast crump as they explode. How I should like you to be here for a bit. . . . We have while here lost several of our very best men, and generally very weak. I have to have men on for four hours patrol on end, and then back to sentry work, which is of



course far too much. Two hours' sentry in England is considered enough, and so it is.

"I have been very glad to have your extra provisions in order to give to the men, who require and deserve any luxuries. . . .

"Such a gorgeous sunset. These sunsets, also lovely nights, also odd birds and beasts, including two small spiders I have never seen before, are as refreshing as anything you can imagine. To have a good look at a good sunset is warranted to do good to any one, and especially if at war."

"2 p.m. *Thursday, September 16, '15.*

"We are to be relieved to-night, and, like return from school, I count the hours to getting clear of this place. It has been very hard work, and harder than a return to it will be—the position being now known."

*Postcard.*

"Huts,

"4 a.m. *Friday, September 17.*

"Got back here about half an hour ago, and real joy at it.

"Mother's letter of Tuesday, 14th, here. Had some cocoa, and awfully fit. Covered with mud, but none the worse for it.

"Be careful to keep clear of the Zepps. No shells to wake me!"

"3rd R.B., Huts,

"2.30 p.m., *Friday, September 17, '15.*

"This is good indeed! A most gorgeous day which all men are using for a general wash, clean up, and rest.

"We had breakfast about noon, with clean shirts, etc., and slacks instead of breeches and intensely ragged puttees, which mine had become, thanks to the putting up of barbed wire at the front. My hands are also pretty much torn,

thanks to the same cause, but to have a few scratches is always a good tonic to me. . . .

“ I have just been darning the corners of the pocket of my coat, which have been some time worn into holes from the rubbing against sides of trenches ! ”

“ This morning my usual small bucket of very black water, but to have clothes off the first time in a fortnight, and a good soap and sluish down, outside the hut, needless to say, with fresh clothes to put on, was a vast joy and refreshment.

“ We are in the same huts as before, which is satisfactory, as they keep the wet out. At the moment everything beautifully hard and dry, and very different to what we left it.

“ We were relieved all right last night, and fortunately had a quiet evening, in the matter of rifle fire and shells, by which we had no casualties getting away.

“ There were two or three men sniping at us earlier in the evening, whom I was pleased to stop by returning it. I kept ready and returned one or two rounds at the spot the flash of their rifles indicated, as far as aiming was possible. I prefer to do a job like this myself, as I know the exact limits of our patrols and listening posts in front, and so can shoot in safety.”

“ Huts in Flanders,

“ 7.30 p.m. *Saturday, September 18, '15.*

“ The last day in the trenches in the morning I went for a look round at the ground to the north, all the time, of course, following trenches. It would not take long to be shot if above ground anywhere there ! I should have had a man with me, as so often I got to bits of trench practically disused, and if shot, would not have been found for

long. This sort of trip is interesting, though hard work, as there is so much water, and general difficulty in shifting along trenches and keeping head down in low places. At night, when moving about above ground, I always take a man.

“ In the bombardment of the 10th I proved the truth of the proverbial luck of white heather. I got my letters about 3 a.m. that morning, just before the bombardment began, with which was one from Lilian in Scotland, enclosing a piece of white heather, which I stuck into the side of my dug-out, and I had not a single casualty. It is worth recording, though my faith in such charms is nil.”

“ 1 p.m., *Sunday, September 18.*

“ We have just had a very nice Service in the open, with band, and Communion Service in a hut after. Neville Talbot is really excellent. He spoke on ‘ All things work together for good. . . . ’

“ Our total losses in the Battalion these thirteen days (killed, wounded, and sick) have been 100, of which 40 killed and wounded, and of which my Company had 21.

“ To-morrow the Coy. go to Railhead for baths ; I may possibly have one if the water is not too black and smelly.

“ The very best of food. Poached eggs and bacon for breakfast, your cold beef or something tinned for lunch, with tinned fruit, tea with variety of jam, biscuits, etc., and supper of hot ration beef, potatoes, and tinned fruit. Also, at all times, baby-food if available. Then your chocolate, etc., is always to hand, and most delicious—sweet stuffs are, for some reason, very nice here.

“ Sleep excellently, often through heavy shell fire.”

“ Huts,

“ 7 p.m. *September 20, '15.*

“ We apparently just escaped another bombardment, either on the trenches we have been in, or adjoining them. This is from information from the summary of news which we have every day, and which I have just seen.

“ There is no doubt that the coming ten days or fortnight may easily be momentous days in ours and the World's history. We are not likely to come into what is on—I can say no more—but we may possibly do so.”

“ To-morrow we leave these huts, having had our six days, and go into support trenches. . . . My valise, which I leave with the transport, has got to be reduced to 35 lbs.—this in view of something happening quite soon !”

“ 2 p.m. *Wednesday, September 22.*

“ Such a bunch of welcome letters just come ; and also some New Testaments from Maggie, which I have given to my men, which they much appreciated, and liked me to write in them.”

“ Support Trenches,

“ 11.30 a.m. *Thursday, September 23.*

“ Exactly a year since I got to Ashted as a Private in his Majesty's Army. It is very strange to look back on those early days, billeted with Wilson and going over to Lilian.”

“ The men of No 10 Section to whom I gave the partridges say they greatly liked them : one saying, ‘ That is why we marched here so well last night,’ another, in reply to an inquiry whether they were good, ‘ I don't know much about poultry, but they were just as I should always like to have it. . . .’

" We got here all right last night about 7.15. You would have been surprised to have seen the Canal, whose sides we inhabit like rabbits. . . .

" It is a different feel to be well away from enemy here, no need to keep smoke down, particularly, and the light of the little braziers, made out of any old tin boxes, looked most picturesque in the water last night.

" Yesterday we were slightly short of water, which is so often the case first day after coming up to trenches, as we have only what is in our water-bottles till the ration-carts come up next night. Here there is a good well supply, the use of which is allotted to our Coy. between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

" Last night we went to do the digging work, which you know we have on hand at a certain place (breastworks). We left about 7 p.m. for our old dumping ground, to take up with us some dug-out frames and other material. But the transport had not arrived with it, so we had to wait about an hour in heavy rain, which had just begun. We then got it, and each man with a sandbag round his neck to keep his shoulders dry (?) carted the stuff up to the right place.

" You never knew such slipperiness, and crossing several trenches with this heavy stuff was difficult. It was too bad to work, so we just left the stuff at the breastworks, and came back."

" 6 p.m. *September 24.*

" Coming here I noticed that the Bosche have now knocked the tower of the Cloth Hall down. The spire of the Cathedral, which is such a fine landmark here, still remains, I am glad to say, though sorely battered. I intended to try and get this off by the transport on its return (in the ordinary course) to-night, as we are having very big days, and it may be that any day both letter writing, or transport

to take letters if they were written, may be impossible. I wish I could tell you all news that I have, though very possibly you may have more or less as much in England. The day is a great one to live in, but it is still greater to take a part in the events that make for the greatness. Don't therefore be alarmed if you hear nothing from me any time, for possibly a considerable time—I shall probably be going strong in more ways than one. What is on is, I fear, hardly likely to affect us here,<sup>1</sup> but, if properly successful, would do so, and I therefore warn you about letters."

*To his Mother.*

"Support Trenches,  
" 8.15 a.m. *Saturday, September 25.*

"I forgot to tell you in the bombardment we had in the last trenches on September 10 it was interesting to see how the shock of the exploding shells made the spiders drop down from the hedges and trees, and hang by their threads, then work up, only again to fall. We had the joy up there of a dead cow just beyond one of the sap heads, from which our patrol usually got out, and then did their listening work, often sitting just by it, or even on it, I think. When I went out there, I preferred a few yards more to the right to listen, though I must say it's a marvellous cow, not smelling at all in spite of having been there a very long time. You see I give you all details of this wonderful life as they occur to me. . . ."

*To A. G. H. [his brother-in-law].*

"3rd R.B., B.E.F.,  
" *September 24, 1915.*

"I do not like working at night with bad sniping going on, and do not think I shall ever get indifferent to it!

<sup>1</sup> The Battle of Loos.





[To face page 121

WITH HAZELRIGG NIECES AT NOSELEY HALL,



The strain of knowing you will have men from time to time shout out from being hit is very considerable.

"How most awfully good of you to say you are reserving a pup for me—thanks *greatly* for thus thinking of me.' All I shall want now is a quick finish to the War to do the training. As you know, I am badly wanting a golden Lab. (Labrador), so to look forward to this will be most excellent. For choice I like one with narrow chest, i.e. with front legs near together. . . . Best of good luck.

"Would that I could see you. Ever thine. CURLY."

*To his Father.*

"Canal. 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

"11 a.m. *Sunday, September 26, '15.*

"Information has just come in that we are to move to-night into a village, about two miles north-west of where we now are, where we shall be billeted. . . .

"As of minor importance, I fear we have missed getting a farm.

. . . . .  
 "The canal is just now very empty, a sort of muddy and 'rushy' thing; water about thirty yards wide, then rough sort of flat muddy sides, with rushes which might, but for us, hold a duck! A line of poplars along this side where we are. Sparrows make a very friendly noise in them each evening. . . .

"I have just seen the troublous sight of an aeroplane coming down over the front lines. I fear it was one of ours, but cannot say for certain. It was hit and brought down to very low, when it recovered more or less, then took a header straight down. There were three others; one high above it, and two more or less following it, all apparently German. It appeared to fall just in German lines. . . .

"Telephone news has just come round to our Coy. (5.30 p.m. 26) from Liason with French G.H.Qrs. that the French

have maintained their advance, and taken 10,000 prisoners, dated 12.30 p.m. to-day. I hoped for better news still, but things may be going all right.

"This morning I read some of the men some of *The Times* Broadsheet literature, sitting in the sun on this bank.

"The mouth-organs are very much appreciated, and are of inestimable value out here, as keeping the men in good spirits. A few more for other Platoons would at any time be welcome, and do real good."

"In Billets,

"11 a.m. *Monday, September 27, '15.*

"We left the 'bank' about 7.30 last night, and came to this little place, which, surprisingly, has not been much shelled, and has houses still habitable, also quite a fair number of inhabitants. The Officers of this Coy. are all in one house of a villa type. . . .

"What our plans will be no one can say. I shall always sleep in my clothes with equipment ready, though probably we shall be here several days. . . .

"1 p.m.

"You would be amused at the way the old soldiers know how to look after themselves in this life—when going up to new trenches carrying bits of wood to cook themselves tea, etc., when they get there, also getting their dug-outs comfortable."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"In Billets,

"4 p.m. *Tuesday, September 28, '15.*

"Captain Reeve was hit in the bend of the arm at 12 o'clock last night by either a maxim or rifle bullet. I do not think it touched the bone, but did cut the artery. I

had just walked a few yards from being by him when I heard some one shot ; this was a maxim-gun Sergeant of another Regiment : he said to me he was hit in the arm, but was all right. I saw a deluge of blood, and had his coat off and sleeve up as soon as possible, and got my thumb on it and stopped it. A stretcher-bearer put on a pad and very tight bandage on the artery above, and another on the wound. He walked to the dressing station half-a-mile behind. He lost a terrific lot of blood and was, of course, faint. I was really glad to be there, as, though several men were there, no one was the least able to deal with it, and thirty seconds more he would have been done. Perhaps you have seen a big artery cut, but I had never before, and was astonished at the terrific rate of loss of blood."

" Billets,

" 11.30 *Wednesday, September 29, '15.*

" Plenty of wet since about 7.15 last night. My Coy. were divided by order for various carrying, etc., work.

" I sent Cartwright with a carrying party of thirty men to go to a certain Regiment's dumping ground. I took fifty men later to the same ground to fetch certain R.E. double hurdles, used for a certain kind of trench, and put them up. This dumping ground is a small paddock off the road, which appeared, when I got there, the most chaotic mass—solid with men, limbers being unloaded, rations, sandbags, and piles of dug-out foot-boards and other R.E. materials. A very dark night except for a few electric torches. I don't think the Army could get on without these. Mud and driving rain. After hunting, I found an Officer of the Regiment I was carrying for. The hurdles had not come, so we took up 3,500 sandbags. A wet night, such as we had, the men all go with mackintosh sheets round their shoulders, also, of course, rifles, and, last ni ht, spades. Carrying more things is therefore difficult, especi-

ally so with the awful slipperiness, particularly crossing trenches with pleasant obstacles of telephone wires to step over, to lift overhead. . . .

“The work consisted of building up traverses in the trench knocked down by shells, and throwing up earth on to a bank from a watery ditch. With pitch dark night, driving rain, men pretty wet through and no definite job to complete, it is wellnigh impossible to get good work done.”

“In Trenches,

“1.30 p.m. *Sunday, October 3, '15.*

“We unfortunately had casualties last night in the Coy. (not in my Platoon) from a whizzbang at dusk, which killed three and hit four, among whom was the boy Thorburn you took such an interest in. He was hit near one eye, but, as I did not bandage him up, I do not know how bad it was. He was, though, standing about, and very plucky.

“I write in a dug-out with rubbers on, which I have changed for those you sent me for a pair which slip on easier from the Coy. Sergeant-Major. Being covered with mud, and quite a lot of things in the dug-out, I put my feet with them on—deep in mud—into sandbags. This plan, perhaps, you would like to adopt by keeping sandbags at the door at Easneye, for any one with muddy boots to get into, and so come in ‘clean!’

“It is very lucky having this bright weather. The trenches, by means of footboards, are comparatively dry. Now is the time to make them really good by taking up these boards, driving in piles, then nailing boards on to them, and riveting the sides with 6-foot hurdles; but, alas, every one is calling out for such supplies and we cannot even make a start on this trench.”

*To T.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ October 4, '15.

. . . . .

“ I said these trenches were getting dry, but in parts they are very bad indeed, in spite of layers of footboards. No commencement has been made for making them fit for winter quarters, and it is worrying in the extreme. . . . But I cannot get material. This, though, is promised for to-night, so a start ought to be made. The Germans have destroyed by shelling each night lately the stuff dumped for this purpose, about half-a-mile behind us, but besides this, there is no Brigade system—every Company cries out for different stuff as essential, and may or may not get it. In my opinion there should be some one on Brigade Staff to go round and see what is essential for immediate trench work, and see they have the materials and working parties for it. I have had several men to spare these nights, and been able to do practically nothing. It takes for the building up with sandbags and earth about 100 men on a dug-out, working about four hours. The Bosche seem to have limitless ammunition and perfect organization—aero-planes, guns, snipers, working parties, and material for them ! All appearing to work like clockwork, and to squash any move or aggression we make, such as Toby-firing—one or two, and they return twenty large shells, or, if we snipe, they return rifle or shell-fire in larger measure, or fire on working parties. I do do some sniping from time to time, but it is discouraging when your guns do not back you up. Things may be different to what they seem, and we shall come out all right, but I wish the Staff would come and live in the trenches for a bit, and see how things really are.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches,

“ 5.30 p.m. *Wednesday, October 6, '15.*

“ *Such* a joy to have about half-a-dozen fellows in two dug-outs just by me doing some decent singing, and in good spirits. This is due to the fact of to-morrow going out of trenches, and to a fine afternoon and evening. I gave one of them one of your mouth-organs this afternoon, which probably started it and keeps it going.”

“ 2 p.m. *Thursday, October 7.*

“ We have just heard that we are not being relieved to-night, which, of course, is a bitter disappointment to all, but it may only be a day or two.

“ As regards the men and working parties, I now always endeavour to give them a definite job. Some of the other Regiments who come to help us do nothing. It was rather comic, two nights ago, to tell them that I wanted 1,200 sandbags filled, and emptied on to a parapet. They came slipping and tumbling about in a casual, off-hand way, and I never saw such amazement as when I said this, and they said to themselves, ‘ By goodness ! Have we got to work ? ’

“ When up in these trenches I do a little sniping, and see the listening posts and all else is in order, but it is a somewhat wearisome and cold occasion till return just before dawn. Always armed with a revolver and two respirators. From trenches, and still more from our listening posts, you hear the Bosche talking and laughing and digging quite well. Last night we had two men sent up to listen and say what Germans they were, and I had to warn off two good men to take them where they were wanted. My men were very amusing after they had finished, saying how terrified these two were—they would go by communication trenches, not above ground, as far as possible, and

then kept wanting to listen from well behind our posts, but ultimately they got them on a bit, and they returned in safety, but more muddy than when they had arrived with beautiful clean boots!"

" 4 p.m. *October 7.*

" I have been adjusting the periscopes. These always make me nervous, as I do not know if the men look with sufficient closeness to really watch for any one moving—if they were gillies from a Scotch deer-forest, instead of from Canning Town, I should feel differently! . . .

" This is the sort of time when I specially greatly long to see you all, and be back at home for a bath and change, and place to lay out my things. You would not say I had much here, but a small dug-out, everything pretty muddy, and nowhere in particular to put things, make a few seem many. Then a sit and a talk. Some day this will be! By a fire in a clean, dry room!"

*To his Father.*

" Trenches,

" *Friday, October 8, '15.*

" We lay great stress on ammunition boxes not being opened, and then return after another Regiment has been here to find them opened, and the weather thus got in, and the trench littered with ammunition!

" Still we struggle along, but it is tantalizing to see the organization that evidently exists in the German lines.

" It appears possible we shall move from these lines after this time in, but I hope not to trenches on which the commencement of work is necessary. . . .

" Last night the Germans evidently spotted a party 300 yards to our right, and gave them about twenty rounds

of shrapnel—suddenly opening after being dead quiet. I have not heard whether they obtained their objective.

“ These working parties very much bring trouble on themselves—talking, shouting and tumbling. There is no doubt our R.B. men are very different, but anything of a whisper seems wellnigh an impossibility.

“ Even on patrols or listening posts, when utmost importance not to be heard, a low voice seems impossible. Isn't it strange ? ”

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches,

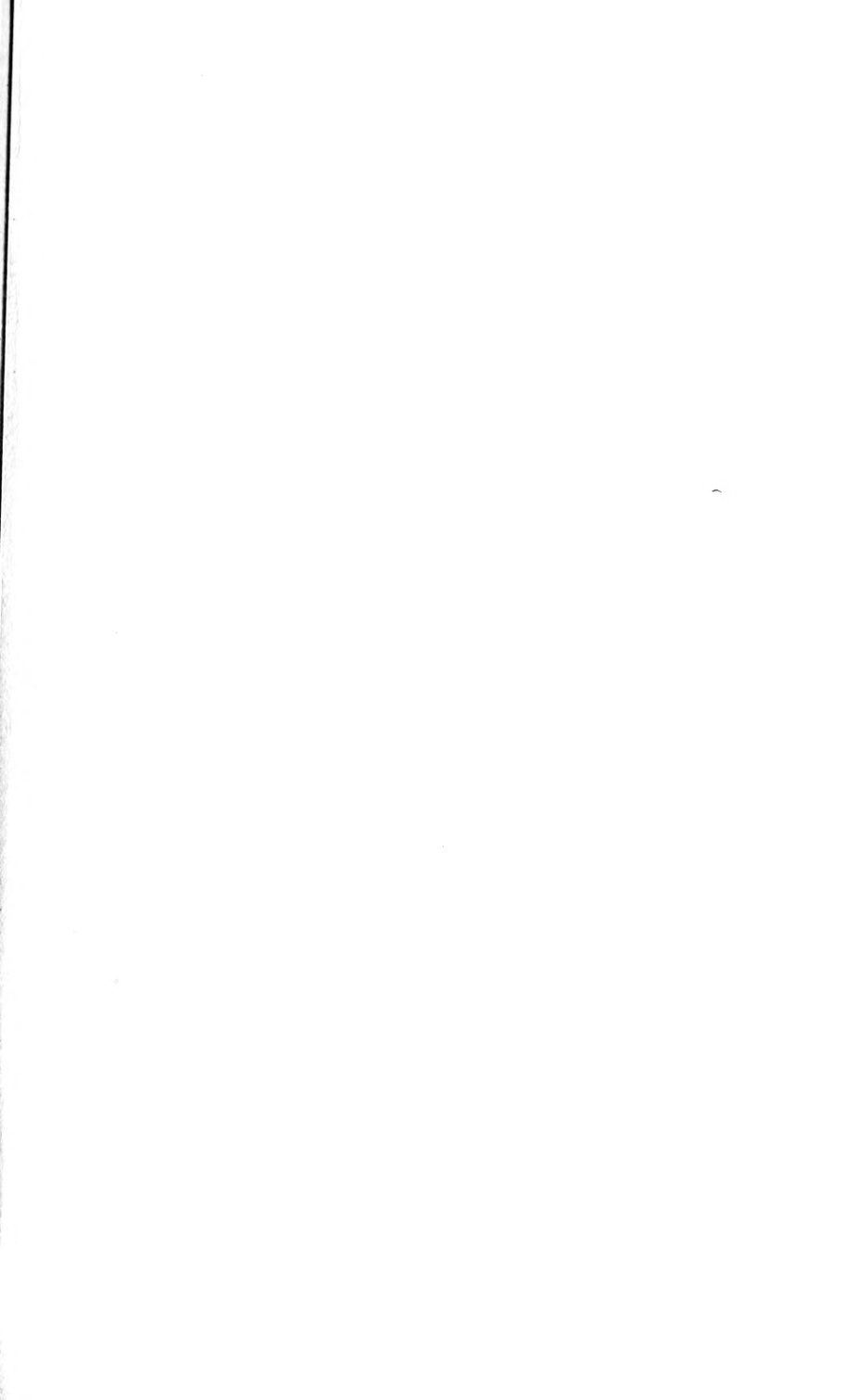
“ 1 p.m. *Saturday, October 9, '15.*

“ I heard this morning, from a man here, about the amazing truce last Christmas, when this Battalion was at Armentières. The things which happened were extraordinary ; also the way it commenced.

“ The two lines of trenches were so near that they could shout across, and during the truce they worked together with us in putting up a barbed wire entanglement between. Major Pigot was one of the first to go out in response to their call that they would meet us half-way. He went with another man at night, and when part of way they called out, ‘ How many have you with you ? ’ He said ‘ One,’ but they said, ‘ There is one lying behind you.’ He said it was a dead cow. One Bosche came round and saw it was so. Exchanged cigars, cigarettes, photos, etc. In one place a beautifully clean Officer came out and had the cheek to remark, ‘ Your trenches must be very muddy.’ (He judged by the mud on our men.) We told him the communication trenches were in some parts.

“ Just been arranging (5 p.m.) with my Platoon Sergeant what work to get on to to-night. Some are on sentry,







WITH HIS BROTHER, H. F. BUXTON.

[To face page 129

some have to fetch rations, and others to rivet sides with hurdles."

" 4.30 p.m. *Sunday, October 10, '15.*

" I had breakfast or lunch at about 1 o'clock, and then a wash and shave, which was a comfort, as last night I did the muddiest bit of work I have ever had to do in my life before.

" A bit of trench here, which has not been used for very many months, had become too bad. At the bottom, if such a thing exists, are footboards, on top of these about two feet of mud and water. The previous night several men baled out a good deal of liquid mud and water. I let them stop because they said the smell of it made them feel sick. Last night we went on, and I 'ran' it. It was impossible to get quite down to footboards, as water all the time came in, so the work consisted in getting up these boards under about 6 inch to 8 inch of slime. I got up three in about five hours, about 5 foot long each, so you can imagine the work. . . .

" This trench must be made good, and my idea is to rivet the sides with wooden hurdles five feet high and six long, then put footboards on piles, making them about two foot six above what the others were. To do this, the old ones have to come out, as the trench is narrow. The suction in raising these in sticky mud is very great."

" Trenches,

" 7.30 p.m. *Monday, 11.*

" We are to be relieved to-night, which is quite satisfactory! This means quite five hours' march."

*To his Mother.*

" Billets,

" 3 p.m. *Tuesday, October 12, '15.*

" . . . . We have had *ten days in the trenches*, which

have been quite enough—more or less eventful. The chief event the last day or two was a pretty heavy bombardment, beginning about 9 a.m. yesterday. My bit of the line got off lighter than some, but was blessed more with whizz-bangs than high explosives. . . .

“The nights have been very dark lately, and as work has to be done without light, there has been some difficulty. Last night also very dark. We left at 10.30, and came the eight or nine miles in splendid time, thanks very largely to the mouth-organs you sent, which are invaluable for the troops, though they last a disappointingly short time, owing to the reed in them breaking. . . .”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“October 15, 1915.

“We have just finished a parade for the benefit of our new General inspecting us and making a speech to say that he is glad to have our Brigade in the Division, which I should jolly well think is the case! We also had a similar parade on leaving Billets for our General to say farewell! . . . A sort of chill misty October morning with a crowd of men (nice way to describe the R.B. on parade) marching out across stubble, etc., I felt like retriever trials; with a lot of horses in one field you would have felt like a hunt meeting. . . .”

*To his Mother.*

“In Tents,

“October 17, 1915.

“. . . We had a good Communion Service at 8 this morning in a barn of the farm in whose fields we are camped. The ground is on quite a fair slope, so should keep pretty good for the winter. . . . In the centre is a big open square in which football proceeds vigorously. . . . Your

letter of Friday just come telling of Hubert<sup>1</sup> being killed—the best fellow that ever lived! It is hard to bear his loss, as also of so many whom I knew well. He is quite irreplaceable. Please let Uncle N. and Aunt M. have my real sympathy if you are writing, but probably I shall write too. . . . My pen refuses to write, but something to cover all troubles has just arrived. The Coy. Orderly Sergeant asks me my address for 'Leave!' This is an unexpected joy. How I shall crawl about the trenches to keep clear of any German farewells! . . . Oh! really magnificent to think of seeing you all again."

<sup>1</sup> Hubert Pelly, killed Oct 9, 1915, Gallipoli peninsula.

## VII

### BACK TO THE SALIENT

OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1915.

“ GOT to Victoria 2 a.m. ; very nice to see refreshment there. Slept two hours in Telegraph Office at Liverpool Street Station, whence caught 5.50 train, reaching Easneye 7.45 ; all just getting up. Joy indeed.” So runs an entry in Andrew’s journal for October 21, 1915. It was his first leave from the Front, and appreciated accordingly by his family as well as by himself. After six blissful days at home he left for the Front again on the 27th, rejoining his unit in their trenches in the Ypres salient. He writes to his mother on October 28 on his way to the trenches :

“ I continue to live on the ‘ send off ’ given me by every one. It was a vile night coming here on Thursday, but I have survived all right. . . . T., our Parson, is leaving for another Division. I have told him Arthur [his brother] might be able to come and he has made a note of it. If A. liked to write to Chaplain-General I believe he could have T.’s place as Chaplain to this Brigade (17th.)”

“ 3rd R.B.,

“ *Thursday*, 28, 10, ’15.

“ . . . . The sound of guns once more—only occasional firing, but none the less vile. . . .

“ I shall always remember the send-off of the servants.

They all in the porch, including Jane Eary, and, outside, Sandy and Hilton, and Mrs. Bradley, and all in the laundry. It is a pity every one cannot come up just to the trenches, and so picture my life out here more completely. . . .

“ The King and Prince of Wales were round here yesterday, and it was no doubt in connection with them that our train was so slow last night.”

All this winter (1915-16) to the end of February was spent in the famous salient, with its everlasting sea of mud underfoot and almost incessant rain of shells and bullets overhead. Like thousands of others, Andrew “ stuck it out ” with undaunted heart and cheerful countenance. Here follow some of his letters of the time.

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches,

“ October 30, 1915.

“ We are pretty close to the Germans here and apparently the Regiment we relieved were properly kept in order by them ; they dared not light fire or speak or snipe, and working parties of Germans were even apparently getting out of their trenches in front by night. The Germans were sniping very heavily. Now by vigorous return of sniping, as we are fortunately able to do, and by more shells than they give us, we have quite reversed the tables, which is a comfort.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

(In the Trenches.)

“ 3 p.m. Monday, 1. 11. '15.

“ We have had a lot of rain both yesterday and to-day, but there is no deep water in the trenches, which is everything. You have only to experience the misery of water to intensely sympathize with those who have it, and, if

combined with leaky dug-outs, to say the life is almost impossible. . . .

“ We call across to the Germans here, and try to encourage talking, as true information might be obtained. It sometimes takes some considerable talking of ‘Hullo, Fritz,’ ‘What’s the matter that you don’t answer, Fritz!’ etc., before getting an answer, which is usually ‘Kamarade.’

“ Yesterday several Germans were talking to one of our men, and even momentarily just showing their heads, hands, etc., above their parapet. They said they were sick of the War. We said we were quite satisfied!

“ With the rain a lot of parapets have been falling in—now I can feel for those at ‘F. Cottage,’ or other similar positions.

“ I have just passed H. in a trench, poor chap, very troubled because ‘they have asked me, as the Parson is away, to go and read the Burial Service over the fellow who was killed in my Platoon last night. Have you a Prayer Book? But even if I have one, I don’t know what to read. Will you do it for me?’ [which he did].

“ In Trenches,

“ 11 a.m. *Tuesday, November 2.*

“ . . . . Rain all night, and continuing hard—absolutely vile. My dug-out is one of the very few dry ones, and I am sitting now with two fellows wrapped up asleep in their coats by me. . . .

“ A lot of men got no sleep, thanks to being flooded out of their dug-outs. I managed to get three into mine in the middle of the night who were trying to eke life out under a waterproof sheet, with a brazier they were keeping alight—they were dead tired, and asleep almost before they lay down.

“ I always go out at times during the night to see sentries,



and work going on, and very hard work it is thus turning out into the darkness and rain and slipperiness.

“Endless bits of parapet of trenches have been falling in with this rain, owing to no riveting having been done, and a vast work it is to make them good. Trenches being blocked, working parties have to turn out to clear them. It is dangerous having so much that may fall in at any time. The whole thing will, no doubt, come in in time, and it remains to be seen if we and other Regiments can keep pace with it.”

“11 a.m. *Thursday, November 4, '15.*

“. . . We have had a time this last forty-eight hours—a proper taste of winter experience. Tuesday was about the third day of almost continuous rain, which meant endless falling in of trenches, and that pioneer men, who were working on definite rebuilding work, with proper riveting, etc., and making of water-proof dug-outs, had to be taken off for clearing up and making good in patches, which is always unsatisfactory. . . .

“The work of clearing away these slides, then filling sandbags, and filling up about seven feet, is tremendous.

“We were told we should be relieved about 8 p.m. on Tuesday. Those relieving my Platoon began to turn up about 10 p.m. and, as they knew the trenches, we got away about 11 p.m.

“The first  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles I took the men a way none of us had been before, as being more direct, along farm roads, etc. You can have no conception of the mud, but the men were in the best of spirits—intermittent roars of laughter from individuals from stepping into some specially deep hole.

“. . . We had a first halt in a more or less battered house about two miles back, which, though dripping, provided some shelter. Soon after Henderson brought his Platoon along, and after that we kept together. Men

having got really sodden, and weight of packs and equipment telling, they soon got pretty quiet. Soon after this, the rain turned into a perfect deluge for about three-quarters of an hour as hard as ever it could pelt, with also high wind.

“ We halted at about every hour, usually choosing the side of a house as protection from wind and rain, and got to our destination, i.e. a farm, with tents in field by it, at 4 a.m.

“ The tents were mostly placed in a dip, and had been occupied, together with some dug-outs, by the Regiment who had relieved us. They told us it had become quite impossible—dug-outs fallen in, and deep mud, and so indeed it was—absolutely awful mud.

“ We therefore went into a big barn, divided up by various partitions, and in the middle a big heap of unthreshed oats. My Platoon were allotted a bit which apparently just gave standing room, and yet they managed to lie down! They all had their breakfast ready for them, but we Officers had no such luck!

“ The report of the King's fall first got to us in the form of the Kaiser being assassinated!”

“ Tents,

“ Saturday, 6. II. 15.

“ . . . This morning I had a parade of my Platoon, which is done each day to inspect rifles. I also gave them some Swedish exercises. I afterwards explained how to use the ‘egg’ bomb, which is much the handiest type we have, then arranged for each man to wear a ‘tube’ helmet (protection v. gas) for twenty minutes, in order to be accustomed to it. . . .

“ A football match this afternoon between my Platoon and one of another Coy. I thought of playing, but they had 11 who were keen to do so, so I stood out.

“ The Transport Officer has had some ferrets sent out.

The Adjutant and my Coy. Commander, with a sporting Corporal who has an excellent little dog, are now having a peace rat hunt with them on the edge of a little stream just outside our Coy.'s Mess hut in which I am writing—thus we fight the Germans, Soccer and ferreting !”

“ Tents,

“ 6 p.m., 6. 11. 15.

“ . . . One of our Corporals has gone into a place for instruction in massage of feet, with a view to remedying frost-bite.

“ How you would enjoy to see the men sitting round big log fires among the tents, singing together splendidly. So picturesque, their faces and khaki clothes in the fire-light.

“ Henderson is just back from riding into the town near here, to the Casualty Clearing Station, and says they have had at that Station only over 1,000 cases of frost-bite the last week. This is, of course, from wet feet for several days on end.

*To D.*

3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

*November 7, 1915.*

“ When will this awful War be over ? I have seen enough of horrors, but mercifully have not had the very worst one of which the terror is of having to shoot a man, or men, point-blank.

“ I cannot but believe that April or May will see the end of it—money or men must soon give way in Germany.

“ It did seem so really strange to be within a few yards of the Germans within 24 hours of saying farewell to you. My Platoon was right up in the front line. The trenches are now, alas, in a sorry state from the rain, and I only trust fine weather may now prevail.

“ I hear, whether true or not I can't say, that the Regiments on the right of where we are arranged a truce with the Germans for the purpose of re-building parapets.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches,

“ November 11, 1915.

“ . . . I looked carefully at the German lines through two or three sentries' periscopes. It is hard to see very minutely, as the periscopes are the tiniest bit of glass—anything bigger being quickly shot and smashed—2 or 3 shots at mine as I was looking. A smart sentry had spotted two of their loop-holes and pointed them out to me. This same man saw a German on their parapet last night. When we sent up a flare about 7 p.m., he told the Corporal in charge, who got him and another sentry to be ready, and then sent up another flare, when both fired at the man, who was still there and hoped by standing still not to be seen. They hit him, as he shouted out. We have lately got several by sniping. . . . What does one say when these things are reported? I suppose, 'That's splendid,' but I cannot get further than 'Is that so?' . . . This morning the men were all issued out the beautiful red-coloured waist-coats, no sleeves; real good leather. All frightfully pleased. So funny to see them walking about in such a clean garment!

“ A good deal of my time this morning, when we had ripping warm sunshine, was spent in getting them to take them off for working!”

“ November 12, 1915.

“ Oh! Such a vile day, with more heavy rain in the night, and this morning everything is *encouraged* to fall in and the men *discouraged* in working. The bottom of my dug-out has filled up with water to a higher level, and the shelf where I sleep is a sort of muddy slosh, but these

things do not really matter so long as the roof does not drip, which mine does not except for very occasional single drops. . . . It is a strange existence, but we flourish all right. The hard work and strain is not wet dug-outs or work in trenches, but consideration of whether we are all right should the Germans attack."

*To his Mother.*

" In Tents,

" *November 15, 1915.* .

" . . . We were relieved last night about 8.30. . . . Some men are in huts, some in *tents*. The two tents allotted to my Platoon were in an awful state—no floors to them, an odd piece of bent-about corrugated sheeting covered with mud or with puddle of water in the middle. The rest a muddy 'slosh' in which was mixed up remains of biscuits, jam tins and similar mess.

" If you had been putting a pig in for the night you would have said some straw was necessary, and to ask men to lie down there in the cold after about five hours with packs and equipment and seven miles march was very hard. . . .

" One of my men got frost-bite the other night from water dripping all night on to a puttee and so into a boot. The foot apparently got blue and he made it bad, losing all feeling, by putting it near a fire. I rubbed it well with dripping, the only available grease, and hope it is now about right."

*To his Father.*

" In Tents, M. 5. a,

" 3 p.m. *Tuesday, November 16, '15.*

" . . . I usually find the baths [in the neighbouring village, Reninghelst] of value beyond that of washing, as there are always several Officers of various Regiments to

talk to. To-day, one who was very interesting in saying what a Pole, who had deserted and come over to our lines, had said. He appears to have come over our parapet and found some difficulty in finding any one to surrender to, ultimately finding a sentry in a communication trench who should not have been there! He was very fully informed in all German methods and the conduct of that bit of line, and, to judge from some things which have proved accurate, the information given is most useful. I wish I could pass on some of the information and how we have used it, but of course cannot do so. . . ."

" In Tents,

" 5 p.m. *Friday, November 19, '15.*

" I have just asked my servant, ' What day of the week ? ' He said, ' I cannot say, I don't take any notice of it.' Thus we live ! "

" In a Farmhouse in France [at Eecke],

" 12 noon, *Sunday, November 21, '15.*

". . . I said we were *moving* from the tents we were in, and I now write, having come last night after dark, i.e. starting about 4.30, about ten miles, taking five and a quarter hours to do it.

" I say ' after dark,' but the most gorgeous frosty moonlight night. I was in command of the Company, so rode the Coy. horse—as far as the second halt, after which I walked, as very stiff work riding all the time. Very jolly and quite hilly country, and we are verily in the country, each Company billeted in farmhouses about five hundred yards apart. With us, and I think each Company, the men are all in a barn, a rare squash, but they are given a good solid heap of straw. . . . We three Officers and the servants are in the farmhouse, with, of course, its occupants

—now much talking going on with our servants, and endeavours to understand what each means! We had to have our valises down to 35 lbs. Any surplus kit had to go on to our final destination. Our valises arrived some time after us. . . .

“Yesterday was a pretty wearisome day; being Coy. Commander, I am receiving endless chits about arrangements for moving, the last one of the previous day being brought to me just before midnight altering, *à l’armée*, many of the previous instructions. When you see moves like this, the wonder is how an army can ever carry on, seeing, as you do, the enormous bulk of material and stuff that accompany it. . . .

“*We are still not out of sound of guns*, but soon will be. The idea was to have a three-day march to our destination, staying each night in some such place as this. To-day being Sunday arrangements have been made to stay here all day. This is the first time I have come across consideration of Sunday. We have had no Services since I came back from leave, but as we now have a new Parson, do not understand why a Service was not arranged for to-day in one of the farms. I intend to have something for our Coy. this evening of a Service, and some football this afternoon.”

(His Diary says: “5.30. Had Service in a barn.”)

“. . . It is extraordinary how other Regiments starve and are uncomfortable simply through muddling things. The Battalion who came into our tents before we left yesterday, had failed to bring their day’s rations, hence will be living on bully beef only to-day. It is entirely their own fault, as also the matter of provisions, vegetables, etc., which can be bought in villages or farms locally. When in the trenches, we even do ourselves so well as to get the Company’s groom, who is behind with the horse, *to send up with the transport* each night eggs, vegetables, or such-like things as we may want them.”

“Billeted in a Doctor's House

[at Arneke].

“6.30 p.m. *Monday, November 22.*

“We moved on again this morning, and are billeted in a nice little place. Most of the Coy. are in the barn of an outlying very jolly old farmhouse. My Platoon are in a loft (over some cowsheds) full of straw. I rode part and walked part of the way. I received alternate blessings and cursings from either Adjutant or Commanding Officer on the way the men were marching. The men came through most wonderfully well. It really shows most splendid stuff, with all that they carry, that they can stick it as they do. A most perfect frosty morning for marching. . . . Henderson and Cartwright and the servants are in the house of Monsieur Depoers, or rather, I should say, with Madame Depoers, since she is the most irrepressible talker, and I only have just fled away from her, though the time has been decidedly amusing. . . . She has sheets of paper on which she gets Officers to write their names who have been billeted there, and we three wrote ours. . . . I hardly know where I am, being given a beautifully clean little room with decent bed, washstand, and all complete, such as I have not experienced before, this side of the sea. It is really nice to find a place where the people give such a warm welcome; I only wish I could talk fluently, but I scramble along.”

[at Eperlecques].

“6 p.m. *Wednesday, 24.*

“I sit in a little kitchen place in this farmhouse, with excellent stove, in which lives a fine old boy, who appears to be sole occupant of the farm. At the moment, with six other Officers, with four of ‘B’ Coy. with their gramophone going strong, and a rare fug on. The house is a good one, on one side of the square farmyard. A servant also getting



supper ready at the stove. Nothing whatever of furniture in the rest of the house, but quite clean for sleeping. When we got here last night the old boy very kind and gave us excellent pears and coffee, which are most welcome."

" Farm in France,  
[at the village of Nordleulinghem]

" *November 25, '15.*

" Most of my French is expended in talking to people about their dogs. I suppose there is no licence fee for keeping them, hence every one keeps them, and in many cases two or three, and they are most abominably thoughtless. For the most part continuously tied up, sometimes in a little kennel, sometimes just to a wall, sometimes to a little round brick place, one such place where we were two nights ago with entrance at bottom of a slope in the yard, so that the water ran down into it, and a poor little shivering dog lying in the sodden bottom of it.

" It is interesting to note in different parts how the same habits prevail among the people over different things. Here every one feeds their dogs on diluted-looking milk, with just the suspicion of bread in it, and a few beans.

" I found one tied to a wall, a most charming looking fox terrier, but so painfully starved, and with claws quite worn-down. I gave it an old box as some shelter, and let it out this afternoon, such terrific joy at getting a run round.

" A brute of an old woman in a little house just by has also a nice little fox terrier, tied short to a fairly decent kennel, but so that it has three bits of heavy chain to its collar, and so that it can only just get its head into the entrance of the kennel, and cannot curl itself up, or get to the back. A real terror of a woman, who says she never gives it 'promenade,' and feeds it on milk and bread. The poor little dog is frightfully starved. She would not even let me go near it! Some say if they let their dog out 'il

partie,' which of course means that they have a tear round, and I have shown them that they do not run away."

" *November 26, '15.*

" Yesterday I gave a little terrier here some dry bread, and a tiny bit of meat—all I had—and really too awful to see its intense hunger. . . . I may be wrong in thinking they suffer as I do, but it is very wretched to see this treatment on every hand. It puts me off *my* good meals badly!"

*To his Mother.*

" In French Village [Nordleulinghem],

" *November 26, 1915.*

" We got here, our final destination, after stopping at three places, mid-day yesterday, and all men are now fixed up—our Coy. in two farms with our Headquarters at another farm, where I also have my billet—a little room with bed leading out of the low-ceilinged kitchen (or living room). *Very clean*, belonging to a man who is at the Front; the wife a splendid little person who would suit you as bustling round real smartly and an excellent cook—she runs all the servants and everything else. . . . We are, I fear, in for a pretty strenuous time of drills and parades all the morning, and in the afternoon something of a compulsory exercise—football, running, hunting or anything that Coy. Commanders can raise. I should have liked a more peaceful time, but suppose it is necessary for us all to be smartened up. . . ."

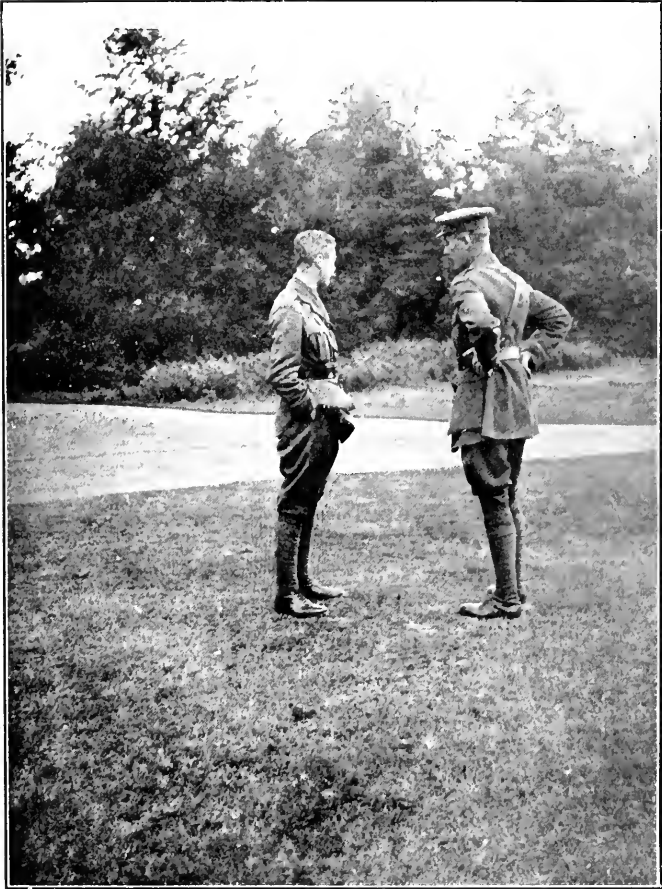
*To his Father.*

" In a French Village [Nordleulinghem],

" *December 1, 1915.*

" This afternoon I took the men out up hedges, etc., with two village dogs to try and get a rabbit, but no luck, though we saw two or three. A splendid lot of partridges here."





WITH H. F. B. AT EASNEYE.

[To face page 145

“ A Farm in France,  
“ 6 p.m. *Thursday, December 2, '15*  
(posted 8 a.m. Sunday).

“ The walk across country this afternoon was, I think, the most peaceful I have had out here, open, undulating country, lots of partridges, a few hares, and not a sound of anything—a really big joy. I also enjoyed a bit of walk two nights ago, the most gorgeous starlight night, as always so vast and wonderful. I wonder what the purpose of them all is, and can think of nothing except a continual revelation of GOD and for His praise. Stars, I found, look quite different, and awfully nice, looking at them with head back.”

“ Noon, *Friday, December 3, '15.*

“ A wettish sort of rain so far to-day, and instead of parades I have this morning given two lectures, one on First-Aid and gas helmets, and one on certain rifle matters.”

“ 5 p.m. *December 3.*

“ I have bought a fine little horn, obtained by the local postboy for me, similar to the one he has for stirring up people to open their doors. It will do well for training dogs, also in trenches for giving warning of an attack.”

“ In Tents in France,  
“ 8 p.m. *Monday, December 6, '15.*

“ . . . I have to-day moved from the billets we have been in. There was a probability I knew of being sent to a certain place about five miles from where we are, where grenade, alias bomb, and other courses, are being given by the Division (trench engineering, etc.).

“ At 10.30 last night I was warned that I had to be here with certain six N.C.O.'s and Riflemen in the Battalion at 8 a.m. This meant being up at five, and parading at

six. A good deal of rain but quite a good sunrise to help us along this otherwise not very attractive two hours' toddle on a muddy road. The course is, I think, five days, so I shall return on Saturday. There are fifteen other Officers from the Division also in it. We are in a sugar refinery, though no refining is now done, the place being entirely occupied by troops. The men are well off, in big buildings. We Officers are for sitting and mess all in one room, rather small and just short of sufficient to sit on, a wonderful collection of sort of music stools, three-legged chairs, etc. We are sleeping in tents about one hundred yards off in a muddy shrubbery, so the men, anyhow this time, score one over us. Each Officer is given a ration of straw to lie on, and the tents are also boarded. . . ."

*"Tuesday, December 7.*

"This 'School' has the feel and appearance of various 'crammer' establishments I have from time to time seen, and which I do not appreciate. It also perhaps adds to this feeling to be told that on Friday we shall have a *written paper* to do on the instruction given! Yesterday morning and afternoon we had lectures by a Lieutenant who appears to do most of the instruction. . . ."

*To his Mother.*

"24th Division Bombing School,

"France,

*"December 10, 1915.*

" . . . This course ends to-morrow after three hours more work in the morning, consisting of lecture on French bombs, bomb-throwing practice and catapult devices for throwing bombs. . . . We have dealt with about 13 or 14 kinds of bombs—also German ones. This afternoon we had an oral examination by the Brigade Bombing Officer, in which I think I gave him accurately all the information he asked

for. . . . Major P. was over here yesterday giving a lecture—not to us—on ‘hate.’ . . . You will loathe the expression as much as I do and therefore require a lecture as much as I do ! . . . It is very easy to try and merely exist in trenches and omit any aggressive work, and for this reason such sermons are from time to time given by C.O. or by instructions from the Brigadier, and are doubtless required.”

Andrew was turning out a splendid soldier, and had the heart of a lion ; but, like many other fine soldiers, he had little use for the “hate” business, an attitude of mind which seems congenial enough to our enemies, but is wholly alien to the temper and outlook of the average Englishman. In a letter written just about this time to his sister Rosamond he says, “I cannot get the spirit of ‘hate’ which is necessary. A struggle goes on in my ‘inn’ards,’ on the one hand an attempt to inculcate this ‘hate’ and on the other a thankfulness that I haven’t got it !”

*To E. S. Woods (in reply to a query).*

“He is and He is not closer out there. I cannot explain by letter what I mean, but perhaps you will understand. In the midst of absolute devilry and hate to comprehend love is wonderful but difficult. The knowledge that any second one may be shifted from devilry to God’s hereafter is so strange.

“I must stop. Best of love to you, Clemence, and all yours. Take care of your dear selves.”

On December 26 (1915) he got some short leave again. His Diary records : “Home at 11.30 p.m. Father thought my stones at his window were a woodcock.”

## VIII

### STILL IN THE SALIENT

JANUARY-MARCH, 1916.

ON January 3, 1916, Andrew was back in France again, finding his Battalion still billeted at Nordleulinghem. By the 7th they were in the Trenches once more, south-east of Ypres. He writes :

*To his Father.*

“ Trenches,

“ *January 8, 1916.*

“ Here all right last night and very pleasing to find the state of ‘ them ’ much better than expected and not at all unattractive as trenches go. . . . The place swarms with rats, the same as apparently in all trenches, any number about on the parapets, etc., and last night a fine cat which I should think has every opportunity of growing fat.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches,

“ *January 9, 1916.*

“ What a day I have had and am having. . . . My chief worry was that our men who had come into these trenches had had a very long march and nothing to eat since a midday meal about 12 noon. Their rations had gone on up to our front line and I had to send a fatigue party with my servant as guide (the only man, except myself,



who knew the way, and quite a complicated one!) to get them back, and though no doubt hungry I really don't believe they were in any way very troubled; anyhow no idea of any grumbling (in fact, just the reverse!); 18 or 19 hours long march with heavy load, without provisions, and very cheerful all the time till they got rations was, I think, good going! I don't know what time I lay down this morning, but suppose about 2.30 and got some sleep, which was pleasing, though messages or inquiries stirred me up every half-hour or so. . . . The free life of the trenches does suit me so much better than the formality of drills and similar work and I feel much fitter at it."

*To his Mother.*

"Trenches,

"January 11, 1916.

". . . It is very noticeable the increase of Artillery fire since I was last in trenches. We seem splendidly supplied and fire a lot more stuff than the Germans. . . . Thanks to having a good rest behind the line and being at home a week, besides now having well got into trench life, I feel *quite at home*, and enjoy it more than being behind."

*To his Mother.*

"In Ramparts,

"January 12, 1916.

". . . The Ramparts are in a much-shelled place [Ypres]. Such a strange abode, deep underground like a mine or wine-cellar with big upright baulks of timber. . . . It was in this place many men were 'gassed' when the Germans used it the Sunday before I came on leave. The men were ordered last night to all sleep with tube helmets round their shoulders in order to avoid such catastrophe recurring. A lovely morning—the first time I have been in this place by daylight—the sight is impressive in the extreme. . . .

You know we now have steel helmets to make us gay. . . . We have got a charming little sandy-coloured terrier which came over yesterday from the German lines. He spends his time killing rats. How often I wish old 'Hai' was here to see the rats; the number and their tameness is incredible. . . . My trench life is far far harder for you than for me, and I only wish you could see our joviality all the time. When the gramophone comes we shall be complete."

*To his Mother.*

" Ramparts,

" 11 a.m. *Friday, 14. I. 16.*

" . . . I am O.C. Company, as Marshall went on leave yesterday.

" We have had a really very slack time these last two or three days back at the place which I write from. The duties have been providing men as working parties to front line, and also carrying up of R.E. material, of course all by night.

" I am writing with some difficulty in the small Mess which we and C. Coy<sup>1</sup> share in these ramparts—a sort of wine-cellar, 18 feet × 6 feet; a small table at each end for our messes; at the present time a charcoal brazier in the middle. . . .

" A covey of partridges here this morning which are now calling outside the hut. . . .

" I have plenty of chocolate and everything now, and, moreover, there has now been opened (two days ago) an army canteen in Poperinghe, where I can buy all provisions, cigarettes, etc., quite easily, and probably cheaper than in London, so don't send me anything more till I write for it.

" I have to-day been out six calendar months and feel quite a veteran! I got to France July 15. Everything is vastly changed here, even in that time, and it gives confidence to have it so. The Bosch rifle-sniping at night is greatly

<sup>1</sup> Captain Tatham.

reduced (they hardly have any men in their front lines). Our shell fire by day is greatly increased, and we apparently have superiority.

“ Organization of working parties and general military arrangements much better—all the time men being sent away for every kind of ‘ course,’ grenades, machine guns, etc. ; also men being returned to England who are suitable for the different types of factory work for which hands are wanted.”

*To his Father.*

“ Billets,

“ 3.30 p.m., *Sunday*, 16. 1. 16.

“ . . . A certain number of us went ratting this afternoon along hedges and banks, including Irven, our sniping Officer. There are a definite body of men detailed for nothing but sniping ; they say they shot nine Germans in the seven days in the trenches, though on the other hand one of them, a very nice Corporal, was himself sniped and killed while doing so—testing certain sniping rifles, of which one is a double barrel 450.

“ These snipers are of considerable value to the Artillery, as by spying they very easily observe enemy Artillery observers in trees or tops of farm buildings, which buildings the Artillery would then demolish.”

7 p.m., *January* 18.

“ This even I have been giving such of the Coy. as cared to hear a talk on Canada, which they appeared to like. It is contrary to any regulations to lecture on any but military subjects, but I consider it of importance that they should have other things to think of besides warfare ! ”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ *Sunday*, *January* 16, '16.

“ I have been so torn asunder to-day, very much wishing to have a Service for the men of the Coy. As Coy. Com-

mander I can of course do so easier than any one else, but the only place to have it would be in our Mess hut, which is separated from the men's huts, and I know only too well that their natural shyness would prevent any from coming. The only thing is to get where they are, and ask any who do not want to stay to move. They then like it. There is such a painful feeling of spiritual deadness, though an equal feeling that the life is all ready to germinate."

*To his Father.*

"B.E.F., France,

"1 p.m., *Monday, 24. 1. '16.*

". . . I had a rotten day yesterday, having to take all available men of the Coy. (about 105) together with others of another Coy., making 150, as a Working Party on roads or trenches at the front. We left at 4 p.m., a procession of 20 (General Service) waggons, each with four horses, and two drivers (riding), ten of the waggons for our 150, the other ten for another Regiment's party.

"A very jolty and uncomfortable ride, walking practically all the time. They took us about half way, after which we got out and walked. It sounds strange, but it's a big difficulty getting out there with road full of troops and transports. No chance of keeping all men together, but managed to get them in three lots in file—mixed up with other Regiments and mud.

"Picked up guides at a certain place, who divided up men in parties as they wanted them. You would hardly believe the conglomeration of mankind, followed by conglomeration of torn up wilderness, at the place where most of our men went.

"All went in 'boots gum thigh' as the Army calls them, and the difficulty of getting along on the greasy road, and more still on lines of footboards, often lying at an angle, was great. It took me exactly four hours in all to get to

the bit of trench where twenty men who I had stayed with had got to work. Here the trench we were on had a few days previously been badly shelled, so badly that the R.E. Captain who was organizing the fatigue work had had great difficulty in retracing the line of it. It was a more shell-torn bit of ground than any I have yet seen, which is saying a good deal. . . . The whole impression a torn, windswept, devastated, uninhabited, uncared for, and upheaved land ! There had been a road through it, but no trace whatever to show that such civilization had ever existed.

“ . . . The men were very happy having the ride up first night, but they far from enjoy it now, knowing what it means of work, as also of risk, which was very much brought home to them by casualties two nights ago.”

“ 5 p.m., 24th.

“ Mother’s letter of Saturday just come, telling of her working party. It is strange that two things of the same name should be of such different natures. We do not work in dry rooms with white overalls and veils. Both appear pretty strenuous though.”

“ B.E.F.,

“ 10.15 a.m., *Sunday, January 30, '16.*

“ . . . It is so strange how mind and muscle get accustomed to a thing, even if not done for a long time. Our steel helmet has a leather strap hanging from the middle, and I continually find myself putting it on with a swing to throw the strap to the back of my head, just like putting on the old Harrow straw with elastic to go behind. And that now over eighteen years ago ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ In Huts, B.E.F.,

“ 2 p.m., *Friday, February 4, '16.*

“ . . . We were relieved in good time in the evening, hurrying in single file over one bit of ground, which the

Bosch have an objectionable habit of 'traversing' every now and then with machine-gun fire—changed our gum boots at a huge big public institution, which is only partly ruined, for the boots we had taken off going up. In a room there some one had generously started some soup-making, whereby all the men had an excellent cup of soup. . . .

"An awkward slippery bit of walking, getting back across to the huts, with considerable low-voiced grousing by the three or four men who helped with the cart!

"My servant Atkinson, the most splendid energetic fellow, who absolutely loves work, and whom nothing perturbs, said on his own account when we got fixed up, 'I can't understand those fellows; unless everything goes just so with them they are grousing and disagreeable at once.' In many ways they are absolutely splendid, but in the matters of (1) no consideration in avoiding waste, (2) reasonable precautions of looking after themselves, even after continually being told, and (3) grousing if anything unusual in the way of rations or marching occurs, then they are sometimes stupid. It is these things that are as hard to bear as anything, as I have told you before. The men don't mean it. It is more habit than anything else, and considered the normal and correct thing to do.

"Where you experience it properly is going over a new bit of road, or on a new bit of country; then you suddenly turn into a bit of road that they know, and they are as happy as mortals can be, usually commencing good singing, starting by 'Here we are, here we are, here we are again!' A new bit of country is no such pleasure to them as to us, but I frequently go different ways, as good knowledge of the country may any time come in useful."

"3.30 p.m., 4. I. 16.

". . . Our last trenches were very weather-worn. . . . I think it was probably this mess of a trench that saved us

the day before yesterday from being badly hit by a shelling they gave us—they probably could not tell exactly where our trenches were. We were shelled a little on Tuesday and Wednesday for about an hour very heavily, but in our Coy. am thankful to say only two slightly hit during it; yesterday just a few shells again, but no damage.

“ I feel I am much blessed that these sort of times do not in any way upset me, my only trouble being whether the men are ready for an attack which may easily follow.

“ It is very hard to get the sentries to continue a good look-out, and I spent practically the whole time with a periscope watching the German trenches to see they did not come out.

“ The idea of an attack does not seem to enter into the men’s heads; all they wonder being when the shelling will stop! There were four men just by me in a bit of the trench who had left their fire positions and rifles at them before the shelling started, and were pretty much cut off from getting back. I did not expect an attack, so did not send them. My orders have been, whenever a bombardment like that begins, every man must get his rifle and nurse it, but the greater part couldn’t, or didn’t, with the consequence that a great number of the rifles got hopelessly coated with mud from the shells, whereby the bolts would not have worked at all. . . .”

“ *February 5, 1916.*

“ I had a long evening of it last night, getting an order at 6 p.m. to be at a certain place three and a half miles off [Hell Fire corner, on the Ypres-Menin road] with all my men to carry up certain rations, mails, etc., from a dump place to the trenches, the distance of a mile. As all had to do two journeys, and some three, with the rations, it was, in all, a good eleven miles walk, and a very difficult one too. The second journey up I took a sack of about

60 lbs. weight over my shoulders, and gave a hand to another man with a mail bag twice that weight. A wet night, lots of mud, and machine-gun fire. Some got very wet, tumbling into muddy wash at the side of the road when any heavy fire opened.

"We came back in parties, the last getting in about 1 this morning, without any casualty, I am thankful to say."

"Noon, *Sunday, February 6.*

"I had the same carrying party last night, and hope it will be the last. It certainly will be for carrying rations, as all our people come out to-night. We did not get off quite scot-free, one man being slightly hit, or, as described by the men, 'a beautiful Blighty one,' meaning a harmless flesh wound, which will get him possibly to England. The stuff to be carried was again very heavy; we did it all in two journeys, and I took rare weighty loads each time, big sacks of meat, and mails, I think.

"I really enjoy such actual carrying, and believe I can take as heavy loads as any man. It makes me hesitate though, more than ever, to ask you to send me parcels, at any rate when in the trenches to which we were carrying, knowing what it means that some one has got to get them along that mile. . . .

"Since writing they have put about forty shells at a gun position about 150 yards behind here—tremendous row, and most wonderfully good practice. The bits of shell flying back all round here, but dug-outs are protection against them. Another big 'crump' just come. Several time salvos four together. I forgot to tell you that in the trenches I was last in there is one splendid upheaval like a crater caused by a mine. Full of water, and if it were a Scotch loch, it would be of just sufficient size to try a cast as very possibly holding trout. You can walk round along the edge on water level, and be about ten feet below the



top. It is this in conjunction with the shell holes which has made this ground such a wonderful sight.

“ One fellow’s nerves (he’s a Buff) have just given way from the shelling, and he is hysterical outside the hut. One shell landed only just outside our hut, where our men were, and two of our men have, I just hear, been hit—awfully troubling.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ In Huts, 3rd R.B.—

“ *Sunday, February 6, '16.*

“ I have had a lot on, and a rotten day, being heavily shelled, or rather some guns just by us ; one shell hit three of my men. Another man of mine was hit carrying last night, and five or six during the three days in the trenches. One Sergeant had a very near shave. He was going out to put up wire with me in the early morning with a close-fitting wool helmet on, and a bullet cut a hole through it without touching his head. Another man, not so fortunate, was sniped, no doubt by a telescopic rifle. The bullet went in the centre of his forehead, and out near his temple. He was just by me. He was able to get up and walk, and apparently did not feel much ill effect. As it was a clean wound I hope he may recover. The front of the brain is, I think, the least serious of any part.”

*To his Father.*

“ In Huts,

“ 7 p.m., *Sunday, February 6, '16.*

“ The shelling set light to ammunition by the guns, and that has been going off at intervals—they have just sent over about a dozen more shells on to the same spot, and again set light to the stuff, which is popping off.”

“ 1.30 p.m., *Wednesday, 9. 2. 16.*

“ I had another working party to take last night, but a better hour than the previous one. Started at 5 p.m. and

got in about 11.30 p.m. A rotten night, very heavy rain a great deal of the time.

“ The night was of interest in that the Bosche were putting more shells over my head than I have experienced previously in the time. They appeared to be shooting especially at gun positions and roads. They were often going over in herds or flocks or coveys or droves, or whatever the correct expression is as applied to shells, and following on like a long-drawn-out pack of grouse. You would have liked to have been there and heard them going over ; big high-travelling ones, then the quick explosions, or else duds, behind, or else shrapnel on the roads, with quick crisp explosions about 20 yards above the road. They started putting some evidently at where we were working at a trench right away from a road, no doubt having spotted the work by aeroplane, and guessed we were there.”

On February 14 came the quite unexpected joy of a week's " leave," which he spent at Easneye. He was back again with the Battalion by the 23rd.

*To his Father.*

“ B.E.F.,

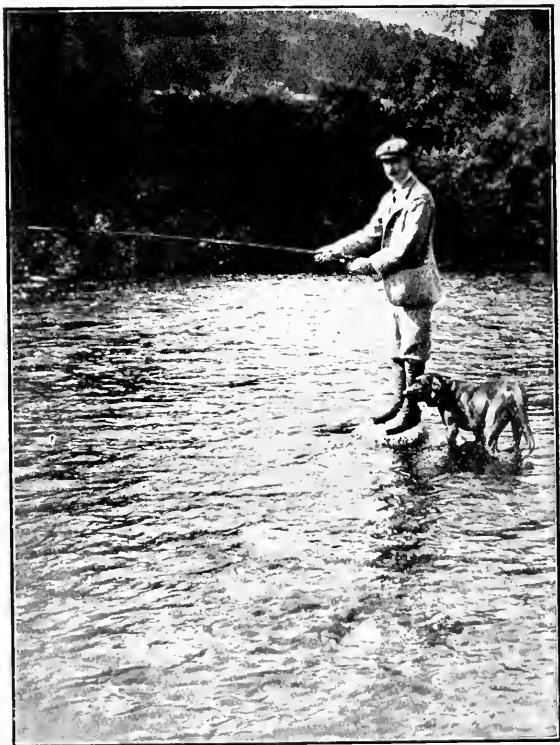
“ Noon, *Wednesday, February 23,* '16.

“ Here I am back again with the Battalion (from a week's leave). Ground white with snow.

“ I had a good journey. Kept at Boulogne about four hours, which I spent chiefly in the ' Folkestone ' Hotel. The train left at 7.30 p.m., divided as usual into carriages for the different divisions, by which I came to our usual railhead [Poperinghe], getting there about 1.30 a.m. As we got in aeroplanes or Zeppelins were dropping bombs on the place ; the train in consequence got properly ' windy,' the last mile or so pulling up with sudden jerks.

“ The R.T.O. (Railway Transport Officer) there told





*[To face page 159*

**FISHING THE GARRY FROM URRARD, 1914.**

me where my Battalion were, but, as I felt sure, his information was wrong. I went into an old sort of chateau place near the station, and had a lie down in a strange sort of room, where was a bed with dilapidated spring base, and door with two panels out. It was pretty cold, but I got some sleep all right, thanks largely to finding an old bit of mat, about four feet long by two feet, on the floor, which I put on top of myself, and thanks also to mother's provisions from which I also had breakfast when I shifted off again about 8 a.m."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

" B.E.F.,

" *February 26, '16.*

" That Sunday was a bad affair with our casualties. I have written to the families of those who were killed who were in my Platoon when I had a Platoon. There was one unusual case of shock; he was a man of thirty-two, with six children. He was not hit, but lay absolutely paralysed all over, quite conscious, and apparently calm, and died two days later. You might by chance find yourself one day near his home, when it would be very kind to see his widow. He was in my Platoon. It is very tragic to think that she does not probably yet know of his death, as, as far as I know, no one has written from here, and in the case of a soldier the news is not given by the W.O. for several weeks."

" Huts, B.E.F.,

' 1 p.m., *Thursday 2. 3. '16.*

" I did not know, when I wrote to you yesterday, what last night would bring forth, as it had been planned to retake some ground,<sup>1</sup> which you know was lost some time ago, and, though in reserve, it appeared very probable that we should have to assist, or anyhow move up nearer.

<sup>1</sup> Diary says "Of Bluff. We in support." See p. 162.

“ The road by us was yesterday a wonderful sight of troops moving, including one Highland Regiment with their pipes, also transport, etc. All men with steel helmets.

“ Our Coy. Commanders went up several days ago to see how the ground lay, in case we should be in it. . . .

“ The only report I have is that we have taken trenches except in one part, and this part being dealt with.

“ 5 p.m.

“ There have been four lots of German prisoners marched along this road to-day, about forty in each.

“ A good number were wounded in arms and various parts. All looked pretty washed out, pale, and as though they had had enough of it, which no doubt is the case; even if they were in trenches for only last night our guns must have given them a terrible time.

“ Most of them were wearing German regular boots, half-way up the calf, and a good many long blue-grey overcoats, more or less anything in the way of breeches, some corduroy, etc. Those who had caps had soft ones, no steel helmets, unless the steel helmets had been pinched as souvenirs by our men!

“ It must have been strange for them coming through our camps; our men, very keen, running in hundreds to the side of the road to look at them. I expect they were thankful to be moving along, even as prisoners, after the time they must have had.

“ It is strange having drills, when any time we may move and have to go and fight. Every one is ready with fighting order, and has been so the last 24 hours. My fighting order consists of my equipment with water-bottle and revolver, and haversack buckled on to it. In haversacks, bag of emergency rations, which consist of chocolate, tin of Brand's, and hind leg of your excellent chicken! also spare pair of

socks and puttees. It is strange not knowing where I may find myself before any day or night is over."

" 4 p.m. *Friday, 3. 3. '16.*

" Still here all right, though apparently we were nearly wanted to go up yesterday afternoon, as the Germans had made a counter-attack, and things looked a bit critical. Our transport horses were kept harnessed all night so as to be ready. . . .

" I am wondering what the papers will say about the efforts here, probably a brief communique giving an impression of some small affair which has given no trouble ; whereas when you see (and hear, in the matter of guns) troops, guns, limbers, aeroplanes, and know all the detail that has had to be fixed up, you realize that these efforts are a very great undertaking.

" . . . I did not tell you of a message through to us yesterday : ' Be ready to move at a moment's notice.' ' Are you ready to move at once ? ' But we are still here ! The Brigade seem to have got the wind up. Yesterday we heard 224 Bosche (of whom 4 are Officers) had been taken prisoners, but this number apparently has been increased."

" 2 p.m., *Saturday, 4th.*

" . . . The Battalion has had a lecture from the Brigade Intelligence Officer of our Battalion. He told us how the re-taking of these trenches was done. Our guns fired salvoes every three minutes from 8 p.m. till 4.30 a.m., when they lifted on to the German back trenches to do in troops there and make a curtain of fire to prevent reinforcements coming up. At 4.30 our troops took the trenches required, with but few casualties.

" The Germans shelled us from then onwards, in which I should gather we had heavy casualties ; it is generally the

case that by means of heavy artillery fire, any trenches can be taken with small loss, but the loss comes from shelling after they are taken, and from counter-attacks.

“ I have now got our ‘ Daily Summary,’ which gives details of what occurred.

“ The total prisoners were 250 men and 5 Officers. The number of prisoners was large, owing to the Germans carrying out a relief at the time of our attack, and also that we surrounded one bit. The high bit of ground called the ‘ Bluff ’ immediately north of the Canal (south of Hill 60) was the essential bit to get back, which was done all right ; they also got back my old friend the bit of trench which I was once in, and the front line of German trench just opposite it and quite near (in one place about 35 yards off).

“ I am feeling most awfully flourishing, and hope greatly you are all the same.

“ There is very little chance of now being wanted. In some ways I am very sorry.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ 13. 3. 16.

“ Don’t think of any job for me beyond what I have. I enlisted for what I am doing, i.e. straight-ahead fighting wherever wanted, and I am prepared to continue and see it through. I do not wish to avoid risk, and I do not think you would wish it either. The necessity of myself ‘ doing in ’ men I should like to avoid, and mercifully have been spared this so far.”

*To the Same.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ Sunday, March 12, ’16.

“ I have just had a short Service in one of the men’s huts.



There were one or two other Services fairly near, one in a cinema, and one in a Y.M.C.A. hut at 10 a.m., but as a bit early for those out last night, I thought well to have this."

*To his Mother.*

" B.E.F.,

" *Sunday, 19. 3. '16.*

" Our Coy. moved about five miles eastwards last evening, having a lift on a train almost to a well-shelled place—the first time I have been on a train on that certain bit of line.

" M., who refuses to ride Nero, our Coy. horse, any more since he was chucked off, walked up earlier, so I brought up the Coy. There is accommodation for all in dug-outs, dug into the railway embankment half a mile south of the place which I said was well shelled.—The dug-outs are right under the line, with passage of four or five yards to come in by, and so they ought to be pretty shell-proof. . . .

" Two nights ago I took up B., one of our new Officers, to show him how to do these things—it made it particularly interesting, as he was only out for the first time, and greatly excited to know what shell or trench mortar or rifle grenade was, and whether ours or German, and seeing the trenches, which appeared like Hampton Court Maze to him. Like every one else, he was amazed at the dilapidated appearance of the muddy front line—trench-diggers in England often forget that the trenches are frequently knocked to bits, then built up, then knocked to bits again next day, and so on. I began to feel quite a veteran who knows the ropes ; anyhow one does realize on showing some one the trenches for the first time the seeming folly of putting troops to attack trenches (as has been done both here and in Gallipoli) who had never seen trenches as we have them out here !

" I often long greatly for a move, and to see into German

trenches, the parapets of which I know so well by sight. It may come along some day, but no sign as yet.

“ There is a small humorous paper issued here called *The Wipers Times or Salient News*, said to be only 100 copies printed for each number. I am fortunate in having No. 3 as a some day souvenir.”

“ 3 p.m., *Sunday*.

“ I have been watching for some time one of our aeroplanes flying low (comparatively speaking) up and down the German lines—quite one of the finest things I have seen—the Bosche pumping first black shrapnel for about three-quarters of an hour, then, having very possibly run out of this, white shrapnel at it. He (the airman) zig-zagging and turning all the time. Probably he was photoing the trenches. They must have fired many hundred shells. I wish Arthur could have seen it, as he would have greatly liked it. I forgot to tell you when I was last where I am now (on way with working party) they had been putting lachrymatory shells on to this part, nothing very thick, or enough to put on goggles or tube helmet, but enough to make us all do a bit of weeping.”

*To his Father.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ 4 p.m., *Monday*, 20. 3. '16.

“ I have been in about half-an-hour from a long walk round certain front line trenches, which I had not seen before. . . . We have a small, shallow pond just by our dug-outs, with low rushes by the side, in which I saw a ripping pike of about 5 lbs. muddling about. I had a shot with my revolver, and apparently stunned him for about a minute, as after that he began to move off again, but difficult to see whereabouts his head or tail was. I thought I got him with another shot, which was about right as it

seemed, but he only went off with big rush. I was very sorry not to get him, as it would have given the men great joy to have had him for breakfast ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ Dug-outs, B.E.F.,

“ 1 p.m., *Tuesday*, 21. 3. '16.

“ Instead of transport coming up to us to-night, we go back to it for two nights, after which I say farewell to the Salient. From all accounts it appears to be quite the worst part of the line, and there is great rejoicing at a move a little southwards, though, as I now know the ground pretty well, I cannot say I move without regret. . . .

“ A ripping pair of moorhens by us on this pond. I wonder where they will nest. It must be difficult to choose, surrounded by Tommies ! The poor young ones will have poor chances with pike and masses of rats.

“ It is very noticeable how little the Germans now put over of heavy stuff—‘ Grannys ’ or ‘ Trains ’ as we used to call them—travelling over our heads in the trenches, bound for some farm or similar place which they wanted to demolish. I have not myself heard one, at any rate anywhere near, for several months.”

“ Noon, *Wednesday*, 22. 3. 16.

“ I told you I missed a pike in a pond, but yesterday I shot a fish, probably a lb. roach, or something of the sort. Quite fun trying to recover it in the rushes ; the mud was too deep for gum boots, so got a tub, in which one of the servants made a perilous journey through rushes, but, instead of retrieving it, stupidly drove it into the mud !

“ . . . I wonder when my next leave will come off. I think I look forward to each more than the previous one. All news seems good, so perhaps a permanent leave may soon come off ! I long and long to see you all.

“ I write this sitting in a big hut, which is used for the Battalion for this day we are here, as a mess room, each Coy. having separate bits of long tables. At the moment it looks like a club—every one (fifteen Officers) reading or writing. A servant has just been in to ask one Officer if he will have breakfast (time now 1 p.m.) He answers ‘ No, thanks, I will have lunch ! ’ ”

## IX

### FAREWELL TO THE SALIENT

MARCH—JULY, 1916.

EIGHT months—and those mostly winter months—in the Ypres salient are calculated to give even the most stout-hearted more than his fill of War experience, and Andrew was not sorry when the day came for a move to other parts of the battle-front. He writes to his mother on March 25, 1916:

“ In Billets (Farms),

“ B.E.F., [Godewaersoelde].

“ Yesterday (March 24), was an eventful day in my army history in that I left the Salient after eight months there, and I do so feeling never more fit in my life.

“ We had a good ten-miles march, starting at noon yesterday, with a shooting lunch en route, for which we (i.e. the Brigade with transport, etc., complete) halted  $\frac{3}{4}$ -hour. The men had good hot stew ready in the travelling kitchens belonging to each Coy. My lunch you provided, as is often the case—ration bread the only stranger!

“ Sir Douglas Haig passed us in a motor on the way.

“ No one fell out of our Coy., which is really quite good going, as there are a certain number both of very young small fellows, and of old and wheezy ones. I was not carry-

ing anything like what they were, but had had quite enough, or rather certain shoulder muscles had, from the drag of pack!

“ We find here a ‘ Barr and Stroud ’ range-finder, probably left in the Farm by whatever troops have just gone out, quite new, value about £60 or £70.

“ You can feel happy about me, such a comfortable warm room with big table, and right behind the lines—the only trouble you are not here too ! ”

*To a Friend.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ 25. 3. 16.

“ MY DEAR A.,

“ Most ripping to get your letter, with its blessings and cursings, of which the latter appear to prevail. . . . From what I see out here, you are right in saying the soldier feels he can get on without religion, or perhaps feels rather incomplete, though religion is far from his wish. It is the old story of the unfortunately wrong point of view of religion which prevails—entirely negative: don't do this and don't do that, then some day get to Heaven and have good time.

“ I have had a few Services as opportunity has occurred for the men, and endeavoured to give them the Truth as I read it in the Bible, with its essentially positive nature—members of the Kingdom, by which life becomes ‘ unto God.’ I see at these times that the feeling of incompleteness is felt, and also that the Gospel is what is needed. All revivals have started by a return to the Bible, and when expounded irresistibly appeals to men.

“ I repeat your words ‘ Why all this ? ’ ; forgive, as it does me good to have a bit of a talk. I do sometimes

refresh myself with memories of Scotland, though it is hard to do in this land. The War is loathsome; mercifully I have been saved from the worst so far. We now have left the Salient after a long time there. I have had just over eight months in it."

*To his Mother.*

"In Farms,

"March 26, 1916.

"This morning I marched with Marshall to the other Farms where Battalion are billeted with a view to getting Officers to send in contributions (literary) towards a one and only copy of a Battalion paper which we propose to try and have, giving record of the Battalion during the War and taking-off various men and Officers—I don't know if it will come off! It is suggested that I write the *City news!*

". . . How is old Zadok now looking? I sometimes long more than I can say for him out here. . . . I am sending addressed to myself a packet of paper cuttings, etc., which please keep for me. There is also a *Wipers Times*. There have only been 100 copies printed, and printed on an old printing press found in Ypres—so is an interesting thing."

*To his Father.*

"Farms, B.E.F.,

"5 p.m. Monday, 27. 3. 16.

". . . Yesterday afternoon I went a walk with two others to top of Mont des Cats, about half-a-mile north of our Farm. There apparently used to be a monastery at the top, which is now a hospital. Very fine view all round. I saw through a fine fixed telescope of a signaller there, and looked apparently at Lille—the houses showed up very clearly, and numerous factory chimneys. Also just saw the remains of the Ypres Cathedral tower. A

strong, healthy wind up there—pretty close to the west is Cassel, a town on a similar type of hill.”

On March 29 the Battalion moved up into trenches at Neuve Eglise.

“ B.E.F.,

“ 3 p.m. *Saturday, April 1, '16.*

“ I sent you an official card yesterday. It is rather hard work getting settled down in a new place and finding how the land lies, but we are getting on all right and think it will be satisfactory. . . .

“ Up at 5 for 2½ hours to take my turn as Officer on duty in the trenches. Then to bed again to be stirred up by a Corporal who had seen Germans working on their parapet, a long way off (when the mist that then was rose for a short time) to know what he was to do about firing. Then again to bed till about 11, when some breakfast. . . .

“ Last night I saw to the work of a working party of 60 men who came up for about 2½ hours, then was on trench duty 3-5 this morn. As dawn came, amongst the rifle shooting, a jolly blackbird got up by me, at a normal time for a blackbird. With usual blackbird noise as he flew, and partridges both ½ left and ½ right (i.e. 2 pairs) ‘ calling ’ quite regardless of heavy firing over their heads, they being between our lines. Sparrows are most friendly and really delightful—quite part of our life and busy talking about nests in trees knocked about by shells. The General has been along our trench this afternoon.”

“ B.E.F.,

“ 3 p.m., *Sunday, 2. 4. 16.*

“ An R.E. Major has just looked into the dug-out to ask certain things re drainage of our trenches. I took him out to show him. Marshall was outside 50 yards along shooting sparrows in a row of elms along the trench with







WITH ZENITH AT EASNEY.

[To face page 171

one of the men's rifles. Not had a single shell to-day, only the sound of odd distant ones ; on the other hand, we gave them quite a lot this morning. . . .

“ Baking hot sun to-day. You would be amused to see the men lying asleep in it. One I have just passed on a fire-step (i.e. step to stand on to fire over parapet) lying on the step with one leg and one arm hanging down, snoring away, with cap on face to keep sun out of eyes—every prospect of falling off soon. Excellent dug-outs here—all quite dry and more than we want. This, together with the fact of it being obviously a very quiet place, looks like being in fortune's way.”

*To his Mother.*

“ April 2, 1916.

“ I finished the Canteen job yesterday and have come back to the Wood as O.C. ‘ B ’ Coy. I have been thanked by the Brigade for fixing up the Canteen. It has been one of the hardest bits of work I have had and I am thankful to have finished it, or rather the starting of it, because I shall have auditing and other work still to do ! Everything is at its height of beauty—trees half out and the low under-wood full of birds. A nightingale singing all night close by my hut and a cuckoo this morning and endless other birds. This morning I saw the pair of nightingales, also a blackbird sitting on a nest only just off the ground. The poor old nightingale did not have the night to himself, as no doubt he is accustomed to expect, because quite a noisy time of our guns and Bosch ones and plenty of machine and rifle fire. I am sure he sometimes got his ‘ runs ’ of note to correspond with the tap, tap, tap of machine guns.”

*To his Father.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ Noon, Monday 3. 4. 16.

“ I just now feel I never enjoyed life as at present. Life

here is so absolutely full of interest, and with baking hot sun and star-light nights it is complete.

“ The Bosch have just been putting over about 20 whizz-bangs and done no damage. One of the servants has come into the dug-out and said, ‘ I think they have now finished their rations,’ i.e. Bosch shell rations.

“ I have always been on the look-out for *Brimstone Butterflies* (yellow ones) as being the first to show up in the Spring, but did not expect to see the first one yesterday through a periscope.

“ On tour of duty I walk along and look over parapet with the sentries and listen to perhaps machine-gun working half-a-mile to one side, then nearer some sector of trench firing rifle grenades, then somewhere between the lines two bombs in rapid succession. Then perhaps think I hear something against wire in front, so send up a ‘ Very ’ flare-light. We send up hardly any of these ; the Bosch keep the whole line lit up with them and much better than ours. They go in an arc of nearly 200 yards. Then perhaps I go out and visit some listening post in front of our lines and lie out with them for a bit. . . .

“ Since I have been writing this, they have been shelling us quite heavily, although splendidly, just over the trench I write from. A great number of whizz-bangs and 5·9 H.E. shot at trenches we are not using. The only trouble is that instead of lunch at 1 o'clock, it is now 2, the shelling having upset cooking arrangements. It has now stopped, which I thought would be the latest for Bosch Artilleryman's dinner hour ! And it is correct. No one damaged, and very little harm to trench. They have cut by the shelling both our lines of *telephone*, so till to-night we cannot ring up. One shell cut one of the elms almost in half. Your elms come down by gale, ours by shell !

“ I now hear the firing this morning was an attack by us, not by the Bosch—80 prisoners. Going out to see a listening post last night I slipped into a shell-hole, with water in it, and made a rare splash, at which two German flare-lights sent over the place. When back in the trenches I asked the sentries if they had heard any noise of water. All in the neighbourhood had heard a ‘ splash.’ The men, especially when on sentry work, are very keen to report anything they hear or see. You would like to walk along and see the sentries standing in pairs on fire-steps, with heads above the parapet, watching the front. By day of course nothing but periscopes.

“ A Sunday paper has somehow just arrived with news of Zeppelin brought down at mouth of Thames. That is excellent good news.

“ This life does suit me so well—anything of drills or parades makes me ill. I toddle about the trenches without a coat these warm days, just in my old Cardigan, steel hat and respirator in bag round shoulders. I told my servant to ‘ trim ’ my steel hat, as otherwise apt to show up. He first of all fixed a sand-bag over it, but this came off, he then fixed something else he had found with elastic round the side but too small, so the last and final trimming is *mud* plain and simple.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Trenches, B.E.F.,

“ 7.30 a.m., Wednesday, 5. 4. 1916.

“ This is a good opportunity as Marshall and Eliot are both asleep in the dug-out (our Coy. H.Q.'s)—Eliot on my bed, he being on duty before me and last night being one place short for lying down, as an Officer of another Regiment came up for a certain purpose, so that whichever Officer was on duty had the one whom he relieved taking his dug-

out as soon as he got up. Our trench is just in front of what must have been a ripping old farm building with very jolly shallow-sided moat all round it. The buildings of course knocked to bits, though a good many bits of wall standing 10–20 feet high, on which sparrows are trying to find nesting-places. Also this morning a pair of wagtails, and in a little gully by the side, I saw two kingfishers. I shall be very interested to watch for their nest. For some way along the side of this moat we have no parados to our trench, and moreover the trench is on ground level—i.e. breastwork (Irish as this may sound). So very jolly having this pond in which plenty of minnows, and ruin behind us to look on.

The brick *débris* of the farm we collect at night to put on top of dug-outs in order to burst any shell as quickly as possible. They gave us moderate shellings both yesterday and the day before, usually about an hour each day, giving us about 130 shells each time. The day before yesterday no one harmed, but yesterday unfortunately one of the Officer's (Chamberlain's) servants was killed and two men slightly harmed all by different shells. . . .

“ You can hardly believe how natural and undisturbing it is to have a man killed in the trenches from time to time, though only undisturbing if you have not got to know the one well. Some are such absolutely charming and first-rate boys, and when one of these gets hit or killed it hits me very hard. The course taken is his Pay Book and other papers and things are sent in by the Coy.-Sergt.-Major to H.Qrs., who forward them to his family, the Coy.-Sergt.-Major writing a short line with them. The man is taken down the same night on a stretcher and buried in one of the recognized burial-places near by. . . . The cases which are troubling are when you have men hit and in pain—killed outright or able to walk down seem both so merciful compared with the other. . . .

“ The Bosch put up one of their ‘sausage’ observation balloons opposite us at 7 this morning. How greatly you would enjoy to walk along after ‘Stand to’ at dawn and see the fellows cooking their bacon breakfasts—lighting their tin braziers with splinter wood and coke, then cooking bacon in lid of canteens. Most mess in together in parties of 4 or 5—one brazier for all. Tea is boiled in canteen on it. I had to tell off several this morning for making a smoke—unless the wood is cut absolutely fine it smokes. They love muddling over their rations and somehow seem to do it, limited as they are, all day.

“ This morning they all said the rum issue (the best institution that ever was, they live for their  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoonfuls at dawn) was watered, which it certainly was, and was confirmed by the Coy.-Sergt.-Major who had noticed it when opening the rum jars. Some one had helped himself at the base or elsewhere ! ”

“ Huts,

“ 1 p.m., *Thursday, April 6, 1916.*

“ I have not re-read what I wrote early yesterday morning, but now write my dearest of dear love for your birthday in two days time. Many, many happy returns of it. No birthday present, except perhaps to tell you that I am alive and most flourishing. I am thankful to be able to report this, as we yesterday had one of the worst days I have had out here. I told you of the exceptionally quiet morning we started with. It was indeed a quiet before storm, as at about 10.45 a.m. they began shelling us with 5.2's. 5.9's. and whizz-bangs which lasted, with but few short intervals, till 4.45. It was a most awfully hot time and really marvellous how I dodged them as I shifted about the trenches. Sometimes I would sit in a dug-out for a few minutes, half a minute afterwards a shell on top. They followed me about or barred my way in front. I can under-

stand a rabbit's feelings when going slow and a shot is fired to cut up the ground in front of him and he stops or turns ! We got some lunch and a cup of tea—' some ' cup of tea—at a quarter to five. It was rather difficult to fix up anything for the men. They of course had not had their mid-day meal of fresh meat, and this had either got lost, buried or coated with earth thrown up by shells, but found some tinned bully beef, etc. I thought they had finished for the day, but at about 8 o'clock, after dark, they gave us a very heavy shelling again. When that started I was visiting certain outlying posts, which are always a bit of a strain on men's nerves, and specially so when they had had the rattling they had had during the day. I found our Coy.-Sergt.-Major sitting in the trench at the end of the line, who said he had been hit. A bit of shell or shrapnel had dug a hole and gone into the top of his thigh. *By means of my torch I got a bandage on it*, but thought at the time what Ros with her hospital experience and your working party with their beautifully clean cuffs and aprons would have thought in that before I could get the bandage on the wound it was twice over ' dressed ' with a coating of earth thrown up by shells, to fall down again like rain and only a handkerchief from my pocket to wipe it off with ! I poured in one of the little tubes of iodine you gave me, and can only hope he will be none the worse, but I fear there is some risk of septic trouble. He was able after a time to walk down the trench slowly. A most splendid and valuable man and will be a great loss.

" The men were decidedly ' windy,' but for some reason I think the Bosch were equally so, to judge by the number of flare lights sent up, which was exceptional. I think I never spent such a day of cursing and blessing—cursing men for shifting about without rifles or without equipment (i.e. ammunition), and blessing them by patting them on the back to try and cheer them up and restore some colour



to their faces and stability to their nerves. We really had wonderfully few casualties—the terror is to hear a big H.E. coming (you almost always hear them for 4 or 5 secs. before they arrive), then huge burst with shooting straight up of dense black smoke and around and above bits of footboards and wood or whatever it has come near, and to say to oneself ‘certainly half-a-dozen men just where that landed’—but amazing and an awful relief to go and find that not one touched. From a distance you would say anything anywhere near the burst of these shells would be killed, but it is quite the other way, the effect being in many cases absolutely local.

“Don’t let this worry you; it is just one more of a few quite bad days’ experiences I have had. We came back a little way early this morning into the wood.<sup>1</sup> Had supper at 2 a.m. when we got in, and breakfast at noon. At 1 p.m. the cook asked what time we would have lunch. I said we would have tea at 4 o’clock.

“Another ripping day and fine for a walk round as I now have a chance of seeing some migrant birds in the wood. I slept magnificently and never felt so fit. Yesterday has not in the least upset me. The men are also now in good spirits, singing ‘On the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond,’ etc. . . .”

*To his Father.*

“Huts in Wood, [Ploegsteert],

“April 7, 1916.

“. . . The Bosch plumped some shells round our huts yesterday afternoon, which meant an exodus of all men and Officers into the fields—rather strange to see one or two rabbit hunts on the way, put up in the fields. No harm to huts, but too close to be pleasant. I was surprised

<sup>1</sup> Ploegsteert.

how far the bits of 5·9 shell flew—some bits came 600 or 700 yards. It is not often that I have experienced H.E.'s in the open. I was this morning in what must have been such lovely grounds and château, now gone to the winds—long winding paths in the woods, kitchen garden, summer-houses, rockeries, fountain and very pretty cemented winding way from it. Entrance lodges from the main road. The château I have not seen, but believe it is levelled. Gardener's cottages levelled except for cellars. So strange to see things still struggling to 'carry on' in the garden—low box-borders, berberies and laurel, vegetables and flowers (iris, etc.) It must have been a ripping situation and place."

" *April 9, 1916.*

" . . . This morning I saw two magpies on a stick-nest and later a sparrow-hawk, and wonder which is going to have it. To-day I have heard a willow-wren—the first migrant. The shell-holes with water in them soon get those black flies which run on the water. I wonder how they get there. To-day I saw the château in the grounds of which I wrote yesterday—an appalling sight indeed. It must have been a big house, and it is now a pile of ruins, hardly a bit of wall remaining ; massive buttresses and pillars and girders chucked down in a heap—two or three girders are sticking up from it almost straight. It must have been a very jolly place with a little pond just by the house and paths through the wood up to summer-houses and fancy places. The wood is on the steep side of a hill and is now a mass of English Tommies in sandbag huts, and, near by, trenches and wire entanglements. I am just (7 p.m.) back from a Service in a Y.M.C.A. hut—I suppose the nearest Y.M.C.A. hut to the firing line ; only possible as being sheltered by a hill, but none the less it has very nearly had shells on it since we have been here. I have heard from Arthur that he would like to come to this Brigade."

*To his Mother.*

“ April 9, 1916.

“ I know you wish to hear if anything nice is said about anything. I do, so tell you that on the 5th when we were heavily shelled there happened to be three Brigade Majors in our Coy. H.Qrs. who for several hours could not get away. They said nothing at the time, but three days after our Adjutant, who has been temporarily at Brigade H.Qrs., told Marshall what good work they thought I was doing that day, and Marshall, who had not said anything to me, added ‘ I must say you did awfully well.’ They saw nothing except that I went out of H.Qrs. once or twice and knew something of what I had been up to. This was rather pleasing and you, no doubt, would like to appreciate with me.”

“ April 10, 1916.

“ Another absolutely perfect morning, and after a splendid long night I feel just bursting with life and enter thoroughly into the singing of tits around. All the men singing and so jovial too.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ April 10, 1916.

“ . . . One thing I have never told you as to shell fire is the way any shell that lands near puts out a candle in a dugout. On 5th we had three candles in H.Qrs. dug out which were several times all blown out by bursts of shells. We have to-day got back about 16 *men* who have been away sick or wounded. It is a real joy to have them back.

Two days ago I went to find P. Hall (Ploegsteert) built in this wood by Ken Trotter and was awfully pleased to find it with inscription :

‘ Built by A Coy. 1st R.B. March 1915.’

Just like a Canadian log-hut, and in front a ripping grass

and flower garden about ten yards long. I must write and tell Mrs. Trotter I have seen it."

" *April 13, 1916.*

". . . I saw a most ripping pair of 'black-caps' hopping about on the ground and bushes quite close, from a small sandbag place I was in. I first heard the cock singing, though rather badly, and then saw them. . . . I saw a rabbit this morning, which surprised me as I thought there was nothing but English Tommies and rats!"

" Huts, B.E.F.,

" 11 a.m. *Saturday, April 15, '16.*

" Nine months to-day since I got to France. I am much fitter now than then. Since I wrote this we have had a most exciting rat hunt with a splendid little fox-terrier—a splendid run with a big rat from under Tatham's hut opposite us, about thirty yards off round through brambles to our hut, from which after some time it was bolted and killed by the dog. After which a first aid of boracic ointment I put on a bite he got. About eight men joined in the 'run.' Last night Cox shot a woodpigeon with a rifle outside our hut, so we are not without sport. How strange you would think it, and during the hunt two Bosch shells came over our heads, and landed in the wood about thirty yards behind us."

" 11 a.m., *Monday, 17th.*

" My gramophone which has done such good work here, was yesterday done in. I had lent it to certain Officers, who yesterday had a direct hit on their mess, burying everything. Last night things were being dug out, and the works of the gramophone were found knocked right out of the case, and practically undamaged, the case being smashed to bits. The Records were, I expect, all smashed, except

that they found one called, ' Red, White and Blue ' unbroken. Unbreakable colours ! ”

“ 1 p.m., 19. 4. '16.

“ There is a small canteen in the camp here (Bulford Camp) which I have been asked to run, and which has taken up a lot of time yesterday and to-day. Accounts have hardly been kept, so it is very difficult to fix up. As I am also now running the Coy. mess and the men's pay, I have pretty nearly got back to the land of business. Time in trenches is not long with plenty out in huts.”

*To his Mother.*

“ Huts,

“ 9 a.m. *Wednesday*, 26. 4. '16.

“ My Coy. went to the trenches on Sunday, so I am in the strange position of being left behind for the time being with another Regiment in the same Brigade as we. A very nice lot of Officers, many of whom, of course, I have several times seen. They have one mess for all four Companies, which means about thirty Officers.

“ I have now got accounts completed and in order, which is a great satisfaction. The canteen (a Brigade affair) itself I cannot get good yet as timber is scarce, and all available stuff goes up to the front line trenches first, which is quite right, so that the indent I have put in for it has not yet borne fruit, nor my request for sanction to remove six G.S. waggon-loads of bricks, to make a floor with, from broken-down houses in a town near by. This is not a permanent job. I shall only be here a few days longer, then Regiments carry on as they come in. . . .

“ Our A.A. guns brought down a Bosch aeroplane on Monday about 6, a.m. falling a few hundred yards from here ; the pilot and observer both killed, and the engine

of the aeroplane breaking away, and falling some way off the framework. They had one of our Lewis guns and our ammunition—confounded check! and a camera, not with the ordinary range-finding window, but with sights like a rifle.

“ We let off 12-inch guns most days from near us, and a proper row too. I watched one yesterday from about fifty yards off firing on a certain target they had knowledge of in Comines. One of our aeroplanes was doing the observing, and ‘ wirelessly ’ to the gun the accuracy of the shots. Just before firing one round a Bosch aeroplane appeared, which meant necessity for very rapidly lowering the barrel, and covering all up! The aeroplane was obviously out to find the position of this gun.

“ How awfully interested you would have been to have seen it. It seems, though, so strange to see guns firing from the middle of peaceful cultivated ground, and to picture what it may mean the other end—from experience of Bosch shells—demolishing a house or blowing up a gun, or landing in the middle of a lot of men. Six of our aeroplanes now going over high up, looking beautiful with the sun on them, just like silvery minnows, three abreast, then three behind, going towards the front.

“ One of the Master of Trinity’s sons has just joined us. . . . I can’t believe that a double ‘ first ’ man should ever go to the firing line. There must be lots of work ‘ behind ’ in England which requires such men. . . .

“ . . . The Y.M.C.A. huts do splendid work in every way, including excellent Services.”

*To his Father.*

“ Huts,

“ 2 p.m., *Thursday*, 27. 4. '16.

“ The evolution in gas-helmets to put on *versus* gas is

wonderful; yesterday I saw two new types again, one to be adopted for general use, and the other, a more elaborate one still, for machine-gunners, etc. There are helmets for horses, and now helmets for pigeons, not for individual pigeons, but to put round baskets where they are!

“The Doctor of the Regiment which I am left with has gone on leave, and a very nice Doctor has taken his place, having come from the ‘back’ dressing station of this part. The arrangement is a hospital with forty beds at Bailleul, then a dressing station, then ‘advance’ dressing station near the Front. For these three they have eight Doctors distributed, 4, 3, 1 respectively.”

*To his Mother.*

“Huts,

“2 p.m. *Monday*, 1. 5. '16.

“. . . I have now been here two days with again a different Regiment, for the purpose of handing over canteen. This is going swimmingly, and I am particularly joyed to have accounts all worked out (!) and in good order. About 940 francs profit made in 13 days. . . .

“So ripping being with the Officers of these Regiments and getting to know them. All such good fellows.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“Wood [Ploegsteert],

“*May 2*, 1916.

“What ages since I wrote you, due to really hard work on Canteen accounts. It was very hard work to think out a system, but now I am glad to say I have what I think is a good one. I was gratified to be congratulated on it and the work done, by the Brigadier.

“We have had quite exciting times lately, as the Bosch have been decidedly worrying all down the line, and have amused themselves by letting off chlorine gas. All needed helmets.

“ I have just had a wire ‘ Gas alert cancelled,’ which means that the wind has shifted, so I hope for a peaceful night to-night.

“ The shelling set fire to and burnt down the Y.M.C.A. near here, which is a great pity.”

“ Huts,

“ 5 p.m., *Thursday*, 4. 5. '16.

“ You will like to see, and please keep for me, a nice grateful letter from a friend of the mother of a young Sergeant of ours who was killed about a month ago. . . . The death of that Sergeant is particularly sad, as he was only nineteen, and had a mother and five sisters, and so was the only man in the family.”

The letter is as follows :

“ DEAR SIR,—I cannot refrain from writing to tell you of the very great comfort your letter has brought to Mrs. Shuttle. You must have many such letters to write, I know, but you would be rewarded if you could see the difference this letter has made to this one poor mother. She had been so afraid that, as her son had so lately joined the 3rd Batt., he would be so little known to his Officers that no one would write to her about him, but now that the letter has come giving all the details which she longed for, she seems wonderfully comforted. She is a good woman, and most fully appreciated all you said.

“ May I add my heartfelt thanks to hers ?

“ Yours truly,

(signed) “ M. C. WILSON.”

After a refreshing ten days' leave in England he writes :

“ 11 a.m., *Wednesday*, 24. 5. 16.

“ . . . Got to Boulogne easily yesterday, and on again after two hours' wait, working by the old time, as the French







[To face page 185

WITH HIS NEPHEW AND NIECES AT NOSELEY HALL.

have not adopted the new. Got to the railhead<sup>1</sup> about 1 a.m. after the usual very slow progress, the train taking six hours.

“ There I went into the small house where I stayed close to the station on my way to England ; there were Officers in the two rooms available, so I had, till they got up for the leave train about 4.30, to sleep on the floor, which was decidedly cold work, but had a good few hours' sleep on a bed afterwards, after which the woman of the house gave me some breakfast.”

“ 10 a.m., *Thursday*, 25. 5. '16.

“ I stupidly missed the post yesterday, due to keeping my letter till I had met Arthur<sup>2</sup> and so be able to say we had met.

“ My arrangements yesterday were altered because of a draft of over forty men who were arriving last night, and whom, being at the Transport I could more easily meet than any other Officer. I therefore did not ride up with the Q.Master, but sent a note to A. by him to say I would walk in his direction after lunch, and if he did the same we would meet.

“ You can imagine how strange it seemed meeting him here, but how really splendid to have it so.

“ . . . He has also been very busy with Sunday Services, and evidently splendid ones. I met last night Rev. Reid,<sup>3</sup> the Wesleyan parson, who said he was at one of Arthur's Services last Sunday, and was delighted at how splendid it was. . . .

“ I go up this afternoon to where A. is, and shall be there for probably a fortnight or more, quite near him. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Steenwercke.

<sup>2</sup> His brother Arthur, who had just gone out as an Army Chaplain, being attached to Andrew's Brigade.

<sup>3</sup> Killed the same day as Andrew, June 7, 1917, and buried within a few yards of him.

Pigot very warm, and saying how useful A. will be. He congratulates me on 'not having stopped one' yet!"

*To his Mother.*

"Huts,

"11 a.m., *Saturday, 27. 5. 16.*

"I forget what I have written, but know I only sent a 'deaf and dumb' card yesterday. Since I got here Arthur has fixed up in our 'A' Coy., but not the actual one I am in, as I share a small one with the O.C. of 'C' Coy. . . . A contingent of men from the Fleet here yesterday to see the life, which was interesting; all fitted up in London with khaki, but retaining their ship badges on caps. . . . Since writing this I have had orders to take command of 'C' Coy., as from May 24th. This is owing to Tatham having left it. It is, I suppose, by way of being permanent, so that after a month I may please you by becoming a Captain."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"B.E.F., [Ploegsteert]

"*May 31, 1916.*

"I have been turned on to a bit of trench-making, which has meant late hours to bed lately. An interesting but hard bit of work last night trotting round after seeing my bit of work started behind the line, seeing how trenches, etc., go—all very rough, long grass and self-sown corn, shell holes, and unused trenches. The Bosch machine guns were too active to be pleasant, but I got through all right, and learnt a lot that I wanted to know. My word! If you had been with me, what would you have thought? So absolutely lonely in a way, except, of course, for the Sergeant with me. On a trot like that it is strange to feel that if one were shot, on certain bits of the journey, one would never be seen or heard of again, except for the man with you. Some of our machine guns firing over where

I was, and plenty of Bosch ones too, as I say. I came on a party of 'D' Coy. who had just had two men hit by a Bosch Maxim."

*To his Mother.*

" Huts,

" 4.30 p.m., 31. 5. '16.

". . . I have been detailed to dig a certain line of trenches, and have about forty men each night, working from 9.30 p.m. for about four hours. It means a lot of organization and arrangement, and material for riveting, foot-boarding, etc. I started the men on a rough field of self-sown stuff, I think rye, about two feet high, which I suppose has had an undisturbed life behind the line for two seasons. I have not always stayed all the time, but have had another Officer up with me to carry on, but it has meant very late hours to bed. Last night I spent two and a half hours with a Sergeant of mine showing him various trenches, and exploring parts I did not know behind the firing line with a view to knowing them, should we have to reinforce any time. Very interesting, but very rough going. A lot of the trenches had been very badly crumped in, and above ground (as was mostly) full of roughness, shell holes, long ragged grass, self-sown crops, and old unused trenches. The land is cultivated anywhere where not visible from the Bosch lines, and so sometimes, when there is a hill, pretty close up, but it is strange indeed otherwise. . . ."

" 2 p.m., *Thursday*, 1. 6. '16.

" A lovely day and all well. At 9 p.m. I went with Arthur to take a funeral of an Artillery Sergeant. Such an impressive service, with about six Officers and seventy or eighty men all standing round. Arthur took it very nicely, with the aid of an electric torch."

“ Huts,

“ 4 p.m., 1. 6. 16., *Thursday*.

“ . . . Yesterday one of our observation ‘sausages’ broke adrift, and went over to the Bosch lines, in spite of hundreds of our shells trying to destroy it, as well as machine guns and rifles. The two men let themselves off in parachutes, but, I fear, landed in the Bosch lines.”

*To his Sister Dorothy.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ *Monday, June 5, 1916.*

“ I have just had tea, Arthur having come in and had some too, having had a trot round certain trenches. It is splendid having him here. He is doing A.I., and is very fit. . . . Out here there has been a ghastly fight, which will continue for a long time near Ypres. You have doubtless seen its ‘belittlement’ in the papers.”

*Letter from his Sister-in-law Esmé to Andrew.*

“ *June 1, 1916.*

“ I can’t tell you what it means to me to have you and Arthur together, and I did so appreciate your writing to me as you did. He told me in one of his letters how very thoughtful and careful of him you were that night when you returned at 3 a.m. and found him awake and gave him an extra blanket and cocoa. So like you Andrew!”

*To his Father.*

“ 4 p.m., *Tuesday, 6. 6. '16.*

“ . . . I do not know if I have told you the names of the Officers of this Coy :

“ 1. Lieut A. W. S. Brown.

“ 2. 2nd-Lieut. Vernède.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Pursuit of Mr. Faviel, The Fair Dominion*, etc., died of wounds April 9, 1917.

“ 3. Lieut. A. Douglas, Lewis gun Officer.

“ 4. 2nd-Lieut. Chamberlain.

“ They are all excellent fellows, and I feel I have got to the best possible Coy. . . .

“ I spent an interesting walk round from about 9-12.30 last night seeing the work, and finding valuable old trenches in long grass both in front of and behind our line. They would appear to you as rather deep drainage ditches, and not much of a trench, but their value lies in their being unseen by any form of observation, owing to the long grass, etc., covering the sides. Our own trench is a semi-brickwork sort of thing, visible to all the world, and if the Bosch intended to come, would be the first shelled to destruction. It might therefore easily prove of great value to have these trenches to shove men into where not seen, and splendid field of fire. . . .

“ We had more rain last night, which was bad for the men, many of whom have to sleep in the trench without dug-outs or cover, except for waterproof sheets, etc., across the trenches.”

His brother Arthur writes on June 6, 1916: “ Andrew and I are not together just now, but only about twenty minutes' walk apart. He is extremely busy and has a big responsibility in taking over a Company. He is splendid with both his Officers and men.”

“ B.E.F., Trenches,

“ 1.30 p.m., *Friday*, 9. 6. 16.

“ . . . The men work splendidly, and both ourselves and the other Companies have been congratulated by the higher authorities on the excellent work done lately in trenches. Since I wrote this Arthur has dropped in for lunch, also Rev. Reid the Wesleyan parson in this Brigade.”

“ June 9, 1916.

“ I never felt more fit in my life. It is amazing how frightfully fit I always feel in trenches, due, I think, to the life being free from formalities of parades and other miseries (or such is my opinion)! From time to time working with the men or trotting round exploring old trenches and generally a simple informal life in any dress, except that steel hats and gas helmets must be worn, is highly congenial. . . . Arthur is reading out the news and says 40,000 Austrians prisoners. The Ypres affair is a very big thing.”

“ B.E.F.,

“ 1.30 p.m., *Tuesday*, 13. 6. '16.

“ . . . At noon a memorial service in the open here to Kitchener, and these are held throughout the whole Army. Arthur took it splendidly as it was difficult to know what to make it.

“ . . . He followed what he knew was going to be the St. Paul's service and gave out that he was doing so, having the same hymns, etc.”

“ 2.15 p.m.

“ Have just had a wire to be shown to all Companies saying we have re-taken all that we intended in a counter-attack last night. The firing all night was intense and I wondered greatly what was happening. We first heard that the Bosch had Ypres, but the news is now the other way on! We took 100 prisoners. Trenches very much damaged owing to our fire. This is very good. I was very anxious as to what was happening.”

*To his Father.*

“ B.E.F., Huts [Bulford],

“ 1 p.m., *Saturday*, 17. 6. '16.

“ We had a pretty rotten night last night—very heavy firing starting south of our bit of trenches and then carrying



on to the north. We heard there was a gas attack and the Battalion 'stood to' ready to move—then fell out ready to fall in again at a moment's notice. It looked and sounded (from the terrific row of guns, including a 12-inch going off just by us) as though we were in for something, but, though the Bosch did make a gas attack on one bit of the line, I think it was a matter of 'wind up.' . . .

"The heavy firing started about 10 p.m. and was exceptional enough to keep us from bed for a bit, but I turned in about 12 o'clock, and about an hour afterwards Brown, who is second in command of 'A' Coy. and who had been talking in another hut, tumbled in with a shout of 'Gas.' This had been got from sirens at the Front, intended for the purpose, letting off. The first thing to do is to get braces on and jacket, so that you have the jacket on to tuck the gas helmet under down the neck, and I told Arthur and the others in the hut to do so. As a matter of fact we got no gas here, but they had let some off on certain front-line trenches. All Coys. fell in here, drawing at the same time extra ammunition and bombs; all in fighting order, with transport all ready, and the Company horse (together with other Coy. horses) brought up for me."

*From the Rev. Arthur Buxton, C.F.*

"Trenches,

"Monday, 19. 6. '16.

"Andrew is in trenches, so we are separated again as I stay with Headquarters a little way behind. We've had two gas alarms these last three nights, but no gas reached us. There was none anywhere near last night, but on Friday it came close, though it missed us and three men got it badly some way off, and a General slightly. Others got it here where we are *now*. (We have moved since Friday.)

"Andrew is splendid, the only bother being that he fusses so about me. An Officer last night said that while

gas alarm was going last night some distance from him down the line, and most people had the wind up, he was 'carrying on' counting jam tins! If you are ready for gas with helmet in a certain position, it only takes three seconds to slip it over your head, so there is no need to worry till the alarm is given! He is known in the Battalion as 'Brave Buxton!'

*From Andrew.*

"Trench 1. B.E.F.,

"2 p.m., Wednesday, 21. 6. '16.

"I saw a lot of Arthur last night. He came up to tea, and stayed till about 2.30 this morning, being very interested in a little night experience in this life."

*Andrew to his Mother.*

"Billets, B.E.F.,

"6 p.m., Sunday, 25. 6. '16.

"I have just finished having a Service for the Company on a meadow just outside where we are. Arthur has gone to another farm to take a Service for other of our men. It was very nice having it."

"9 p.m., Sunday.

"Just had supper so peacefully at a table in the middle of a meadow in lovely bright evening sun. The men are all in such good spirits, laughing and ragging, pigs walking about, one man drilling four young calves in the meadow—'form fours,' 'cover off' 'form single file,' and other orders to the accompaniment of loud cheers from the others smoking in the field. The farm people, a huge family party of all ages, bringing in cows to milk, etc.

"Arthur has had my gramophone, given me by that shop, but I only heard it for the first time this evening. We have also had that during supper. Not a sound of warfare, except lovely aeroplanes quite low overhead. My feelings

are so strange. All this peaceful scene, and absence of warfare, and yet so lately we have lost from our numbers—two men buried a few days ago, and others hit. It is so weird.

“ Since I wrote this, there has been an excellent impromptu entertainment by a Rifleman,<sup>1</sup> also in this meadow, causing much enthusiasm. It is a great joy to have such good spirits.

“ Arthur has a football, which is most useful for the men.

“ I wish I had my gun here for wood-pigeons, who quite disregard mankind just now.

“ Arthur and Brown were out for a stroll last night about 10, and came across a woman and a small child with her—she appears to have been hunting for a boy of hers, aged about five. Brown knew that a small boy had turned up at our ‘ D ’ Coy., so took her there. She wept with joy to find it was her boy. I think it was the second night that he had been with ‘ D ’ Coy. ! She said she could not stop him running after soldiers.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ July 5, 1916.

“ Pigot told me yesterday to put up another ‘ star,’ though I do not think I am gazetted yet. This will, I know, please you as it does me. I congratulate you on having three Captain sons ! ”

*To his Father.*

“ B.E.F., Trench 2,

“ July 11, 1916.

“ . . . We ‘ lived ’ yesterday for a special ‘ show ’ of ours on last night at 1 a.m. to-day. Up to then the ordinary cracks of Bosch bullets (high over where I am as I

<sup>1</sup> Corporal Bodimead.

am in dead ground) every second or two, then at 1 a.m. precisely a very heavy opening of our guns soon to be answered by the Bosch guns. We had a rare row for an hour, during which interesting things happened. I was rather particularly pleased that Arthur was a great help in our dressing station, where I am also quartered. He helped a lot with one fellow especially who was badly hit. You would like to see a dressing station out here at the Front, probably either a sandbag place or the cellar of a shelled down farm. I don't believe any one would mind seeing the dressing done out here—it is so different to civil life! Even fellows very bad indeed in such good spirits and joking very likely to others round. Last night several in waiting to be dressed by the Doctor, smoking and talking and discussing things taken from the Bosch trenches. One of my Corporals (a man from Norwich) tremendously pleased coming back with a Bosch marching order of equipment, and pack; also German gong, trench notice-board, etc.”

July 10, 1916. His diary says:

“Everything living for our ‘stunt’ to-night. Black faces, bombs, rum. Latta killed, also Orchard and two others, 33 wounded.”

Diary, July 15, 1916. (In Trenches):

“A peaceful day except for ‘Minnies.’ Blew up our Stokes gun and 97 rounds.”

“Billets,

“July 16, 1916.

“If allowed and able I could indeed write you much, but alas! No! I got to where I am about 3.30 this morning. . . . The Company were kept late as they had to undertake a weird and decidedly anxious job (which I may not reveal) but which got through all right. . . . Had a glorious bath. . . . You can imagine what this is after several days of

not having boots or clothes off except to change socks. . . . It is a very real feeling of selfishness that I have being in the midst of things of such intense interest, of which you have no part, not even the papers give an idea of the interest of various things doing. It is a great day to live in and I am thankful in the extreme to be so fit and able to see it ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ Billets, B.E.F.,

“ July 17, 1916.

“ I have just managed to turn the half-grown Billy goat out of my hut where it has inspected everything. . . . There is no reason to think the Germans are chained to their guns so don't believe the statement as made in the papers. . . . I told you a ' stunt ' mentioned in the papers was not done by us (the 3rd), but we did one the other night. A great many have been done all down the line lately. They are all bound to be decidedly exciting, as it may all go smoothly or be a smash up. The night of our special one I was with my Coy. about 300 yards behind the front line [R.E. Farm]—the men who had been training for it for a few days came up from behind at 10 p.m. . . . their faces were blacked so as not to show up and each had a white mark to identify one another. . . . Watches were of course synchronized and the men were to be in the front Bosch line at a certain moment. The Bosch wire had been previously cut by our artillery fire. . . . The fact of no machine-gun fire from the Bosch lines made me nervous as I feared they had got wind of the move and had their machine guns fixed ready to meet it. Our artillery fire was intense. In spite of Bosch artillery and a beautiful barrage they put on, our men got in all right though the wire was not quite cut and cocoa-nut matting had to be used to get over it. We killed a certain number of Bosch, but brought back no prisoners—though several interesting

things from dugouts and trenches. One of my men insisted, though wounded, in bringing back a 'souvenir'—a bit of Bosch barbed wire! We got several complete Bosch equipments, trench gong (for giving gas alarm) and whistle, trench notice board, bayonets, helmets, clothing of all sorts, and letters, ration biscuits, etc. (the unit was identified quite clearly); also a bit of bacon in a parcel from 'home.' We left no one in Bosch trenches but one man was killed in 'No Man's Land' on his way back to our lines—his body was recovered next night.

“ . . . . We are shifting huts, bivouacs and tents from this farm to a short way off as it is not healthy enough. . . . The men are being kept much too busy with working parties, etc., and not getting enough sleep or time off, but I hope this may improve.”

X

ON THE SOMME: THE BATTLE OF  
GUILLEMONT

JULY-AUGUST, 1916.

ON July 24, 1916, the Battalion left Neuve Eglise for the Somme district. Andrew writes in his Diary on the 24th:

“Arrangements *re* moving. Dinners 11 a.m. Moved off 1 p.m. Entrained at Bailleul. Left 4.28 p.m., men in trucks; we in 3rd Classes.”

“July 25.

“Got to Amiens (Longueval) at 1.30 a.m. Detrained and marched 1½ hours when halted for cookers and breakfast. Then on to Riencourt (about 14 miles in all). Men very done, feet very bad.”

The next fortnight was spent in attack practice and “dress rehearsals” prior to taking part in the great Somme fighting (the battle of the Somme began on July 1).

Here follow extracts from letters of this time:

*To his Father.*

“July 26, 1916.

“. . . At the moment I can imagine nothing more absolutely perfect than to now go up to Scotland for a month with the War over! Still it will come again some year

soon, I hope. It is very excellent being O.C. Coy., though it is not all of smoothest sailing or of the pleasantest, as troubles of discipline etc., are certain to be present pretty frequently. . . .”

*To his Mother.*

“ July 28, 1916.

“ . . . I can't quite place myself as Captain at present or appreciate that I am referred to when I overhear men speaking of me as 'the Captain.' The one thing I am thankful for is to be it in a regular and really crack Battalion. . . . My letters are most hopelessly short and uninteresting, for which you must forgive. . . . I think all the time so much of you and want to tell you everything, but it must not be done. . . . The whole of Longueval and Delville Wood seem to be ours. . . .”

Diary — “ July 30, 1916.

“ Paraded 7.30 a.m. and went again about three miles for attack practice. Back to dinners. At 5 p.m. unexpected orders for valises to be in by 7 p.m. Then orders that we entrain at noon at Picquigny. (July 31.) Breakfast 7.30 a.m., marched off (from Riencourt) 9 a.m. Three hours wait for train at Picquigny with packs on. Train to Mericourt (a few miles S.W. of Albert), then marched seven miles south to Bois de Tailles. Men badly fell out, very thirsty.”

*To his Mother.*

“ August 1, 1916.

“ ‘C’ Coy., Arthur included, have just had tea sitting in a wood. Very hot in the sun. Before that I was looking at some Bosch prisoners working near by. To-day Pigot says all men are to cut their trousers down and so make them into 'shorts.' Yesterday we had a march in marching order ; first five miles, then a halt which extended to three



hours during which time packs were not allowed to be taken off owing to something being expected to arrive at any time, then about seven miles when more men dropped out than I have ever seen do so before. It was very hot, but it was largely due to the men finishing their water-bottles too soon and also either having left behind their rations or eaten them over-night and so being probably faint from want of food. We had paraded at 9 a.m. and got in at 8.15 p.m. Fortunately the cookers by leaving overnight had got here first and had tea ready. Half the men on getting here at once departed to look for water, with canteens in their hands, but found none ; a quart of tea though was ready for each all the time which they got all right. A good many would have approached drinking a gallon if they had had the chance, I think ! I do feel so intensely for fellows feeling seedy like that, and especially through no fault of their own. I did not have my horse and was carrying a good deal, though not so much as the men, but kept cooler than any one I think and felt no worry. It is a blessing to be so fit. One or two men were even sweating through the backs of their jackets, poor dears ! A wash would have been a joy, as you can imagine, but we had to ' turn in ' without. I had, though, a good ' bath ' in a little water this morning."

*To his Mother.*

" August 4, 1916.

" Just a line before I turn in though I write by the light of a ' ration ' candle on my rug in my tent. Chamberlain has just come in and said, ' Well, do they expect me to sleep in this ? ' which refers to a terrific bombardment again by our guns of all sizes. He happened to be out on a ridge ' here ' at 9.20 at which moment our guns opened, hundreds of them all together on a small front. They all seemed to open (as no doubt arranged) at the same second

and, be it said, it was the most terrible and awful thing he thinks he has seen out here—the guns with their quick belch-forth of flame and the burst of shells or shrapnel beyond. It is just as intense now (10.30) as at 9.20. I went up to the same point soon after we opened—first impression you would say it was some electrical-firework display. The guns are not quite a *roar*, more a sort of rolling and absolutely impossible to judge the number—it might be 10 or it might be 20. Similar firing went on the whole of last night, starting at 10 p.m. In fact it seemed just as intense the whole time. You are making shells all right in England! Best thanks, we can do with *them* all!”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“B.E.F., August 6, 1916.

“I have been frightfully depleted lately in N.C.O.’s. Two very valuable ones gone to-day. How I loathe this War. It is too vile for words, and also no sign of any end. The Bosche are confident, well fed, and strong, from all accounts, so every prospect of sitting here for years.”

*To his Mother.*

“August 6, 1916.

“. . . It is a great day to live in and I am thankful to be taking a part. . . . We had an excellent Service in the open this morning—the Brigade there—Arthur spoke well.”

Diary—“August 6.

“In afternoon walked with Arthur to Fricourt and saw the lines. The mine craters to left of Fricourt specially interesting.”

“August 7.

“We move up in support to Guillemont to-morrow. G. is to be taken at 5 a.m. Going up very light—haversacks only.”

Diary—" *August 9, 1916.*

" At 6.30 a.m. went with Pigot, other Officers, and some N.C.O.'s to see the country at the Front. Went through masses of our guns, leaving Mont-au-Vay on our left, then up west side of Bernafay Wood, then up Longueval Alley towards top of Trônes Wood. Wounded being brought down covered with dust. All men looked done up. A lot of dead still unburied West of Trônes Wood. Back at 8.30 a.m. for physical and bayonet drills."

" *August 11.*

" . . . Arthur's birthday. Cake at lunch put me off tea and supper."

" *August 12.*

" Started work again (on trenches at Longueval) at 4 a.m., but had to knock off for 20 minutes owing to more shelling. As last night, had to have a burying party to clear the ground we had to dig. Weird, starting digging and burying before dawn. Buried about thirty, all English. Pay-book and Identity Disc got from most. Lots of salvage about. Men hardly slept last night, with so much shelling, but set themselves well to the work. Thought it was Sunday all day, but Arthur came up in afternoon from Headquarters in Bernafay Wood and said it was Saturday. . . . In afternoon we shelled heavily. Our aeroplanes flew very low over the Bosch, dropping white lights. We had 15 or 20 'sausages' up. Very fine how we allow no Bosch sausages and very seldom an aeroplane. . . . All night heavy artillery fire from both sides—heaviest continuous fire I ever heard."

*To his Father.*

" *August 12, 1916.*

" . . . Many happy returns! I can send no birthday present from this land as it is torn and bare. What a

strange 12th August ! I sincerely hope I do not have another out here. It hardly seems possible for the War to go on thus long, and the thought of a possible contrast in a peaceful Scotch place is almost overwhelming."

*To his Mother.*

" August 12, 1916.

". . . I am feeling more fit than you can imagine possible, thanks to plenty of exercise. Friday night the Coy., after a very hot march, dug from 7.30 to 8.30. I then knocked it off as Bosch shelling was too close and no trench to get into. Started again at 4 a.m., but had almost at once to stop for 20 minutes as Bosch again troublesome. . . . We have trenches 200 yards from our work to come back to, though no dug-outs. The men have to cook their own meals, so they are kept going. I have worked, of course, only a very small part of what they have as I have to supervise the work, plan out trenches and plenty of other things. I had a small cupful of precious water yesterday in which I had a good shave, teeth wash, and bath ! We gave the Bosch a rare 'strafe' yesterday afternoon to which he replied about 10 p.m. You cannot conceive what the firing from both sides was from then till 5 a.m. It was terrific."

*From his Brother Arthur.*

" August 14, 1916.

"We are indeed 'On active service,' and life is not all jam. On Saturday night Andrew was in trenches. I was staying at Headquarters ; Andrew in miserable quarters. You know how sheep in Scotland burrow out a cavity on the lee side of the hill to be out of the wind. That is how Andrew and his men were living in little holes in the side of the trench—no 'mess,' no table, etc."





FISHING THE TARVIE BURN WITH ZULU.

[To face page 203

Diary—" *August 14.*

"Saw C.O. at noon, who described when and where we should attack. Aeroplane photos wonderful."

" *August 15.*

"Not very good night. Had walk with Arthur last night, and prayer. A 'dud' shell very near. C.O. saw all Officers and N.C.O.'s at 2 o'clock and described course of our attack, which is now put off till 18th. . . . C.O. says A. and D. Coys. are to lead the attack, which is disappointing, but not likely to be lack of interest! Lots of additional guns about the last day or two."

*To his Mother.*

"Billets, *August 16, 1916.*

"A good deal of rain last evening which was bad for working parties. Our party did not get in till about 2.30 a.m. . . . By the time you get this we expect to have done a bit of work of more than usual interest. I may, or may not, then be able to tell you of it, and now can say no more than that I would not miss it for anything! Don't be alarmed, my dear, I wish you also could have the interest of it. This morning at 5 a.m. I went with Pigot and other O.C. Coys. to see a certain bit of ground. It was more like Scotland than ever in the early dawn. The earth thrown out from trenches and from shell holes looking like heather in the undulating open country."

In the Somme fighting considerable progress had been made and ground won before the 24th Division, with Andrew's Battalion, was thrown into the battle. North and south of Guillemont, respectively, part of Delville Wood and the whole of Trônes Wood were in our hands; but Guillemont itself, the one big position as yet untaken in the German second line, still held out. On August 18

Guillemont was attacked, at first with partial success ; but a few days later the whole position was finally won, though at a considerable cost. It is to these attacks on Guillemont that the following letters and Diary entries refer :

Diary—" *August 17, 1916.*

" Left the Bosch trenches (between Montauban and Carnoy) at 5 a.m., with C.O. to Sherwood Street east of Trônes Wood. . . . Walked with Page, my Orderly, round Waterlot Farm, viâ Old German Alley, also towards Arrow Head Copse to get a view of Guillemont and our objective."

" *August 18.*

" Got attack orders from Pigot. Zero time 2.45 p.m. A Coy. were on left, B in centre, D on right, C behind D in 'Sherwood' trench, and D half in 'Mike' and half in 'New.' Cut steps to get out by. Shelling tremendous. When D advanced we advanced into 'New,' where we stayed 3 or 4 minutes, then advanced into 'Mike,' where we were intended to stay until 4.45 p.m., when advance again to the Bosch line presumed taken. Reported to Pigot at H.Q. and ordered by him to reinforce E. of Station. . . . Went back and gave my orders ; very difficult to make myself heard. Heard Brown was killed. Saw Bosch being shot like rabbits, ghastly. When first advanced saw four partridges get up in front of 'Mike' and fly straight over Guillemont ; thought our barrage must kill one, but didn't ! The 10 minutes hurricane bombardment was terrific. When Pigot told me reinforce he said, ' I congratulate you.' Got over pretty easily. . . . Found B. in a deep 30 ft. dug-out where I made my H.Q. ; entrance just like rabbit-hole under large mass of concrete. Place an awful sight of dead and wounded. A fine Bosch Doctor walking about doing good work ; 3 or 4 Bosch wounded by dug-out. . . . C. Coy. dug in well. Railway Station taken without opposi-



tion. I had orders to hold the Station and not have less than 50 men in it. There were three machine-guns and a Lewis gun of B Coy. there too. In the Bosch dug-out we found field-glasses, revolvers, endless equipment, iron rations, rifles, Very lights, a bottle of brandy and of Hock, cigars, cigarettes, aerated water, two bugles, flutes and medicine cases."

*" August 19.*

" Men were digging all night. In case of counter-attack did not allow any one to sleep till well after dawn, though men quite done up. They were completing the Station trenches all night.

" The programme was to get to half-way through Guillemont by a further attack at 5 a.m., but this had to be cancelled as the 73rd Brigade got hung up on our right yesterday afternoon. (It was an ever-memorable sight to see them advance yesterday.) Continued working and clearing dead from dug-outs, etc. Used telephone wire, but frightfully difficult to get bodies out. Buffs got in yesterday on our right quite easily. . . . Venner was killed after we got to Bosch trench; only saw him just before he died. . . . My Sergt.-Major, also Page my Orderly, killed to-day by same shell. Buried them, and Jock Henderson and Venner, after dark; also others of our men and lots of Bosch."

*" Sunday, August 20.*

" A little dozing, but practically no sleep. Dug-out full of débris, signallers, orderlies, etc. Bosch shelling very nasty but ours far heavier. Not much on the Station fortunately. We have got the Bosch here all right now, I think.

" Guillemont appears like a ploughed field. Our dug-out has two entrances, both very dangerous. Cleared out the dug-out by a chain of men. In evening put on a work-

ing party to dig trench along lines of Bosch front line towards D. Coy. Men very done, but had to be done by dawn. Five men wounded by digging on to a Bosch bomb. Had a Coy. of Fusiliers to help. Pigot sent in afternoon congratulations on work and also saying, 'Now get some rest.' Did not pass on latter part of message as too important to continue work. Men very rattled. Cpl. Hogben killed to-day, also Wedlock of A. Coy. Arthur turned up in afternoon; so ripping to see him. He asked where Guillemont was! The men remarked, 'He can't keep away from the Front.' From French reports it appears possible Bosch may have evacuated Guillemont, so going to patrol accordingly and snatch the trench east of 'High Holborn.'

"The idea was we should be relieved on Saturday, but nothing doing, though Sunday was promised. On Sunday Pigot sent round to say we had to be in till Tuesday, 22nd. Men very done and rattled, and greatly depressed at this news."

*"Monday, August 21.*

"Zero time for renewal of attack for taking Brompton Road and dug-outs at the side was 4.30 p.m. 1st R.F. were on our right; Queen's beyond them. The 1st R.F. moved on before the two minutes' intense bombardment had begun and were spotted. As soon as they (1st R.F.) had got to Hill Street (i.e. High Holborn continued) our D. Coy. were to advance. Fusiliers got objective, then were driven back and D. Coy. got badly cut up. Chamberlain observed near dug-out and Vernède at Station; most valuable reports from both.

"I had orders to send up a bomb squad to reinforce and to carry bombs, and later 20 men with more boxes. Frequently our own shells were doing in our own men. Later got orders to dig new line behind where Venner with a few men was holding out and to tell him to retire to it. This

new line was from east end of Station to Brompton Road. Men absolutely done. Sherwood Foresters came and helped dig. Put out covering parties. Looked round for wounded ; found Shaw Stewart killed. . . . We were relieved at 5 a.m. by R.F.'s. . . . Total Battalion Casualties : 8 Officers killed, 8 wounded ; other ranks 278."

*" Tuesday, August 22.*

" Got back at 6 a.m. to ' Sherwood Street,' where at once slept. Went to H.Q. 11 a.m. ; heard we were to be relieved by Cornwalls at 4 p.m. A very nasty day with lots of shelling on the trench, but fortunately no casualties. . . . Went to Carnoy with remnants of D. Coy. attached to us. Just managed to get myself along. Just beyond top of C. had busses to Happy Valley. Men began to sing a little just before Carnoy—joy. Alfred Dunnage who had been on a course had beautiful supper ready for us."

*From Arthur.*

*" Tuesday, August 22, 1916.*

" I know you will have been anxiously waiting for a letter, but I simply could not write till our time in the trenches was over. It has been awful, and the fact that we both are well and (Andrew especially) have come through without a scratch is simply providential and due to prayer. He has been through an inferno ! I have only just seen him once since Thursday, so can't say much from him, but about (I mustn't give numbers) of wounded men of our Battalion have been through our Dressing Station, so I've heard a good deal of what it was like. I simply can't give a connected account, but just a few facts will show. Out of our mess of 7 Officers, Brown and Venner have been killed and Catchside wounded ; Andrew, Vernède, myself and Chamberlain are all right. A's Sergeant-Major and his runner are dead. Last week I went a walk with three

charming young Officers, Henderson, Daly, and Barnard, —to-day I am the only one left, all the three killed. Out of four Company Commanders only Andrew and Boscawen are left, the other two wounded badly ; it's too awful for words. It's marvellous that our Dressing Station is still standing ; 2 other Regimental ones are knocked out and a despatching station, and only this morning we had a terrific shelling and of course a direct hit from the big stuff they were sending over would have done for the place and all in it. Two men on Friday were standing in the doorway ; both were blown in—one died in five minutes, the other badly wounded. Oh ! the loss of precious lives is awful, so are the sufferings of the wounded. The constant danger, the noise, the smells are past words. But if I feel it bad, it's ten times worse for Andrew, and even if he doesn't get some decoration you can believe me he has more than deserved it.

“ I trust we will get out all right to-night. I long to leave it all behind and I suppose some unfortunate fresh troops will come in and carry on. I only trust they'll take us right away from these sights and sounds. At home you can't understand what it is, and the many pitiable cases of shell-shock. Many have been buried 2, 3 or even 4 times—think what that means to the nerves. After our first night in a fairly decent dug-out, when we'd had a bit of shelling during the night, the Medical Officer confessed to me that he had felt scared out of his wits. Far worse is it when you're above ground or in trenches that may be blown in on you. I must stop. There is reams more I want to write, but you must let me sleep instead. The dug-out of which I spoke is one once used by a Bosch Company. The dressing-station an old Bosch gun-pit. Needless to say souvenirs are many, though I can't be bothered with carrying them. . . .

“ No further need to worry ; just sing the Doxology and

imagine us 'resting' well behind the line for a month or two at least ; *would* that we might do the rest at home. I will not post this till we are safely back. Love to all ARTHUR."

*Telegram.*

" *Wednesday, 23.*

" Both well, got back here last night."

*From Andrew.*

" 4 p.m., 23. 8. 1916. *Wednesday.*

" Arthur has this afternoon sent you a wire to say all well, by which you will know we have been through something. I return to find lots of letters and six parcels which were kept behind while we were in a show. . . .

" I don't feel I can now describe these last six days, they have been too big. We got back late last night and I had a glorious sleep till about 11 a.m. to-day. I was 'done' and footsore last night, having had practically no sleep 'there' and plenty of anxiety. . . .

" A glorious bath this morning in a waterproof sheet, and shave of seven days old beard !"

*From Andrew, to his Mother.*

" B.E.F., Billets,

" 5 p.m., 24. 8. 18.

" I have now opened all the parcels, which are truly beautiful ; thanks so much for them. I wish I could have had them where we have been, but such things cannot be got up, and if I had had them before I could not have carried them up. Don't send any more now. Your letters now come along each day, and are most welcome. Please thank Ros for her parcel from Cromer, so beautiful, and full of thought for what I like. Please keep enclosed post-cards found in Bosch trenches.

“ I may not say where I have been fighting, and the story of it must remain till I see you. I know not how to start, continue or finish, as there was too much, all of such moment to us there. On the second day I was watching the course of the fight from about 500 yards to the left from a slight slope, and reporting to Head Quarters by telephone what was happening. I soon had sent away about half my men to carry more bombs up to D. Company, and to support them, and was wondering what my orders would be. I was nominally in reserve. I expected to have to go and reinforce, and probably be wiped out as D. Coy. were, and this order was given me but then cancelled about 8.30 p.m., and told instead to try after dark an advanced trench about 130 yards from the Bosch, and tell the remnant of D. Coy. to retire into it. Our men were *absolutely* done, but we had a Coy. of another Regiment to help us, and we were going to be relieved by yet another Regiment. This relief came off at about 5.30 a.m. At that time, i.e. just as it was getting light, we managed to extricate a wounded man from a 60 feet deep well. The well was exactly at the bottom of a shell-hole, and running back wounded he tumbled into this for protection, and went straight to the bottom. It was in front of our line, and only by chance that I heard a noise as I passed on the top. Amazingly, he was unhurt. I sent to Headquarters, and luckily got some armoured telephone cable, which, tied to a pick, I let down, and with about ten men pulled him up (my men were so done up that it was with difficulty I could get them to give a hand to save this man's life !). He was frightfully exhausted but will be all right. We found a Bosch jammed down a similar hole, which we could not get him out of, and also a Bosch in a deep dug-out, quite unable to get out. The latter seemed broken all over, but lived two days, and the former three days. Such a problem whether to shoot men in such torture.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ 11.30 a.m., *Sunday, 27. 8. 1916.*

“ A deluge of rain this morning and your sympathy would go out to the men who have no cover except mackintosh sheets in a field. Early this morning we paraded and our General congratulated us on the work we have done. . . .

“ I wrote just to say I was going down for two days' rest. I started off and got to Field Clearing Station, but came back again as there did not seem much chance of any dinner, and I was hungry, having had no tea! The real fact was I was feeling all right except for a slight cold. To-day our Dr. tells me he wants me to go after all as if I got bad the C.O. would drop on him for not sending me!

“ I thought of you when we were doing the attack on 18th—a lovely bright day. My Coy. was behind D. Coy. in 'jumping off' trenches which had been dug. When 'D,' advanced to the Bosch line, we advanced to where 'D,' had been and were going to stop there for two hours, and also 'D,' in the Bosch line. I had orders while there to go to Pigot about 150 yards off at our H.Qrs. (this previously given). I could not get there for three-quarters of an hour owing to intense Bosch barrage of fire between which I could not have got through. I then hustled safely through it. He had just had word from our front line that they wanted reinforcements at a certain bit of line and he said I must go up. As I left him he said 'I congratulate you,'<sup>1</sup> i.e. on having this responsible job to do. So I went back and took the Company over to the Bosch line we had taken. I then heard Brown had been killed on right of my line. The trench we were in was far from pleasant as only partly dug, and our men were digging it deeper all they could, but a Bosch machine-gun was very nasty

<sup>1</sup> Andrew thought much of those three words—the only reward that came his way for his really fine work at Guillemont.

along us as well as the shells. We got over well and took a certain number, about 16, prisoners, even though the other Company had been some time in the Bosch line. We then dug hard to make the German trench good to hold. It had largely been levelled by our shells, but still several deep dug-outs. A lot of Bosch bolted out to meet our first line as they got to the trench and doubled back towards us all on their own! I think we only just got the trench, as there were a lot of Bosch there. Our shelling was intense, especially the ten minutes before we advanced. Impossible to describe what the noise of possibly thousands of guns all firing as hard as they could on to the Bosch line, both H.E. and shrapnel; then (in the open hedgeless country) seeing the line of our men advance. Probably if a minute later advancing we should not have got in, as the Bosch would have been up and able to fire. Therefore the time of the shelling and to keep absolutely up to it are essential, and to know when the shelling 'lifts' on further. The Bosch counter-shelling was very heavy, but nothing like ours. I could not make any one hear a word except by shouting in their ears at the top of my voice when our shelling was heaviest and my whistle only reached a few yards! We were going to advance again at 5 a.m. on 19th, but could not do so as Regiment on our right were held up.

"What probably is not realized at home is the extent of counter shelling, not only on the trenches we have taken, but everywhere behind in order to stop reinforcements, etc. Arthur was in a wood  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile behind and had heavy shelling, but got through all right. I hear he worked nobly helping in the dressing-station there. On 20th he came up and saw me. He ought not to have done this as it was not a 'healthy' journey. I did a lot of observing on 21st of the attack that D. Coy. were doing and the Regiments on their right. Very necessary work, but most unhealthy, as the Bosch were plastering us badly. Pigeons were partly



used for messages. On 18th when I first went to H.Qrs., I told Pigot that our shrapnel had not sufficiently lifted and was hitting our men who were in the Bosch trench, at which he sent a pigeon! On 21st we suffered several times from our own artillery very severely, which is worst of all but impossible to avoid when hung up and cannot tell where our men are. Sleep was very scarce. In the deep dug-out where B and C Coys. made their H.Qrs., there was no room, absolutely chock a block with débris, Coy. signallers, etc., and only possible to sometimes have a sleep squatting down. The men in the trenches were all the time in great danger so did not sleep much, and moreover lying at bottom of a trench about 2 feet or 1 foot 6 inches wide at bottom with endless passing along and no room to put feet on either side of the lines of tired sleepers and the tumbling down of earth on to them made sleep difficult. I am sorry to say my Coy. Sergt.-Major was killed. It was a very great time, and as I said to you in a previous letter, I would not have missed it for anything.

“It is hard to tell you anything of this show till I get home, though difficult even then I think.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“B.E.F.,

“*Sunday, August 27, '16.*

“I am afraid this will arrive late for your birthday, but it brings none the less my awfully best wishes for the day. May you be preserved long to me and to us all, and may *παρουσία Χριστοῦ* become more and more of a fact to you, whereby you naturally tell Him all that is in your mind.

“I cannot say what it is to have the Word of God in my heart to feed on, and to keep such a big view of God all the time, though probably no time to do reading of the Word.

“ I had from about the 16th to 22nd the most strenuous, mentally and physically, time that I have ever had.”

*Andrew to Mrs. Prideaux.*

“ We have had a time which has been too much. No one who has not been through such a time can in any measure appreciate what it is. My thankfulness is that there is no chance of your experiencing such vileness. I have a strange feeling of being wrong to be left alive or without a wound, as we were a mess of seven, and I only am left. But I must not depress you !

“ Please don't suggest that my men have a good one in me. I sincerely wish it were so, but it is very much the opposite. I feel like Solomon—a man of peace—but without his wisdom. We are getting back to all sorts of primitive ways of fighting, but not yet adopted David's sling, but we shall see it before next Spring all right I expect.”

Diary—“ *August 27, 1916.*

“ The Doctor told me he wanted me to go to a Rest Camp. Went in ambulance at 3 p.m. ; the Camp near Buire-sur-Ancre.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F., B.,

“ *August 28, 1916.*

“ My servant and I came across yesterday afternoon about a mile from where the Battalion is to the Divisional R.A.M.C. Camp. I have a tent and I mess with the Medical Officers. I still have a bit of a cold and am not absolutely put together right, but there is nothing amiss. The value is to get away from the Coy. for a couple of days. . . . A ripping swallow-tail butterfly here the other day. . . . I want to now come and have a long yarn with you.”

“ *August 30, 5 p.m.*

“ Since writing the first two sheets and signing them I

have had Arthur most faithfully come and see me. So awfully nice to have him bringing letters from yourself, Ros, Dor, also papers to read, so I'm in luck's way."

*From Arthur.*

"August 29, 1916.

"I saw Andrew to-day 'resting' at a Field Ambulance. I fear nothing will persuade him to stay there if the Battalion moves again. He is still not sleeping well, and his mind is going over the horrible time he went through. I don't think he could stand another winter here. He has done his time in the trenches, and ought to have some job at home, if his health is not to suffer. He is a most capable leader, both of his Subalterns and men. He has a better insight into the working of trench warfare than any one I have met out here, and his practical knowledge of the difficulties and needs and qualifications for a Coy. Officer would be invaluable to any Staff. I feel very strongly he ought now to get something less strenuous."

The following letters to his Mother from his Brother Arthur and from a brother-Officer of his, referring to the Guillemont attack, may be inserted here :

*From Arthur's Diary.*

"How loving and thoughtful he was when I went up to see him for a few minutes when he had been through so much and had to stay there in such danger."

*From Licut. Chamberlain.*

November, 1916.

"DEAR MRS. BUXTON,—

"I feel I should like to write and tell you how very pleased I was to have an opportunity of seeing Andrew at Easneye while on leave. After his long period of trench

warfare—he must have been nearly eighteen months in France by this time—and, more particularly, after the recent strenuous weeks spent in the Somme area, he must feel the need of, and welcome a short rest, for the way he has stood the strain of responsibility has been wonderful. Nothing would please me better than to be able to accompany him when he returns, and to carry on as before, for after having served under him in ‘C’ Coy. for nearly eight months I recognize how splendidly he has always commanded, and how prompt and eager was the response made by the men. They seemed ever ready to undertake voluntarily tasks of exceptional difficulty, and their spirit and keen desire to undertake hazardous duties bear admirable testimony to the cleverness of the Officer who commanded them. The very fact that one Platoon volunteered ‘en masse’ to take part in a raid on the German trenches—the necessarily rejected ‘candidates’ were only appeased with the greatest difficulty—shows clearly the spirit which animated all ranks in the Company, and the way in which they settled down to their programme of training and subsequently carried out the enterprise successfully, in spite of unforeseen difficulties, proves how keen and proficient they may become.

“I shall always retain a vivid mental picture of our advance during the attack on August 18th—the most critical, exciting, and strenuous day of my life. Only by displaying the very highest qualities of leadership—coolness, a knowledge of the exact situation, unswerving tenacity and resolution—did Andrew bring his Company through the attack with small loss, carrying the whole responsibility for success on his own shoulders. When he led the advance, the whole Company responded splendidly to a man.”

## XI

### VIMY AND LOOS

SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 1916

**D**URING the few days that Andrew was away at the Rest Camp the Battalion was given yet another bit of work to do, which it accomplished successfully. Andrew did not at all like being out of it. His Diary records (September 1, 1916): "The Battalion has gone up towards Montauban . . . to get back lost trenches E. of Delville Wood. At 6.30 p.m. . . . (September 2) we got objective. Very tantalizing being away from the Company. Dunnage killed; Vernède and Chamberlain hit, so all five officers in C. Coy. now gone. The Battalion (and Division) come out to-morrow."

He rejoined the Battalion on the 4th.

His brother Arthur writes to their mother, September 5, '16:

"Thanks for all yours up to the 30th. You ask how Andrew is. He's all right, much better and rested, but doesn't sleep well, I think, but he has had up to date some pretty poor beds. Andrew returned from the Rest Camp on Friday or Saturday, and was told to stay in the transport lines. This kept him out of another show that our Battalion had, for which I was most profoundly thankful. After it, he and I are the sole survivors in our Mess. All the others

were wounded (Vernède, Chamberlain, Catchside) or killed (Venner, Brown).

“We now go *right* back.”

*From Andrew.*

“B.E.F., Billets,

“8 a.m., *Wednesday*, 6. 9. 16.

“We have had a lot more on since I properly wrote to you last, as the Battalion was up in or near the Front from Aug. 31 to Sept. 4, with, alas, a lot more casualties. I was hardly with the Battalion, as I came back from the Dressing Station in the middle of it. I am very sad to say that both Vernède and Chamberlain, the only remaining Officers of ‘C’ Coy. were hit. Not dangerously in either case I hope. We now have had a draft of three new Officers, of whom Northcroft [killed July, 1917] is posted to ‘C.’ It is a most tremendous blow losing Vernède and Chamberlain, as I valued both so extremely as Officers, and both such good fellows.

“Everything continues more than full of interest, and at the moment the news seems excellent. We heard last night that the French were on the Bapaume-Peronne road, and that we were east of Ginchy Telegraph. Actual gain of ground may or may not be of value—this is all most satisfactory.”

*Diary—September 7.*

“Entrained 2.30 p.m. Arrived Longpre (near Abbeville) at 9.30. 35 miles! Marched till 3.30 a.m. next morning, via Long to Gouranflos, arrived very weary. Arthur and I in a small cottage.”

*To his Father.*

“B.E.F., Billets,

“6 p.m., *Friday*, 8. 9. 16.

“. . . We arrived at where we are yesterday morning

about 3.30 after a wearisome effort, but hope to now have a rest, though the necessary training that has to go on is almost as much effort as trench life, though of a different kind. . . .

“ Tell mother I will take good care to get all I can !

“ Tom Buxton turned up suddenly\* yesterday afternoon and had tea ; it was very nice seeing him. He asked Arthur and myself to come and dine at Headquarters, which we did, he sending a motor for us. Quite an interesting evening in which, as Arthur says, I instructed the two Generals between whom I sat in fighting matters. They certainly appeared interested to talk to one who had been actually fighting !

“ I wonder if you can picture Arthur and myself in a small cottage, ground floor only, rather back from centre street, and round a corner in a village. Chickens and bantams walk in. We sit in quite a nice orchard outside it. This afternoon Arthur and I cycled (on Signallers' cycles) to a village near, to see another Regiment, with a view to fixing up a Service for Sunday. He has a concert here to-night.

“ The sadness of our losses has not been without its comic side sometimes. There were two brothers in my Coy., one of whom was killed. The other one started a letter to his home to tell them the news with ‘ I have now much pleasure in telling you.’ They get set phrases for their letters. We got this more happily written.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F., Billets,

“ 12.30 p.m., *Sunday*, 10. 9. '16.

“ Arthur took a nice Memorial Service, or chiefly memorial, this morning on the village square for the Battalion.

“ Tom Buxton was coming over to lunch to-day and going to bring another Officer from Corps H.Qrs., but

very disappointingly rode over at noon, and said he had to be in at lunch. Arthur has a friend, a Brigade Signalling Officer, who is coming, and an Adjutant is also going to join the lunch, which, by the way, is going to be 'some' lunch as I bought two chickens this morning. They were brought in alive to me in bed this morning. I had given orders to bring them alive, as people here have all sorts of fancy ways of killing them, and I prefer to do it myself with a stick, though I find it quite hard to kill anything just now!"

At the end of September the Battalion moved into the line again into trenches just west of Vimy.

Diary—"September 26, 1916.

"Walked round front line with Pigot in morn. Rations are dumped each evening from the railway at my dug-out; 3 mules to each truck. The Coy. are responsible for 'Vincent Street'; commenced work this evening. It is quite alarmingly peaceful here. Heavy firing in morning to the south. Here we have taken Les Bœufs and Morval."

*From Andrew to his Sister Rosamond.*

"B.E.F.,

"September 28, '16.

"To-day is Jewish 1st of year (though I thought it was about April). I should like to have gone to a Service they have near here. Perhaps another year we might look in to this Service somewhere, as I should be so interested. It is on the Day of Atonement.

"I enclose a letter from Daly's mother,—he was a most charming young Officer of 'B' Coy., killed at Guillemont—which please keep. His death, and one of my Sergeant's, I have felt more than anything I can express to you."



“ B.E.F., Trench 2,  
“ 6.30 p.m., 26. 9. '16.

“ I have no Officer now in the Coy., so have the whole thing to work, which is a bit of an effort, but very interesting. Northcroft who recently came to ' C ' Coy. has now been taken for some special work. I have in fun told Arthur that I must have him as a Platoon Commander, which he rather inclines to. Pigot would, I am sure, be only too glad to have him so ; but in any case he helps much and has just been censoring a vast quantity of letters.

“ It is getting dark very early now, as you will have experienced. I this afternoon was detailed to repair a certain bit of trench, and the whole Company are now on it. I must go and see that it is going all right. I can, however, get no riveting material till 10 p.m. to-morrow, if then, and as the trench is a depth varying from eight to twelve feet, all more or less falling in, I have ' some ' job ! ”

“ 8 p.m., 26. 9. '16.

“ Back from seeing to the work on this trench and find two or three Orderlies from Headquarters, which is about half a mile from here, with chits about various things. About a quarter of the chits received in this land are marked ' secret,' some of which are interesting, some not ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F., Trench 2,  
“ October 1, 1916.

“ 7 p.m. had a very nice Service in the half light and dark on the side of the Valley only about 600 yards from Bosch front line.

“ The new Officer Duncan is such an excellent fellow—so keen to learn and ready to help with everything.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F., Billets [Estree],

“ 2 p.m., 8. 10. '16.

“ A very showery morning. We were going to have a route march at 9 a.m. and paraded for it, but dismissed as too wet, and instead carried on with various drills and practices.

“ At 2.15 Arthur has a Service in the Ambulance Station here.

“ I forgot to tell you what a lot of weasels I saw last time I was at the Front. Two which were running about on top of dug-out in the trench I ‘ squeaked ’ to, and brought them so near that I stopped, thinking one of them was going to jump on to my shoulder, which I did not fancy ! A party of mine digging in the side of a trench sliced away so as to leave a family of mice in a niche—the nest was made of old bits of letters and field postcards. They were not ‘ red,’ but had not yet got hair, or eyes opened. The old one was there, coming up and going down a hole in the back. We did some first aid work by handing her the young ones one by one, and she carted them back down the hole !

“ One of my young clerks did good work in Trônes Wood, and has got a M.C. for it. It seems strange, for some reason, to picture fellows like that, whom I have seen nowhere but in an office, in a wood like that ! ”

Diary—“ *October 10.*

“ Moved up to-night, sub-sector of left Sector at Vimy. To Carency, then via Hospital Corner, Redoubt Road, 130 Road and 130 Trench to Zouave Valley. ‘ A,’ ‘ B ’ and ‘ D ’ are in, ‘ C ’ in support. Had to carry up dixies. Long confab with C.O. in even. . . . (11th Oct.) Rather wet. Long walk round with Palmer to see our men working

at fire saps. . . . Rats and mice absolutely vile. The place thick with them and their noise."

" B.E.F. Trenches,

" 9.30 p.m., *Thursday*, 12. 10. '16.

" What would you think of the sight of us at the moment — ' us ' consists of Duncan, Palmer, Thorn, Arthur and myself. Just had a magnificent dinner, cooked by our wonderful Coy. Mess Cook, Coleman, consisting of soup, ration meat, potatoes, cabbage, tin of apricots, toasted cheese, and coffee, sitting in a dug-out, whether an old Bosch one or a French one I do not know—a sloping passage down, and then widened out, so that where we sit is about 12 feet long and six wide, in which are two beds, and a table of a footboard with newspapers for a tablecloth—my gramophone going well, worked by Duncan—such a good fellow,—with a few records I had borrowed. The gramophone I had up by my Q.M.Sergeant with the rations tonight. A rare good evening within 300 yards of the Bosch ! The dug-out 6 feet 6 inches high strutted up and about ten feet below ground level—' minny ' (*minnenwerfer*) proof. For light two candles and a tin of grease—either fat or slobbered candle-grease—with wick made by my servant. Interrupted now by my Sergeant-Major asking if any orders for the morning, and I say ' nothing fresh, except that Mr. Thorn will give the wind report at 3.30 a.m. and the Coy. will stand to at—(I must not say when).' The wind report is from a gas point of view ; fortunately the wind is in our favour.

" Now Edwards, O.C. ' D ' Coy., has come in, his Headquarters being near. Atkinson asks me what time to call me in the morning.

" A sentry is detailed to call for any early occasions like ' wind report,' sent by wire to Headquarters by signallers—or ' stand to.' We, in the words of the papers,

'sprung' a mine this morning, probably in retaliation for which the Bosch gave us a heavy supply of 'Minnies' this afternoon—they made me laugh. The trenches I am in are open behind and there is little fear of them provided you keep eyes open and do a sprint if one is coming towards you. They are shot up high, and then turn down, and you can see approximately where they are coming. If sending many over this is safer than dug-outs, which may or may not hold them. We sent a lot over in return, also Stokes gun shells.

"Last night two Cadets from a training school near St. Omer were posted to my Coy. for 36 hours (young fellows) (Tommies training for commissions) for instruction in practical trench life and arrangements. Both very keen. I took them last night round a bit of our front line in the dark, including looking into a mine crater, of which we hold the near lip, and the Bosch the far lip. Our bit of line is, I think, the ruggedest and messiest I have been in with mine craters, saps out from the front line, mining work with its accompaniment of high masses of sandbags, in which the earth is brought out, through which run trenches, or so-called. They are different to what you picture them, in many parts battered to bits, and full of 'mess.' Looking ahead at any point, hard to tell where Bosch is and where we are!"

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"B.E.F.,

"9 p.m., Tuesday, 17. 10. '16.

"Oh! If you were here at the moment. Old Palmer, one of our Officers, a splendid fellow, has just expressed, 'Well, I'm blessed. I don't know whether it is a mouse or a rat, but one of them is in my bed.' Arthur gets up from where he is sitting (on a bed under the one Palmer is on)

with an electric torch, and looks. The mouse or rat turns out to be one of the servants laying out the under bed and just touching the top bed with his back! . . .

“ We came ‘ here ’ [Bajolle line down Ersatz] this afternoon by a long communication trench which I have been down several times, taking about an hour. Every time I go up and down it I think of Love Lane, Cromer, along past Colne House, which as a baby was a walk I always seem to have been taken by my nursery maid, but never to the end, and I thought it never had an end! . . .

“ Well, I am getting along. I mentioned the ‘ mouse or rat ’ which expression naturally followed on to what we have had the last few nights. I have experienced many mice and rats, but never anything like those outside and inside the dug-out we have been in. A deep one, about twenty-five feet below ground level, going down from the trench by about fifteen long big steps, all timbered, in which we five Officers and my servant slept, he in a small adjunct at the bottom of the steps. The dug-out has two entrances. Rats and mice all over everything, and every one making an awful din by every means, including tearing up newspapers to make nests of. This writing pad I had had sent up by Edge my groom, wrapped in paper, which was half eaten off, and the pad also just suffered, as you will see at the bottom left side. There are a good many real black ones about. It is very disturbing having them sitting on your pillow, touching your head, and washing or scratching themselves, and at intervals, by mistake no doubt, washing or scratching you, and next minute having to eject one from the commanding position obtained by sitting on your hind leg. In the interval another showers earth over head and face, making itself a new dug-out.

“ We are more than fit—trench life always suits me—owing, I think, to the exercise involved, though this has been a pretty real strain. There is far more than enough

to see to, and you cannot well understand what it means to be responsible for holding a bit of front line when it is new, and a very complicated bit. No wire, owing to its having been blown away, to prevent Bosch from their trenches just by, coming if they wish, to raid or take ours. I don't mean to imply that they could do so, as our young fellows have sharp eyes and quick ears, but I think you would a little get the wind up if you looked over the parapet on a pitch dark, stormy night, and were told the Bosch were 70 or 100 yards off. . . .

“ . . . I had a rum issue last night, and ordered a 'stand to' at 6 a.m. chiefly as a means of giving it out, and saw each man drink it. Very necessary to see it drunk, or somehow or other one man may get five or six men's rations. It is the most tremendous thing for the men. This is the first one we have had for a long time. 'My word! doesn't it make my throat lovely and warm!' I passed a few men a little time after they had had some; one handed another a spoon that they had used and remarked with emphasis, 'Here, Bill, smell this!' I am going to send this to Bairnsfather, as he could make a good picture, and also a remark yesterday by one of my Corporals: 'They can keep their military medals and crosses; them what deserves them don't get them; what I wants is to get 'ome with my 'ead on. . . .'

“I have just made a mousetrap out of a large biscuit box. This land is a rare opportunity of learning the nature of rats and mice, as they are all round all the time. Edwards bought six rat-traps yesterday, and caught twenty-eight rats in his dug-out in an hour. Yesterday I had breakfast with one hand, and fed three mice (from my hand) with the other. They came over my bed, a wooden erection about three feet high, adjoining the table. Some nights they are frightfully disturbing.”

Diary—" *October 14, 1916.*

"Life is very hard with so much to see to and men often very stupid. Sergeant-Major takes his turn on duty, so is either away or asleep when wanted! . . ."

" *Sunday, October 15.*

"More endless hard work with many bombing and other arrangements. Glorious moon again—a heavenly sky and a devilish earth. Lots of 'Minnies' in afternoon. . . . No man in top of A2 (patrolled at night) or in A3 (held by B. Coy.) as Bosch mine is ready this side of Kennedy crater."

" *October 17.*

"A gorgeous day. Relieved at 3.45 p.m.—joy! After considerable strain of a new bit of line and putting it in order, as always falls to our lot."

*To his Mother.*

" *October 19, 1916.*

" . . . This morning I spent some time in an O.P. (Observation Post), a hidden place with just a small slit for the telescope. Very interesting looking down on Boschland—here several big valleys. Being a fine day, they have washing hanging up in several places. . . . The moon has been absolutely gorgeous lately."

Diary—" *October 23.*

"Went with C.O. and Coy. Commanders to see our new area S.E. of Loos; also Arthur, who is taking over the canteen there. Bus from Givenchy—for which we were late owing to trying to cut off a corner and badly losing our way in the mist. Weird and rotten piece of line."

" *October 25.*

"Relieved 11.30 a.m. by 1st Canadians."

“ *October 26.*

“ In the evening some of the ——— came in for supper after a Court of Enquiry, held in consequence of losing men in their saps. They lost 17, nothing heard of them.”

“ *October 27.*

“ At 8 a.m. went on to Loos with C.S.M. etc. Coy.; started at 8.15. Rotten game taking over. Cooked and not much sleep. Arthur turned up to supper and sleep.”

“ *October 29.*

“ Wired last night. . . . Lots of arrangements and sending down bombs. Bosch nearly got wiring party.”

“ B.E.F. Trench 1 [Loos],

“ Noon, *Monday, 30. 10. '16.*

“ . . . It is impossible to think of the joy of leave from the place where I now write from. It is a life which no one in England can possibly picture, and I am verily thankful that you cannot experience it. It is almost too severe, the fact of getting Mother's, yours, or other letters, here in the midst of anxiety (as O.C. Coy.), mud, and general vileness—but we survive well.”

“ B.E.F. Trench 1.

“ 12.30 p.m., *Tuesday, 31. 10. '16.*

“ . . . Trenches frightfully falling in owing to wet, and real problem to deal with owing to so few men available for work.

“ I and some men of another Coy. who came up for wiring last night nearly got a free ride to Berlin ! Wiring is always a rotten game, as when near up to the Bosch they are bound to see a party in front of the trenches by their ‘ Very ’ lights, which light up like day—far better than ours—which probably means machine-gun or rifle fire against



which tumble down if possible ('squatting' in rabbit language!) and bless a shell-hole if there is one there. Last night, however, they stopped sending up lights on our front after spotting my parties (I had two out for the purpose of dividing up the men, as otherwise it is true terrors to have a machine-gun spitting into the middle of a big party) and instead they sent out a patrol of eight men to try and cut off some, and they jolly nearly succeeded! I had just been to one party, and told them to wire further out than they were doing, and then left them to go to the other party. I had hardly got to the other party, who were wiring for the most part on pure white chalk thrown round the sides of a mine crater—exactly like snow, and men on it showing up like men on snow—when my Sergeant from the other parties ran up and said he had tumbled into this Bosch patrol. When I had told him to move forward he had of course taken his 'covering' party of a few men forward to lie on the ground, and just shown them where to lie, when he saw some men move a few yards from him, and, quite rightly under the circumstances, tumbled back with the others into the trench, but one of the covering party had not done so. As the Bosch were on each side of him, though he was in a shallow shell-hole, this man of the covering party—I say 'man,' but rather boy—had lain still in what was fortunately a small shell-hole. I sent out a patrol and found him there, which gave me, as you can imagine, one of the most joyful moments I can remember. I felt sure they had got him. Men came back torn to bits, getting over the small amount of wire there was there, and now on it hangs the greater part of a man's shorts, which they are still wearing. When I left that party I must have been within a few yards of this patrol, and it was lucky they did not get the lot of us, though they were running a big risk in their enterprise. It was a bad night, pitch dark, and heavy rain. If they had got that man I

should have felt it a very bad job, as they would have identified the Regiment, besides scoring one up.

“ So you see life is exciting, in fact I have just come in from my dug-out owing to half-a-dozen ‘ Minnies ’ being just plumped from two directions—the Bosch line goes pretty much round us—on to where I was arranging for certain sand-bags to be dumped, which they could see. These are great big things which you see for a few seconds falling from the skies, but they and we have every assortment of these things.”

“ . . . When I came in at midnight—my armament on those occasions is a bomb in one pocket and revolver in another—I had the great joy of sitting down and reading yours and Ros’ letters.”

“ B.E.F., Trench 1,

“ 4.30 p.m., I. II. 16.

“ Last night got through very satisfactory work. Coming back from our front line about 10 p.m. I told one of our Stokes guns to fire on Bosch front line just two shots, one on each of two places. I saw the first one burst beautifully about twenty feet above the ground, and the second on the ground (the fuzes are about twelve seconds) and then went on to my dug-out. One of my Officers who was on duty in the front line told me, when he came in, that the first one had burst immediately above about a dozen Bosch working outside their trench, scattering them pell-mell! Isn’t it a strange life!

“ This life is not pleasant, but none the less extremely fascinating.

“ So interesting, the Bosch things we are now using which we captured on the Somme push.”

“ Billets,

“ 5 p.m., *Thursday*, 2. II. '16.

“ I am in one of those times of bliss which it is hard to

describe, but which I expect you know the feeling of in a return to home with a welcome there, and every home comfort !

“ I left a certain place,<sup>1</sup> neither residential, nor one that you would choose for a holiday, this morning ; a vile walk down two and a half miles of trench, fallen in in several places. At one place I looked up to see where I (and my Sergeant-Major) had got to, and what the country was like, and there, like chickens for tameness, was the most lovely covey of sixteen partridges, quite unfrightenable, and just strutting about within a few yards, surprised at seeing a human being, it being land which no one traversed except by deep trenches. Every feather looked so beautiful. Then after a time we got out, and by means of my compass and map made out where we were—big open country, no hedges, only wide expanses of rough ground, with shell-torn coal-mines, sidings, etc. From there we went, after a bit of Leicester chocolate and a cigarette, above ground to a certain point where Officers' horses were meeting them, and right glad I was to give my groom my pack and the rest of the baggage round my shoulders to carry for me, and to get Bummy to take me to my billet, though only about three-quarters of a mile off.

“ When I got to Bummy I put on my Burberry, wet and muddy though it was, as I felt that somehow my mud-covered clothes were too bad for the ‘ public ’ eye, even near the Front.

“ . . . It is, as you can understand, like getting into another world after several days of trench life, to have my horse to meet me at one point, then round the corner my Q.M.-Sergeant, and then to come into this clean cottage about 3 p.m. where my valise and kit were all ready, and lunch, and very soon a fire going in the small projecting stove. After that to change into clean and dry things,

<sup>1</sup> Trenches at Loos.

and have a wash, and then sit down to write to you, during which your letter of Monday the 30th comes in. . . .

“Plenty of room now to empty out pockets, and sort up letters, papers, and clothes, and now soon to sit in a comfortable chair, and read yesterday’s *Times* by the fire!

“The only trouble is that my men (who are in huts) have, to the number of 26, to act as guards at once. It is hard to be turned straight on to that, but active service makes it necessary. To-morrow morning they will get baths, and myself too, after many days with no more than my jacket off.”

“November 6, 1916.

“. . . I have just been a most refreshing half-hour gallop on Bummy on some stubble.

“. . . The Kippers were greatest joy and change to the men especially as they arrived when we were in trenches. The men have just had issued most beautiful ‘leather erkins.’ Really long weather waistcoats, the same as last year, except that these are lined—also soon, I believe, going to have the same mackintosh caps as last year. The only trouble is the load it means for them to carry. The men are wonderfully provided for. . . . A football match yesterday, C. Coy. v. H.Qrs., ending in a draw! There is a boxing tournament to-night.”

Diary—“November 6.

“Arthur says that to-day he buried two Buffs shot through one of them not answering when challenged.”

*To his Mother.*

“B.E.F., Trench 1,

“5 p.m., Tuesday, 14. 11. '16.

“Trenches are good friends of mine and I am beginning to know them well.

“The first two or three days in trenches, especially if

new ones, are hard work, but other than this I feel much at home in them. There is a great charm in tumbling into or out of bed without any worry of taking off or putting on clothes.

“ This morning, half a mile to our left on some ground which I could see, some heavy rifle fire commenced and made me wonder if the Bosch were attacking, when I saw a flock of geese flying high over that part in their usual V formation. The rifle fire was Bosch and us firing at the same time at them! It is stated that one was brought down in our lines. I have once or twice seen geese flying high in the same direction.”

*To A. G. H.*

“ 3rd R.B., B.E.F.,

“ November 20, 1916.

“ . . . There is no doubt I, according to family ways, make too heavy weather of trench life by taking to heart too much until things are as much in order as is reasonably possible.

“ I certainly do not again want to be more cooked than I was the first three days of each of the last two tours of trenches! This is due to not making other Officers responsible for different things, but the two I have have not had sufficient experience to do so, and also it is not in me to detail an Officer for dangerous work like wiring, etc. If I consider it has to be done, I supervise it—quite wrong, but there it is!

“ I sadly miss the splendid Officers I had before the losses on the Somme—each one of the four was far better than I. It is the absence of support such as theirs which hits particularly hard, as well as of course the invaluable N.C.O.'s who have gone.

“ It is inexplicable to me how Staff jobs are given to men

with no trench experience. The absence of that experience is continuously obvious."

Diary—"November 21.

"Walked with Boscy to H.Qrs. where told my leave is from to-morrow (not 24th as I thought), so I go to-night and now write this at Les Brebis. Sent a wire home from Orderly Room. . . . Walked to Mazingarbe and got the 9.30 p.m. bus to Bethune. Waited in hotel for 11.30 p.m. train. Train full and cold, not much sleep."

"November 22.

"Boat left Boulogne 9.30 a.m. Good crossing. Came down by 2.53 p.m. train from Town. Mother and Ros. met me. A great welcome."

## XII

### STAFF WORK WITH THE 73rd BRIGADE

DECEMBER, 1916—FEBRUARY, 1917.

ANDREW was back in France again on December 3, 1916. On December 4 he joined the Staff of the 73rd Infantry Brigade, then at Les Brebis near Loos, as a 'learner' of a Staff Captain's duties.

*To his Father.*

" 3rd R.B.,

" 2 p.m., *Monday*, 4. 12. '16.

" I went direct to our Q.M. Stores, and then walked to Battalion H.Q.'s and saw Pigot, who confirmed what had been told me by two Officers, who were going on leave as I got to railhead, that I was to go to the 73rd Brigade, which is one of the Brigades in our Division. I lunched at H.Q.'s and then went on from there. My job appears to be assistant Staff Captain. The Brigadier I know well, but I have not seen him yet. I will give you my address to-morrow. Till you hear this address, write to me as before."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

" 73rd I. Brigade,

" 6 p.m., *Tuesday*, 5. 12. '16.

" At the moment, I feel really 'Company sick,' and long far beyond words to be back with men whom I have such

a tremendous admiration for, and some of whom I feel I deeply love. . . . On the other hand, I think trench life had become for me a very great strain, not only from the point of view of wondering if the line was being held as well as possible, but also owing to the untold effort of detailing men for dangerous work, such as wiring or patrol. This would not have mattered, except that the nerve strain sometimes became so great, chiefly owing to want of sleep, that I wondered if I was able to deal with any complicated position that might arise.

“ I feel at present very bereft, as in all other ways trench life suits me so far better than a house and comfortable mess, such as I have at present.

“ I feel GOD has been so good to me all my time in the Army, and now again such a magnificent leave.

“ I had to stay a night at Boulogne (Louvre Hotel). If you ever get there, make a point of getting the Proprietor’s small daughter of about fifteen to play the piano, and to sing—I don’t think I ever heard any one perform so superbly as she did on a small piano in a writing-room where she sometimes walked in and carried on.”

*To his Mother.*

“ 11 a.m., 5. 12. '16.

“ They seem an excellent lot of fellows here, and I hope to soon get into things, though at present all is fairly strange.

“ The Staff Captain is Captain Norrie, who does both ‘ A ’ and ‘ Q ’ branches. ‘ A ’ includes Administration and Discipline, and ‘ Q ’ Supplies (rations, R.E. material, and ammunition).

“ I feel very sad at leaving the Company without prospect of return, especially when those of the men I have seen all give such a warm though silent welcome—silent till spoken to !







“The Bosch did a raid last night at 1 a.m. on our (i.e. the 73rd) front, but got the worst of it, I am glad to say.”

Diary—“*December 6.*

“The Bosch on Monday 1 a.m. raided the Leinsters, but got the worst of it and left a prisoner (wounded).”

“B.E.F.,

“2.15 p.m., *Sunday, 10. 12. '16.*

“A different Sunday to yours. Ordinary office work, consisting chiefly of a Court Martial. The labour in getting these Court Martials together is tremendous, owing to witnesses being far distant. For this one, three from Boulogne, and two from other Divisions called by the accused. The C.M. was put off till to-day owing to these two being called, but neither turned up, one being in England, so the Court had to adjourn without decision. Then last night the President of Court could not leave his Battalion, so new President had to be got.

“It seems hardly practicable to give such full justice as this out here. It was very difficult for any of the members to attend.

“All well here, and a bright day.”

*To his Father.*

“B.E.F.,

“4 p.m., *Monday, 11. 12. '16.*

“Yesterday I went to see my old Company. I saw a certain number of the men, and a great joy it was too. I also had tea in a very cramped little dug-out which I have lived in, and know well. The best tea that I have had since I got back, in that there were only two cups available, and the tea made and brought in a canteen. I do not like tea

in a room with electric light and china cups nearly so much !

“ I find the men are very grateful for any knits which may be sent, and including socks, which I made a mistake in thinking they were well provided with. Any that are sent me, I shall enjoy to send up to them.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ December 14, '16.

“ I am glad you appreciate how much I feel being absent from the Coy. It is indeed most troublous to me, but I think it best, anyhow for the present, from every point of view. . . . It is, though, very hard to think of the men in the trenches with attendant risks, and not be with them.

“ I can hardly think that I can ever become efficient for Staff work, as it has sides to it which are not in my line, but should they give me an appointment, I do trust it will not be something involving the wearing of ‘ red,’ of which I have a vast horror, but I suppose it will. . . .

“ If it was not for Mother and Father, (I don't mind a bit about you !) I don't feel I could stand being situated as I am, and not sharing trench risks with the Coy. ; but anyhow I may get back some day.

“ Having this job, which the General regards as,—and indeed it is,—very important, he has arranged for me again to be Temporary Captain, which I am, though without Captain's pay.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ December 14, 1916.

“ . . . I sit for work in a room with the Brigadier, Brigade-Major Howlett, and Staff Captain Norrie. The mess is in a house behind, where I and others also sleep. We seldom leave the office till pretty late at night.”

“ December 16, 1916.

“ There are two such jolly black puppies about 9 or 10 weeks old belonging to our Mess. They live in the garden round the house and are a real tonic to talk to—unaffected by war, just ordinary charming pups ! ”

Diary—“ December 24, 1916.

“ A very busy day in the office all day. In evening dined with C. Coy. R.B. at house with white shutters in Mazingarbe. Bridgeman, Patey, and Northcroft there, a real joy.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ Christmas Day,

“ Monday, 9.15 a.m., 25. 12. '16.

“ I have had two or three rides lately, going up to a certain part, though not able to ride the whole way, as within sight of Bosch, but wonderful to be able to get as far as is done. This is owing to the cover a certain village street gives. There are often hurdles or canvas screens along sides of roads in places where traffic can otherwise be seen by the Bosch. I rode the General's little horse the other day, such a beauty. I wished Ros. had it.

“ I have had two ripping good evenings with the R.B. lately. First one with ' A ' and ' D ' Coys. and last night with ' C ' Coy ; all very genial and in good form. They are now only about 1½ miles from where I am.”

Diary—“ Christmas Day, 1916.

“ At 7.30 p.m. dined with the R.B.'s at Mazingarbe—17 Officers there. Beautiful room and dinner. A most ripping evening. I thought of our Christmas dinners last year ; who will there be next year and where will it be ? ”

*To his Mother.*

“ 3 p.m., *Wednesday, 27. 12. '16.*

“ I take it as a compliment being now acting Staff Captain while Norrie has gone away, as it means a lot of responsibility. The work varies from day to day, but there are several things to get on with which mean a lot of time and working out, especially Appendices to defence scheme. I was going hard all yesterday till 12 midnight, which is usually the time we knock off in the office, work starting about 9.30 a.m. When I got back to bed about 12.30 the firing was heavy, so I got up at 1 to get to the telephone to see if anything special was on, then at 3.30 a.m. an Orderly stirred me up with a message, so you see there is plenty moving. It is extremely interesting, and I enjoy it much. I only hope the Brigade Major won't get sick from having too much on him. He is a charming fellow, but far from well. He and the Brigadier, General Dugan, are a great deal up the line, often for most of the day, which means my seeing the various Artillery and other Officers who come in, and taking messages or arranging things for them. Or some Battalion ringing up, wanting Artillery retaliation, etc.”

*To his Brother Arthur.*

“ Headquarters,

“ 73rd Infantry Brigade, B.E.F.,

“ *December 29, 1916.*

“ I do feel torn asunder in not being in the trenches, but on the other hand I think best that I am not as the strain is too great now that Brown, Venner, Chamberlain and Vernède have gone. I would revel in it if they were there to be with me.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"H.Qs., 3rd Infantry Brigade, B.E.F.,

"December 21, 1916.

"I wonder when Sabbaths will return again. I should dearly love a day's rest, but I struggle along in spite of it being Sunday. I am glad to be out of trenches for a bit, as I don't think I could stand the strain as things are at present, and without any of the old time support of the old time Officers. The trenches are, of course, vile from this wet. There is an Officer in where I write now who says he got stuck yesterday, and if he had not had a servant he would be there still in the trench. The effort comes in the discouraging amount of work to do, and the men's vitality being so low, and hence so difficult to make it pleasant. A man here the other day killed himself from overwork in the trenches. He refused to go sick till he could not help himself, and then died soon after he got down. A noble character to stick it thus."

*To his Father.*

"Headquarters,

"73rd Infantry Brigade,

"January 1, 1917.

"Mother asks what a 'Camouflet' is. It is a mine blown up with the purpose of blowing in an enemy's mine-gallery. Usually it does not break the surface of the ground, but of course it may according to the depth it is and the amount of explosives used. Usually it is a race between ourselves and the enemy as to who shall blow first. They know they are near one another and both intending to blow the other, and when one is ready they listen for work in the other, in order to blow up the gallery when men are in it. It therefore becomes a time of great excitement for the miners.

" . . . Very glad Arthur has six weeks' leave. I don't

think you fully realize how nobly he did on the Somme. His work in the Dressing Stations was splendid, and done in places under heavy fire, also coming up to see me in the line we had taken that day, which meant a very nasty journey."

Diary—" *January 10, 1917.*

"Saw the Leinsters raiding party paraded by the Church for inspection. Keenly felt the certainty that some would be killed and many wounded in a few hours' time. The General and Brigade-Major went up to Leinster H.Q.'s. The left party got in, and the right also after first being driven back. They got eight prisoners, killed several and bombed dug-outs; our casualties 19. Beautiful arrangements with all guns, Stokes, smoke, lachrymatory, etc.; great number of wire-cutting shells and some torpedoes. . . . Comfort to have it over. Very tantalizing being in office while it was going on."

*To his Mother.*

" *Friday, 12. I. '17, 5 p.m.*

"A very busy day all to-day, but interesting.

"I ought to be able to speak on the telephone and sign my name all right soon from the experience I have had! My great trouble is not speaking French, all the time wanted here, and especially as a Staff Captain. Do encourage all your married children to have a French governess or nursemaid. When your grandchildren fight in the next war they will thank you.

"A doctor now here came a long way to give evidence as to the sanity or otherwise of a man up for Court-Martial. It is my job to find him a billet."

" *3.30 p.m., Sunday, 14. I. '17.*

"Not so much doing to-day, which is good, especially



to-day being Sunday. Conferences are ordinary routine, not pious ones but ones for consideration of how best to beat the Bosch. In all the vileness of war, there is a wonderful fascination in tactics to adopt, and in new inventions or improvements. There is wonderful confidence here, which has a splendid moral effect, which the Bosch feel, I think."

Diary—" *January 17.*

" Canadians (800) raided Bosch and got 100 prisoners, one machine-gun, one trench-mortar. Casualties 19. The raid was at 7.30 a.m. after being put off several days. Code words used 'Asquith' and 'Lloyd George,' the last =OK, i.e. 'conditions suitable.' Heavy snow in night."

" *January 21.*

" Middlesex raided at 7.30 a.m. With mobile charges blew in 2 dug-outs and a M.-G. position. Our casualties 9, and 1 Officer missing. We took three prisoners. Our smoke barrage and smoke feint and tear shells worked well. . . . Gave brandy to one of black pups which has distemper."

" B.E.F.,

" 5 p.m., *Sunday, 21. 1. '17.*

" I have felt so ashamed of my few lines of newsless scrawl lately, but both lack of time and of news have stopped anything decent in the way of letters!

" I still spend most of my time in a high square room, with dusty distempered walls, and very dusty spiders' webs all round the top—windows with holes in the glass (these covered up with bits of paper). A good globe of electric light in the centre of the ceiling, and radiator pipes for warmth, so not badly off. Plenty of maps, returns, etc., round the walls—the Brigadier, Brigade-Major and myself

sit in it—table very untidy according to custom of mankind, and strewn with papers, as you may imagine.

“ I wish I could tell you of the several events of great interest which have been happening here, but am prevented.

“ The other day I was reading an extremely interesting Bosch account of their defence last summer of a certain place on the Somme. The account was, I suppose, captured somewhere. Everything magnificently organized. They paid great credit to the way we attacked.

“ This hard frost is a great change, and relieves the deep mud on the roads that there has been.

“ Another weird Sunday, and hard to realize. I wonder when I shall next get to a Service.”

“ B.E.F.,

“ 5 p.m., *Tuesday*, 23. 1. '17.

“ I doctored up the other night, and put in a warm room with covering round it, one of the little black pups which has distemper. It is very sad to see a ripping little thing, full of licks and life suddenly begin to waste, and become altogether sorry for itself. I don't know any such real joy as to see pups about.

“ I am glad to say a learner for Staff work—a very nice Captain—has come to-day, so I shall get some help. It is very seldom that a Staff Captain is on his own as I have been, and there is no doubt it has been far too much for my liking.”

Diary—“ *January* 24.

“ The Bosch raided us at 3 a.m. Only a few got in and left 1 Officer and 5 men dead in our trench. We had 4 killed and 6 wounded. They also left a prisoner.

“ Feeling very cooked all day, especially owing to move arrangements, but none the less worked on till 12.30 a.m.”

*To his Mother.*

“ B.E.F.,

“ 5 p.m., *Saturday*, 27. I. '17.

“ No letters yesterday or to-day, and I wrote none yesterday; life was impossible in the extreme. To-day work has eased off a bit, which is a mercy.

“ We still have very heavy frosts. Several of the Officers on Division and Corps Staff are Harrovians, and were with me there. If you are writing to Harry, ask him if he remembers Kay, also Pope and Sandilands (these two were in Bowen's house), also Boyd Rochford.

“ . . . I asked Sandilands if he remembered the scrum our house had with theirs outside his house, which he did well ! ”

“ 5 p.m., *Sunday*, 28. I. '17.

“ Thanks for Cox and Co.'s letter. It matters little to me whether I am a Lieutenant or a Captain, as long as you don't mind ! (Cox classes him as Lieutenant.)

“ It is rather strange being reduced while undertaking what is recognized as being a very Senior Captain's show, and in ordinary way involving pay of £400 per annum and two horses, and many other things.”

Diary—“ *January* 30.

“ Not quite so cold. Busy day and not feeling very grand. Saw a half-starved collie in afternoon and wished I could have shot it.”

“ *January* 31.

“ Slept night 31st-1st in office on table to be near telephone.”

“ *February* 2.

“ To-day has been the ' Mission ' and kept throughout the Army as a Sunday. The idea is to show men what we

are fighting for and that Christianity should come into it. This afternoon went to hear the Rev. H. W. Blackburne (A.C.G. of 1st Army), who speaks well."

*To his Mother.*

"Monday, 5. 2. '17, 5 p.m.

"Arthur tells of Ros. as a splendid pigeon shot. This is great, and gives me visions of lying up for them together, that is if I get this 'special leave,' as is very probable apparently. I might get it any time after the 8th."

"Tuesday, 6. 2. '17, 5 p.m.

"It would have interested you to see all the Battalion's rations, and other units attached to this Brigade, including also fodder for horses, dumped in their own heaps in a line, and then loaded in G.S. waggons. Also the coal and wood dump near by from which units drew their rations. Such good ones too.

"Then work at the Office, and then up the line to see certain Battalions, and lunched with the Brigade-Major of another Brigade and Division, whom I had to discuss certain matters with. Then back here, and then a stroll round to see other people on certain matters, so that by now a good deal has collected to deal with.

"No news of leave at present."

Diary—"February 3.

"Two F.G.C.M.'s (Field General Court Martial). In one case the verdict 'guilty' and sentence 'death'; but he will for certain get off. . . . The General applied to Division for one month's leave for me."

*To his Mother.*

"February 8, 1917.

"Just a line to say I have been granted a long 'leave.'"

I am due to leave to-night, but Brigade have asked me to stay on a few days."

The telegram to say he was coming home on leave arrived at Easneye late at night and his brother Arthur (also home on leave from France) took the car down to meet the train. In his hurry he forgot that the Lodge gates were closed and dashed right through them, mercifully not hurting either himself or the Chauffeur and doing remarkably little damage to the car.

Andrew describes in his Diary his bitterly cold journey from Bethune to Boulogne, and then across, and finally his midnight arrival. "Great welcome at Easneye. Mother, Father, Ros., Esmé all at the door in the cold. Provisions all ready and fire in room. What love and welcome . . . who can express their value?"

## XIII

### VIMY RIDGE

MARCH-APRIL, 1917.

**D**URING his month's leave in England (Feb.-March, 1917) Andrew was somewhat exercised in his mind as to whether he ought to continue Staff work or return to the Battalion. His own personal wish was strongly for the latter course. His family, on the other hand, doubted whether it was physically possible for him to stand much more of front line wear and tear, after all he had endured during the past two years, and felt moreover that all his fighting experience both fitted him for and justified him in doing work on the Staff.

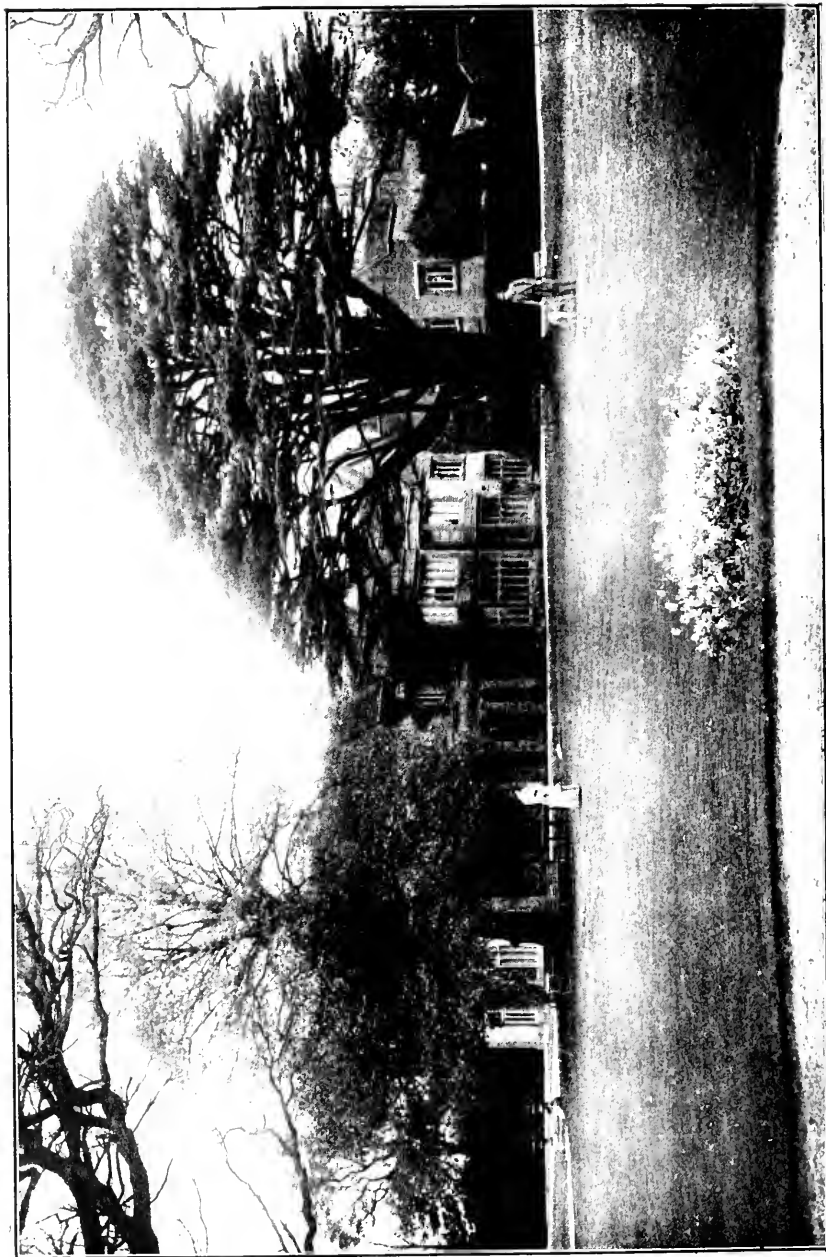
To this question, and other matters, the following letters and Diary entries refer :

Diary—" *February 12, 1917. (At Easneye.)*

" Shot 2 rabbits and a cock. . . . In afternoon Arthur and I bicycled to Bonnington's ; no one in, so on to Hunsdon Bury (the old home of their childhood). Walked into house and all round the wood. Saw all the old rabbit-holes ! No heat in hot-house so spiders dead. They have been breeding there these 24 years."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 2 above.





[To face page 249

HUNSDON BURY.



*To his Mother.*

“ Bowden Hall,

“ *February 25, 1917.*

“ . . . The suggestion of D. J. that I should accept the Staff Captaincy of 1st Corps Heavy Artillery is tempting and of Staff jobs I should prefer this to any, but my wish is *to get back to the Battalion*. I only consider the other because I know your preference for my having Staff work, but I know your real self would wish me to be where I can be of most use, which I am confident is with the Battalion. . . . Of course P. may have made Battalion arrangements by which he does not want me ; in this case I would accept the Heavy Artillery. I have replied accordingly. . . . ”

*To a Friend.*

“ Easneye,

“ *March 1, 1917.*

“ Bricks have been falling heavily on my head here. I feel innocent, but have no witnesses for my defence. Arthur writes volumes about my at all costs sticking to Staff work, as I cannot stand trenches, which the family swallow in gulps. . . . The sad part is that I am undutiful enough for none of these things to move me. I confess I am a feeble creature to be once knocked over by trench life and once by Staff life, but think it good for the Bosch to show them that I can still dodge their Minnies and bullets.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ Easneye, Ware,

“ *March 6, 1917.*

“ This morning I set nine snares below kitchen garden, showing Sandy the art, then helped Sheppard<sup>1</sup> binding underwood, then shot spinney by Hilton's with Sheppard and his men, and got one rabbit and one waterhen, for which

<sup>1</sup> Died in the London Hospital, Nov. 1918.

two I tossed up as to which should go to which man. In afternoon walked with Mother to Widdbury Cottages, on way back got two rabbits. One, apparently lightly hit, died just within reach, in a hole. This often happens, as you know, I am going to have a P.M. on it."

*To his Sister Margaret.*

"Easneye,

"*March 9, 1917.*

"Here's a parcel for you of home-made stuff. The rabbit I snared last night just below the kitchen garden; the three pigeons were got by Uncle Geoff and myself last night, together with seven others. I wish you had been with us. I got some rippers.

"Sad to relate, I go to Grosvenor Hotel to-morrow, and leave on Sunday."

*To his Sister Dorothy.*

"Easneye, Ware,

"*Thursday, March 9, '17.*

"I never answered your ripping letter of Feb. 26, asking me to stick to Staff rather than Battalion work. I am afraid I have not acted on it, but have instead done my level best to get back to the Battalion. . . . I have now had some of that which, with an excellent leave, has given me a change which there was no question I absolutely needed. . . . And so I think it right to get back.

"Also I love being with the men, and can't stand being comparatively away from the risks and vileness, which they have to be in. At present I have heard nothing, though I have written to Division, Brigade and Battalion, to say I would like to go back to R.B. unless they are full up."

Diary—"March 8 (at Easneye).

"Some snow in night. . . . Shot pigeons after tea

and got ten—all real good ones. Total bag for day—2 cocks, 7 rabbits (Sandy got 4) and 10 pigeons.”

The present writer can testify that the expression “all real good ones” is not at all beside the mark! He has constantly seen Andrew bring down wonderfully “tall” birds, grouse and pheasants as well as pigeons.

On March 11 he was back in France once more.

Diary—“*March 12.*

“Reached the Brigade, and saw the General who has received no orders for me yet. . . . The Town Major regrets he has no cellar available as a billet at present! Two shells came over Béthune Station just after I arrived.”

*To his Mother.*

“5 p.m., 14. 3. '17.

“(At Ablain St. Nazaire).

“I have time for a line, waiting for breakfast, after which I shall go across country about three miles to a place where I shall be quartered for a time. They have given me the title of ‘Defence Officer,’ for which I am responsible for defences of certain important ground (The Lorette Ridge).

“With this job I shall be living in turn with four different Battalions, and no longer at Brigade, though not many miles from it.

“How I am to tell you to address letters I am not yet sure. An Officer here suggests my having an Army post-office to myself.

“When I got to railhead the Huns gave me a welcome by a salute of two shells put a little way over the Station. One broke a little glass in the Station.

“My abode in my new quarters will probably be somewhere underground. When I got here it was somewhat strange after ‘billets’ in England to be told ‘I am afraid

there is no cellar available for you,' by which I instead had what was much more comfortable, a ground-floor room shared with Evitt. They have hardly shelled this place where we are for a long time, but it is expected that they will do so soon, and hence a cellar is safer than above ground."

*To his Mother.*

" 4 p.m., 15. 3. 1917.

". . . The men whom I have specially under my orders (22, composed of men from four Battalions) have gone up to work on certain muddy trenches. . . .

"I changed my dug-out last night for another little underground place, which I have to myself. My servant (Smith) who is a great comfort, as being very keen to do anything, said he was going to make a palace of it, and after he had swept it out, and got my things in he said it was a dream. I must say he had done it very well by moving a wire bed in, and putting down sandbags and a strip of carpet he had brought here with him, also Christmas cards, etc., on the walls. Another man made me a table out of two sugar boxes.

"I have not been sleeping well the last few nights, but will soon get into it when I get used to my dug-out, and my work gets into running order. No mortal man could have slept for an hour from about 3.30 a.m. with guns firing over where I was from a few yards off!"

Diary—" *March 14.*

"The Middlesex are the Battalion just now in Brigade reserve so I fix up with their H.Q.'s. . . . Went to 'D' Coy. 3 p.m. and had a walk round with Davis till 5.15 p.m. Mud up to knees in places. A vile land indeed."

" *March 15.*

"Had a dug-out with two B. Coy. Officers—excellent

fellows. They and every one here, including the men, are splendidly bright. . . . I have 20 men and 2 N.C.O.'s of the four Battalions under me for work on the defences ; 5 of these reported at 10.30 a.m. and I took them up Maestro Line. . . . In afternoon sent men to learn Bouvigny Wood and others I took up Spur Alley, etc., nearly getting caught in the dark."

" 4 p.m., *Saturday*, 17. 3. '17.

" My job is really delightful, and I am most comfortable. I have just been censoring the men's letters, and find that they too enjoy what they are doing with me. I and they are out a great deal of the day, and have especially lately had a lot of walking and hill-climbing, also muddy trench walking ; in one place this morning in water to only just below the top of my high boots.

" I am in a very safe place, some way behind the front lines, so you can think of me without worry. It is such luck too being stationary, and not moving every few days. The only trouble is that I have still not settled down to sleep very well, but I am extremely fit myself, and this will soon come. It is a joy to be so much out of doors.

" I should like to have some other Officer with me to work together and discuss matters and arrangements necessary to defences, instead of being on my own. This may come, but at present nothing doing. The men are entering into the work well, and getting very keen about it."

Diary—" *March* 18 (*Sunday*).

" Slept better. Men worked on Spur Alley, then I took them to Arras Rd. via Ablain trench. . . . At 5.30 p.m. inspected kit, after which had a short service. News this morning of fall of Bapaume and good French advance . . .

Bosch tried to get me near ration dump with 3 H.E.'s. . . . What an unhealthy place this becomes, and more so every day."

" 10 a.m., 18. 3. '17.

" Splendid drying weather here the last few days. Lots of walking round yesterday morning, and again starting at 4.45 p.m. going up a hillside in 'dead ground,' i.e. hidden from the Bosch, then into a long trench, and arriving, as I aimed for, at a certain part at 6.15 p.m., when, being dusk, I could get above ground and see the lie of things, as I wanted to do. 'I' consisted of myself and a party of twenty-two men. Several pairs of partridges about, and a snipe came in quite near me in the dark."

" 3.15 p.m.

". . . I almost found a robin's nest this morning in a trench, as it flew out from the riveting as I passed, and again from the same place when I returned 20 minutes later. Unfortunately I was in a hurry so could not have a good look."

*To his Mother.*

" March 22, 1917.

". . . Yesterday I was out on the hill from 11 a.m. to 4.30. A most wonderfully clear afternoon and wonderful to look back miles into Bosch land. Our shells bursting over various parts. Bosch trains and factories, etc., carrying on. I have been up again this morning and almost equally clear between some snow storms. . . . I spend most of my time in gum boots. My wanderings take me down disused trenches with mud to the tops of boots occasionally. It is pretty hard going, as you may guess, but like a Scotch hill it keeps me fit."

“ 3 p.m., *Friday, 23. 3. '17.*

“ I am getting on fine, and am very fit.

“ Every one extremely genial, and being with different Battalions is interesting—some muddlers getting nothing done, others (the Regulars as a rule) with such a different and businesslike feel about them.

“ This morning I was walking round trenches I have not been in before. I found a large bomb store in a disused one, and near it on a bank an excellent spring of water. I have now found two springs on this hill, both well situated, which rather solves the problem for me of forming reserve water supplies.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ *Sunday, March 25, 1917.*

“ Just had a very nice Service with my men in a strange old dug-out, with one candle. We had one last Sunday, and they asked to have another to-day. I shot a puppy last night who had a broken leg.

“ I am thoroughly enjoying my work, which is to a considerable extent an R.E. job.”

*To his Mother.*

“ *Monday, 26. 3. '17.*

“ The men in H.Q.'s mess vary with each Battalion. At present it is C.O., Father—(a most genial and jovial R.C. parson), Intelligence Officer, Adjutant, and Doctor. The latter a very nice chap. Talk is varied, as you may imagine, chiefly perhaps war, but everything else too. You would sometimes be surprised to look in and hear discussions taking place on weirdest things, regardless of guns popping off outside the door. A good many medical ailments dis-

cussed at supper this evening, including some pet Australian liver complaint of the C.O.'s which he described as 'like a bunch of uncooked tapioca—that's right, isn't it, doctor?'

*To his Father.*

"7.30 p.m., *Wednesday*, 28. 3. '17.

"How I would have enjoyed for you to spend the day with me to-day—including too last evening and last night. This morn several 5'9's plumped on to trenches on the side of this hill, also very heavy Bosch shell and minnying of our front line which all laid out below me, and in afternoon intense Bosch shelling of the front on a 600 yard front, about two shells a second for over an hour, after that from the top of this ground I watched our shells bursting about two miles off on Bosch back lines; they also at the same time searching for our batteries. As this sort of thing happens continuously all down the front it gives nothing away to mention it generally, though this was a day which thousands in England would have given up very much to have been with me and seen, also connected of course with numerous warfare duties. Some day I must show you this land, and especially a certain Church (Lorette Chapel)."

Diary—" *March* 30.

"Went with men putting up notice boards (names of trenches). Terribly hard work walking in trenches. . . . Canadians again came up to hold Ridge while Northamptons relieving Leinsters."

" *March* 31.

"Just been witnessing Canadians raid South of Souchez river, about 500 going over, Zero time 10.30. Bosch green and red lights innumerable. A wonderful sight and sound. The wounded will soon be coming in to the Dressing Station here in Ablain Str. N."



*To his Mother.*

“ 9 p.m., 1. 4. '17.

“. . . Evitt, the Parson who came back with me, came here this afternoon and had a Service just behind some trenches on an old roadway across a hillside. It at once started to snow heavily, so we shifted into a corrugated iron shelter, which I had just put up for reserve rations, bombs, etc., just by. A good Service. I told Evitt he was consecrating the bomb store. You would have liked to be there, with the experience of our guns firing over us from quite near. You would have liked still more to have been here about 10 p.m. last night, and seen our guns giving heavy bombardment on Bosch lines (firing over us), bangs with sharp flashes and then tearing of shells going through the air with usually a few sparks somewhere in their flight, and then the flashes of the bursts.

“ Everything goes well out here.”

“ 7 p.m., 2. 4. '17.

“ This morning I went with O.C. Battalion here and 13 men to Brigade [at Aix Noulette] to show the men the country, and to see the Brigadier on certain matters. I lunched there, and then came back a different way. Most of the time a driving snow storm. This was in one way fortunate, as I went through a big and lovely wood, and expected to also have to come back through it, and round to my abode by a circuitous route, but the snow made it impossible to cut across open country which in the ordinary way is in view of the Bosch, and important not to show movement in case important things there should be shelled now or at any future date.

“ I have no other Officer yet, but expect one soon, I am glad to say.

“ I have a special and exceptional appointment with

considerable powers. I receive orders from the Brigade. Whether I am on the Staff or not I can't say ! ”

Diary—“ *April 2.*

“ Mobbs had a chit that to-day commenced our attack on Vimy Ridge. From which it might be supposed that we had not already shelled it and much less that we have now for weeks been *pounding* it ! But a pounding indeed it has been, all day tens of thousands of shells. . . . Going to my dug-out again found caterpillar towing big gun into position and another big one on the road also to be placed. The place will be solid with them soon and for miles and miles along the front and in depths. When shall we have the Ridge ? ”

“ *April 3.*

“ Men on different jobs. Went to cellars with Mobbs to see if he could put men into them as there are now guns in the Sugar Refinery and he wants to clear men from there. . . . Bosch have to-day got several direct hits on Maestro and on Laprade. Shall have to mend them to-morrow. Got back 11 p.m. Mobbs has orders to relieve to-morrow night ; he has had 8 days in and only 4 out, very sickening. Apparently Leinsters and Middlesex have both had bad time.”

*To his Father.*

“ *April 4, 1917.*

“ Just had tea and the Doctor in the Mess has said ‘ Do you know it is Good Friday ? ’ I don't think any one else in this City realized it but him. We have had plenty of Church bells ‘ du pays ’ though, i.e. from our guns. . . . I said yesterday I saw a strange bird—that I could not identify—I have since seen three of them, but none so that I could get any background but the sky. Neither birds

nor animals care anything for guns. I particularly noticed a few nights ago, some teams of six horses or mules with limbers trotting back past guns firing very heavily almost into their faces from the side of the road and taking no notice whatever."

Diary—" *April 6.*

"Lovely morn. . . . Our test barrage on Vimy Ridge began and was wonderful sight. Bosch answered with a barrage, mostly in Zouave Valley. Watched with glasses. Later heavy showers. Major Vanderbilt of Tanks attached for one day ; went on to Brigade—I sent 2 guides with him. Got back to lunch at 3.15 seeing various things en route. . . . This afternoon one of our 8-inch Hows. fired before lifting the gun, with result that shot into side of hill a few yards off—one of team killed, 2 wounded."

" *April 7.*

"Heavy Bosch shelling. . . . Lovely moon. Caterpillars panting everywhere as I went to bed at 11.30 p.m. . . . The guns sound bitterer every day."

*To his Mother.*

" *Easter Sunday, April 8, 1917.*

"It is a strange land to spend Easter Sunday in. We have not had quite the peace that I hope you have, but like David in Ps. xxiii inward peace can be there tho' war without. . . . I suppose America has come in for the Entente. I hope it may mean much good to us. I have found 2 most gorgeous masses of snowdrops, each about 9 inches square, in an old garden. One of them I shall dig up and put in a tin for this Mess."

Diary—" *April 8, 1917.*

"When in Ablain the Bosch put 5 shells very near me ; plenty of splinters, then one of our 18 lbs. prematurely

burst just by me. Previously in the morning they had shelled nastily on the Ridge. This place is more than unhealthy now. How I wish our attack would come ; but how momentous it is."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

" 8 p.m., 8. 4. '17.

*" Sunday.*

" What an Easter Sunday I have had. I went to lunch with a Regiment some way off to inform them about certain ground, and then to show it them. Shelling was active all day, but I have not had a scratch."

*Diary—" April 9.*

" . . . At 5.30 a.m. all the guns opened fire simultaneously and the Canadians at the same moment began their attack on Vimy Ridge. The Bosch have several times got wind up and put up a barrage, and we obviously caught them 'asleep.' As a consequence of this we in Ablain have had a quieter day than for a long time past. A counter-attack was expected to-day or very soon and we were wired accordingly. Apparently prisoners state that if the Ridge is taken it must be retaken and the Guards' Division at Douai is ready to do so. All O.P.'s (I went up the Ridge at noon, waiting till then in case of orders) report much movement of men, lorries, etc. . . . Apparently all objectives were gained down to Arras and now (11.30 p.m.) I hear there are 10,000 prisoners, hundreds of M.G.'s, and 16 big guns. . . . To-night, here, only single gun shots about every 2 seconds. It seems dead quiet ! Will there be a counter-attack to-night ? "

*To his Father.*

" 5.30 p.m., *Tuesday*, 10. 4. '17.

" This morning on the hill where I am I went, as I often

do, into several O.P.'s (usually called 'Opips') (Observation positions), sort of dug-outs with slit-like aperture to look through, and looked with telescopes and glasses into Bosch land. It brings a feeling very similar to deer-stalking and I wish you could have it too, as you love such a bird's-eye view with a map before you, and seeing our shells in various parts. O.P.'s are usually gunners' shows for seeing the accuracy of their battery's shooting. Inside is a telephone with a man on it, and you hear from him 'No. 1 gun fired.' Watch the target and telephone back 'Two degrees left' or whatever it may be; or 'Unobserved. No. 1 fire again.' Often some Artillery Officer whom I may or may not know says 'Come into my O.Pip and I will have a shoot,' which is always interesting.

"I couldn't have a job more to my liking than this one I am on.

". . . Mother asks if I am on a Staff. As I am doing executive work and am not with the Battalion I am still on the Staff, though my appointment is, I think, a unique one."

Diary—"April 11.

"No counter-attack in night. . . . Zero for Leinsters and Sussex in Hache Wood is 5 a.m. to-morrow, also apparently for Canadians to take Pimple. The former necessary as overlooking Zouave Valley and also both must be taken together."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

"7 p.m., Wednesday, 11. 4. '17.

"I have done a rapid skin of a lovely goldfinch I found dead in a trench this morning. . . .

"Events have been developing, as you will now have seen in the papers. Everything seems very satisfactory, and this afternoon we hear that we have Bullycourt, which

should be important. I want to see the paper accounts, and you want to see the show itself—how unfortunate these things are!

“We are having lots of snow, and the ground is now white with a heavy fall. . . .

“The position, as you will no doubt see it in the papers, will, I think, do your hearts good and cure all aches. It cures all ours here, or would do if there were any, and rejoices us much. This is probably the hardest knock Germany has yet had, and I fail to see how she can recover. My life has become more ‘healthy’ since this push—the Bosch shelling being more erratic.”

Diary—“*April 12.*

“Canadians attacked The Pimple (on the Ridge) etc., and Leinsters and Sussex Hache Wood at 5 a.m. in rain. It is rather uncertain where the latter two have got to but believe all successful. Our and Bosch wounded coming down to our Dressing Station here. Bitterly cold, but sunny. Took some of the lighter cases into the men’s dug-out, where it was warmer, and gave them food, etc., before they moved on. . . . As I turn in (11.30 p.m.) a wire to say that from information of a prisoner just captured a Bosch counter-attack is being prepared by Givenchy village. The Canadians apparently found they were holding from Kennedy crater to Souchez river with 76 men so kept 300 Cavalrymen who were up digging to increase their number.”

*To his Mother.*

“10.30 p.m., *Thursday, 12. 4. '17.*

“Owing to the snow last night, heavy drifts in many trenches; we again made a successful attack at 5 a.m. to-day. I gave some of our wounded some of your provisions, which they were most grateful for, including the beef tea.

“The men have had to go through a very bad time for many days with nothing warm to drink; and vile mud and snow. The Bosch prisoners had to carry down stretchers, etc. They were a mixed lot; some fine men, some poor looking men. I have just looked at Tuesday’s paper. The account from the Correspondent is a wash-out as far as this part is concerned. Sunday night was comparatively quiet till 5.30 a.m., when all guns opened heavy barrage, and our men went over at same time, and no doubt took Bosch by surprise. They knew we were going to attack, but expected it between 15th and 20th.

“An Officer lightly hit in the head this morning came in to breakfast with us after an exciting attack. The mud was too bad for the men to keep up with the barrage, but we got all objectives, though it did not work in the same clockwork as on Monday. . . .

“In one place the Bosch came out of a deep dug-out and fired with M.G.’s on our men who had passed it, and proved nasty. The usual scheme is to leave ‘mopping-up parties’ for any trench, etc., passed by the men, but some impossible to see, and trenches are no more. An Officer went down one dug-out without revolver or any weapon, and when there seven Bosch came up from further stairway down, but fortunately surrendered without first shooting him.”

*To his Mother.*

“7 p.m., 13. 4. '17.

“This morning I saw a swallow, and on the 10th a red-start, so we are getting on for summer. I told you of the fine bunches of snowdrops in a garden here. My servant has put one bunch in a tin for the Mess. I enclose two of the flowers, as I think they are the largest snowdrops (single) I ever saw. These must also have come up last

year in the deserted garden where I found them. There are also daffodils just showing a little yellow in the same place. The house, like most here, is not only a heap of bricks, but has followed the usual evolution of disappearance, first woodwork for fuel, then bricks for making up roads, etc. Everything looks very well here."

Diary—" *April 13.*

". . . At 3.30 p.m. wire from Division to say Bosch have withdrawn their patrols, prepare to move. All stood to and Companies from the hill dumped packs at H.Q.'s. I packed up my things. . . . I was not on the hill this morning, but they say fires and explosions could be seen in Lens and apparently blowing up roads. Evidently our attack on Pimple yesterday made them change their minds from a counter-attack to withdrawal. Caterpillars now moving guns up. One long How. badly stuck! Saw one swallow to-day."

" *April 14.*

"Lovely morning. Inspected rifles, then sent men salvaging. . . . Fires and explosions in Lens area, but no one knows where our men are. . . . No Artillery observers seem to know where we have got to. A German with broken femur just brought in; looked very well although had been lying out since morning of the 12th. I asked him if he knew where we were going to attack. He said he did not, though Hindenburg warned them it was coming. . . . The Bosch shelled Vimy Ridge a bit this afternoon, but the strange thing is this which will probably be recorded as one of the biggest battles of the war, it is now almost dead quiet owing no doubt to Artillery not knowing where to fire and moving their guns. . . . It is very tantalizing being not actually 'pushing' myself."



“ April 15.

“ A vile day of heavy rain when we want 2 weeks dry ! Went with an Orderly to Brigade, found they had moved to Angres. . . . Several Bosch dead still about. Saw also a Sussex Officer lying killed when advancing on 12th. A sad sight to see 20 or 25 of our dead, who had been collected, lying anyhow, clothes covered with mud and heavy rain on them. Bosch were shelling nastily round Fosse 6. My Orderly was hit by a splinter on the thumb, his tin hat saved his head. . . . Roads being made up everywhere, but none the less caterpillars, lorries, etc., stuck axle deep. The lorries though are marvellous in getting out, and wheels don't buckle. . . . The Bosch are marvels in thoroughness of work—splendid trenches though now knocked to bits and everywhere deep dug-outs. We struggle along in mud and with bits of corrugated iron over us ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ 7 p.m., 15. 4. '17.

“ My dug-out is right at the bottom of eight or nine steps, and on the left is another larger cellar. The Officers who were in the left one have moved, and I told my servant I would sleep there to-night. He has just come in, more beaming than ever, which is saying a good deal, and I asked him if peace is declared, or what is the matter ? He says he has ' fixed that dug-out up just lovely, got a good fire going '—there is a grate and chimney in it, as in many of these cellars—did people live in them, or why a fireplace and chimney ? He has got all my wet things drying, and thinks if I saw it I would sit there instead of in a room in another building which was H.Q. Mess, as I am doing.”

“ 11 a.m., 16. 4. '17.

“ A gorgeous morn ! Just had an inspection of five additional men's rifles, ammunition and iron rations, and put

the wind up them, finding, as is almost invariable, that absence of discipline reigns. One man put on charge for being unshaved, and for being caught taking another man's ammunition to make up his deficiency before the parade.

"The men I have had with me now for some time are all up to Rifle Brigade standard, but this standard comes as a shock to newcomers! I am most flourishing and now just going what should be a ripping walk in connection with my work."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

*"April 16, 1917.*

". . . My servant looks after me well, always with his broad smile, none the worse for being like a monkey, and guards my things, though many of his have unfortunately been pinched. You never saw such a dishevelled and slopping crowd as most of the men now in 'here' are. Caps on back of heads, hands in pockets, hair uncut, and faces unwashed. Largely sloping round seeing what they can loot. How I should like to give them several hours' squad drill, and get some self-respect, and hence efficiency, into them!

"I saw some of the Staff at Brigade to-day, and greeted, as is for some reason customary there, by some with 'Hullo, jolly old Andrew!'"

*Diary—"April 17.*

"In afternoon went with 2 Orderlies up Vimy Ridge. There are now two tunnels, Coburg and G——. Followed what was Coburg trench but soon lost it and could not be certain of Kennedy Crater, which was at the top. There are two new craters. Walked across and traced along what were Bosch trenches. One or two dug-out entrances not blocked. . . . Lots of Bosch bombs and strange detonator-looking boxes, also large trench mortars, probably

about 150 pounders. . . . Givenchy is as much—or more—ruined as Souchez. . . . The men i/c stores gave me curried bully and jam pudding for supper to-night ! ”

On 20th April, 1917, Andrew and his men were moved back into “rest billets” at Febrin Palfart.

## XIV

### MESSINES RIDGE—AND THE END

APRIL—JUNE, 1917.

ANDREW had a passion for *thoroughness*. Whatever the job that wanted doing, he did it with his might. He was the sort of man that hates to see a thing done in a slack and slovenly fashion. This characteristic stood him in good stead in his soldiering, where patient attention to detail is of enormous importance at all times, and specially in the kind of fighting that has developed in this war. But it was a trial to the flesh when he had constantly to do with others who failed dismally to get anywhere near his standard ! Here is an illuminating entry in his Diary on the matter (April 20, 1917) :

“ I have had a day of criticism of ‘ men.’ Walking across from Ablain to Aix this morning thought of the disgraceful shirking of work yesterday by some men. Does it do to be kind to them ? But then what a difference between their and my bringing up ! Thought also of their (frequent) waste and inconsiderateness ; and this evening at Marles there was a disgraceful case of thoughtlessness.”

The next few weeks were spent behind the lines.

Diary—“ *April 22, 1917.*

“ Communion Service at 9 a.m. Post came in about 10 a.m., with five letters from Mother, of dates previous to

those on letters received yesterday ; also 3 parcels and 9 newspapers. What wouldn't I have given to have had these in Ablain ! but very welcome now. . . .

“ Generals C., D., Major H. and the C.R.E. had an exciting experience when in Bois de Riaumont. They met three Bosch who had got through and probably got lost. These at close range opened fire and our four bolted for all they were worth and were unhit. This is all the time being referred to ! It is said that General C. has not yet stopped running ! Anyhow it is a fact that he has gone on leave to England.<sup>1</sup>

*To his Mother.*

“ 9.30 p.m., 21. 4. '17.

“ . . . You can imagine the joy of hearing after an interval of nine days, with no letters, and in a rotten land !

“ I also saw Arthur this afternoon at 4 p.m. He knew the road I was coming and came to meet us, but was fortunate in hitting on me, as I had been trekking for a long time. He was very well. We were able to share your letters, which was excellent.

“ Apparently you have not received all my letters lately, but this is as I expected.

“ Yesterday I was up at 4.15 a.m. and have not had much sleep since, and also rather a strenuous existence, so shall turn in early to-night, and enjoy peace and quiet, as I now can ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ April 22, 1917.

“ . . . Arthur told me yesterday of Vernède being killed. I am troubled to hear of it. I shall write to Mrs. Vernède, though I have not met her. . . . Life has sometimes been very unhealthy for us both, but nothing has touched us.”

<sup>1</sup> This incident found its way into the papers. See *The Times*, April 26, 1917.

*From Andrew to Mrs. Vernède.*

*"Monday, 23. 4. '17.*

*"H.Qrs. 73 Brigade (Infantry), B.E.F.*

"I hardly know how to write to you in this most grievous news of Mr. Vernède's death. For some time I have been very much cut off from everything except just what was happening around me, but yesterday I saw my Brother Arthur, who told me the news of his having been killed in action. You know how tremendously fond of him I was, and with his wonderful abilities and mind. I have a feeling of it being altogether wrong for me to be still alive and he no longer so. We so often in C. Coy. were given by him, usually most unexpectedly, some extraordinarily sound and what must have been carefully thought out ideas with reference to tactical, disciplinary or other Army matters, and there is no doubt he should have been O.C. Coy. rather than me. But our time together was the most splendid imaginable, and I shall always look back on it with recollections that can never be forgotten. What Mr. Vernède's death means to you I just dare not think, as you have lost one whom you must have loved so much. My Sister Rosamond, whom I have just heard from, speaks of you as giving the impression of being so extraordinarily brave, so I comfort myself that you will not allow your loss to be too overwhelming. When I mention the word brave, I must speak—though you doubtless know of it from many sources—of your husband's extraordinary bravery—over and over again undertaking and carrying through the most unhealthy bits of work with, as far as I could see, every thought for the men he was with, but with none for himself. He just loved the N.C.O.'s and men, and if at any time anything happened to one he was connected with he felt it intensely. . . . Again my deepest sympathy at your great loss. Of course don't write, but just accept this thought of you."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ April 22, '17.

“ Well, you can picture me as safe for a while. Life has been pretty unhealthy at times. I have had a dug-out blown to smithereens after leaving it, and an Orderly hit walking with me, and many other very nasty shell interviews, but none the worse.

“ How I should love you to see the Vimy Ridge in present state; torn to ribbons, and most difficult to walk over, with vast shell holes all touching one another. For everything of salvage that is visible I have doubtless been buried or blown to dust.”

Diary—“ April 25.

“ I am detailed to go with the General for his inspection at 9 a.m. first of the Northamptons and then of the Sussex. In the evening the Brigade played Northamptons at Soccer. Great number of swallows about.”

“ April 26.

“ Orders at midnight to say we were to move into Army Reserve in place of the 18th Division who entrain to-night and go down south. We therefore packed up. I was put i/c transport which left at 12.15 p.m. We are stopping to-night at Anchel, and to-morrow go to Nœux-les-Mines. Swallows have disappeared to-day—perhaps gone on to England—but saw two nightingales near Ferfay.”

*To his Mother.*

(“ At Houchin).

“ April 27, 1917.

“ A gap of 48 hours since I wrote the above but I sent two Field postcards instead. I now write from a different billet to what I have been in. Quite nice except that I

think the old girl downstairs must be making bread or something of the sort and I therefore must flee from the smell of it to H.Q. Mess. . . . I saw a pair of nightingales by side of road on 26th, but the great number of swallows I saw on 25th have disappeared. I expect you have stolen them from us. There were also lately a great number of chiff-chaffs, but I have heard no willow-wrens yet. . . .

“As I came along this morning in charge of various men, etc., I had a halt at a place where I was billeted for one night a little while ago and I went in to see the people, who were very genial and gave me a glass of Vin Ordinaire, but before I went in they spotted me passing and vigorously tapped on the window. Many of the French people are extremely genial, which makes all the difference to life when with them.”

Diary—“*May 1.*

“Bicycled to Bruay. . . . Lay down in afternoon, feeling done up, chiefly, I think, owing to sleeplessness. A nightingale was singing in Labuissière as I came in.”

*To his Mother.*

“*May 1, 1917.*

“. . . I think you would like to see and destroy the enclosed two nice letters from people whom I wrote to saying their relations had been killed. Both were quite unknown to me, but I naturally wrote as relatives at home are bound to like as many letters as possible. I was only lately talking to an Officer who had had a great friend of his killed just by him and was the only person who knew what had happened. He asked me if I thought his family would mind if he saw them when he next went on ‘leave.’ I advised him to do so and at once write as well!”



*To his Mother.*

“ *May 3, 1917.*

“ Life is still very peaceful for me. I met Arthur at 3 p.m. to-day in a certain place (Bethune), and we had tea together in a shop. In all his life I never saw him looking so amazingly well. You were wanting him to get home before 14th so as to see him, and I am delighted to say he has orders to report at the W.O. on 10th.”

*To his Mother.*

“ *May 7, 1917, 7.30 p.m.*

“ In the letter I posted this morning I said I was going out for a Field day. The H.Q. horses were all wanted, but I borrowed one from one of the Regiments and acted as sort of A.D.C. to the Brigadier. A gorgeous day with the greater part spent in a lovely wood (Diary, Bois des Dames),—sandwiches in our pockets for lunch. It did me a world of good. . . . To-morrow I hope to see Arthur off for Railhead and want, too, to see the R.B. What a lucky fellow he is.”

Diary—“ *May 9.*

“ Due to leave i/c transport at 9.50 a.m. Rode via Chocques to Busnes where we are in the Château. So we appear to be bound northwards again. What are we to be in for? The Château is lovely. Moat and water round it and ripping wood and shrubberies, full of birds and wood life.”

“ *May 10.*

“ Left 9.45 a.m. Went via St. Venant to Thiennes where H.Q.'s are in a school. The Canal crossings very pretty.”

“ *May 12.*

“ Left at 7 a.m. for Steenvoorde, riding. Passed 72nd and 73rd Brigades. Terrific hot day. Arranged billeting, etc., for H.Q. We came through Hazebrouck. How weird to now again see Poperinghe road, etc. I thought I had left this land for good a year ago. Troops all very done when they got here. . . . Dined at Club here and regretted it ”

“ *May 14.*

“ . . . At 2 p.m. took the transport via Eecke to Reninghelst where we are in good huts. Evitt (the Parson), Ribot (the Interpreter), and Thorp (the Signal Officer), and I are in one. How strange to be back in this land ! Several sausages and aeroplanes up but very quiet. This place much altered, now apparently all kinds of canteens, etc.”

*To his Mother.*

“ *May 14, 1917.*

“ . . . The last two nights I have been billeted in a good room of a baker's shop. This morning at about 4 a.m. some troops passed and were very refreshing as it is a long day since I heard men so jovial as they. Not only singing but verily shouting, and most of them a different song, and this even though it was raining hard.”

*To his Mother.*

“ *May 17, 1917.*

“ . . . I have to-day had a most pleasant surprise in Guy Leatham turning up in our Mess to see me ! . He had lunch (and is coming to supper soon). He then took me to where he is quartered to see Walter Pelham (his brother-in-law), who has been out a week as Chaplain to 2 Battalions. It was splendid seeing him and I am delighted he is out, though I wish he was in this Brigade. . . .”

*To his Mother.*

“ Headquarters,  
“ 73rd Infantry Brigade, [Reninghelst],  
“ May 19th, 1917, 7 p.m.

“ I am now sitting at the Staff Captain's table where I have been signing various documents for him and the Brigade Major and seeing to various things for them this afternoon. How I wish I might tell you where I am and what is going on! . . . Since I wrote you in ink Tom Buxton rode over to tea, which was very excellent. It has been really refreshing seeing some of the family lately. I had to leave some spare kit two or three weeks ago at a certain place in order to lighten our baggage and now hear the place it was stored in has had a direct hit from a shell which destroyed it. It may be mine has escaped or not been badly damaged.”<sup>1</sup>

Diary—“ May 20.

“ Walked to see that the Transport were all right, then drew money from Cashier in Reninghelst. . . . Bicycled over to Westoutre to see Clarence Buxton in 19th Division, but he was out. The dumps are truly marvellous in their size and contents. Reninghelst at 8 p.m was solid with men strolling about. Very warm evening.”

“ May 21.

“ . . . At 10 p.m. very heavy firing, probably a raid. I have orders to-night to go to Steenvoorde as Adjutant of the Training Battalion.”

“ May 22.

“ Reached Steenvoorde at noon, relieving S. of the Leinsters as Adjutant. Q.M. and Transport Officer of this the 24th Divisional Reinforcement Depôt (about 600 men). . . . Have a good billet in estaminet.”

<sup>1</sup> This spare kit was found by Arthur the following October.

“ May 25.

“Wire to say we might be moving to-morrow, which was confirmed in the evening. Got out operation orders and made several necessary arrangements.”

*To his Mother.*

“ May 25, 1917.

“ I have a lot doing, but it is quite pleasant work. It involves a good deal of riding round to see detachments at various farms and I am fortunate in having a very nice pony for doing so. Any day now I expect my job to come to an end.”

Diary—“ May 26.

“ . . . Got to Brigade at 6 p.m. There received orders to go *back to R.B.*”

*To his Mother.*

“ 3 p.m., *Saturday*, 28. 5. '17.

“ . . . I am greeted with the news just received by wire from Division that I am to rejoin the 3rd R.B. In some ways I am glad, and should be very glad, but for the fact that I am not likely to have a Coy. at present, as they have their arrangement of Coy. Commanders. Therefore please write to me once more as 3rd R.B., B.E.F., and address me as Esq. ! I shall join them to-morrow. As far as I know I shall be permanently back with them, but I should have liked to be a Coy. Commander. This though I may find myself at once or very soon. I am extremely fit now again, and to-day more so than ever.

“ . . . The General, Brigade-Major and all here are very nice in regretting my departure.

“ The horse I have been riding belongs to another Regiment. I am sending him back, and asking for a receipt, which is a necessary precaution in this land.”

Diary—" *May 27.*

" Left at 11 a.m. on Hill's horse for the R.B. who themselves move this morning to a farm about 2 miles S.W. of Poperinghe. Found Boscy and Kewley-Pigot had motored to Arras to see Tanks perform. They had heard nothing of my coming, and said I had better fix up with C. Coy. for meals ! "

" *May 28.*

" Disturbed at 2 a.m. by Sentry saying ' Gas Alarm ' had sounded. Got respirators handy, but no gas came. Saw Pigot in morning ; he was very warm and regretted he could not give me a Company, as Coy. Commanders have been doing new training, etc. In afternoon bicycled to Reninghelst to see the clay model of ground we are to attack. About 9 × 12 feet, beautifully made. . . . A long confab with Pigot before lunch with maps, etc. We are to take the furthest objective. The thousands of details of arrangements of every department are beyond belief. To be back with the Battalion with this kind of thing on recalls the Somme days. . . . Officers and men all very jovial as there. . . . I think of Daly, Alfred Dunnage, Archie, Joch Henderson, Brown, Vernède, Chamberlain, Venner, Edwards. . . . What will the Company and Battalion be like after this show ? "

*To his Mother.*

" 11 a.m., 28. 5. '17.

" . . . It is really good to get back to the Battalion, and I expect to enjoy it mightily when I have got to know all the Officers well. More than a half are new since I was here. I think what it would be if we could once more be exactly the party we were a year ago, before the Somme took away three-quarters of us.

" I have not yet really seen the men, but what I have

all very genial, and salute accompanied by welcome smiles.

“ I write sitting under two rows of elm trees, with delicious cool breeze.

“ Yesterday I lunched in A. Coy.’s tent, and recognized the man who waited, but could not think why his name was not familiar to me. The reason for this was that he used to wait on me at lunch in the small restaurant in the block of flats above 95 Victoria Street ! . . .

“ . . . Do you remember the trout you caught in the river near where it ran out of the loch ! What joy it was catching the trout in that loch and especially in the caves under the hillsides. Those were good days, and we must have other such before long. There hardly looks the chance of it though this summer ! ”

*To his Mother.*

“ 3 p.m., 29. 5. '17.

“ I have just been censoring letters, in one of which a fellow says : ‘ I don’t think I shall bring home a French bride as I have not seen one I like yet ; the Blighty birds are best.’

“ All the men in the Battalion have had trousers cut down, and made into shorts. I have shorts also, and very comfortable it is to have them again.

“ I think I never saw men so fit as they are, but this is natural from the life they have had lately. We are all in tents. . . .

“ I asked to be attached to C. Coy., my old Coy., and I am glad to say Pigot has agreed. A very nice lot of Officers, Bridgeman (O.C. Coy.), Northcroft, Goodson, Layton, Reade (at present away), and Fenner. Fenner was a Sergeant in command of the Battalion Stretcher-Bearers, and has lately been given a Commission. He is a real good fellow.

“ The organization of Companies, and mode of training,

etc., has been considerably altered since I was here. I am greatly joyed to be back with the Regiment.

“Regimental life is the obvious game out here, though I am glad to have had the break from trench life, as I wanted a change after 17 months of it.”

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“May 31, '17.

“It is a very great relief to me to have returned here, as I was living in terrors of being given a Staff job, which would have been misery to me. Think of wearing ‘red,’ forsooth. Company life is the life here, but I wanted a change, and was fortunate to get it, and now return, and with the summer.”

Diary—“May 30, 1917.

“Left at 8 a.m. with about 30 N.C.O.'s and 8 Officers in a motor lorry to Dickebush, where we got out and walked across the south end of the Lake up to Moated Grange Farm, looking at the ‘land of promise’ from different points. Each platoon has its own direction up to our Front Line marked out by lines of little flags. At Moated Grange went up the chimney (which remains there) and had a good look.

“In the afternoon went (from there) to tea with the Borderers, who will be on our right. . . . At 8 p.m. a Boxing Tournament in the field, Officers sitting round the roped enclosure and the Battalion behind them. What a sight—but a month hence how many of them will be casualties?”

“May 31.

“Left at 8 a.m. after packing up tents, etc., and marched via Abeele to a farm north of Bois de Beauvoorde. . . . A good mess in the farm. We sleep in tents.”

*To his Mother.*

“Noon, *May 31, '17.*

“We have just arrived at a good farm, having packed up from where we were early this morning, and done a rather dusty march here of about six miles. Fortunately not very hot, but marching order is none the less a heavy load, but being as fit as I am I much enjoyed again having a march, having not had one now for long. . . .

“Yesterday I left at eight in the morning on a motor lorry with about thirty others on a mission which I may not reveal, and from there to tea with another Regiment, and from there walked back, taking  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours. . . .

“The whole Battalion were going to have tea with the Regiment I mentioned above, but had to be put off at the last minute, as a working party of five or six hundred were required at once. A great pity, after they had made all arrangements to give us a welcome. We (about eight Officers) had tea on the grass with a piper playing to us, and when we went, had their band playing us about a mile down the road. . . .

“We had great Boxing matches in the meadow of our farm last night. Officers sitting round the ring, and the Battalion in a line about sixty long, looking over a wire fence about five deep. Such a sight of brown faces and R.B. badges.”

The next few days were spent, in the neighbourhood described in Diary entry of May 31, in constant and detailed practice for the forthcoming attack. On June 4 they moved off up the Line.

“2 p.m., *Sunday, 3. 6. 17.*

“We are leading healthy lives, billeted still in farms and out a good deal of the time doing training, which is interesting. Knees, as always when we first wear shorts, getting



a bit sore from the sun. Shorts are a great comfort, as you can imagine.

“ A ripping letter from Rachel at Noseley yesterday, all about chickens and animals. So refreshing, and a change from the thought of warfare !

“ We have lots of caterpillars of amazing colours and beauty about the hedges.”

*To a Nicce (Rachel Hazlerigg).*

*“ Sunday, June 3, 1917.*

“ MY DEAR OLD RACHEL—

“ You can't think how I loved getting your letter telling me of your animals and the carrier pigeon. It is such a different world that you are in to what I am with war going on, but some day I shall come back and see all your things, and keep some perhaps myself like I used to do. I am writing this in the middle of cultivated fields where we are practising. In the hedges here are lots of caterpillars ; some in bunches in thick webs which they have made, and some lovely coloured ones with yellow lines, and red and black lines down their sides.

“ I am wearing ' shorts,' so my knees are getting sunburnt and quite sore. At present I am in a farm with lots of white pigs about which the farm people try to sort up and put in different sties, etc., calling out all sorts of funny noises to make them come. The same way they shut up ducks at night and calves. They had a great hunt after two calves yesterday, which got out into the corn. My men helped get them in.

“ The War is going very well, and the Germans must be feeling very uncomfortable, I think.”

Diary—“ *June 4.*

“ In afternoon marched off into camp at Heksken (S.W. of Reninghelst), just above where the Sussex were. Arrived

at 6 p.m. hungry and dry. . . . Had dinner at 9.15. Officers in tents; men piled arms and slept in rows. By moonlight they looked like rows of dead on a battlefield. Tremendous firing by our heavies. This is 'W' day (being 3 days before the assault; 'Z' day is the day of assault).

*To his Mother.*

" 2 p.m., Monday, 4. 6. '17.

" I continue awfully fit, living a most healthy life. It may soon again be difficult to get letters and also to send any, so keep this in mind if none turn up! You will know, if this happens, that I am doing something that I would not miss for anything.

" We continue to have glorious weather, though rather colder at nights. . . .

" You would be so amused to hear the men come into the kitchens of these farms and talk: 'You cook two boiled eggs comprez,' and then 'You no comprez,' 'No bon,' etc.

" I have to-day received a most lovely parcel from you with fresh butter and bacon and tinned things. It is very strange that I have wanted nothing for six months, but this has just come right, and I expect to be very glad of it. I was going to buy half a pound of butter this evening. You have an instinct for these things! Don't send again, as I shall want no more for six months.

" When practising yesterday, two calves got out into the crops to the great joy of my men, who assisted the farm people in getting them back, which was difficult, as they were out to enjoy themselves. . . .

" Don't be troubled at my return to the Regiment. It is such a joy to me."

Diary—" June 5.

" A fair night, but ground gets harder every night!

Tremendous hot sun. Breakfast outside tent. We move at 10.45 p.m. to-night."

"*Later.* After dinner a big blaze made by burning boxes, etc. A great sight to have all the men round in a circle, all as brown and fit as you ever saw men. Calls for Bodimede who came and amused every one and after him other performers with songs, etc. Marched off at 10.45 via Reninghelst to within a quarter of a mile of La Clytte, where we are in tents on left of the road. Interesting thus to come pretty near behind the heavy guns all firing heavily."

*To his Mother.*

" 12.30 p.m., Tuesday 5.

"Just had a short Service in shirt sleeves, and Communion Service following. We had no Service on Sunday, and this was a nice arrangement. Plenty of firing in the distance to accompany it. . . .

"How rotten the ink running out in your pen. Do have it put right if out of order. How I should love a family lunch party *here*. It is now being laid on a mackintosh sheet in our tent. You would be interested I think.

"So glad your little dogs are well. Give old Fritz my love.

"I have got a special job with men of all companies under me."

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

" June 5, '17.

"Just a line of best love as always.

"Having most gorgeous weather. Men are just sleeping in coats and blanket on well-worn grass. Officers in tents, or likewise outside. . . .

"The old ground seems to get harder and harder to sleep on, but I flourish well none the less!"

*To his Sister Rosamond.*

“ June 6, '17.

“ Just a line written from a tent.

“ Life is very big and interesting. Apparently we are getting submarines, and out here the Bosch must be having a real bad time.

“ Stick it ! ”

Diary—“ June 6, 1917. ,

“ Continued heavy firing all night.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The above is the last entry in his Diary. “ Z ” Day—June 7, 1917—arrived, and for Andrew it turned out to be the day of his going “ over ” into the shining country . . . and so he too laid down his life for his friends, and passed over, and—“ the trumpets sounded for him on the other side. . . . ”

He was killed near Oostaverne, after the successful attack on the Messines Ridge. The 3rd R.B. had gone “ over the top ” and taken their objective. Andrew followed immediately behind in charge of a party with the rations and ammunition. In order to save the men as much as possible he himself carried a “ U ” Pack consisting of four petrol tins of water slung round his waist—“ He was always like that,” Corpl. Bodimede adds, “ trying to save the men and doing the hard jobs himself.” After they had finished their job successfully, Andrew took Bodimede with him to visit his Company, to find out the result of the attack and who had been killed and to see those who had come through safely. A machine gun was sweeping the ground round them, and they had scarcely started before Andrew cried out, “ Bodimede, I’m hit, they have got me this time,” and fell into Bodimede’s arms. Captain Fenner, at great personal risk, ran out to do anything that was

possible, but Andrew did not speak again and in three minutes he was gone.

His body rests in the N.E. corner of Oosttaverne Wood with a rough cross over it.

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead !  
 There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
 But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
 These laid the world away ; poured out the red  
 Sweet wine of youth ; gave up the years to be  
 Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,  
 That men call age ; and those who would have been,  
 Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow ! They brought us, for our dearth,  
 Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.  
 Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,  
 And paid his subjects with a royal wage ;  
 And Nobleness walks in our ways again ;  
 And we have come into our heritage.

XV

POSTSCRIPT

FOR nearly a year before his death Andrew carried about in his pocket a letter to be given to his mother in the event of his receiving a fatal wound. A portion of this characteristic and beautiful letter is printed below. Any reader of the letters in this Memoir of Andrew will have noticed that the great bulk of them are addressed to his mother, and may also have descried, between the lines, the very beautiful and almost lover-like relationship that existed between them. She was all the world to him, as he to her ; they possessed that utterly perfect fellowship which, enjoyed for a while on earth, has its abiding home and richest fruit in the Eternal.

The letter is as follows :

“ In the event of my death please forward this letter to

“ Mrs. J. H. BUXTON,

“ Easneye,

“ Ware, Herts.

“ enclosing envelope and letter (unopened) in another envelope.

“ A. R. BUXTON.”

§

“ B.E.F., B.

“ 3.30 p.m., *Friday, August 4. '16.*

“ I am writing a line to keep in my pocket, only to be posted should I be fatally hit.

“ This sounds rather a strange thing to do, but I believe

you would like it, or otherwise a sudden discontinuance of letters without any word from me would be a sort of shock to you. . . . Should this occur, I want no shock or worry of any sort to you or any of the other dear ones, so please just carry on the same as usual, but more rest and enjoyment, and less work !

“ Things are moving out here, as you will see in the papers, and every prospect of our now being put into something. It is very, very great to be living in these days, and taking part in what is on hand. I should not be sorry to get through it without knowingly having ‘ done in ’ any Bosch, but I am out to shoot them if I can, as it is my job to do so, and I certainly should ‘ get in ’ first if any close work came along !

“ Besides being one more letter to you, I can now again tell you that no words of mine can express what yours and Father’s and all the other dear ones’ love has been to me, not only out here at the War, but from the time I was born till now.

“ David and Jonathan loved, and many have loved, but I cannot think that there ever was such love as you have showered upon me. How I can picture you looking round the door of my bedroom in the morning if any time I was seedy to see if I was awake, and now I have had a letter from you every day when away from home. . . . I can never thank you as I should wish to do.

“ If I am knocked out, as I presume will be the case if you get this, I do most particularly hope that you will not be troubled at it—I shall have gone on before you and the other dear ones to a far bigger and more glorious sphere, and shall right well be on the look out for you all when your call comes along too. How we shall all rejoice together then—all with our ‘ robes made white in the Blood of the Lamb.’

. . . . .

“ I do hope I get a good run of open fighting before I get knocked out !

“ Dearest of dear love to you all,

“ Your ever very loving son and brother,

“ ANDREW.”

“ 3 p.m., *Monday, June 4, '17.*

“ Rather a jump in dates since the above was written (i.e. before we went to the Somme Battle) till now, but I have had the letter in my pocket all the time.

“ We now in a few days go in to another big fight, which will be a far more wonderful show, with Tanks, etc., there, and probably more artillery. Multitudinous and more than detailed arrangements have been made. This Battalion goes ‘ over ’ (I was going to say where but dare not, in case this got mislaid before the event—I know you will want to know where, but you will soon hear !) and has important work to do.

“ Is it stupid to leave this letter ? I think not. I think you would like it.

“ I see, though, I have said nothing of a message to all the servants and people on the place, all of whom have been so extraordinarily kind, and so interested in my doings. To all the very best of wishes for themselves, and for relatives who may still have to fight.

“ Yours, Father’s and all others’ love seems to be now greater than ever.

“ It seems a shame that I alone of the family should see such a piece of history as this will be !

“ As always,

“ Thy very loving Son,

“ ANDREW.”

Andrew, with his radiant face and radiant soul, was precisely “ the sort of person you can’t help loving.” It



can easily be imagined, therefore, how, after his death, the flood-gates of the love he had inspired were opened, and burning words striving to say what he had been to those who knew him and loved him came pouring in. He, however, more than any man would hate encomiums—in his lifetime it always remained for him an unsolved mystery why people seemed to like him!—and of the many things that have been said about him only a very few are set down here.

*From his Commanding Officer, Colonel Pigot, D.S.O., M.C.*<sup>1</sup>

“ 8. 6. '17.

“ DEAR MR. BUXTON,—

“ It is with the very deepest regret that I have to tell you that Andrew has been killed. He was just coming back from the Front Line after our attack yesterday, when he was hit by a bullet, and died almost at once.

“ I can't tell you how much I deplore his loss. He had been with us a long time, and on ever so many occasions had shown himself a very brave man.<sup>2</sup> Every one loved him, and all the men of his Company will, I know, regret his loss. He was always doing his best to make his men comfortable, and I can assure you he will be a very great loss to us all.

“ He was buried this afternoon, and a cross will be put up on his grave.

“ If there is anything else I can tell you, please let me know.

“ Assuring you and Mrs. Buxton of my own and my Battalion's deepest sympathy with you in your great loss, and will you kindly tell the Padre how very sorry I am?

“ Yours sincerely,

“ R. PIGOT.”

<sup>1</sup> Now Brig.-General.

<sup>2</sup> A common soubriquet for him, among officers and men, was “ Brave Andrew,” or “ Brave Captain Buxton.”

*From the Quartermaster of his Regiment.*

“ 8. 6. '17.

“ DEAR MADAM,—

“ Andrew asked me to send the enclosed to you if he should not come out of the attack alive.

“ I am so sorry we have lost him ; I think he was one of the truest Christian soldiers I have met in the 29 years I've been in the Regiment.

“ I'm so sorry I cannot give you details of his death, but I'm sure Colonel Pigot will write you at the first opportunity.

“ I wonder if it would comfort you to know that Andrew attended a Communion Service on Tuesday morning, just before we moved into our battle stations.

“ Yours very truly,

“ L. EASTMEAD.”

*From a Brother Officer.*

“ France, July 7, '17.

“ DEAR MRS. BUXTON,—

“ Thank you so much for your letter, but I did not wish you to trouble to write. I was so grateful for your sending the enclosures, and it is no wonder to me that he was so beloved by all, as he was one of those men whose religion shone forth in his every act and gesture, and yet he never appeared sanctimonious, as with it he combined a wonderfully tolerant mind to all.

“ I shall never forget the way he was always tackling the villagers here about their dogs, and how an old woman who used to tie her dog up so tight that it could hardly move became very angry, and nearly turned him out of the house, so that evening he and I went down and got over the fence and lengthened the dog's chain, and nearly got caught doing it.

“ . . . I was behind the line near where Andrew was

killed, and only wish that I might have seen him, but his influence will never die and he will strengthen the link with the wider sphere to which he has gone. If only there were more like him in the world, war would cease. . . .”

*From one of his greatest Friends.*

“ Andrew has been in my thoughts all the day long, and to-night he is still in my thoughts. It is just as if ‘ Curly ’ was my own brother : it is a great deal more than if I had just loved him as my friend. Others have been like that to me, but ‘ Curly ’ was so different from all, and now all my life must pass without him. You can tell how much I feel for you, if I feel this for myself. Nothing but my deepest love can ever follow him ; never a cloud or a day’s estrangement ever came between us. I would like to tell you all ‘ Curly ’ has ever been to me and ever will be, the truest, dearest, most glorious friend that a man ever had, the very soul of purity and goodness, that often blessed me by his influence ; a never-failing joy whenever I saw him. . . .”

*From another Friend.*

“ So many pictures of him are in my mind to-night, but none more precious than when he was bending to kiss you [his mother] at the Station—his head uncovered—when he went back last June.

“ He sent us such a wonderful letter in September when he was the only one left out of the Mess of seven. Not only in that letter, but in everything he did, one felt his nearness to the Unseen, his utter goodness. I remember so well his saying, ‘ I can’t talk about these things ; to me Jesus Christ is just everything.’

“ W. and I always felt we would like his help more than any one’s about our children, and often told him so. He

promised to write a book about education some day. What a sound, sane, helpful one it would have been. One hopes and prays that some of his spirit may be the heritage of our children."

There is the old saying that a man is never a hero to his valet ; but the butler at Andrew's home, after knowing him from boyhood till his death, could write of him :

" He was more helpful to me than any one I have ever met on earth."

This power of his, to communicate to others something of his own quality, to inspire them with his own shining ideals, is referred to again and again in the letters, and the writers are people of both sexes and very different ages, standing and outlook. An Eton boy<sup>1</sup> says :

" He was so splendid and ' white ' . . . whenever I saw him I felt I was in the presence of one who was a true English gentleman, one who feared God."

A very beautiful Memorial Service for Andrew was held in Stanstead Abbots Church on June 14, 1917. About that Service there was an atmosphere of triumph. As his brother (the Rev. Arthur Buxton, C.F.) said in his moving address :

" We have tried to make everything at this Service as bright and happy as it ought to be. Our Saviour is alive, so is our brother.

" We often spoke of what we would do after the War : of how we would take a house in Scotland, and use it as a meeting place of the family. It was to be like Dalcrombie, where he was for a holiday in 1912, where the moor came right up to the house, and the grouse would sit on the garden wall, and call to us in the early morning, and the trout

<sup>1</sup> John W. D. Birchall, who died of appendicitis, August 26, 1918, aged 16.





[To face page 293

would rise on the sparkling waters of Loch Ruthven, down below—and now, anything, however lovely, will fall flat without him. But he will be busy now with another house in that place of many mansions, alongside the Master builder. He will put into that all the loving labour and thought for which he was so wonderful in his care for his friends down here below. . . .

“ . . . We are proud of this ‘ beloved Captain,’ this ‘ man greatly beloved.’ German bullets cannot destroy a soul like that. We can hold our heads higher, and feel we have grown a bit, because he lived among us, and was one of us.”

These extracts may close with the letter which a little niece (Hannah Buxton) of Andrew’s wrote to his mother when she was told about his death :

“ DEAR, DEAR GRANNY,—

“ I remember when Uncle Andrew was here he did lots of things with us. He helped us put up bird boxes. On Friday morning we tried to shoot something, but couldn’t, and in the evening we had great fun with him ; he carried three of us at once. On Saturday, first we had a game of hockey, then we went to catch the bus, but as it did not come we stopped a little blue motor and he went in that. Before he went he gave us each a shilling. I loved him very much. He loved everything out of doors, spiders and birds, fish and fishing, and all green things. . . . He sent me a P.C. with ‘ Dinna forget me, lassie,’ and I won’t forget him. It was a picture P.C. He used to take Darky Daniel down to the bath-room with him, and Dan said that he turned on the taps for him and that he liked the cold water. Dan used to talk to him about the taps and pipes and the numbers on the telegraph posts. He was always asking us to come and stay with him at the Front. . . . Before he

went out to the Front we helped him put on his puttees, and he gave me an old body of a wooden spider ; it had lost its wire legs. I have got it. It was at Easneye. It was the day he went to the Front for the first time. . . . I am glad God took him because he will be so happy in Heaven."





40  
97

**THE LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Santa Barbara**

---

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE  
STAMPED BELOW.**

---

Series 9482

9-69

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**AA** 000 294 344 7

