THE SOLDIER BOOKS

The PADRE

By

'Temporary Chaplain'

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BY

"TEMPORARY CHAPLAIN"

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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To
BOY

CONTENTS

JOINING UP

CHAPTER I

JOINING UP

I APPLIED at the very beginning of things. I just wrote a note in August 1914 offering my services as a chaplain. I thought I knew something about Tommies, having acted as chaplain to a Regimental Depôt for six years. After an interval I was told that the powers that be had already made all arrangements.

I had dreams of doing many things. First I had a dream of being a combatant officer. Then I joined the Volunteer Training Corps. That went on for months. And still the Germans were not beaten.

The V.T.C. was quite exciting, especially when I became a section commander and took part in a night attack. We stormed an old rabbit-warren and disputed vehemently with our opponents. They said they had annihilated us with rifle-fire; we said that we had outflanked them and cleared them out with the bayonet. Besides, you can't aim in the dark. We accused them of muddling up the properties of a shotgun and a rifle. Our wag said it was the influence of the long-departed rabbits.

And then I wrote a long letter to K., when my boy was on leave. I offered to do anything. Of course, I couldn't do anything. In fact, there are very few things I can do. Still, I braced myself to a persuasive composition addressed to K. I gave the letter to my son to post. He walked with his mother to the post office. We lived in the country

then—a village where every prospect pleases and only the parson is left. I mean that our village has done well; the available men had chaffed one another and gone, some to India, some to France, some to Gallipoli. Two—agricultural labourers—whom I had never connected with soldiering, being sixpence a day men, had mobilised at the beginning. Their graves are on this side.

Well, my son went to the post office and did not post my letter. He brought it back to me with the solemn advice to think it over. I kept that letter for several weeks, but in the end I destroyed it. I remember watching it burn. I made up my mind as the flame obliterated K.'s full name and title that I would stay at home.

Then—well, really I can't bore you with all my mental divagations and family matters. The spring had come and

was going. I had finished a job for an august university, which has the juvenile temerity to employ me. I had been offered another living, and had been forced to decline it. That hit me very hard, because I thought I was about to prove myself the ideal Vicar of that dirty northern parish.

I wrote to an old man, a beautiful, fiery old man, who used at one time to minister in a great office. I wrote to a middle-aged man whom I used at one time to call Simon. He is most useful in this war. I besought these two—and one other—to say that I was indispensable to the British Army, that my strength was as the strength of ten, that Tommies and even officers would smile when they saw me, and that I was of an untamed youthfulness of spirit in spite of my years.

Whether they wrote to this effect or not I cannot say, but the result was

satisfactory. I was summoned to the metropolis.

I need not describe the metropolis, nor that particular building where wisdom is found. I was asked various questions. When I couldn't answer them I tried to turn the position. A friend of mine put me up to that. He used to play golf with a bishop. As they walked through the green the bishop would ask, "What proportion of onions to bread does your unit consume?" or "Has this been examined and passed for necessary action?" These were not the precise questions, but I am trying to conceal the bishop's identity. My friend would allow some time to elapse in thought. And then he would say, "And what proportion, my lord, should my unit consume? I should like your guidance." So with me. I threw the onus on the questioner.

That ordeal over, a boy scout seized me, shoved papers in front of me, gathered them up and went ahead. I followed meekly, as my manner is. I went into a room. Others were there, some in khaki, all waiting to have their chests listened to. I hoped my chest was all right. In order to calm myself I talked with a man from New Guinea—a fine, fresh-faced man, looking as fit as a fiddle. I asked him if I should write to Simon about him. He said yes. (I may here remark that Simon got him.)

My boy scout rushed in again and haled me up flights of stairs, and in I went to a large lethal chamber. An operator went over my body, seeking some weak spot where a slight puncture might put me out of action. He also asked me to look at some very small print about Cæsar's adventures in Gaul.

That made my heart leap, because I remembered that Gaul was the ancient name of France. And it was to France that I craved to go. Of course, Cæsar was a combatant officer, and his proceedings on the field would be no guide to me. Still, for administrative purposes "a chaplain" shall be treated as a combatant officer. So you know all the meaning of "administrative purposes." I wired home and followed the wire. I got indigestion waiting for a message to say that I was commissioned. It came at last, but it did not cure my disorder. In fact, my disorder was aggravated. For I suddenly became conscious that I must leave home in less than a week. All my life I have been a helpless creature. I cannot ride a horse, or sew on a button, or make a bed, or pack a valise. I am not courageous or adventurous.

Nor am I in the least dignified. I

cannot carry anything off; I never grace a position. For instance. Once in the dim and far-off days before this war I had a journey to make from the town where I worked to the seaside. I had been ill, and as it was just before a Bank Holiday I thought I would commit the extravagance of riding first-class. I took a first-class ticket, honesty being one of my redeeming features. Presently the station-master, a friend of mine, strolled up and leaned on the carriage door and talked with me. He is a man of most aristocratic appearance—clean-cut features, Vandyke beard. I felt that I ought to apologize for the unaccustomed luxury of riding first-class. I said, "I wasn't feeling very well, and so I got in here." "Oh," he answered, "that will be all right." After he had gone a porter came up with a bag, followed by an important-looking old

gentleman, who called out, "First-class Smoker." The porter made his way to the carriage where I was. The old gentleman looked in, saw me, and said disgustedly, "That isn't first class." The porter assured him that it was, but he refused to enter.

Another instance. I fondly imagined that His Majesty's uniform would disguise my native disabilities. But alas! I was at the Base (this is to anticipate) watching a football match in camp. Near me was a funny man, with a big, round, open, bespectacled face. He was shouting remarks to the players. Presently his remarks began to be garnished with soldierly words. Some one drew his attention to my proximity. "That a parson?" he said. "I thought he was a motor-man."

Still, what troubled me most was the breach of continuity in a relationship

that had lasted more than twenty years. I cannot write of it; other happy men will understand.

When I first put the uniform on I lost my temper. I suddenly hated the whole business with a fierce hatred. My rage turned to sadness in the night. And yet it was my own doing. I was old enough to know better than to cry about the thing.

My eldest daughter—a beautiful and accomplished person (though I say it as shouldn't)—packed me up, and my wife went part of the way with me. We did not talk much. A few sentences about the Peace that must come soon. Something about Boy—we still call my soldier son "Boy." Something about the others; there are four others living. Something about ourselves, trying to keep our courage up.

I landed at a town in the east of

England, where I was to report at the Divisional Headquarters of a certain Division. I asked at the station where Divisional Headquarters was (or were). They told me of a building. Some soldiers saluted me as I went along. I saluted back again, and said "Good-morning," and then remembered when it was too late that it was drawing towards evening. After a time I came to the conclusion that the Division was not there. I was directed to a lieutenant, who was the rear-guard of something. In front of the house next to the rear-guard's was a woman gardening. I asked her whether the lieutenant was in. She thought he must be, as an officer had whistled to him from the street a while ago. I hardly liked to begin my military career by whistling, so I knocked at a door and rang a bell and awoke echoes in the empty rooms.

Eventually the rear-guard heard me. He seemed to be guarding the remnants of a telephone. By means of this he tried in vain to get the C.R.A.[1] I didn't know what C.R.A. meant. He directed me to the H.Q.[2] of the C.R.A. I went there. I nervously passed in. A staff captain said I was "new to the game." He called out to a sergeant—

"What is the name of the Senior Chaplain?"

"I don't know, sir. I don't think we have a Senior Chaplain."

"Oh yes, we have."

I should think they had—a dear man, whose little son is one of my pals. If this should catch his eye, perhaps he will strafe the sergeant aforesaid. Except that he never seems to strafe at all.

He took pity on me and gave me food

[1] Commanding Royal Artillery.
[2] Head Quarters.

and found me a room at an hotel. The Division had gone—at least, most of it. The R.A. was to be my portion of the vineyard. I was to be the chaplain of (or to) the R.A. of the Nth Division. It took me quite a time to take off my puttees. And a still longer time to put them on next morning. My puttees were to me as fleas to a dog. Some one said that the fleas kept the dog from thinking about being a dog. My puttees kept me from thinking about being a fool.

WITH GUNNERS

CHAPTER II

WITH GUNNERS

ONCE when we were discussing ways of making our ministry effective among rural populations in England, one of our number suggested that we should begin by taking an interest in the agricultural person's pig. A little talk about the pig was supposed to lead by sensible steps to talk about prayer and church-going. I didn't believe that. It's a long, long way from the sow to the soul. My people kept pigs. One morning a woman called at the Vicarage.

"I suppose," said she, "you have heard of our great loss?"

No, I hadn't heard. She had not sent for me. Which child was it?

"Oh no, not one of the children. But last night two of our pigs died."

"Well?"

"We thought you would like to head the book."

And she produced a penny pocket-book. In it I was supposed to write that Mr. and Mrs. —— deserved the alms of the faithful in order to make up the price of two pigs. I was also supposed to hand over five shillings.

This was one of the few occasions on which I was personally consulted by any of my parishioners. And as I dubbed up shillings and such whenever I was asked they concluded that it was superfluous to give me their Easter dues.

I made up my mind when I went to be a chaplain to gunners that I would not begin by talking about guns, and trust that by some strange feat of mental gymnastics I might drag in a word about

the Eucharist. I determined to begin right off with the man's religion.

This determination was strong in me as I journeyed down with the Senior Chaplain to the scene of my labours—a hut camp in a park touching a quaint old town. I didn't feel that I was cut out to get hold of men. I am too shy to put a finger on them. But I resolved that I would not be a kind of super-numerary officer who took parades on Sundays.

When we reached the town we sought out the local clergy. At the Vicarage we were referred to Mr. Brown the curate. We tried to run him to earth. He was running others to earth making up the National Register. His wife—coming to the door from the kitchen—told us that her husband was a little thin, dark man, and that if we saw him in the streets we could accost him without fear of

offence. We didn't meet him. The Senior suggested getting a billet. Formerly they were called rooms or lodgings. I asked whether I need be billeted in this town. He looked at me in surprise. And for the first and only time he answered with severity. It appeared that a soldier did what he was told without question. He didn't even make suggestions.

We lunched, and the Senior left. I went to see my first billet. It was supposed to be one tiny room. It was really a whole house, with (I think) three servants to wait on me, and whatever I liked to eat and drink. As whatever I liked was just whatever they liked, the arrangement was perfectly satisfactory. The lady of the house, who spent very little time in it, regretted that she could not put her husband's motor-car at my disposal.

I visited the Camp, and found it in-

habited by gunners—but not mine. I went to the place where the C.R.A. was said to be, but he was not there. I thought I must do something to earn my pay, so I froze on to the gunners who were there. "Froze" suggests the coldness of my reception. And when I told them, as I certainly felt justified in telling them, that I was the man the Government had chosen out of the great big world to be the R.A. padre of the Nth Division, "they didn't believe me"—I mean they wondered why the usual place I had come to them instead of waiting for my own people. They had no objection to me, of course, didn't know a thing about me, but——

That made me want to go back. Nevertheless, I took note of the Camp—ascending rows of huts with the stables conveniently placed on the top ground, because water, etc., always flows up-hill.

The approach to the Camp was by way of an improvised bridge and a narrow winding road flanked by a wall. The wall was severely dented in parts. Gunners have to have waggons. And when some of them go up the road and some of them go down it sometimes happens that they pass one another. So much the worse for the wall—or the waggons.

I saw a large hut with Y.M.C.A.[1] on it. Wherever there is a camp in England or at the Base (generic name for scores of places) you generally see a large hut or tent with Y.M.C.A. on it. If a C.O. flops down—I beg pardon, settles—in a place, an old Y.M. hurries up with a hut stocked with provisions and a piano.

The man who ran this hut reminded me of Dan's carpenter friend in *Rewards and Fairies*. He beamed on me, and

[1] Young Men's Christian Association.

then looked into space. I told him of a scheme I had for using his hut. He beamed on me and again looked into space. His wisdom surpassed mine even as the carpenter's surpassed Dan's. On two Sunday mornings when he and I waited in vain for a congregation to assemble for an early Eucharist, I discovered why he looked into space. He knew his Tommy so much better than I did.

For several weeks I haunted the Y.M.C.A. hut. I said prayers there, and helped to sing hymns there and sometimes o' evenings I preached there. I played the piano there. I joined in concerts there. What more did I want? Perhaps you can guess.

There was a smaller camp about two miles away. I met it by accident, and walked in, and discovered an adjutant of " heavies " sitting on the grass making lists of things. On Sundays and at other

times I went to that camp, where were two batteries of R.G.A.[1] Territorial.

One of the batteries harboured a Senior Wrangler, a Professor of History, and a Lecturer on Law. There was good talk in the mess. I remember that the Professor gave a very vivid and detailed account of how it felt to be dead tired. I cannot recall the terms of the description, except that one had a sense of detachment from one's body, but I knew why the Professor had developed an interest in the psychology of physical fatigue.

After the Parade Service on my second Sunday there, the "Law" man walked round the horse-lines with me, and disturbed the repose of my soul by asking what I did all day. I nearly cried with vexation because I was so very anxious to do something. I told him what I did, and he evidently thought it unsatisfac-

[1] Royal Garrison Artillery.

tory. If I had asked him what he did he would probably have answered, "What I am told to do."

The awkwardness of the padre's job is that he is told to do hardly anything. He has to arrange his own work and often to make it. And even when he has done his best he may ask himself—and if *he* doesn't put the question others will—what good he has done. Besides, the lay person often praises the parson for the wrong thing. Quite naturally, because the Englishman hates to talk about religion. God becomes "the Deity," supposing He is mentioned at all. And I have very rarely heard a soldier speak of Jesus. Once (this is also to anticipate) when I had said some prayers with an Australian in a Casualty Station and the demon of nervousness and unrest had been cast out of the man—so effectually cast out that the Sister

and the Major could not but notice the change in him—the Major announced in his genial, hearty way to the whole of the mess, " I don't know what the devil the padre said to him, but it did him no end of good—saved his life perhaps." He knew as well as I knew that it was nothing I had said to the Australian which proved effective. He knew that the Australian and I had been praying to God. But he wouldn't have said so for the world. What I attribute wholly to the intervention of personal prayers he pretends to attribute to " walking round and saying a cheery word or two."

When the first Brigade of my own gunners arrived they had to lodge cheek by jowl with the other gunners. The other gunners had been mobilized a long time, and were rather sore that they were still in England. My gunners—with a deplorable lack of manners—began to

ask them how long they had been back from the Front, and other similar questions. The affair may have been exaggerated, but the guard-room was very full the next morning. I was bound to like my own gunners best, of course. Still, if I had not been my gunners' chaplain I should have liked the others best. For one thing, they swore less and less filthily. I am not prudish about language—there are occasions when a man *must* swear; but useless or impertinent profanity "feeds me up to the back teeth."

After the preliminary row and the departure of the less profane we settled down. By this time I was billeted with Brown—known to me and some others as Innocent Brown. If you want to know where he is now see Psalm cv., v. 22, P. B. version. At least, that's how he put it in a letter, for he has

donned khaki and gone a-ministering to the boys.

By this time—or shortly after this—I had made a friend or two. One knew his Browning and loved Rupert Brooke. The other was the cousin of a funny man I used to know and nearly as funny as his cousin. The man who loved both R.B.s used to dine in mess; the funny cousin dined in his billet. I dined with both of them in turn. I just walked in to the mess and dined. I am still waiting for the mess bill. I believe I ought to have been invited, but as I saw no sign of that I walked in. I did it even with the less profane, to whom I did not in any way belong. I remember telling two funny stories to the less profane, and they stared at me stonily. I think I interrupted a subaltern giving exciting information of a new instrument he had devised for killing chickens. Having

lost many chickens through the old-fashioned instrument of a mangy fox, I broke in on the subaltern with my stories.

So with my own people I did not attempt stories, and only once or twice have I attempted any since. And yet in peace time I used to fancy myself as a raconteur.

One very wet evening I was sitting with Innocent in his study—he being engaged in trying to swat an unfortunate fly that had lingered there—when a telegram was brought to me. The telegram was rather confused, but it contained my name and France as well as a.a.a. I sent off several wires and (after hours) I received a telegram, not obscure, asking me to embark on the following Saturday. Then it was that Innocent got the khaki fever. Then it was that I wrote three letters about him. But

there was no need to write. Any one who saw Innocent would want him. My only unfulfilled desire (in this one direction, of course) was that his Vicar—just the very man for a Divisional Chaplain—did not go too.

I went to say good-bye to the funny cousin and found him with guests, some of them ladies. I forget what we said and mostly what we did, but I know I ended up at the piano with the rest of the guests singing "Irish Eyes," and "Are we all here?" and "I want to go back," and other classical compositions. I left earlier than they thought necessary.

AT THE BASE

CHAPTER III

AT THE BASE

We were a party of four padres as far as G.H.Q.[1] One of us thought he was going straight into the trenches. He had a riding-crop loaded with lead; he wore spurs; he produced a revolver given him by some grateful policemen. Many things he told us of many parts of the world, where he had been. He struck me as an ideal man for any kind of strafe.

Another was a humorist. He had been a private in the R.A.M.C.[2] It was due entirely to him that we got the reputation of being *toujours gais* at our G.H.Q. billet. He jested until night-fall, and then when we were in bed he

[1] General Head Quarters.

[2] Royal Army Medical Corps.

discussed with me the position and attitude of the Church of England.

The journey over was swift and uneventful. But the thought of war cannot drive out a tendency to sea-sickness. When we pulled up or hove-to (or whatever be the nautical term) a man with a megaphone gave directions from the shore. To me they were entirely unintelligible. I thought he said something about an anonymous writer, who plied pen in my youth under the style of A.L.O.E. The letters turned out to be A.M.L.O. I believe A.L.O.E. stood for "A Lady of England." I hadn't the foggiest notion what was portended by A.M.L.O.

The "spurs" man, however, seemed to know. He took charge and walked through a hut and said it was all right. I tremble to think what would have happened if I had been alone.

We tried to sleep in the train—*sans succès*. We arrived at G.H.Q. at the awful hour of 2 a.m. A person called the R.T.O.[1]—not to be confused with the D.C.G.[2] or the B.S.M.[3] (there is only one D.C.G., there are many R.T.O.s and thousands of B.S.M.s)—advised us to climb into a stationary train and finish our night's rest. We did so—again, *sans succès*.

We sought to report ourselves to the D.C.G. Again, *sans succès*. But we were put into billets, that is to say, we went to an hotel, where we fed and slept. It was here that the humorist acquired for us the reputation already alluded to.

One of the most important things I did at G.H.Q. was to get a bath. I didn't get another as good at that till I went

[1] Railway Transport Officer.
[2] Deputy Chaplain-General.
[3] Battalion Sergeant-Major.

home on leave. I brought a green bath with me, and a green bucket. They both leak. Now I have a wash by standing an iron utensil of hot water in the very middle of the green bath. I put my left leg into the iron thing and cleanse that completely. Then I do the same for the right leg. *Mutatis mutandis*, the process continues until the water has greatly changed colour.

Another important event was the receipt of instructions to proceed to a Base Camp. An officer sat in an office on a high stool. If he hadn't had a pipe in his mouth I should have taken him for David Copperfield. I certainly felt like adopting the cringing attitude of Uriah Heep. The officer didn't seem to be in any hurry. Presently some one came in and announced that Lille had fallen—apparently quite a common occurrence.

The officer on the stool sent me, after a time, to see the D.C.G. And the D.C G. told me that I must go as soon as the train served to a Base Camp, there to minister to the C. of E.'s of three camps, the names and situations of which would eventually be revealed to me. I said, "Thank you, sir," and saluted with my cap off—which I afterwards learned to my chagrin was quite wrong—and retired to the neighbourhood of the high stool. There I was given a note to the R.T.O.

Some men don't like R.T.O.s. People often get strange prejudices. One woman wrote in the margin of a page of one of Thomas Hardy's books (library copy), "Oh, how I hate Thomas Hardy!" I have heard soldiers express similar opinions about R.T.O.s. It is very unreasonable, because R.T.O.s are not like potatoes. I mean that, though they may be bits of a machine, they are human

and vary among themselves even as other men do. You may hate Thomas Hardy, but you can't very well hate *all* the heads of the many-headed hydra called the R.T.O.

At any rate this R.T.O. told me accurately the time of the train's departure, and assured me that it would take me to the Base. It did—in nineteen hours.

I had a strange feeling as I wandered into that old, old city of many memories. I recognized the Cathedral from a picture that hangs in my study at home. But my picture did not show the iron spire. That was a very astonishing feature. I found the place where Jeanne d'Arc finished her earthly career. I sought for the statue of Richard the Lion-heart.

Then, going down to the river, I began to see signs of the activity of war. And nearly all the activities were for our Army. We were in occupation here.

The public buildings were our offices or stores. The stations seemed to exist for our troops. Khaki dominated the streets. The shops had English notices. The trams were often crowded with British soldiers.

I observed these things after feeding and while I was waiting for the Senior Chaplain. They tended somehow to lessen the huge trouble of the war. The place had a busy and wholesome look. I reflected how providential it was that the actual area of destructive warfare was a thin riband about five miles deep stretching from the North Sea to Switzerland, and that on either side of that riband human life had resumed a normal aspect—or nearly normal. But many, many women in deep mourning reminded one of the irrevocable dead, and also of the life of the world to come. I thanked God that I believed in the life of the world to come.

The S.C.F.[1] made short work of me when he arrived, and bundled me off in the waning daylight to a Camp four miles or so away beyond the race-course. I tried to bargain with a taxi-driver. He adopted a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. I paid a considerable sum to get to that Camp. Still, the British Government refunded a part of it.

The Camp Commandant was very courteous—astonishingly so. He soon had me in an Aylwin hut with a batman by my side, overlooking my vain attempts to be cheerful and capable and military. An Aylwin hut (I hope I spell it right) is a clever canvas thing that can be put up and bolted together in two shakes. That is its chief advantage. Otherwise —well, one mustn't grumble. Diogenes lived in a tub. I wonder if he had a bad cold in the head when he started the

[1] Senior Chaplain to the Forces.

experiment. I had, when I took to an Aylwin hut.

I got a guide to take me round the camps I had come to serve. Even after that I lost my way with great ease. I reported myself to the C.O.s. As the camps could hold about 5000 men, of whom a large proportion were C. of E.'s, I wondered how I was going to do anything effective, especially as the camps were reinforcement camps. Detachments of men came in constantly. They might stay a month, or a week, or a day. But whether it were a month or a week or a day, one seemed to have very little chance of getting into touch with them. One C.O. believed in the voluntary principle. Very few men came from his camp. Another brought such a crowd that the biggest cinema tent wouldn't hold them all. My own C.O. helped me right well, though he was Scotch and a

Presbyterian. Scotchmen almost always believe in religion.

There was a Scotch minister running one of the Y.M.C.A. huts. I stood behind his counter on two afternoons a week, hoping that my men would come to talk to me. Several of them did. I did the same in another Y.M.C.A. hut on the other side of the road. I used a quiet room adjoining the hut for the Eucharist and Intercession services whenever I could gather a company of the devout.

Then there were the drafts. Two, sometimes three, times a day drafts of men would go to the Front. I went to see them off at the station. That station —a great open yard intersected with rails —was a kind of mouth of the demon of War. It swallowed up thousands of our best boys. I have seen their graves in Flanders. They would come swinging in cheerfully enough, and even when

they were packed by forties in cattle-trucks they joked about it. I used to go round and dish out cigarettes and prayer cards, and say "Good luck," or "Good-bye," or any old thing like that, often with a lump in my throat. For the Front meant death for very many, and some of them were very young and, to my eyes at least, very beautiful. I know that in the midst of death we are in life. Still, who can refrain from indignant grief at the thought of it all? Such a drab and cruel foolishness it is. Such a blasphemous beggary of civilization. Such a blow at the Heart of Christ. Such a slaughter of the Innocents. What shall happen to the Herod who loosed this Terror on the world?

I was a bit shy sometimes, especially before people like the H.A.C.[1] You see, one may be offering a penny packet of

[1] Honourable Artillery Company.

Woodbines to a millionaire. All officers call the Chaplain "padre." So do the H.A.C. "Ah, here comes the padre to cheer us with a few fags." I always apologized for doing so, and on the whole they were gentle with me.

These station expeditions kept me late. I have come back at midnight through the sleeping camps. A slight fog, a crescent moon, gave a queer, ghostly effect. I used to weary of riding my heavy service bicycle over the rutted road. I walked the last mile always. And out of the gloom would break the sharp voice of a sentry. And a little further on another. These voices made me long the more for home. When they said that all was well I felt inclined to laugh. For I knew that all would not be well with me till I set foot on my own door-step when the world was at peace.

GOING UP THE LINE

CHAPTER IV

GOING UP THE LINE

THERE came a day when the train that I had so often seen take others away took me away also. Our Colonel received a wire that my transfer was approved to a Division.

At first I couldn't believe it. I was not on the S.C.F.'s list of those marked to go up the Line. I thought it must be a mistake, and that I was meant to migrate over the road to another Divisional Base Camp. I went so far as to question the decision of the authorities. Another wire came telling me curtly to go to the —— Front.

Then a reaction set in. I began to feel important. I said to myself, " The

G.O.C.[1] has heard of me. I served faithfully the R.A. of the Nth Division. These are the same people. This Division to which I am now transferred—call it the $\overline{N+1}$th—is reinforced from the Nth. I have seen men in the Base Camps here whom I knew in that old Hertfordshire town. I have stood in their midst on the cattle-trucks and they have reminded me of the things that happened in Blighty, when we were together. The G.O.C. or some officer in high command has heard of these doings of mine. He has slapped his thigh, or struck his gaiters with his riding-whip, and with a genial soldierly oath has demanded that I should be sent for. I am made. They will (almost immediately) award me the temporary rank of major. I shall be given (in a short space) the superintendence of the whole division."

[1] General Officer Commanding.

Fortunately, I did not blurt this out to the others. I think I did casually mention to the Adjutant that some friend of mine in the Division must have asked for me. I hope I said nothing more foolish than that. For that was in very deed quite foolish enough. I doubt if any one in the $\overline{N+1}$th Division as it was then constituted—any one, that is to say, beyond a Tommy or two—had ever heard my name. Certainly they had never heard it at D.H.Q.[1] They spelt it wrong, even after I got there.

I left the Base Camp with many regrets. I should hear no more the voice of the Adjutant telling of his ancestors and Eton and the rubber plantations in the Malay States. He was a C. of E. man, and defended the C. of E. with great vigour, but he never came to any service of the Church while I was there. Neverthe-

[1] Divisional Head Quarters.

less, I liked him, and I would give a good deal to see him again.

I should play no more billiards in the Y.M.C.A. after hours, with the little Scotch doctor who had acquired, in Glasgow, such a fund of general information, or with the great hearty Highland captain, who specialized in courts-martial. I should no more overlook games at chess, in which "Sanitary Sam," who used to specialize in beriberi, checkmated all his opponents. It was said that the Adjutant once sent Sanitary Sam . . . but it would be better not to tell that story. Besides, the Adjutant was so like a brother-in-law of mine in appearance and manner that he threw me back in spirit to my courting days. I ought to have forgotten the story of Sanitary Sam out of gratitude for this pleasant rejuvenation.

Then there was the Quartermaster

who knew all the horses that ever ran their rural races in Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty's dominions beyond the seas. He specialized in " nice bits of bacon," as in duty bound. And when I came away he gave me two ration-bags of foodstuffs to consume on the journey.

At the station I fell in with two other chaplains, who were also going up the line. In fact, one of them had snaffled a compartment for the three of us. And the luxurious man had reserved another compartment for our baggage. As my valise alone must have weighed about 100 lb., and looked on the point of exuding its contents, this was a thoughtful provision.

During the train journey, which lasted all through the night and well into the next day, we three learned each other's life history. One of us was a Canadian.

He had been a trooper in the South African campaign. Another was a Londoner, middle-aged, modest, capable. The third was middle-aged too. The Canadian and the Londoner called him "Father," for the sufficient reason that he had a son in the business.

The Canadian left first. By this time we could hear the sound of guns—that dull, grumbling sound now so familiar to all our ears. When he left, the Canadian said something which reminded me of Mistress Quickly's description of the death of Falstaff. Do let me quote the passage: "'A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any Christom child; 'a parted even just between twelve and one, even at the turning of the tide; for after I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way: for his nose was as sharp

as a pen, and 'a babbled of green fields. 'How now, Sir John!' quoth I; 'what, man! be of good cheer.' So 'a cried out, 'God, God, God,' three or four times: now I, to comfort him, bid him 'a should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.'" Can you guess what the Canadian said?

The Londoner left next, and I finished the journey alone. At the rail-head I descended into mud. I hauled out my valise (nearly breaking my back) and two other receptacles, and left them in the mud. I felt rather miserable. I don't know what I expected. Perhaps a small arch with an illuminated legend: "Welcome to the Front."

I sought out the R.T.O.[1] He had made a billet of a truck on a bit of side-rail. It was some billet. He advised me

[1] Railway Transport Officer.

to get tea, and come back again. He said that two padres had been looking for me; they might return to renew the search. I obeyed the R.T.O., but the padres were not there. He suggested reporting at D.H.Q.[1] He didn't quite know where D.H.Q. was.

It was raining. I walked out into a village. My impression was simply of mud. The traffic was varied and continuous. All the windows of all the houses on either side of the street were covered over with blobs of mud. The horses were muddied up to their manes. The men were muddied up to their eyes. The motors were muddied in all their quarters. I ploughed through slush to a place called Signals. Some men were lying on straw in a barn, and near by was a little recess with a telephone.

[1] Divisional Head Quarters.

By this means I learned the location of D.H.Q.

Two miles in the rain brought me to a château, a large and pleasant château, suitable for a general. Outside I saw some motor-cars. If I had known my own destination I might have commandeered one of them. I felt beastly. I was dirty and wet and lonely. However, I pulled myself together and knocked at a door. A Colonel took my name and said he supposed I should want a horse and saddlery. I said I couldn't ride a horse for nuts. What price a bicycle? (or words to that effect). He looked doubtful. Afterwards it appeared that a bicycle was the thing allowed to a Chaplain in that Division. It matters more what you get than what you are allowed.

The Colonel was a kind man. He placed at my disposal the motor that

I had thought of commandeering. I bumped through the dark for eight miles to the N+1th 2nd Field Ambulance. "Afterwards it appeared" (this is the usual formula) that I had been sent to the wrong Field Ambulance. But as no one seemed to mind much where I was or what I was doing the mistake was never rectified. I couldn't very well rectify it myself, because I did not know which was the right Field Ambulance. As a matter of fact, I could never see any point in being with a Field Ambulance at all. And I am proud to say that the authorities are now coming round to that view.

At the end of the eight miles course I came upon another château—smaller and dirtier than the last. I entered and passed into a room, where was a Major of R.A.M.C. reading a novel. He said something which I did not catch, and went

on reading his novel. After an interval of silence I timidly suggested that I should like a wash. He answered, " This is a campaign, not a picnic," and again relapsed into his novel.

There was a fire in the room, and one of those acetylene burners that give out more stench than light. On the other side of the fire was another R.A.M.C. officer. He was too absorbed in thought, evidently, to say anything.

I sat there for half-an-hour, and during that half-hour not a word was said. I was afraid to ask any questions or to make any more suggestions, for fear the genial major might have more retorts courteous up his sleeve—or wherever he kept them. I gazed at the fire and longed for the Base.

Presently another genial person of French extraction—birds of a feather flocking together even out of different

races—entered and, by listening hard, I gathered that I was meant to follow him. I did so. He took me to an *estaminet*, showed me a room, and invited me to lodge there. I refused. My fighting temper was beginning to show itself. I remembered that my great grandfather was a warrior—killed at Hougoumont—and I determined to stand no more nonsense. He showed me another room. I refused again. We went to another hovel. I declined that also. At length, after walking two hundred yards, he found me a clean billet.

A chaplain (fourth class) holds the relative rank of captain. I had time to reflect, before I fell asleep that night, how very relative his rank was.

FOOT SLOGGING

CHAPTER V

FOOT SLOGGING

THIS is more a manual of philosophy than a dissertation on making war. And so if you want a complete account of the work of a Field Ambulance you must consult the text-books or the illustrated papers. I saw in one of them a diagram with a train in it that struck me as being quite good. Still, I might just throw out a hint or two.

The nearest medical comfort to the men in the trenches is the Regimental Aid Post. It is close to the line, maybe in a dug-out. There the Battalion M.O.[1] and his satellites sit and wait and work. This M.O. " evacuates " to the Advanced

[1] Medical Officer.

Dressing Station, which is a part of the Field Ambulance. The Advanced D.S. may be a mile or two back. It is not a well-appointed hospital, with nice clean nurses. It is probably a room in a way-side house or a bit of a barn. There is plenty of noise, because our guns are busy in that neighbourhood, and it goes without saying that the enemy's guns are firing back. The A.D.S. (the designation becoming shorter as the student acquires familiarity) evacuates to the Field Ambulance proper. This has a hospital, which may be any sort of fairly extensive building they are able to find or rig up. A schoolroom isn't bad, or a barn.

The Field Ambulance evacuates to a Casualty Clearing Station, or, perhaps, straight to the Base. Strange to say, a Field Ambulance is known as a Field Ambulance; a Casualty Clearing Station

is always known as a C.C.S. It may be—well, I am coming to that some time.

The Field Ambulance, like everything else in the British Army, which consists of many persons, is called a unit. The normal personnel of the unit is 250 men, and there are waggons and horses in abundance and motors in sufficient quantity—for the use of the unit.

I was attached, along with three other padres, to the $\overline{\text{N}+1}$th 2nd Field Ambulance. I admit it was hard on them. I was a specially grievous burden, because I ought not to have been there. A regimental officer told me once that my Field Ambulance would be overjoyed to lend me a car whenever I wanted to take a service afar off. He was mistaken. I borrowed a bicycle from them for one journey. Even that was a *faux pas*. I did not dare to suggest borrowing a

motor. But I requisitioned for a bicycle through the Q.M.[1]—according to advice from D.H.Q.—and the bicycle came, sans lamp, sans bell, sans pump, sans valise, sans bag, sans everything, *in puris naturalibus*, two days before I left the Division. One of the other padres waited six weeks or more for a horse. At the end of that time he was informed that he was not entitled to a horse. Therefore the Divisional Powers put in for a bicycle for him. As mine had not come, and I was with him at the opportune moment of putting in I upped and said that I should like one too. The consequence was that I had two bicycles for two days. I rode one all one day, and the other all the other day, and my batman did likewise. Then I left them both behind me for the use of my successor, who it "afterwards appeared" had

[1] Quarter-Master.

spent much valuable time learning to ride a horse.

Really I ought not to write about the Front, because I wasn't wanted there. Nobody seemed to know why I had come. The morning of my arrival I sought out the S.C.F.[1] of the Division. I walked ten miles through mud over the flattest and dreariest country that was ever called beautiful. The S.C.F. told me that a chaplain's work at the Front was very much what he liked to make it. He showed me a map, and said that I could get one like it about four miles away. He said also that there was a battalion in Z29 a 3·8, which might be glad of my services some time or other, though next Sunday some one else was likely to minister to them. He said also that I was in the wrong Field Ambulance, but that for the present it would be well

[1] Senior Chaplain to the Forces.

for me to stay there. He said also that he hoped I should be happy, and that he was sure I should be helpful. He said also that he was going away on leave and I must carry on until he came back. He said also that the guns were firing just behind his billet, and giving the Germans something to think about. Thereafter he gave me lunch and I came away, as you have probably concluded, full of plans for the future, and highly enthusiastic about my portion of the vineyard.

Nevertheless, on the following morning (a Saturday) I tried to find Z29 a 3·8. This was the occasion on which I committed the *faux pas*. I believe I should never have found Z29, etc., except that I happened to meet one of the battalion. In a moment I was in B.H.Q.[1] I represented to the C.O. that I was burning

[1] Battalion Head Quarters.

to do something. He told me that the other person's parade service for the morrow was " washed out " (the French word is *nettoyé*), because they were moving up to the trenches. I inquired the place. I proposed to reach there on Monday morning, if they would give me a service. Then I rode back to my billet. On the way I reflected. The result of my reflections was that I went again to B.H.Q., and said that I would march with them on Sunday.

I was up betimes. I celebrated the Eucharist for a dozen men in an old, dirty, cave-like place that reminded me of Bethlehem. Then I had a hurried breakfast and went forth. When I arrived at B.H.Q. I found the whole battalion paraded. They were awaiting the inspection of the G.O.C.[1] So I stood to attention in front of one of the com-

[1] General Officer Commanding.

panies. The G.O.C. arrived. "Battalion —pre-sent *arrms*." It was well done. Soon the G.O.C. was walking round. When he reached our company he asked me who I was. I answered that I was a C. of E. chaplain. He seemed surprised. Most of the men, he supposed, were Roman Catholics. "I didn't know, sir. I should find out in due course."

I didn't hear what he said to the officers, but they told me afterwards. The Adjutant was sure it was "some show." Quite bucked he seemed to be.

We moved off. By me marched for a time a famous cricketer and a subaltern, who told me a strange story. . . . Mile after mile over a miry road that wound about and twisted and turned like the River Wye. Sometimes we had a full view of the companies in front of us, as they wheeled at right-angles. The country was absolutely flat. Nearer and

nearer came the sound of guns. Soon the buildings, farms and cottages showed signs of shell fire. My companions made no remark about them. Nor did they give any indication that this was anything but a Sunday walk of the usual type. I felt inclined to flinch. The long-drawn-out noise of the "grannies" did not disturb me so much as the savage, sharp bark of the field-pieces.

My feet were annoying me—or, rather, one of them. The leather tag of my ammunition boot was pressing unpleasantly into my flesh. I tried to seem unconcerned. But I longed for the end.

It came, of course. We found our so-called billets. When I reflect upon what they were like, and the cheerfulness with which the others accepted them and the celerity with which they were transformed into habitable places, and the

apparent ease with which a meal was prepared, and the jolly talk with which we beguiled the time, and all the other incidents and oaths and laughter and stories and eatings and drinkings of that day, I begin to think that the British, after all, are a great race.

Men praise Tommy, and they do well. But Tommy's regimental officers are even more wonderful than Tommy. The makeshifts and discomforts of this life seem to trouble them not at all. The C.O. came in, after examining the trenches, and looked round upon that enforced habitation, and rubbed his hands and said, "It's home from home, that's what it is. We are simply Sybarites." And when it was pointed out to him that there was something which might have been a bed for him to lie on, he protested against this excessive luxury while campaigning. Ironical? I don't think it

was. He had not expected anything so good.

I bedded down on a stretcher. I tried to sleep. My difficulty was to get warm. I had my own greatcoat and the Adjutant lent me his, but it seemed impossible to bring any sort of glow into all my members at once. As soon as I had one part comfortable, another was crying out for attention. I gazed for a long time at a hole in the roof, through which a piece of shrapnel had wounded a Brigade Major. This must have had an hypnotic effect, because I remember being startled by the entrance of a despatch rider, bearing an urgent message to the C.O. Some rodents were making merry somewhere. A forlorn stray cat blinked by the brazier and took no notice of them. She (or he) came over to me—much to my discomfort.

And all night long there was every

kind of noise, granny noise, field-gun noise, machine-gun noise (particularly devilish), musketry noise, and other noises that I could not then identify. If the angels minister to the fallen they must minister, first, forgetfulness of the noise and the stench. It is almost worth dying for—to get out of the noise.

And next morning I celebrated the Eucharist, and forty men made their Communion. I preached to them, too. Afterwards—but that is too sacred to write of here.

The morning was bright, and I packed up and went. Can you imagine what the Good Samaritan felt like, as he left the inn, after ministering so thoroughly to that mauled traveller? The birds were singing, perhaps, and his heart was singing too. He had not lived in vain. By the grace of God he had been able to do something for somebody. My ministry

was by no means thorough. The spiritual result may seem to you significant. Many padres, I am told, conduct five or six parades on a Sunday. I know our S.C.F. did. I had marched all Sunday, and merely had a voluntary service on Monday morning. Yet I was very happy. The sight of ruined villages, the mud and filth and destruction of a war—the harassed country, the fancied frigidity of the Major, the apparent superfluity of my presence with the Division (this battalion forming no proper part of it), the pain of my leg, the distance I had yet to traverse to get to my billet—none of these things had the least power to depress me. I just didn't care what happened. The memorial of His loving kindness had been showed. I went along singing of His Righteousness. Christ's Body and Blood! Glory be to God on high.

MY FRIEND GEORGE

CHAPTER VI

MY FRIEND GEORGE

I HOPE he will forgive me, if this should ever meet his eye.

When people fall in love with one another they are sometimes able to point to a particular moment of illumination when the light of the great experience broke in upon their consciousness. Sometimes the light steals in and spreads imperceptibly and takes possession that way. So that we wake up on a glorious morning to a spring unimaginably green, and we realize with joyful surprise that the glory has been there all the while and growing while we slept.

My friend George is an R.C. padre. He is a dark Irishman, of an irrepressible

and inexhaustible humour. He was with the N+1th 2nd Field Ambulance when I got there. He had given himself the name of "O. C. Cinders," because he kept the mess fires burning. He certainly kindled and kept burning most of the fire of human kindness that we had. Such of the others of us who were not superior to that kind of thing warmed ourselves thereby.

I don't know when it began with me. Perhaps in his offering me some water to wash myself. We didn't wash much up the Line, but my first wash in that neighbourhood was due to him; and it came at a time when I was feeling that the world was very evil.

And then I have always wanted to win people. I even wanted to win the Major temporarily commanding our unit. To win and to be won are much the same. If you fail you fail, and the penalty is

often bitter. But if you win you win, and there is no other victory to be compared with it. I would rather win the affection of one of my fellowmen than take Berlin to-morrow.

Still, there is more than that in friendship. The soul has a desire and longing to enter into the court of a particular temple. One dwelling seems amiable beyond all others. Or to vary the figure, a man may listen to the music of the harp, lute, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer and enjoy it, but he hears a tune that becomes a part of his life. I once heard Kreisler play the Beethoven Violin Concerto. One phrase in that was It. Sound had reached the goal of expression. What further could be sought for or declared?

But I am not going to write a new *De Amicitia,* though I doubt if Cicero ever had as close a friend as George.

Well, I have left the Division now and George has not.

I told him what the G.O.C. said about my battalion. So we walked there together. It snowed and blew; the weather was vile. This was after we had moved up much nearer the Line. We four padres were billeted together in one room, or rather one room and a half. We met the C.O. in the reserve line. He had just come down from the trench. He was going to snaffle a drink and return. He said he would fix up a billet for George's service and one for mine on the following Sunday. He confirmed the G.O.C.'s opinion that there were many R.C.'s in the battalion. George was pleased. He danced about in the snow. He sang snatches of song—

"I tore me ould breeches
Going over the ditches
For you, Mary Ann,
For you, Mary Ann."

or,

"Indigestion, so she said,
Made her nose so awf'ly red,
Did pious Polly Pain."

or,

"Ri fo tiddi fo lar-y-um."

But I mustn't give any more of that one.

He recited bits of Shakespeare—

"Oh! pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth. . . ."

or,

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more."

Or, perhaps best of all—

"When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-who;
Tu-whit, tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot."

He invited me to sing. So I lifted up my voice, much tempered by the strong wind—

> "Who is Silvia? what is she?
> That all our swains commend her? . . ."

We reflected what a treasure W. S. is in this war. We rejoiced greatly.

We found a team of waggons going our way. We mounted on the seat of the first. All covered with snow it was, and you may imagine the state of our breeches when we reached our billet. It took us all the afternoon to dry them. Brothers in adversity? Not a bit of it. We felt like the two kings of Brentford. The allies were sure to win now.

And the next Sunday! The brightest and most beautiful Sunday we ever spent at the Front. George started first, as I had a service with the unit. He packed his church on his back. He said his first Mass in the church-building of

a ruined village some kilometres away. He told me that the wind blew fragments of the shattered window on to the altar. A few men only, but all made their Communion and he heard their confessions. I met him outside, and together we skipped and hopped and walked to the reserve line of our battalion. *Our* battalion, mark you. We had taken it for our peculiar possession.

The billets were ready—mine was a barn with a high platform for my improvised altar. He finished before I did. I shall never forget his face, as he came in while I was clearing up. "Eighty men, dearr man. Eighty men. It's a gold mine. Glory be to God! Glory be to God!" And the time half-past twelve, and himself without breakfast! Or was it both of us?

I had an invitation to lunch with A Company. I extended it to him. Like

my cheek, of course, but I knew they would love George when they saw him. We lunched in a tiny room all torn with shrapnel. The mess-cook did us proud. We had Clara Butt on the gramaphone for music. Two brothers were in that mess, youngsters, due to "go in" that evening. I thought of my own boy, still more of a youngster, and I felt elated that he would also bear his part some day soon.

We got back after dark. I had other things to do and so had George. My last service was at an advanced dressing station for a few of my men. I found George sitting with the doctors. Another padre who had picked me up was there also. We went to our billet along a road that ought to be called the Rue d'Enfer. The trees on the hither side are pitted with bullet-marks from the Boche machine-guns. We didn't care.

We made a beautiful trio of "Sweet and Low." We sang it well. A sentry or two interrupted us, but we just said "Friend" and continued the trio.

Well, those days are over. I doubt if they were even the best days. For not long afterwards word came that our Division was to make a great trek. And preparatory to the trek, we moved into a village, where George and I were billeted on an old abbé—just our two selves, to spend what proved to be our last days together. I shall meet him again some day—I must—and yet, who knows?

The abbé was the simplest and most pious old abbé who ever offered his guests liqueurs with their coffee. That was the central item of the programme every evening. We came in after dinner and warmed ourselves by the kitchen fire. The abbé got me to translate every scrap of English—newspaper, advertisements

on boxes, etc.—that he could lay his hands on. He and I argued once about Church doctrines. But not while George was there. George and he made remarks to one another about missals and breviaries and rosaries, and George showed him his soldiers' church. Otherwise we gave ourselves up to frivolity. George tried to do a performance on the telephone in French. He showed the abbé (and, on one occasion, his sister and wounded nephew) card tricks and string tricks and tricks of *magie blanche*. He borrowed the abbé's biretta and gave us a speaking imitation of Charlie Chaplin. He sang songs and he got me to sing, "Who is Silvia?" He induced the abbé and his careful housekeeper to try their thin voices. They gave us (so far as I can remember)—

"Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre
(Old England vat faire fich-pipe en terre)."

to the tune of "We won't go home till morning." George—versatile man—drew caricatures of mutual acquaintances, some of them members of the unit! He had met a variety of curés. He showed us how they deported themselves. The abbé knew many of them. His chuckling appreciation of George's renderings was a thing worth going a long way to see and hear.

And after we had retired for the night, we talked. We had much to talk about. Hard upon the news that we were due to "trek" came the news that my boy had started for France. I knew I ought to leave the Division. Suppose anything happened to him, and I was at the other end of the earth. What a grievous situation for my wife, whose anxiety was already more than a woman ought to be called upon to bear! I knew I ought to leave. Yet leaving the Division meant

leaving George. We had much to talk about.

We made the most of that billet and of one another. Then one morning came another "Transfer approved." My application to remain in France had gone through. The T.A. notice said that this officer (meaning me) was to proceed as soon as possible. In fact, my successor was already on the way. So George helped me pack my valise. We threw it into a dirty G.S.[1] waggon, by kind permission of the unit, and walked to the station. We had come to the end of talking. Words no longer served. We didn't even try to be cheerful. My train moved off and I left him standing on the platform. I couldn't see him very well.

[1] General Supply.

C.C.S.

CHAPTER VII

C.C.S.

I CAME here thinking to stay a fortnight at the most. I wrote urgent letters making appeal to be attached to a certain Division, where a subaltern who bears my name finds himself. I was answered most courteously: I have no complaint to make on that score. But I am here still. I am likely to remain here.

"Here" is a C.C.S. It has a number, which I refrain from mentioning. Those who have read this handbook carefully will know that a C.C.S. is a Casualty Clearing Station. A chaplain may be in one of several places. He may be at a Base Camp. He is more often at a Base Hospital. He may be at the Front.

Or he may be at the demi-semi or semi-Front, called the C.C.S. This is not exactly stated. To take a line from musical notation: the semibreves and minims are the Base; the quavers are the C.C.S.; the semiquavers and the demi-semiquavers are the Front. You quicken up as you go along; you slow down as you come back. I have slowed down to quavers. It is less dull than the open notes; it is not so exciting as the others. You may follow the medical profession all the way. That is to say—at the Front you may be attached to a Field Ambulance—a little further back you are joined to a C.C.S. and in the far-off never-never you may live in a Base Hospital. The padres are acquiring a full and particular knowledge of doctors. Some are better than others. The doctors are becoming intimately acquainted with padres. They don't like

them all. Recrimination and admiration are mutual. If you should think that because the padres live with the doctors, the doctors go to church, you will be in error. If you should think that when the padre complains of the doctors his complaint is always well-founded, you would be in error again. There are Malvolios among padres, who think that because they are virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale. There are Bottoms among doctors who think they are It in every part and argument. Some padres labour under the delusion that they are the people and wisdom shall die with them. Some doctors are blind enough to suppose that the padre's vocation eliminates all powers of intelligent thought. Malvolio gets strafed. He sometimes cries out : " I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you." Bottom wakes up in an ass's head.

Again, one padre's poison is another padre's meat. A padre may find a certain mess intolerable, may accuse the members of it of conduct unbecoming, etc.—and his successor may find the same mess delightful. The detached person would say that it was a question of psychology and temperament. These are big words—suitable for the use of "our military correspondent" in discussing the strategy of Joffre. Undetached persons might judge that one padre was a fool and the other was not such a fool as he looked—that one padre had been brought up in a parish of docile admirers, and had gulped down all their flatteries, and that the other had learned to tell a hawk from a hernshaw. The moral is: Don't be a pudding.

Our C.C.S. is divided, like all Gaul and many C.C.S.'s, into three parts, known as A, B, and C. A is graver than B, and

B is graver than C. I take all the names of my men in A, some of them in B, and very few in C. A is A1 and A2. A1 is for serious surgical cases, A2 for serious medical cases. Both are tents—at present. B is in a girl's school behind a church. B1 is for less serious medical cases, B2 for immediate evacuation cases, B3 is the place of the S.I.'s[1] destined for "Bo-sheep." B has also a dental place of refreshment and a skin tent. C is a lace factory, some distance away. It is a large factory of modern construction, and is used as a home for lost dogs (according to an R.F.C.[2] Corporal at present located there).

Many hard things are said about the Lace Factory. The majority of the men in there are suffering from slight wounds or minor ailments. As a rule they go back to duty. There is also a section

[1] Self-inflicted. [2] Royal Flying Corps.

for ophthalmic cases. We have a camp, too, in case of a rush. The church tent is in this camp.

A C.C.S. is the nearest place to the Line that the women of our service ever reach. It is sometimes a man's silly privilege to strafe "silly women." Should you catch a man doing that send him if you can to our C.C.S. His eyes will be opened and he will see plainly. He will repent in dust and ashes.

One of our sisters died this week. She died and was buried, as a soldier is, the day after. A tall, quiet Scotchwoman, always at work, always serene, tackling disgusting jobs, living perpetually in an atmosphere of disabled Tommy—her only distraction a scratch concert of the unit or a walk in the Place. We sent her down to the Base in an ambulance. I saw her just as she started, lifting up a feverish face from her stretcher bed, but

protesting that she was "much better." At any rate she is out of it now, and mayhap can review this bloody Thing with purer eyes than to behold nothing but the grievousness thereof. I was talking to her once of a promise of our Lord's: "And when all these things begin to come to pass then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." I remarked upon the sensation of seeing the single word Redemption all over the newspaper bill. People would wake up in our country and ask "What news?" And the answer would be "Redemption! It has lingered long, but all the while it has been drawing nearer and nearer, and now it has come." I love to think that she has passed from the winter of this trouble to a clime where she can await in calm assurance the fulfilment of that hope.

As I said, I have in a book all the names

of the A's who stop for more than a day. If I pull through, the book will provide an added interest for the time of peace. I wonder how many of the names will call up faces and voices to me. One A who stayed two days I shall not forget. He was an airman. He had been out a fortnight and was taking his first flight here as observer. A German flier got a shot home on him. He said it sounded among the wires "like somebody playing the mandolin." Almost at the same moment he himself was hit in the eye. But as he had his machine-gun already trained on the adversary he fired at him. The German was beaten off and with great skill our pilot brought the aeroplane back. This observer, whose eye was shot away—and you can imagine the state of his face—*walked* into the C.C.S. He was quite cheery. He told me to write to his mother, "Nothing to

alarm her, of course. Say I got a bit of something in my eye while flying." I did so, adding an opinion of my own upon his courage. His mother replied that he was a good son, and had never given her any trouble. He got the D.C.M.

A very attractive personality was an old bird in the S.I.'s. "Bo-sheep" is the name of the place where the S.I.'s proceed for an inquiry to be held. If you hurt yourself in our part of the B.E.F. you have to prove that you didn't do it on purpose. In the great majority of cases you didn't. You can be "crimed" for "trench-feet."

This old bird was a Canadian infantryman. He had dyed his hair before enlistment. The dye wore off. When I saw him his hair—what there was of it—was white. He had seen many lands and he seemed to have been a part of all that he had seen. He gave me information about

the effect of whisky on the cartilages of the legs. He said he had a constitutional inability to choose the profitable course in life. For example, he had been making money way down, and had been beguiled by pictures of the golden grain *et tout ça* to go north, where he could make but little. He was reading George Birmingham's *The Lost Tribes*. He advised me to read it for the living delineation of a "hustler and a booster" such as he had met oftentimes in his peregrinations. He wore a sleeping-cap and spectacles, and from his bed discoursed at large on international affairs. I am longing to hear what happened at the inquiry.

I suppose the enemy could shell us if they liked from one of their insolent, heaven-affronting howitzers. "If they liked," of course, is relative to our independent mind. If you have a long-range

gun it doesn't necessarily follow that you can bombard anything at the distance of the range of your gun from your line. You have to get the gun in position, and to guard it from being destroyed. Then two (at least) can play at the game of lobbing shells.

But they throw "little apples" at us. They threw apples for a whole week every night when the moon was up and at or near the full. It seems a devilish use to make of moonlight. I could see from my window our "Archibalds" trying to get at them. Little apples are aeroplane bombs. Archibald is the pet name of the anti-aircraft gun.

If any person who has not been shied at asks me whether I was frightened, I decline to answer. I will say, however, that one gift most useful for this campaign has come my way—I am not easily startled.

That week quickened up our Mess. It gave us the feeling of a common danger. We have a Major who has formerly been up the Line for months and months and months. We have a Lieutenant who was in the Loos show. We have me. For the rest they have not been there yet. The enemy's missiles might have hit any of us. It is really a case of "God help you" when things come dropping out of the sky; you can in no wise help yourself. And whenever a whole company of men begin to realize that it is a case of "God help you" they are drawn closer together. Considering that we are nearly all doctors, we are not only jolly and human but gentle too. That is, on the Mess side. On the professional side, I believe that we are above the average in skill, and exemplary in our devotion and desire to do all that is possible for the men who come down to us.

They are all interesting men, but perhaps the most interesting of all is the specialist, to whom the Major once referred as a "parasite." The Major—round, rubicund, soft-hearted, fearless—strafes us all in turn. He once coupled the specialist and me together and denounced us as "traitors" because we did not agree with his ideas on the proper conduct of war. The specialist spends many hours in what is called a mobile laboratory. He is a pathologist of parts. He is a man of virile and active mind. He is endowed with a gift that too many Englishmen lack—the gift of mental curiosity. He has the highest notions of morality and the Brotherhood of Man is a reality to him. But he cannot believe. He is more interested in Jesus Christ than many believers; he declares that a belief in the Fatherhood of God almost necessarily

follows from a belief in the Brotherhood of Man. And yet he cannot believe. Surely he is not far from the Kingdom.

When I first came to our C.C.S. I wanted to go away at once. I meant to go. Now I shall leave it with many, many regrets. I shall probably be horribly homesick.

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE . . ."

It is said that war brutalizes men because the object of a soldier is to kill his enemy, or at least to put him out of action. Those in high command are bound to foster and encourage this desire to kill. And, by consequence, death and wounding are apparently treated with a certain amount of callousness and even levity.

But there is another side, because there is also God. The commander issues the order that the King's are to "go up" to-night. Some one must go, and why not the King's? Then, perhaps, a day or two later there is a curt

notice that the King's have taken a trench. That is all.

What are the thoughts of the King's as they go up? The King's as a unit have been up before. But there are many young men among them to whom this is the first experience of certain close danger, of probable wounding, of possible death. They are highly nervous —small blame to them. The older men have already been up, and they don't like going up any the better for that. The thoughts of young and old alike fly back to a spot in the homeland. They have children, they have wives, or they have sweethearts or mothers there. They may have undervalued their homes in the past. They may have treated their children harshly. The sweet church bell may have called to them in vain from year's end to year's end. They may have jested at religion, and thought

nothing of all that Agony and Bloody Sweat, all that Cross and Passion endured for them by their own Brother, Jesus Christ.

Yet as they go up their hearts are not hardened; the soft amazing Voice is heard at last; they know that there is only one thing of which they can be sure amid the changes and chances of this mortal life—the unwearied and unresentful love of the Son of Man. They perceive, however dimly, that when He took our nature upon Him, He did it out of love and because He meant us to be better than ever we have been, and that when He died (some will die to-night) He did it to give us the power to be better.

And so the home is irradiated. The soldier remembers the patience and tenderness of his wife, the pitiful face that gazed so yearningly his way as the

train drew out of Victoria. Surreptitiously he draws out a picture post-card, and tries to see the sweet features of his child. He is not very far from the Kingdom of Heaven in those moments of extreme tension.

Some—those who in the past have learned to love God and to keep His commandments—are able to *see through.* You know what seeing through is? You are not preoccupied with the physical or the obvious. Mangling and destruction and the immediate horrors have not clouded your vision. Two brothers fell within three hours of each other. They had knelt together and received the Sacrament in a little auberge behind the line a few weeks before. And one of them wrote to his sister, "Entering this war is like entering some great Cathedral, full of God's Presence and of prayer and of praise." Fancy, turning the bitter

fields of Flanders into a House of God. Yet full of God's Presence one might understand. Full of prayer also. But praise!

I have just seen the In Memoriam notice of Ronald Poulton Palmer: "In memory of our dearly-loved brother, Ronald W. Poulton Palmer, one of those who 'went to war in the cause of peace and died without hate that love might live.'"

The padre, so often disappointed and fretted by the indifference of men, has here a grateful task. One of the soldiers I prepared for Confirmation, a modest sapper—he was one of our "lost dogs"—applied to go back to duty immediately his Confirmation was over. I told him of a Communion Service in the Church tent on the morning of his departure. And he brought with him four others, who had not communicated for

years. I can see their trembling hands now. When they had gone I knelt down in front of the little improvised altar and wept tears of joy.

I wonder if you can bear with the translation of a letter, which, though like the book of Esther it does not contain the name of God, is full of the spirit of Jesus.

It was addressed by the commander of a battalion of infantry, engaged in the battle of Verdun, to the widow of a sergeant fallen at the recapture of Avocourt.

" Madame, fifteen days ago I learned the terrible news of the death of your dear husband, and if I did not show before by a word the very large share I take in your trouble it is because up to now I cherished a ray of hope.

" Alas ! a letter this morning confirms the glorious death of my poor friend.

"Allow me, madame, to give him this title. Grosmaire was not only for me the model soldier, the comrade who often helped me by his gaiety, his spirit, to fight fleeting depressions, he was the man to whom I owe an eternal gratitude for having saved my life on several occasions. Ah, that I could not help to save his!

"Under your mourning veil, madame, you can pass everywhere with your head high: the name that you have borne (for such a short time, alas!) is a synonym of honour, of courage, and of loyalty. Your husband has nobly given his life for this ideal: the defence of home and the deliverance of our France from the enemy.

"May the grief of those who knew him be a solace for your own!"

That is how they speak of death in France. Our men just say that so-and-so has "gone West." And yet one boy

I knew was so affected by the loss of his pal that he did not want to live any longer. He came into the station. There was nothing the matter with him except grief. To him this world, without his friend, was a harsh world in which he drew his breath in pain. One can only say, and keep on saying, that the dead are not dead and that Jesus is a Pal to everybody.

Nearly all men say that they pray for a Blighty. A Blighty is a wound just serious enough to get them home. Some of them get Blighties; more of them fall sick, and get home that way. Disease-fighting in this war is a romance of the first order, and my friend, the bacteriologist, ought to write it. But wounds are, of course, the new and living way of doing your bit. (By the way, some degenerates in England have confused "*making* their bit" with "*doing* their

bit.") The worst of it is you can't draw the line. No man objects to a Blighty; no man laments unduly the loss of a limb. Nevertheless there are limits. There are some wounds, just as there are some diseases, that no man can bear to survive.

I have seen men die that I was very, very glad to see die. A Canadian lay in terrible, terrible pain. You have watched a child's mobile face suddenly wrenched with a fleeting spasm. Well, I watched this Canadian's strong impassive face pulled across and about and every sort of way against his will and overcoming all his resistance, by awful, continuous pain. And then his mind went, and he babbled. I was very glad to see him die. And very glad also to know that Christ loved him and pitied him far more than I did.

One night when I had gone to bed

early—it is astonishing how early one goes to bed on this campaign—a doctor sent for me. I got on some socks and boots and a greatcoat. One of the station tents is in a children's playground, and the playground shed is also used for beds. Under the shed was lying a man with a very unusual face. Thin and finely cut, strong chin, and short hair, nearly black, and large, blue eyes. The sort of looking man that Pierr Loti's "Matelot" was. He had a tiny bullet wound in the middle of his back. Yet such was the disastrous effect of it that living would have meant lying. No one thought that he would live. I said some prayers. I learned his Christian name—Stephen. I called him by his Christian name, partly because a man can so easily forget he has a Christian name, and partly because I thought it would sound to him like home. He raved

about shells for a while. Then, when the sister had gone, he suddenly became conscious and told me, allusively, vaguely, that he knew he was to die. I said, "I have said some prayers for you, Stephen."

He answered, with Scotch independence, "Thank you, I am able to say some for myself too."

He lived for several days. The devoted sister watched him and tended him as if he had been her son or her brother. She talked, as women only can talk.

Every morning he said he was "doin' fine." The same splendid lie! And every morning his breath became more and more laboured, as his strength ebbed away. Once he suddenly began to tell me how he got his wound, and how his back and legs felt.

"And how do you feel in your mind, Stephen?"

"Free!" he answered.

"Of whom may we seek for succour but of Thee, O Lord?" Of whom may we seek for Freedom? Stephen had sought it where it may be found.

Many of our lads who have fallen in this struggle have been, like the Holy Innocents, unconscious martyrs. They have died for a faith but dimly understood. But while they answered the call of their country, and offered themselves in that service they were also serving Christ. For everything that makes up a Christ life, all kindliness and love of men, is at issue in this war. Let us be thankful for them, and recognize the nobility and true greatness of what they have done.

Well, some are called to serve this way. Some are called to serve like my Stephen, and his namesake, the first martyr. They are fully conscious of all that is

at stake. Their eyes are wide open to the facts of life and the truth of things. They go with brave, alert, undaunted spirit to meet death for Christ's sake. They recognize the inward glory of sacrifice. And they are free. They see His Face. "His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face." That service is perfect freedom.

A VISIT

CHAPTER VIII

A VISIT

ONE morning in mid-winter I rose at the awful hour of 4 a.m. It was very dark outside, and inside very cold. Shaving by the light of one poor candle was not easy. I made as little noise as possible, because the artilleryman, who is Madame's husband, had come home *en permission* the evening before, and without doubt was dog-tired. I could not wear a greatcoat, as I had some biking to do. I contented myself with a cache-nez and a Burberry and hoped for the best.

I had made a tentative arrangement to meet a Royal Mail lorry at 5 a.m. It

was only tentative; I was doubtful of my ability to rise unsummoned. I got out my bicycle and started. It was held up at the barrier over the railway line. My lamp flopped down through the jolting of the *pavé* and I could not relight it. When I came near the Field Post I saw two lights gleaming at me from a motor on the move. I rang my bell and shouted.

"Hallo," said the driver, "what's up?"

"Chaplain!" I answered. "I have a pass to come with you."

"Good job you shouted, sir. We thought it was a Frenchman."

My bike was hauled in. I sat down next the driver. The wind was bitter and strong. The driver was as old as I am and hailed from the same part of Blighty. We talked of familiar places. As for this place he knew the road in the dark, but had never travelled it by day.

I told him with pride that I had risen at 4 a.m. He told me without any pride that he got up at 3 every morning.

We passed a camp and a village full of lorries. We turned into a railway station. A bayonet protruded itself. "And what's this lot?" asked a Scotch voice. The driver apologised to me for the ignorance of a new sentry.

We had left the broad *pavé* and were running along a narrower and softer road with a few awkward turns in it. Afar off we could see a flare against the sky. It looked like a burning village. It wasn't.

The driving rain was becoming unpleasant.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Royal!"

There was another challenge.

"Royal! you fool. Can't yer hear? Royal!!"

The shadowy form was satisfied.

"Silly blighter," muttered the driver. "Thought he was going to put a bullet across us."

Conversation became almost impossible.

Still I learned many things about the driver's family, and the people he used to drive a car for, and the damage a Zeppelin had done, and the best way to deal with asthma (that was his thorn in the flesh), and the regularity of the postal service.

Just before 6 a.m. we pulled up on the outskirts of a town. My bike was placed once more at my disposal. I was told that I could not miss the way. "Over there to the left, and keep straight on along the cobbles."

I had had some experience of greasy cobbles, but I pulled myself together. Even a dozen miles of cobbles was not going to daunt me, considering the

object I had in view. And of course it might stop raining, and the wretched head wind might die down.

Going out I saw lights in a window or two. There was the promise of day; it was certainly not so dark as when we started. I did not try my perverse lamp again.

The rain and the wind increased, if anything. After struggling along for three or four miles I came to a level crossing. An old man carrying some wooden implement emerged from the side of the road. I asked him the way. "Does one pass by here for Blank?"

He put down his wooden implement.

"Hold, sir," he said with ceremony. "I will explain to you the road to Blank. You go straight on, quite straight on; this is the chief route. You pass the village of N. Then quite straight. That

is the road to Blank. Good-day, sir. I am an old papa."

I thanked the old papa and resumed, feeling better. He was such a very courteous papa. If he had not been, I might have thought he was pulling my leg, for no one but a lunatic could miss the road to Blank.

The villages along the road were in English occupation. Men would break out of farms and cottages, and trot through the rain. The day's work in this strange war was beginning for them.

It was quite light when I arrived at Blank. English newspaper bills were being washed off their boards outside stationers' shops in the usual English way. The half-obliterated legend: "What is Hindering the War?" testified to the home-interest in things. A French boy enquired, "English paper?" and

when I refused suggested the gift of a penny.

I went right through Blank. I had still four or five kilometres to travel. I was hungry, the wind was wicked, the road began to climb. I could not ride any more.

I was in a country of mines. And the mines were all at work full blast. An M.P.[1] of a Scotch regiment told me where I could find the battalion I was seeking, so, full of hope and with excitement growing every minute, I pushed on. Up a wide hilly road—scored slopes and slag heaps on either side—I trudged and laboured, roundly berating the weather, but very happy. Then I dropped down into an intricate mass of cottages. And finally, guided by a chalk mark, I stopped at one of them.

A subaltern had just finished breakfast.

[1] Military Policeman.

I enquired for another subaltern. He would be back in a moment. Would I like some food? Rather. He talked, while I listened for a footstep . . . What a pother I was in, to be sure! I felt like giving way. You see, I had been battling with weather at unconscionably early hours. My mouth went dry. A door opened and in walked the other subaltern.

"Hallo, Dad," he said.

My son is taller and better-looking than I am. It seems only a very short time ago since he used to walk with me hand in hand. He was always fond of a little excitement. I remember taking him out when he was tiny into the streets of our town during the election. He became instantly a partisan. The thought of a contest exhilarated him. Now he has had his turn in the trenches.

I had been wondering all the way what

he would look like. We still call him Boy as we have done from the beginning. He used to call me his "young dad." We sat eyeing one another for a bit. I had a new feeling inside me. It was not exactly pride. I don't know what it was. I had been anxious—terribly anxious—during that long first spell of his up against the Boches. I was relieved to see him, *ça va sans dire.* Also . . . well, it is no use my trying to express it, only I wouldn't have missed that moment for the riches of Golconda or the honours of a king. What will his mother say when he gets home? What will his close pal of a sister say? What will they all say?

We talked. We walked. We bought things at the resourceful village shops. We discussed the end of the War, because the end of the War meant home for both of us. We discussed the chances

of leave, because leave meant home. We even tried to think as well as we could of the Boches, because the Boche also has a home. And if he has a home he wants to go back. We both wanted to go back, and yet we didn't want to go back and leave others to carry on the business out here without us.

I got a lift part of the way to my station in the company mess cart. Boy came with me. We had the bicycle in also, and the driver. Boy screwed himself in a corner and smoked cigarettes. I crouched half under the bicycle. It was a real joy ride. In the square of Blank I found an ambulance, and Boy returned in the mess cart. I can see him running across the square now.

He has had another spell in the trenches since—almost finished, I hope it is. I write him a scrap every day while he is in the trenches. He writes to me. Here

are some sentences from his last letter. I ought perhaps to say that in one of my scraps I had remarked that whatever men might think of Jesus Christ they had to recognize that He was not afraid. The letter was written at 4 a.m.

"Your letter some days ago referring to Christ's fearlessness did me a lot of good. I now face crumps and whumpers if not with indifference at least with a certain amount of equanimity. . . . To blame a man for nerves, of course, is ridiculous, but there is a great difference between bad nerves and that kind of selfish fear of saving your own skin whatever happens. . . . There is a little cellar here that I sneak off to in the small hours sometimes and enjoy a read and a smoke and if possible a sleep. I have a ripping brazier, a bed (of sorts), a table and plenty of chairs, besides crockery and a kettle and saucepan.

"So altogether I don't jog along badly, though occasionally get rather tired.

"I'm afraid I have very little . . . Still it's all in the game, and the game's not so bad really. Anyhow it's a man's life and good service."

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