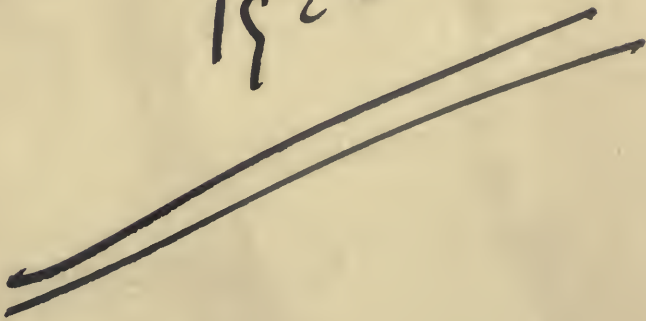


A BORDER BATTALION  
THE 7/8<sup>TH</sup> KING'S OWN  
SCOTTISH BORDERERS



Charles H. Harkness.

1920.



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A BORDER BATTALION  
7/8th King's Own Scottish Borderers







THE BATTALION COLOUR



A BORDER  
BATTALION  
THE HISTORY OF THE  
7/8th (Service) Battalion  
King's Own Scottish Borderers

PRIVATELY PRINTED EDINBURGH MCMXX

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\* Drawn by Pte. W. P. WILLOCKS ("MAPS").



# INTRODUCTION

IN the following pages an attempt has been made to write a history of the 7/8th Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers, during the entire period of its career. As a Service Battalion, it had a short life; and having fulfilled its purpose, it was disbanded and removed from the establishment of the Army.

The chief object, therefore, of this volume is to provide a permanent record of the engagements and movements of the battalion during its active service; and to recall, to those who took part with it in the Campaign, scenes and incidents, grave and gay, in their proper setting and sequence. Many who, while not belonging to the battalion, were, for one reason or another, interested in its vicissitudes, will welcome a volume that contains a narrative of events with which they are, to some extent, already familiar from the letters and conversations of their friends.

The history, which owes its inception to Lieut.-Col. H. P. Hart, D.S.O., has been compiled and, to a large extent, written by Captain J. Goss, M.C.

Major J. H. Patrick, M.C., who, with the assistance of Sergeant E. H. Whitehead, collected from official sources much of the detailed information contained in the history, has also written several of the chapters.

Other chapters have been contributed by Captains W. W. Henderson, M.C., A. B. Paton, M.C., P. Reay, M.C., J. Weir, M.C., and Lieutenants J. E. Thomson and J. D. Brown.

The whole work has been revised, in many parts rewritten, and prepared for the Press, by Rev. J. Ferguson, B.D., who was the last Chaplain with the battalion.

## INTRODUCTION

The executive work of arranging for the publication and distribution of the volume has been in the hands of Captain Reay.

In a composite work of this kind it is almost inevitable that there should be repetitions and, it may be, omissions. Every endeavour has been made to ensure that the lists of Honours and Casualties should be as comprehensive and as accurate as possible. On active service it is very difficult to keep perfect records, and where the battalion lists are incomplete, memory has tried to supply what is lacking. If any name that ought to be included in these pages has been omitted, pardon is sincerely craved.

When the Great War has long passed into history, perhaps some aged Borderer, sitting by the fireside in his big arm-chair, surrounded by his grandchildren—and many may there be—will pause in the midst of his tale, and say to one of his grandsons, in whom the old Border spirit shall have been reborn: “Hand me, from the shelf there, that book about the 7/8th K.O.S.B., and I will tell you exactly when and where this happened.”

If this volume preserves a record of dates and names and incidents necessary to retell with accuracy, in after years, many a stirring event in the life of the battalion; if it helps to keep the memory of the battalion green, or even to furnish material for some future historian of the Regiment, it will have amply served its modest purpose.

EDINBURGH, *March* 1920.



## FOREWORD

THE King's Own Scottish Borderers was raised in Edinburgh, on 19th March 1689, by the adherents of King William III., under the title of the Edinburgh Regiment, and is stated to have been completely recruited up to a strength of 1000 men within the short space of four hours, a facility for recruiting certainly unparalleled in its subsequent history. Within four months of its formation it was called upon to face a formidable opponent, in the person of "Bonnie Dundee," who, at the head of the Highland Clans, was in arms for King James II. The opposing forces met at the Pass of Killiecrankie. Of the troops under General Mackay, only two regiments bore themselves with any degree of resolution; one of these was the King's Own Scottish Borderers, which thus early showed a courage and efficiency which it has steadily maintained for over two hundred years.

When the authority of King William III. had been firmly established in Scotland, the regiment proceeded to Ireland, and took part in the Campaigns in that country until King James and his Irish and French allies were driven from the United Kingdom.

When this service was ended, the regiment embarked for Flanders, where the ambition of Louis XIV. of France had called the British Monarch into the field. The regiment was present at the hard-fought battles of Steinkirk, 1692, and Landen, 1694, and in the following year took part in the Siege of Namur, one of the strongest fortresses in Europe. The capture of this place ranks as one of the greatest

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achievements of King William III., and the magnitude of the operation may be gathered from the fact that it cost the besieging army a loss of 12,000 men. The King's Own Scottish Borderers suffered heavily, losing on one occasion no less than 20 officers and 500 men by the explosion of one of the enemy's mines. It was during the taking of Namur that the regiment was somewhat roughly made acquainted with an improved method of fixing the bayonet to the musket. The British practice was to screw the bayonet into the muzzle of the gun, which, of course, could not then be fired. The Colonel of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, seeing a French regiment approaching with fixed bayonets, ordered his men to fix theirs, and calmly awaited the charge, with perfect confidence as to the result. He was, however, rudely awakened when the French regiment presented their pieces and fired a volley at close range, a feat which they were enabled to perform by having their bayonets fixed outside the muzzle instead of inside. The Borderers, however, quickly recovered from their surprise, and routed the enemy at the point of the bayonet. The Treaty of Ryswick put an end to this Campaign in 1697, when the regiment returned home.

In 1719 it formed part of an Expedition which proceeded to Vigo, a port of Spain, where a large quantity of stores, collected for an invasion of England, was destroyed, and the project thereby frustrated. At Gibraltar, in 1732, the regiment had to endure a siege, when for four months they successfully bore the persistent attacks of a Spanish force of

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20,000, and the assailants were eventually forced to retire, leaving Gibraltar still under the British flag.

The regiment suffered heavily at the battle of Fontenoy, where, owing to the apathy of their Dutch allies, the British were obliged to quit the field. Such, however, was the vigour of the British attack, that, at one period of the battle, it is said that if the Dutch had fired but one shot, the victory would have been ours. A loss of 206 officers and men attests the courage and desperation with which the King's Own Scottish Borderers fought.

The regiment embarked for Germany in 1746, as part of the British contingent, which, under treaty, was sent to assist the heroic Empress of Austria, Maria Theresa, the French, of course, fighting on the other side. Never did British valour gain greater pre-eminence than in the war that followed, and at the close of the war the British troops had wrung from their foreign allies a verdict which placed them first and foremost among the many nations which had taken part in the conflict, a verdict which they had placed beyond challenge, by losses on the field of battle out of all proportion to those of their allies.

The King's Own Scottish Borderers fought at Roucoux, at Val, and in the celebrated battle of Minden in 1759, when it was one of the famous six British regiments which received and repulsed charge after charge of sixty squadrons of the best cavalry of France, routed two Brigades of French infantry, and swept away a body of Saxon foot, and all this under a heavy cross-fire of Artillery. Well might Prince

## FOREWORD

Ferdinand of Brunswick, who commanded the Allied Army, say, on revisiting the spot: "It was here that the British infantry gained immortal glory."

At Warburg, Campen, Follinghausen, and Wilhelmsthal alike did the regiment signally show its gallantry and devotion, returning home in 1763 with a reputation second to none. At Newcastle-on-Tyne a curious and interesting ceremony was performed by the regiment, when its tattered and war-worn Colours, which for twenty years had led it from victory to victory, were buried with military honours.

In 1782 the regiment proceeded to reinforce the hard-pressed garrison of Gibraltar, which, under the stout Elliot, afterwards Lord Heathfield, was engaged in resisting the fiercest efforts of France and Spain. It was in time to share the glory of repulsing the culminating efforts of the besiegers, when the royalty and nobility of France and Spain had gathered on the surrounding hills to witness the success of the famous floating batteries which had been prepared at enormous expense to annihilate the stubborn garrison. British pluck and red-hot shot, however, dissipated their hopes, and, exhausted by their efforts, the shattered foe withdrew. In 1793 the regiment transferred its services from the land to the sea, and acted as Marines, in which capacity they were fortunate enough to earn a large amount of prize-money by the capture of a vessel of the value of £1,000,000, and to participate, under Lord Howe, in the glorious victory over the French Fleet off Brest on the 1st June 1794. Part of the regiment was also present at the

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Siege of Toulon, where Napoleon, then a Lieutenant of Artillery, was wounded by a British bayonet, and at the capture of Corsica.

The regiment was then called upon to proceed to Grenada in the West Indies, where a detachment made a most noble defence against a much superior force of insurgents, and it was while the regiment was here that the gallant spirit of its men was shown in the following manner:—

While proceeding to the West Indies the ship in which a party of the regiment was embarked was captured by an enemy's vessel. The officers were disembarked and placed in prison, whilst the rest of the party were transhipped for conveyance to another place of captivity. On the way, however, the men, under the leadership of a sergeant, overpowered the French crew, and forced the captain to take them to Grenada, where they rejoined their Headquarters.

In 1799 the regiment earned for its Colours 'Egmont-op-Zee' in the Campaign in Holland, under the Duke of York, and in 1801 took part in the Expedition which forced Napoleon's army out of Egypt. The capture of Martinique in 1809 earned still another distinction, and a detachment of the regiment also took part in the capture of Guadeloupe. From August 1814, till the end of 1815, the Borderers were engaged in garrison duty in Holland.

After this a long period of peaceful service ensued, broken only in 1842 by a Boer insurrection at the Cape, which was promptly and successfully repressed,

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and by an attempted invasion of Canada in 1866 by the Fenians, which was as easily dealt with. The regiment was next engaged in the Afghan Campaign, 1878-80, when the murder of the British Envoy was avenged, and a ruler susceptible of British power established on the throne. The services and privations of the regiment amply earned for it the name of this Campaign on its Colours.

In 1888 the King's Own Scottish Borderers were defending Suakin, in Eastern Sudan, against the Dervishes, and fought in the action of Gemaizah, the good conduct and perfect discipline of the Battalion earning General Grenfell's special approbation.

The regiment then saw service among the wild tribesmen on our Indian frontiers. It was represented by a half battalion in the Chin Lushai Expedition in 1889, and formed part of the Chitral Relief Force in 1895, fighting successfully at the Malakand Pass, Swat River, and Panjkhora River. Still severer work was experienced during the progress of the Tirah Campaign in 1897, in which it endured much hardship and danger in marches through ice-cold streams and amidst the precipitous hills and passes of the north-west frontier, constantly exposed to the bullets of the tribesmen. The Battalion was in action twenty-three times, including the capture of the heights of Dargai, Sampagha Pass, Arhanga Pass, Tirah and Bara Valleys, at Bagh and Skenkanar Pass, and had four officers and thirty-two N.C.Os. and men killed or wounded during the operations.

In 1899 the outbreak of the Boer War called the

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Home Battalion to South Africa, where it formed part of the army of Lord Roberts. As part of the 7th Division it moved forward in pursuit of General Cronje, and at Waterval Drift, on the 15th February 1900, lost eight men in making its first acquaintance with the Boer riflemen. On the 18th February it took part in the battle of Paardeberg, and on the 27th had the pleasure of witnessing the surrender of Cronje and over 4000 men.

This was followed on the 7th March by the action at Poplar Grove, but the speedy flight of the Boer army gave little opportunity of fighting.

On the 29th March, however, the King's Own Scottish Borderers were called upon more seriously. Bloemfontein had been occupied by our victorious army, but at Karee, some 20 miles off, the Boers occupied a most formidable line of hills which lay across the line of our further advance, and Lord Roberts resolved to attack them. This task was allotted to the 7th Division, and to the Scottish Borderers fell the honour and the brunt of the fight. As they advanced, so silent seemed the hills that it was thought that the Boers had abandoned the position, when suddenly at short range a tempest of fire opened upon two companies of the regiment.

These got under cover and re-formed, and then followed a hot artillery and musketry duel between the opposing forces. The numbers of the Boers and the strength of their position made it impossible for some time to push the attack, but the flanking movement of the Cavalry Brigade, under General French,

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at length alarmed the Boers, and late in the afternoon they abandoned their trenches and fled, leaving the path clear for the advance of Lord Roberts to Pretoria.

In this hotly-contested action the Scottish Borderers had eighty-three officers and men killed or wounded.

The limits of this short history do not permit of a detailed account of the numerous marches and fights which followed for the regiment before the war was over, but in speaking of the force, of which it formed part when under the command of General Ian Hamilton, Sir Conan Doyle says that it "put in as much hard work in fighting and marching as any body of troops in the whole Campaign."

The fight at Vlakfontein, however, on the 29th May 1901, must be mentioned. On this occasion the regiment was part of a small Column, under General Dixon, operating in the dangerous country near the Magaliesberg range of hills, a neighbourhood which had been the scene of more than one mishap to the British forces. On its way back to camp the Column found a veld fire raging, and suddenly from out of the smoke 500 Boer horsemen dashed upon the rear-guard, under the support of a fierce musketry fire from another party of Boers. In a few minutes two British guns were captured and turned upon the rest of the Column, and the rear-guard was broken and scattered. The companies of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, with those of the Derbyshire Regiment, however, came speedily to the rescue, and in a

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## FOREWORD

dashing charge recaptured the guns and drove back the Boers, who vanished into the smoke, leaving forty-one of their number dead on the field. In this gallant encounter it is gratifying to know that the Volunteer Service Company shared in the honours of the day.

The mounted infantry of the Borderers did much excellent service, and while serving with it Lieutenant and Adjutant G. H. B. Coulson won the Victoria Cross, on the 18th May 1901, by his heroic self-sacrifice in rescuing a comrade from danger, after having on many previous occasions displayed great coolness and gallantry under fire. He, unfortunately, did not survive to wear it.

The Militia and Volunteers were in no way behind their Regular comrades in the spirit shown by them during the Campaign. The 3rd Battalion volunteered for active service, and proceeded to South Africa in March 1900, and did not return until June 1902. In the meantime it did excellent service in the arduous and dangerous work of guarding the lines of railways from marauding Boers, while the Volunteer Service Company joined the Regular battalion and shared with it the hardships and perils of the Campaign.

The total casualties of the regiment amounted to 11 officers, 120 N.C.Os. and men killed or died of wounds, disease, etc., and 5 officers and 90 N.C.Os. and men wounded.

The regiment, when first embodied, was called the Edinburgh Regiment.

In 1786 the Duke of Sussex had it named after his

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territorial designation, and it was known as the Sussex Regiment.

In 1806, however, King George III. had it renamed the King's Own Borderers, by which designation it was called till 1887, when it was finally named the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

*Official Pamphlet.*

## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND EARLY TRAINING.

TOWARDS the end of August 1914 posters were exhibited throughout the British Isles, appealing to the manhood of the Nation to volunteer for service in the "New Armies." The Old Army, which formed the original British Expeditionary Force, had been mobilised and sent to France, where, notwithstanding its exceptional state of efficiency, and the gallantry of its officers and men, it was being hurled back towards Paris by the onrush of the more powerful German army.

The War Office decided that new battalions should be formed territorially to be added to the existing regiments, taking their numbers after the Territorial battalions.

Thousands of men flocked to the Colours; amongst them some who had seen previous service and who in a good many cases were well above military age; but by far the greater proportion had never handled a rifle before. There were also those old officers and ex-non-commissioned officers who did such excellent work on the parade ground and helped to knock the new battalions into shape. How should we have managed without them?

Recruits, on joining the King's Own Scottish Bor-

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derers, were sent to the Depot at Berwick-on-Tweed pending the arrival of their attestation papers from the various recruiting areas. They were then dispatched by rail to Bordon, and were accommodated, temporarily, in the Royal Engineer Barracks. Huts, tents, stables and outhouses of all descriptions were utilised for sleeping in. Fortunately, the weather was warm, and the discomfort of sleeping on a wooden floor or on the hard ground was not so keenly felt as it would have been in cold weather. Luxuries were relegated to the past, and were not much regretted. Every man knew he was out for a purpose, and every one was determined to put up with privations and inconveniences unavoidable under the circumstances, so long as the great purpose was served.

The formation of the 6th Battalion having been completed by the 12th of September, the 7th and 8th Battalions were then formed. They occupied the Married Quarters in Guadeloupe Barracks. Lieut.-Col. G. de W. Verner commanded the 7th Battalion; Major Gunn held the command of the 8th Battalion until the end of September, when Lieut.-Col. T. B. Sellar was appointed Commanding Officer.

For a period of three or four months there followed the drudgery of recruits' training, physical exercises, musketry, and all those various little things that have to be learnt before a civilian can say that he knows anything about a soldier's life. But was there not a reward in seeing a crowd of civilians developing into those fine battalions which afterwards did such magnificent work in France and Flanders? The men were

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exceptionally keen, and anxious to make themselves efficient as quickly as possible. Young subalterns who knew nothing about forming fours—not to mention giving a word of command—had to be taught their adopted profession. Often after the day's work was done, commanding officers and senior officers would lecture the young officer, in order to make him more conversant with his duties. Shortly after the formation of the new battalions, His Majesty the King held an inspection on the R.F.A. drill ground. The battalions were paraded in column of companies, without arms or equipment. The physique of the men was very good, but there was not a rifle amongst them. It was a kind of undress parade, lacking in uniformity. Some wore straw hats, some bowlers; some were in grey flannels, others in corduroys. There was some difficulty in getting the men to look straight to their front; but His Majesty was pleased with their appearance. No doubt he knew why rifles and khaki clothing were not available.

Evidently the civilian clothes worn by the men were not meant to stand the rough usage of infantry training. Some gave way at the knees or the elbows; in other cases the seat was the weakest part; hair was coming through the crowns of hats; toes were protruding from boots. Several men could not attend parades owing to the bad state of their footwear. Others, under the same plea, made a point of evading parades, until they were discovered by the Orderly Officer, who had been detailed to search the rooms for these schemers and hurry them out. Those men

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who were the most respectable looking, that is, whose clothing had stood the strain best, were often the first to be selected for promotion. Physical exercises and squad drill become very monotonous when practised day after day; especially when the men are all eager to carry a rifle, and to learn how to handle it, and to shoot. There was a fear that the war would be over before we should be equipped and ready for fighting, and that there would be no opportunity of meeting the enemy and proving ourselves. Rumour was rife. One said we were going to Egypt, another to India. In fact, the white helmets had been seen in the quartermaster's stores!

Still we carried on—marking time and practising other necessary motions prescribed in the art of soldiering. One particular officer was very keen on marking time, probably because it gave him pause to think. He liked to see it done correctly. One day he threatened his company that if they did not do the thing as it should be done, he would make them mark time all the way home.

When, at length, we received a few D.P. (drill purpose) rifles, life seemed to become a little rosier and our prospects more hopeful. These few rifles were passed round on parade from squad to squad, each in turn receiving instruction in handling arms. To carry the rifle at a correct angle at the slope seemed to be the most important movement in exercises with arms. Sergeant-majors would roar at the men to press on their butts, or to get the heel of the butt in line with the centre of the thigh. A well-meaning sub-

## BIRTH AND EARLY TRAINING

altern, not liking to be as stern as the sergeant-major, would cajole his men by offering them chocolate if they carried their rifles in the right way. Often when the men were feeling tired or bored, some trifling incident would cause a laugh, and put them into good humour again. On one occasion a company sergeant-major, with a remarkably loud voice and a compelling emphasis on the executive word of command, was drilling the company. Walking backwards, he fell into a hole and disappeared, before he could finish the word of command. The Company Commander saved the situation by turning the company about.

In spite of such incidents both officers and men rapidly got into the way of doing things as laid down in the various Manuals of Instruction. They were becoming versed in the formalities of a battalion orderly room. They were growing hard and fit.

Great use was made of the miniature rifle range. Under the supervision of the musketry instructors attached to the battalions, creditable progress was made in the art of shooting. To add to the interest of musketry training, shooting competitions were arranged and prizes awarded.

One hundred service rifles were issued to each battalion for use in range practices; and incidentally to arm a detachment which was called the Service Company. These troops were always held in readiness to proceed to the coast in the event of an attempted raid. Thanks to our Navy, they were never required.

More D.P. rifles were forthcoming, and an obsolete pattern of equipment was issued by Ordnance, so that

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now we could turn out on parade fully armed and equipped. Civilian clothing had been discarded, and the men were warmly clad in various descriptions of pre-war military uniforms: red coats with blue or whitefacings; trousers with red stripes down the sides; blue caps with shiny peaks, and civilian greatcoats of a certain uniformity.

After we had passed through the tedium of squad and company drill the battalions indulged in route-marches; and often with bad boots, but good hearts, we tramped along country lanes to our assembly place for a tactical scheme, or to take up a line of outposts. Here, again, the men had to be taught what was required of them. There was a young lance-corporal in charge of an outpost group who, by some lack of imagination, had his sentry facing his own lines instead of towards the supposed enemy. The senior Major, riding up, noticed this, and asked why the sentry was facing that way. The lance-corporal replied: "He thought his duty was to look out for the Colonel." But there were others who did not suffer from a lack of imagination. There was, for instance, that signaller who was violently waving a flag during an operation supposed to be a night attack though carried out in daylight. An irate Staff Officer, riding up to him, asked what he meant by waving that flag. Did he not know this was supposed to be a night attack? "Yes, sir," replied the signaller, "but this is supposed to be a lamp." What could one expect at that early stage in the military training of the civilian? Was there not a battalion that on a dark night lighted its fires and



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cooked its meals in front of its outpost line? Experience had to be bought.

Winter set in, cold and dreary, but training was still carried out in the open air, except on occasions when the weather was extremely inclement. The men would then be taken under cover and the officers would lecture them on various military subjects. One day a very fine lecture was given on Observation. Great emphasis was laid on the fact that the first and foremost maxim for observation is, "To see and not be seen." The lecturer noticed one man who was not paying attention. Speaking rather sharply, he said, "Do you know what I have been talking about?" "Yes, sir," replied the man. "Well, what is the safest way to observe the enemy?" "On the cinema, sir," answered the inattentive one.

Training having now reached a stage reported to be satisfactory, Lord Kitchener notified his intention of inspecting the Aldershot Command. Consequently, on a bitterly cold day, during a snowstorm, the battalions formed up on Frensham Common. There was a long wait, and then Lord Kitchener, accompanied by M. Clemenceau, arrived and inspected the troops; eyeing the men critically, and no doubt wondering how they would acquit themselves against a well-trained enemy.

After the inspection no work could be done for two days, as the one and only suit in possession of the men had become saturated, and drying facilities were very inadequate. The drudgery of constant training was not altogether unrelieved. St Andrew's

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night, for example, was celebrated with great gusto. The sergeants held a most successful smoking concert. Many of the officers were present, and Brig.-General Wilkinson made a very fine speech, in which the Huns were characterised in terms of considerable force, and the hope was expressed that before very long we should meet again in Berlin. Several remarkable incidents happened after that concert—but we must go gently. We all reached our quarters in safety; some by accident, others by the homing instinct, or by the aid of a friendly hand.

As Christmas approached leave was eagerly anticipated. The men were granted six days' leave, and were sent off to their respective homes in two reliefs—half a battalion at a time; the first party spending Christmas at home, and the second New Year. For over three months the work had been very arduous, and the comforts few. A short respite would do us good and put new heart into us.

After these holidays the battalions were exercised in musketry on the Whitehill ranges. A special recruits' course was fired. Practices were frequently carried out when the ground was hard with frost or during showers of rain or snow. The cold was often so intense that it was found necessary to keep the men warm by means of exercising them at running drill, physical training and organised games. Notwithstanding the hard weather, competition between battalions, companies and platoons for the honour of securing the highest average was most keen. Independent shooting was also practised to enable the

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firer to correct errors and to learn the peculiarities of his rifle. This would have been most useful if each man had been in possession of the rifle he would use in action, but service rifles were not issued until some considerable time after. Another practice was "rapid firing," or "the mad minute," when the soldier would throw away as many rounds as he possibly could, causing his platoon commander endless worry and annoyance should the markers signal a "wash-out"—no hits on the target—and thus lowering the platoon average. "Grouping practices" consisted of five rounds fired, points being awarded according to the size of the circle enclosing the group of hits on the target. The musketry instructors were untiring in their efforts to improve the shooting; particularly in the special training of those incorrigibles who are found even in the best-regulated regiments—the men who cannot hit a haystack.

Being a Lowland regiment we were not entitled to bagpipes as an authorised Government issue. Each Lowland battalion of the "New Armies" was supposed to sport a drum and fife band, flutes and piccolos being a recognised part of their equipment. But these were never demanded from Ordnance. Bagpipes were purchased privately by the officers. With one bass drum, eight side drums and six or eight sets of pipes, and the pipers dressed in Royal Stuart tartan kilts, excellent pipe bands were formed. The men showed their appreciation by flocking to the barrack square in crowds when "Retreat" was sounded. After a long and tiring march, what a thrill it gave to hear the

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band strike up "Blue bonnets over the Border." How we would square our shoulders, and march gaily along, with heads erect and chests thrown out, feeling proud that we belonged to such a fine old regiment, and imbibing that wonderful *esprit de corps* which was to carry us through many a hardship and fight in days to come.

Bordon! It may be fraught with memories grave and gay, but it is remembered chiefly as the place where we learned to form fours. Truly, a motley crew! "How can ye be smairt in thae duds?" There was something in it. The soldier on the barrack square is curtly informed that he is not paid to think. He is told when to form fours, when to go for a route-march, and when dinner is ready. Yet in "thae duds" we trained for many a long day, marching from camp to range, and from range to camp in the gentle process of becoming soldiers. We began as civilians, complete with bowler hats, etc., presently we became "lobsters," and finally we blossomed forth as the khaki-clad warriors of K2.

The old aspirations fell away from us. Boyhood's dreams of cow-punching, ticket-collecting, engine-driving, were things of the past. Greatness had been thrust upon us. Some of us had been commissioned as officers in His Britannic Majesty's service, and had gravely assumed the responsibilities of our rank. Much was expected of us, from the reverence due to "Brass Hats," to a full and comprehensive knowledge of the "Triangle of error." A "Brass Hat" is a thing never seen in peace-time, and we looked with awe upon the first that swam within our ken. He strolled

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up and down the firing point at the range, muffled up in a light British warm and wearing white gloves.

It is impossible to set forth everything that creeps back into one's mind. One can but hope that a few personal reminiscences will recall others in the minds of those who read. So we must leave Bordon, and bid good-bye to its pine trees and its red-roofed huts. It was whispered that France was near. We were going to Winchester, and was not Winchester the jumping-off ground for France? Fervently we hoped so! Bitter disappointment! We had yet to be hardened and weeded out.

Ours was the 15th (Scottish) Division. The 7th and 8th Battalions King's Own Scottish Borderers, with the 10th Scottish Rifles and the 12th Highland Light Infantry formed the 46th Infantry Brigade. At the end of February 1915 the 46th Infantry Brigade moved to Winchester; the 7th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers being quartered at The Cross, and the 8th Battalion in the town. All sorts of buildings were requisitioned to accommodate the troops: Methodist chapels, Salvation Army buildings, schools, and Masonic and Mechanics' Institutes. The officers were billeted in private houses.

Good old Winchester! Most of us learned to love the place. Its social aspect improved daily. From the "Dirty Bird" in the North, to "Mishter Baker's" in the South, we enjoyed ourselves immensely. "Flower Down" and the "Race Course" witnessed the might of our arms and the wisdom of the umpires. If we marched off gaily to our rendezvous at H.17.d.6.3,

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it was no down-hearted crowd that turned its face towards the H in Home. The mention of the H in Home brings back memories of our gallant scout officer; for, given a prismatic compass and a certain amount of low cunning, could he not find his way anywhere? We trusted him implicitly; 'twas a bad day if he was two degrees out. Was he not directly responsible for *London Opinion's* inquiry, who the officer was who fell into a trench during night manoeuvres? Most emphatically. And was it not from Winchester that our C.O. went to visit real trenches, coming back with Army Books 136 filled to overflowing? In his absence did not a senior officer endeavour, upon a steep slope, to get the battalion into line, facing quarter left? Reputations went west, until finally—"Mr Larkin, will you kindly dress the Battalion?" Steps forth Peter—the one and only Peter—and order is restored.

One can recall many little incidents connected with Winchester. The Brigade arranged an Inter-battalion Cross-country Run, for which the Mayor of Winchester, Alfred Edmeades, Esq., presented a silver cup to the winning team. This cup was won by the 8th Battalion, Pte. D. Gorton being first man in.

The generosity of the people was all that could be desired. The proprietor of a restaurant in High Street gained the patronage of the men of the Brigade, who used to repair thither after the day's work for supper. He was very liberal; and great coat pockets were large! The strain was too great. The restaurant lasted for three days and then went under.

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The extreme lassitude frequently observed after inoculation and vaccination was greatly mitigated by leave subsequent thereon.

Packs and equipment were issued, each strap neatly stamped with its owner's regimental number.

"Please, sir, I've lost ma canteen."

Turmoil in the company!

Officers hurry along the lines, identifying each man's canteen by his number. Hurrah! It is found!

"Where did you get this canteen?"

"I thought it was mine, sir."

"Where is your own?"

"Some yin must ha' ta'en it, sir."

"And where did you find this one?"

"Lying aside my equeement, sir."

Keep your eye on this man. He may make a corporal some day, or perhaps even a sergeant.

It is to be recorded also, and with sadness, that as we were not yet on active service, unpolished buttons for a G.O.C.'s inspection were not considered the correct thing.

But we must leave Winchester behind, and we quit it with regret. Some, even now, journey thither in quest of a fickle goddess. Most of us, however, are content to visit it in spirit, and dream of the past.

On the 18th of April the Brigade marched from Winchester to Parkhouse Camp. Over that march to Parkhouse let us draw a veil. Our dreams of a speedy departure for the front were rudely shattered. Was it the soft living in Winchester, or the insufficiency of army rations? The spirit was willing but the flesh

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was weak. One makes no attempt to deny that we were scarcely fit for France. But the weeks in Parkhouse told: the strenuous training performed wonders. We had staggered into camp weary and worn: when we came to quit it, no finer body of men ever swung along the King's High-road. We all enjoyed Parkhouse. Away from town and temptations, we were brought nearer to the meaning of soldiering than ever before. We handed in the old D.Ps., took over Mark I, and were the better men for it. We began to feel that we were not merely ourselves, not merely a battalion, but were part of one great whole—the 15th Division. Later we learned what honour was ours.

“ I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.”

This about sums up Parkhouse. The very mention of the name makes one perspire freely. And yet it was good. Our bodies, hardening to the work, thought less of the pleasures of town life.

When the time came to take our departure, we felt more like soldiers than ever before. Three weeks' hard training had oiled our joints and hardened our muscles. We covered the twenty-five miles to Chiseldon as veterans ; though not a few limped into camp, dusty, thirsty and crusty. Only four men in the Brigade fell out.

At Chiseldon the battalions were housed in huts, with commodious dining-halls and up-to-date cook-houses and recreation rooms. The last stage was beginning. We were rapidly approaching the perfection of ideal “cannon fodder.” The final touches



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were about to be administered. Chiseldon was to be one long polish up. Our muscles were hardened to the long route-marches, and our civilian minds accepted without too audible comment the wonderful manœuvres we were called upon to perform. Blindly, at the bidding of the Brigadier, we were prepared to charge anywhere. Colossal triumph for the "Manual of Infantry Training."

Our machine gunners at last obtained guns. Our bombing experts taught us about fuses and detonators. "One thousand!" "Two thousand!" Even the C.O. bobbed his head in the narrow trench as the jam tins exploded. Range-finders made their appearance, and we lay prone on our "tummies" to gaze wistfully at the retreating enemy. We even learned to tie knots. In the virtue of a good knot was to depend the safety of the army when it reached the Rhine.

Last, but not least, we dug furiously at trenches, toiling like niggers amid obstinate chalk and flint. There was another plot of ground hard by the camp, at which our hands had not toiled, but over which our legs carried us time after time as we strove to render a complete account, before the C.O., of our prowess in trench-clearing.

But work was not without its complement of play. Swindon was at hand, and Swindon was not without its possibilities. Many who had reputations lost them, and a few who had none, earned egregious distinction. The "Goddard Arms" replaced the "Dirty Bird"; and the "County Cafe" had a piano. Gilbert cashed our cheques—what more could the heart of

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the sub. desire—and Gilbert hired or sold us furniture, to the amusement of the audience at the theatre.

At length the long looked-for day arrived. The 15th Division received orders for mobilisation. Officers and men on leave were immediately recalled. All was hurry and bustle. It was to be France at last! The instructions for demobilisation after the Armistice did not create one-tenth part of the excitement which this momentous announcement aroused. On all hands it was presumed that the war would soon be relegated to its appointed place in history. One almost felt sorry for the unsuspecting Boche, who was shortly to receive a knock unparalleled in the annals of war. All manner of gear and equipment had to be issued or withdrawn. Countless details of the soldier's kit had to be inspected, and made good. Service dress clothing of a special texture had to be fitted and issued. All men going overseas with the battalions were to be measured for new boots. By a Special Order companies were to parade outside the shoemaker's shop at suitable hours on Sunday to enable the Master Shoemaker to take measurements. That worthy, who had recently joined up, was obviously a member of the Cobblers' Union, and refused to work on Sundays. Colonel Sellar was on leave for a few days at that time, but when the Second-in-Command gave the Master Shoemaker the option of a Court-martial or measuring the men's feet, the tyro bent to reason and chose the latter. "None of your d—— Trades Union tricks here, don't you know!"

Some little time before our departure the 15th

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Division was reviewed by the King on Salisbury Plain. How well the battalions looked; and how proud we all felt that here we were at last, ready for the fray, trained and equipped, with transport and all the other accessories that go to make a fighting unit. The march past was a great success, and His Majesty expressed his approval. What a change since his last inspection!

As there was a surplus of subalterns in each battalion, some had to be left behind. The selection rested with the Commanding Officer, whose verdict in such cases was on a parallel with the laws of the Medes and Persians. He issued his orders. There were no cases of suicide among the band of outcasts; but in their minds lingered a feeling that the C.O.'s power of discrimination was a minus quantity, and that he had not selected the best men. In any event, they concluded the next step would be to proceed to the Reserve Battalion; from which they hoped to be drafted to a fighting unit in the field, where a man of worth could show his mettle. But here, again, their wishes were overlooked. Behold them setting out for a remote station in Scotland, where they felt they were doomed to be interned for the duration of the war. Shortly after the battle of Loos, however, the majority of them rejoined their battalions, and "carried on" in the place of those who had become casualties in our first great fight.

Then followed the task of loading wagons, preparatory to the transport moving off. S.A.A., tools and signalling equipment, all had to be packed accord-

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ing to mobilisation instructions. Stores and officers' valises were packed on two baggage wagons which always accompanied the battalion when on the march. Great care was taken that officers' kits should not exceed the official weight, viz. 35 lbs. A meagre allowance, surely! But what could one do? Officers could not get their kits down to the prescribed weight without leaving some necessary article of clothing behind. In these circumstances, a good servant was a boon. He would pack his officer's valise so compactly that even the Quartermaster would be deceived. Each kit was scrutinised critically, but none was sent back.

On the night of the 8th of July the regimental transport left Chiseldon Camp, marched to Swindon, where it entrained, and proceeded to Southampton. All horses, vehicles, and machine guns accompanied this party. Major Gordon S. D. Forbes was in command of the 7th Battalion detachment, with 2nd Lieut. C. M. Horne as Transport Officer, and 2nd Lieut. J. Scott as Machine Gun Officer. Strength, 3 officers and 109 other ranks, including 6 A.S.C. drivers.

The detachment from the 8th Battalion was under command of Major G. M. Hannay, with Lieut. V. N. F. Surtees in charge of machine guns; and Lieut. H. F. Brigstocke as Transport Officer. Strength, 3 officers and 112 other ranks, including 4 A.S.C. drivers. These detachments embarked at Southampton the following morning, and crossed the Channel to Le Havre. After spending some hours at the Rest Camp, they entrained on the 11th for Pont-

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de-Briques, where they joined up with the Headquarters of their battalions on the 12th.

The transport has gone; the "Danglers" are dispersed; blankets have been handed in; we have paid our last visit to Swindon, and bid it good-bye; we have settled up everything—even our accounts with "Gilbert." Remains only our account with the "Boche." One sees even now that last parade. Ammunition is issued; rolls are called; and we march off by half battalions to Chiseldon Railway Station and entrain for Folkestone. Embarking during the evening of the 10th July on the S.E. & C.R. Co.'s steamer *Invicta*, and escorted by a torpedo-boat destroyer, we crossed over to Boulogne, where we disembarked, and marched to the Rest Camp at Ostroho.

The following officers proceeded to France with the 7th Battalion:—

Lieutenant-Colonel	G. de W. Verner, Commanding.
Major	G. S. D. Forbes, Senior Major.
"	B. J. B. Coulson.
"	T. A. Glenny.
Captain	M. F. B. Dennis.
"	F. R. Hutt.
"	P. Newton.
"	T. Blackburn.
Lieutenant	J. B. Waters.
"	P. L. Lethbridge, Adjutant.
"	J. D. Denniston.
"	C. B. Bird.
"	A. K. Gilmour.
2nd Lieutenant	J. M. Sellar.
"	T. A. Stewart.
"	J. Frew.

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2nd Lieutenant	J. Seafield-Grant.
”	J. Scott, Machine Gun Officer.
”	J. W. Jarvis.
”	W. Haddon.
”	J. R. Milne.
”	T. K. Newbigging.
”	J. L. S. Allan.
”	F. M. C. Tod.
”	M. W. Duirs.
”	W. G. Kerr.
”	A. J. M. Tuck.
”	M. C. de B. Young.
”	C. H. M. Horne, Transport Officer.
Lieutenant and Quartermaster	F. Hopkins.
Chaplain	Rev. T. S. Symington.

The following officers proceeded to France with the 8th Battalion:—

### *Headquarters—*

Lieutenant-Colonel	T. B. Sellar, Commanding.
Major	G. M. Hannay, Senior Major.
Captain	J. S. M'Arthur, Adjutant.
Lieutenant	V. N. F. Surtees, Machine Gun Officer.
”	H. F. Brigstocke, Transport Officer.
Lieutenant and Quartermaster	J. Goss.

Attached { Rev. E. A. Forbes, C. of E. Chaplain.  
Lieutenant S. Jackson, R.A.M.C.

### *Officers "A" Company—*

Captain	H. P. Hart.
”	H. H. Smith.
Lieutenant	C. H. Crawshaw.
2nd Lieutenant	W. G. Douglas.
”	J. R. Ardill.

### *Officers "B" Company—*

Captain	H. T. Cruickshank (Att. from 1st Batt.).
”	W. W. Home.

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2nd Lieutenant W. G. Herbertson.  
    "    C. K. Thursby-Pelham.  
    "    J. D. Brown.

### *Officers "C" Company—*

Major H. M. Forster.  
Lieutenant J. R. Learmonth.  
    "    A. F. C. Hartley.  
2nd Lieutenant H. G. Mitchell.  
    "    F. G. M'Clelland.  
    "    J. S. Wyper.

### *Officers "D" Company—*

Captain S. S. Lang.  
    "    J. P. Larkin.  
Lieutenant C. W. Stump.  
    "    W. Thomson.  
    "    P. M. Ross.  
    "    P. C. Drummond.

Lieutenant H. W. Sutherland, "A" Company, was left behind in England, to join on recovery from "septic finger."

Parade State, 8th Battalion, leaving England:—

Thirty Officers, 51 Warrant Officers, Sergeants, and Staff-Sergeants, 941 Rank and File—total, all Ranks, 1022.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BAPTISM OF FIRE.

#### LOOS.

THE silent streets of Boulogne echoed our footsteps as we marched up the hill to the camp at Ostrohove. The inhabitants did not turn out to sing "Tipperary," or to throw flowers over us, though occasionally a window was opened by some inquisitive Frenchman anxious to find the cause of so much noise at midnight. The novelty of the arrival of British troops had worn off.

We stumbled into camp where the Commanding Officer, by the aid of a lantern, addressed us briefly. Blankets, with funny holes in the centre, were issued; and French soil welcomed our tired bodies. So we were in France at last! We had come to uphold the prestige of the British Empire, and to add a page to the annals of the regiment.

Next day iron rations were issued, and we were threatened with the direst penalties if we so much as nibbled a biscuit. Such was the awe and respect in which we held the Quartermaster, that there still reposes among our most cherished possessions a dirty old bag in which are two tins and some mouldy blue objects. During the afternoon the battalions paraded



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and marched through the principal streets of the town.

One day more, and we swung out of camp towards Pont-de-Briques Railway Station, where we picked up the transport and entrained for Audricq, and thence to Zutkerque, where we had our first sample of French billets.

We remained at Zutkerque until the 15th of July. Nothing very unusual occurred here, except, perhaps, to the drums. The C.O. of the 8th Battalion did not like side drums; he preferred pipes without drums. This dislike was well known to the band, and some of the drummers, thinking to please the C.O. and incidentally to lighten their own loads, left their side drums in the billet. These were kindly collected by the Maire, and lodged in the Mairie until called for some years later.

From Zutkerque we marched to Arques, a distance of fifteen miles. The march was hot and dusty and very trying to the men, many of whom were wearing new boots of trade pattern, which played havoc with their feet.

The following day the 7th Battalion marched to Lambres, and the 8th Battalion to St Hilaire, and spent the night in billets. Next morning the march was continued through Lillers to Allouagne.

At Allouagne we remained, apparently in the meantime unwanted. In the distance we could see the glare of the Verey lights, and hear the French guns about Souchez. Inactivity bred "spy mania." A C.O.'s patrol was no uncommon occurrence. One

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officer, stung with an enthusiasm for destroying all printed matter, was nearly shot by the Scout Officer for making flares at night with "Daily Orders." At every cross-road was posted a picket with a lengthy list of motor-cars whose numbers were wanted. The Orderly Officer crept round at night on all fours, armed to the teeth with trench daggers and revolvers. Every inhabitant of the village was a possible spy; the very interpreters were regarded with suspicion. (Our friends of after days, you must forgive us!) The flickering lights of the miners, returning from their work before daybreak, called forth the whole garrison. Inactivity bred other things as well, chiefly a mania for discovering lost articles in kits. These were the days when a lost round of S.A.A. was a criminal offence, and G.H.Q. had to be informed by wire.

Orders were received for the Second-in-Command, the Machine Gun Officers and five selected senior N.C.Os. of each battalion in the Brigade to proceed to the trenches for instruction. The party left in two buses for Château des Pres, Sailly Labourse, where they were met by guides who conducted them to the trenches.

A report was received from Headquarters 46th Infantry Brigade that Major Gordon S. D. Forbes, C.M.G., D.S.O., had been seriously wounded by shell fire in the trenches on the 21st inst. A later report was received from O.C. No. 3 Field Ambulance, that Major Gordon S. D. Forbes had subsequently died of wounds and was buried at Fouquieres-les-Bethune.

Lieut.-Col. G. de W. Verner was admitted to hos-

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pital, and Major B. J. B. Coulson assumed command of the battalion. Lieut. E. Gwilt reported for duty as transport officer of the 7th Battalion.

Then came our first visit to the line! One need not dwell upon it at length. The battalions of the 46th Brigade were attached to units of the 47th London Division for instruction in trench warfare. Soon came the time for us to take over for good. Gaily we marched as a battalion with pipes and drums, from Allouagne to Houchin, where we bivouacked. Thence by platoons at 400 yards interval we crawled forward. By and by we were into half platoons at 200 yards; sections at 100 yards, and, finally, half sections at 50 yards, almost tiptoeing along the road to Mazingarbe, scarcely daring to breathe. It all seems very comical now—the Boche was some miles away. What would Fritz have thought of us then?

One could dwell lovingly upon each minor incident of trench life, so serious then, but, looking back, one treats it all now with a smile, almost forgetting the hardships, and thinking only of the little pleasantries. One sees a company of the 17th London Regiment trudging along Quality Street towards the trenches with all their worldly belongings on their backs, close under the shelter of the houses; for the centre of the street was under rifle fire. One fellow says languidly, "Roll on Berlin." Another replies, "Roll on London, I'm fed up with this."

Quality Street, so named by our soldiers because at one time there was a board stuck up at the end of it showing the quality of the coal in that district, is

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about 300 yards long, with a row of miners' cottages on either side. It was here that we received our first baptism of fire. Rifle bullets would whish along the street, and an occasional shell would drop over, although the damage done was surprisingly slight. The travelling kitchens were brought up to the end of the street farther away from the enemy, and drawn in under the shelter of the walls of the houses. The rations were cooked there and sent up to the men in the trenches. Every night after dark the transport brought up rations for the following day. At the top of the street, on the left, was the corner house, usually the Headquarters of the battalion in that sector, with the communication trench close at hand leading one to the support trenches and the firing line.

On the 10th of August the 46th Infantry Brigade moved to Maroc and took over Sectors W<sub>1</sub>, W<sub>2</sub> and W<sub>3</sub>. Three battalions occupied the front line, and one remained in reserve at Les Brebis. This tour lasted until the 25th, each battalion in turn moving back into Brigade reserve. Much work was done in the way of improving saps and communication trenches. The Brig.-Gen., 46th Infantry Brigade, by Circular Letter No. H/249, dated 27/8/15, wished to place on record his appreciation of the efforts that were made in the Brigade to keep the trenches clean and sanitary whilst occupying Sector W at Maroc. The digging and repair work carried out was most satisfactory.

During this spell in the trenches the weather was good and the casualties light. There was a great deal

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of sniping, and an occasional burst of shelling. In Sector W2 Headquarters was in a "crassier" very close to the Boche line. In the other two Sectors miners' cottages were selected for Headquarters.

The Brigade moved back to Houchin, bivouacked for one night, and then marched to Fouquereuil in Divisional Reserve. There was great difficulty in finding billets, as the area was already occupied. The 7th Battalion occupied billets in Labeuvriere.

On the last day of August we had the pleasure of meeting the 6th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers. They were marching through Fouquereuil on their way to Verquin, where they were to be billeted for the night. Work was stopped, and the 6th Battalion halted for a few minutes to allow the men to talk to one another. The 6th looked very fit.

After a week's rest the 8th Battalion moved to Mazingarbe, marching by companies to Noeux-les-Mines, and thence by half platoons, to bivouac near Saulchoy Farm. The men were most uncomfortable; heavy rain fell during the night and continued all through the next day. Working parties of 300 men by day, and 200 by night, were employed under the Royal Engineers improving communications, making advanced ammunition stores, cutting gun emplacements, improving the water supply and laying a trolley line from the R.E. store at Mazingarbe to Quality Street. The work done by the battalion was more than favourably commented on by the Divisional and Brigade Commanders and the R.E. Officer supervising the work.

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The weather having broken, steps were taken to move the battalion under cover, "A" Company and part of "B" Company being billeted in Noyelles. These billets were evidently under observation, for whilst a group of men was standing on the road a 5'9 shell dropped amongst them, killing one man and wounding eight others. Some men standing by ran to their assistance, and immediately another shell landed, wounding eight more.

On the 8th of September the battalion took over the line in Sector X2 with Headquarters in Quality Street. While they were in the trenches on this occasion an effort was made to enfilade the German trench known as Loos Redoubt.

The bomb-throwing catapult was also brought into play. The shooting appeared to be good, and it is believed that the Germans were greatly annoyed, as on the night of our departure they opened fire from the whole length of their trenches opposite X2 and Y1, with field-guns placed near their front line. We had no casualties this day—our successors were not so fortunate.

Meanwhile the 7th Battalion remained at Labeuvriere until the 7th of September, when they marched to billets at Philosophe. On the following day Headquarters and "C" and "D" Companies proceeded to billets at Mazingarbe, where Lieut.-Col. G. de W. Verner rejoined from hospital and took over command.

It now became evident that a big attack was pending, both battalions being left out of the line, the 7th

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at Mazingarbe and the 8th at Labeuvriere, where they were practising the attack and otherwise preparing for something important. On the 22nd of September the 8th Battalion was moved forward to Mazingarbe, with two companies occupying a line of trenches east of Noeux-les-Mines. It was a matter of general knowledge that an attack on the German position was intended for Saturday, the 25th of September.

The Mairie at Mazingarbe was used for storing officers' valises, men's packs and the stores of the two battalions. Billhooks, wire-cutters and entrenching tools were issued to the men, and to every platoon two yellow flags for the purpose of marking advanced positions for artillery observation. In addition, each man carried two empty sandbags. A special party was detailed to dig communicating trenches between our own front line trench and the German line, when captured. Other parties were detailed for special water duties in Quality Street; guards were placed over the water tanks, and forty N.C.Os. and men were sent to the Brigade Ammunition Store to carry up ammunition during the attack.

Only twenty officers were permitted to accompany each battalion into action, all above that number remaining behind at Mazingarbe. This was felt as a bitter disappointment by those officers selected to remain, but they had to make the best of things; their turn would come soon enough.

Two platoons of "A" and "B" Companies of the 7th Battalion had been sent to occupy a portion of

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the trenches in Sector X2 for the purpose of cutting our own wire entanglements; while a third platoon occupied the assembly trenches. The remainder of the battalion paraded in Philosophie at 8 P.M. on the 24th, and marched through the communicating trenches to the assembly trenches, where they spent the night.

That same evening the two companies of the 8th Battalion which had been occupying the trench system east of Noeux-les-Mines rejoined; and the whole battalion paraded at Mazingarbe. Marching by companies to the Bethune-Lens Road, they entered the C.T. "Northern Up." The move was by platoons in file at two minutes' interval. Reports were received at Headquarters about midnight that all had arrived at their appointed places.

And now, all being ready, we waited for daylight, wondering what was in store for us. Was this to be the last of the Boche? Everybody was in high spirits, and eager to do his best, full of confidence and hope that the next day we should be in Lille, and the German army in full flight back to the Rhine.

Gas was to be used. We prayed that the wind would blow gently and waft the noxious fumes over to Fritz. Our artillery was in position, heavy guns and field guns waiting the order to open the bombardment and pour forth such a hail of shell that nothing, we conjectured, could possibly live under it.

As far as the German troops in front of us were concerned, everything must have appeared very much the same as on any ordinary night in the



## THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

trenches. The usual sniping went on, and an occasional shell was sent over. Little did they dream what an inferno there would be in the morning, when our men were let loose among them.

At 3 A.M. the roll was called, and at 3.30 A.M. breakfast was served.

The morning broke fine but rather dull, with a very light wind blowing, variable and at times gusty. To the casual observer it was difficult to tell whether it was favourable to us or not.

### THE BATTLE OF LOOS

*(25th September 1915).*

Zero hour 5.30 A.M.

The artillery fire had now increased in volume, and had become almost deafening. Never had such a bombardment been heard before. Field guns, howitzers and heavy naval guns all directed their fire on the German first line and support trenches. The gas attack was carried out from our front for a space of forty minutes. During the first twelve minutes gas was sent over, followed by eight minutes of smoke, and again twelve minutes of gas and eight of smoke. This gas attack, so far as the 7th Battalion was concerned, was not a success. Most of our men were themselves affected by it before the Infantry attack commenced.

The 7th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers left the assembly trenches, and filed up the communication trenches till the first two platoons of "A" and "B"

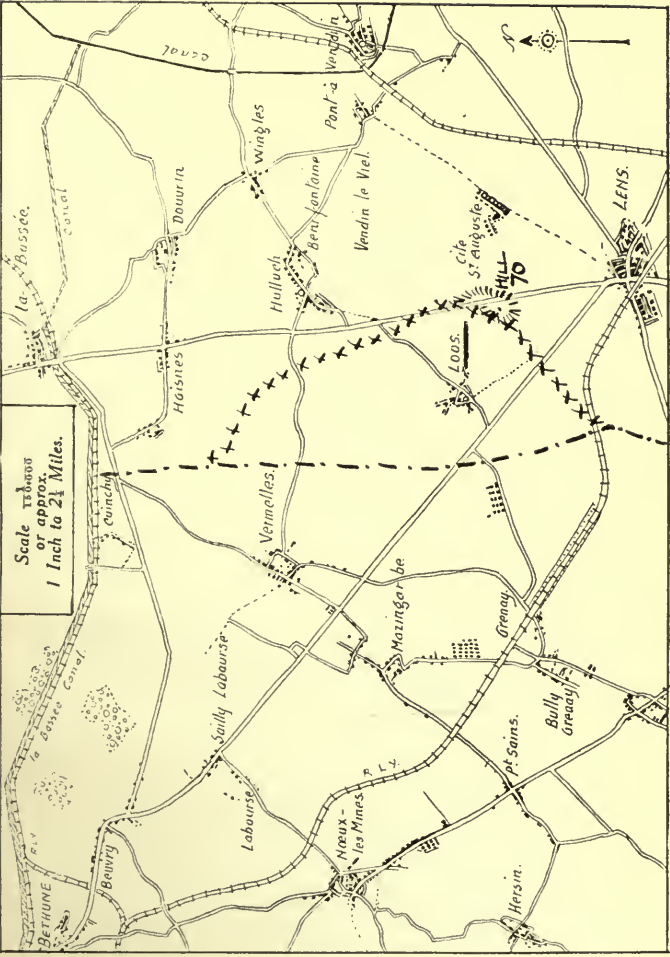
## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Companies were in the firing line. On their left were two companies of the 12th Highland Light Infantry, and on the right the 10th Scottish Rifles. Together these composed the firing line of the 46th Infantry Brigade. The support line was composed of the 8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers and two companies of the 12th Battalion Highland Light Infantry. On the left of the 46th Brigade was the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division, on the right, the 44th Infantry Brigade. The 45th Infantry Brigade was in reserve.

The first objective of the 46th Brigade was Hill 70, and of the 44th Brigade—Loos.

At 6.30 A.M. the first platoons of "A" and "B" Companies of the 7th Battalion charged across "No Man's Land," followed at distances of about 50 yards by succeeding platoons of the battalion. "B" and "D" Companies were on the left of the battalion front, and "A" and "C" Companies on the right. The battalion frontage was 420 yards.

The trenches were very slippery, and the heavy state of the ground impeded the men greatly in their advance. It was at this time that Piper Daniel Laidlaw earned his V.C. by marching up and down the parapet playing his pipes and encouraging the men onwards, until he was wounded. The casualties in the attack over the first 1000 yards were very heavy, all the officers, with the exception of three, being placed *hors de combat*. Almost unchecked the remainder of the battalion reached Hill 70 and Loos at 8.30 A.M. There was very little opposition from the Redoubt on Hill 70, and the men being excited, the



MAP OF LOOS SECTOR

— . . . — Approximate Line before 25th September, 1915  
 x x x x x " " after " " " " " "



## THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

whole line advanced over the hill for a distance of 400 yards until they were brought to a standstill in front of Cité St Laurent by very heavy machine gun and rifle fire. A party of men, roughly about 100, became detached from the battalion, and joined the attacking battalions of the 44th Brigade.

There was no sign of the 2nd Brigade on our left flank. At 11.30 A.M. it was found necessary to retire. The movement was carried out in fairly good order—though with heavy losses—to the west crest of Hill 70, where the 46th Brigade and a part of the 44th Brigade dug themselves in. The Germans occupied the Redoubt on the crest of the hill.

Meanwhile the 8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers, which was in support, had detailed two platoons from "C" Company and two from "D," as digging parties to make the two Russian saps in Sector X2 into communicating trenches to connect our front line with the German front system. This was very hard work, as two trenches, each 400 yards long, had to be dug, and as from time to time many of this party were taken away to carry ammunition to the firing line. About a dozen of these men were killed or wounded by German snipers who had concealed themselves while the attacking force had gone forward. Several others were wounded by shell fire. Corporal Eccles, who was working on the trench, hearing voices from a German dugout, the entrance to which was about 5 yards from him, went into the dugout and brought forth eight Germans, one of whom was an officer.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

The other four platoons of these companies were ordered to cross over the trenches after the 12th Battalion H.L.I., to be followed by "A" and "B" Companies. "C" Company was on the right, "D" Company on the left. The order received from the G.O.C. 46th Infantry Brigade was that, as the leading line had taken and occupied the German first line trench, the support battalion would follow the 12th H.L. Infantry. When the Headquarters of the 8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers arrived at the front line trench, advancing over the open, no trace of the other battalion, or of our own right column could be found. However, "B" and "D" Companies were hurried up and ordered to push on, as presumably the right column had advanced close upon the 12th H.L.I. Captain S. S. Lang, commanding "D" Company, was wounded about this time.

"B" Company was to have followed "D" Company in two lines of half companies; but, as it was found that the left of the firing line had not joined up with the 1st Division, "B" Company was ordered to dig trenches and place two houses in a state of defence; thus helping to prolong the line a little to the left of the 46th Brigade.

At 4 P.M. Captain H. T. Cruickshank ordered one platoon of "B" Company to skirmish a short way through the Bois Hugo. At the same time he was seen to go off by himself, with a rifle and bayonet. He was not seen again.

The two platoons of "C" Company emerged from the trenches which had been occupied by the 10th

## THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

Scottish Rifles, and followed the course of the leading troops. Major H. M. Forster was wounded early, and the half company was left to the command of 2nd Lieut. Mitchell, who took it on over Hill 70, where he was wounded and reported missing. The remnants of this company joined some men of other battalions, and remained on Hill 70 until Sunday night, when they withdrew to Loos.

"A" Company, which should have followed "C" Company down the communicating trenches, found its way blocked by crowds of wounded men; and appears, with the exception of a few men, to have taken a wrong turning, coming out later on the top of our own trench line and thereafter following with the rest of the 46th Brigade's line of attack. This company went through the outskirts of Loos and bombed several houses. Its Commander, Captain H. P. Hart, was wounded early in the day; and the company was then led by Captain H. H. Smith up to a point south of Hill 70, where this officer was killed, as was also 2nd Lieut. P. C. Drummond. The men of this company, along with men of other units, withdrew to a position on the northern edge of Hill 70.

In consequence of the movement of the battalion along the communication trenches in two separate columns, control was lost. The columns had emerged from the trenches at different places; and, instead of acting as a reserve, had early been mixed up with the firing line, and had gone on with it over Hill 70.

The four machine guns of the battalion moved across the front in rear of the Highland Light In-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

fantry, and at an early stage joined the firing line. No. 2 Section gun was out of action at the time of the first movement back to Hill 70. The broken parts were removed, and the gun speedily repaired and carried back on to Hill 70 by Sergt. Oakes. Nothing more has been heard of this Section, or of the gun.

Of the officers who moved forward with their companies (excluding the two working parties, the C.O., and the Second-in-Command) one officer, Lieut. C. H. Crawshaw, alone returned unwounded; and he would have been gassed but for the prompt action of Captain Hart, who, on his way to the dressing station after being wounded, found Crawshaw lying in a trench, dazed with gas. He lifted him from the trench to the parados, and the wind did the rest.

To those of us left behind at Mazingarbe the suspense was great. We had heard the heavy bombardment in the early morning, and received the news that the attack had been launched and was going well, and that the Boche was on the run. We had seen Padre Forbes marching through the village at the head of a mixed and motley crew of wounded, some with their arms in slings, others with heads bandaged, and all splashed with blood. Covered with mud from head to foot, but withal looking cheerful, they tramped along to the nearest Field Ambulance.

Who can forget that awful shambles in Quality Street, where thousands of wounded were lying awaiting attention, and where one solitary doctor, Captain O. Day, R.A.M.C., was working like a hero, unceasing, by day and night, to give relief to the poor



## THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

fellows? Nor should one pass without mention the work of the 8th Battalion cooks, under Sergt. Swift, who prepared and supplied hot food and tea to hundreds of walking cases on their way from the dressing stations to Mazingarbe.

Under instructions from Divisional Headquarters, the officers who had been left out of the fight proceeded, on the morning of the 26th, to Quality Street, where the digging parties, water parties, and ammunition parties were collected and held as a reserve. Later in the day they were ordered to occupy a portion of the German front line, our own front line trenches being full of gas. The position was put in a state of defence and the night passed quietly.

The 15th Division had reached its objectives; it had captured Loos, and taken Hill 70; although, unfortunately, it had afterwards been compelled to retire from the crest of that hill. But at what a cost this was accomplished! After the battle our battalions were mere skeletons. Many splendid officers and men had given their lives in a heroic effort to achieve victory, and to make a name for their regiment in this, the first fight of the new battalions.

The Divisions on the left had not been so successful in reaching their objectives, and consequently the attack was held up. The 21st Division, which should have passed through the 15th, and gone on to the second objective, was greatly handicapped by a lack of knowledge of the surrounding country, and lost its way in the darkness. It had only recently crossed the

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Channel, and had made a long march from village to village in heavy marching order through a downpour of rain. The men, wet through and tired, were not in a fit state to render the assistance required of them. This Division relieved the 15th Division on the 27th of September, and the 46th Brigade was ordered to move to Mazingarbe. Both officers and men looked haggard and worn-out after the terrible ordeal through which they had come during the past forty-eight hours. Unshaved, dirty and unkempt, with clothing in rags, and covered with mud from head to foot, they struggled back to billets, where they cleaned themselves and rested. The 7th Battalion was billeted in the school at Mazingarbe, where Major J. C. W. Connell joined and assumed command; and the 8th Battalion occupied billets at Saulchoy Farm.

The casualties of the 7th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers in action on the 25th, 26th and 27th of September 1915 were as follows:—

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Other Ranks.</i>
Killed . . . .	7	72
Missing . . . .	3	160
Died of wounds . .	4	14
Wounded . . . .	5	410
	<u>19</u>	<u>656</u>
Total,		

During the action of the 25th, Lieut.-Col. G. de W. Verner was severely wounded, and died on the 10th of October 1915, in No. 4 General Hospital.

The casualties of the 8th Battalion K.O.S. Bor-

## THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

derers in action on the 25th, 26th and 27th of September 1915 were as follows:—

	<i>Officers.</i>	<i>Other Ranks.</i>
Killed . . . .	6	33
Missing . . . .	2	118
Died of wounds . .	1	7
Wounded . . . .	4	216
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total,	<u>13</u>	<u>374</u>

## CHAPTER III.

### TRENCH WARFARE.

ON the 29th of September the Brigade moved to Haillicourt, a mining village with very little capacity for billeting troops. The men were put into stables and outhouses; and the officers, sleeping five or six in a room, occupied garrets, lumber rooms, or any odd corner the inhabitants would give. The next day we were ordered to vacate these billets for incoming French troops, we ourselves having to make the best arrangements we could in the open. That night the rain poured in torrents and we all rushed back to our old billets for shelter. Luckily the Frenchmen did not arrive until the following morning. When we saw them stabling their horses in the sheds that had been occupied by our men, and making saddle-rooms of what had been our officers' quarters, we began to think how inhospitable the French civilians could be. The French troops just took the best rooms for billets.

On the 1st of October the Brigade was paraded for inspection by the Corps Commander, Sir Henry Rawlinson, who congratulated officers, N.C.Os. and men on their fine work during the recent offensive. In the course of his remarks he stated that he had passed nine Divisions through the 4th Corps, and that the 15th Division, if not the best, was one of the best.

## TRENCH WARFARE

Major-Gen. M'Cracken, the Divisional Commander, also complimented the units of the Brigade on the good work done. 2nd Lieut. T. K. Newbigging now took over the duties of Adjutant to 7th Battalion. The following officers joined: 2nd Lieut. W. H. Valentine to 7th Battalion, and Lieut. H. W. Sutherland to 8th Battalion.

Orders were received at 9.30 A.M. on the 3rd of October that the Brigade would move to Lillers. This order was so eagerly complied with that in less than two hours we were on the march towards what we hoped would be at least a better billeting area, but on our arrival we found that it had already its complement of troops, and that billets were scarce.

Our stay in Lillers lasted for ten days, and the time was occupied in reorganising companies and in training. In the 7th Battalion 2nd Lieut. C. H. M. Horne had assumed command of "A" Company; Captain J. B. Waters of "B" Company; 2nd Lieut. A. R. Brown of "C" Company; and Captain C. B. Bird of "D" Company. The following officers joined: 2nd Lieuts. J. K. Ballantyne, H. A. E. Buckley, F. T. Bridger, J. Wildman Lushington, V. Cowley, H. Kennedy, G. H. Charlton, C. de B. Murray, A. W. Murray, R. W. Lees, W. N. Clark, J. B. Penfold and C. E. Barrow. In the 8th Battalion the Company Commanders were: Lieut. C. H. Crawshaw, "A" Company; Lieut. H. W. Sutherland, "B" Company; Lieut. J. R. Learmonth, "C" Company; and Captain J. P. Larkin, "D" Company. The following officers joined the battalion: 2nd Lieuts. A. M'Intosh, J. H. N. M'Leod,

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F. L. Hamilton, T. H. M'Arthur, R. R. Harkus, J. H. Patrick, A. B. Lawson, N. Lee, R. Clark and G. A. Fraser.

Leave to the United Kingdom was now being granted. The period of leave was six days in each case, and places were allotted to battalions on an average of one or two per day.

The following extract from Corps Orders was promulgated on the 7th of October: "On several occasions the enemy has made use of the word 'Retire,' with the object of causing our troops to fall back. . . . In future the expression 'Retire' is not to be used either in writing messages or as a word of command in the field."

Much instructional work was carried out, especially in bombing. A Brigade Bombing School was opened at Lillers, and 2nd Lieut. J. D. Brown was selected as Instructor, with Sergt. Grant as his Assistant.

Meanwhile the Germans had made several counter-attacks in the Loos and Hohenzollern Sectors. The Guards Division had done excellent work in repelling them, but the situation appeared to be still critical, and the 46th Infantry Brigade was ordered to move forward on the 12th of October to Noeux-les-Mines, where it was billeted, in readiness to proceed to the trenches at an hour's notice. This state of suspense lasted until the 21st, when the Brigade was ordered to occupy a portion of the trenches in Sector D.

And now began that protracted spell of trench

## TRENCH WARFARE

warfare which was to last for several months, thinning our ranks and trying the endurance of our troops to the very limit. Sniping was carried on continually; mining and counter-mining, bombing, raiding and incessant shell fire were all part of our daily existence. Each side seemed to be searching for a weak spot in its opponent's defence, through which it might break. The Germans occupied the higher ground and thus held the advantage, but our men hung on in spite of the number of casualties, the losses being so great that eventually the amalgamation of the two battalions became necessary.

Troops proceeding to the trenches were ordered to pass the cross-roads at Philosophe at a stated time. Thence the way was by Vermelles, where the communication trench was entered. Vermelles! We knew that desolate village only too well! How often have we been billeted among its ruins and in its cellars! How often, passing the cross-roads at Philosophe, and the corner shop that at one time did duty for our Quartermaster's stores, we tramped along the Mazingarbe-Vermelles Road, by the empty rows of miners' cottages on either side. At the end of the row on the right stood Brigade Headquarters. Farther on lay the cemetery, a forest of wooden crosses, where perhaps more brave men sleep together than in any other corner of the world. The famous Château, where French and Germans once struggled so furiously, was at that time used as a Field Ambulance; and in its garden French and German dead lie peacefully side by side. And then into the village, turning to the

## 7/8<sup>TH</sup> KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

right, and along the road leading to what remains of the church, with roofless and hollow houses all around it, into which an occasional shell falls, knocking a little more off the walls and scattering the rubbish. The interior of the church at first sight seems only a chaotic mass of debris. Then one sees a side altar almost intact, and a large figure of Christ on the Cross, hanging on a wall, thickly studded with bullet marks, but the figure itself uninjured.

There is not a pane of glass or a whole roof in Vermelles. Horses are billeted in drawing-rooms, and soldiers make their tea under waterproof shelters outside. At the corner of the Hulluch Road, to the left, past the church, we come to "Mansion House Station," on the light railway. At that point ammunition, material and rations are loaded on light trucks, which, after dark, are pushed by hand to the various dumps, near the support line. Within easy distance of this light railway terminus, several communication trenches lead to the front system: Le Rutoire, Chapel Alley, Stansfield Road, Barts Alley, Gordon Alley, and many more.

Entering Chapel Alley, we move along in single file past the Chapel de la Consolation to the front system. Our Sector was D1. The firing line was taken over in a very bad state, and part of the work of the 7th Battalion, during this tour of duty, was to rectify it and to construct two dugouts. Intense artillery bombardment was a daily occurrence on both sides. Our artillery played effectively upon the enemy's front line, which in this Sector was approximately 250



## TRENCH WARFARE

yards distant from our front trenches, and lay behind a small crest. The British support line was the old German line, and the enemy knew it so well that his fire was extremely harassing. Most of his shells fell into the trenches, and it became necessary to move the men into our immediate support line. This was known as "The Milky Way." Its construction had been completed by the battalion.

The company in support collected and salvaged a large quantity of bandoliers of ammunition, equipment and clothing.

One of our machine guns was posted at Hairpin bend on our right, supporting the 12th Highland Light Infantry and the 10th Scottish Rifles.

On the 26th of October the battalion was relieved by the 15th Divisional Cyclists, and moved into support in the "Old British Lines." This was the cyclists' first experience in the fire trenches as infantry.

The 8th Battalion moved into the trenches G.12, A.5.4 up to, but excluding Goeben Alley. 2nd Lieuts. Brown and Lee and one section of bombers from each company occupied Point 54. Cooking was done in the trenches during this tour of duty. Water and supplies were brought up nightly on the light railway to a dump at G.10 Central.

The weather broke, and the condition of most of the trenches became very bad. This state of matters, added to the heavy artillery fire to which we were subjected, did not make our lives altogether pleasant. The artillery bombardment was more severe than any we had hitherto experienced in the trenches, and

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we can only congratulate ourselves that the casualties we suffered were not heavier. One shell landed on the top of a dugout occupied by the machine gun section, and completely demolished it, killing six men and wounding three.

Captain and Adjutant J. S. M'Arthur was wounded in the thigh while superintending the collection of salvage between the old British and the German lines.

After a trying period of eight and a half days in the fire trenches the 8th Battalion was relieved by the 12th Battalion H.L.I. and withdrew into Brigade reserve in the old British fire-line. Nothing untoward happened during the battalion's occupation of this line, though the enemy kept up a steady bombardment of the entire sector. Our artillery, throughout the whole of our tour of trench duty, maintained a lively bombardment of the enemy's trenches and of the towns in his rear.

Lieut.-Col. T. B. Sellar took over command of the 46th Brigade on the 25th of October, during the illness of Brig.-Gen. T. J. Mathieson, and Major G. M. Hannay assumed command of the battalion.

On the 1st of November the 46th Brigade was relieved in the line by the 45th Brigade, and moved back into Divisional reserve at Noeux-les-Mines.

Noeux-les-Mines is a large coal-mining centre, with streets upon streets of miners' cottages, and innumerable slag heaps round about. The ground is practically dead level, and in wet weather the water, or mud, lies about the streets until it is splashed by

## TRENCH WARFARE

the constant stream of motor-cars into the adjacent houses. It is averred that four fatigue parties industriously swept a pool of water round and round a square block of houses for several days, each party being under the impression that they were sweeping it downhill! The men found the town hopelessly dull. Practically all the public rooms which might have been used for concerts, or as recreation rooms and canteens, were monopolised by the Field Ambulances, of which there were many. Latterly things improved enormously in this direction. The R.A.M.C. were compelled to disgorge a fine hall, which was thereupon furnished as a Divisional recreation room; and another place, in which at one time the R.A.M.C. had insisted on billeting some twenty-five men at the expense of the cleanliness of two Divisions of Infantry, was fitted out as a bath-house. There was also a "Field Force Canteen" and a very popular Y.M.C.A. hut; and, of course, the Officers' Club in the main street, where one could play billiards, eat oysters and drink stout, or flirt, if so inclined, with Mademoiselle!

After seven days' rest at Noeux the Brigade once again moved forward into the line and reoccupied D Sector. Owing to inclement weather the men of the 7th Battalion had to work on night and day shifts in order to maintain the trenches in fair repair. Artillery duels with periods of intense fire took place daily. The enemy's "whiz-bangs," with "heavies" interspersed, were only too effective in knocking in several bays and causing many casualties. The precision of

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

his artillery fire was due in great measure to the good use he made of his observation balloons, which enabled him to traverse our communication trenches, "Wings Way" and "Stone Street." In view of the assiduity of the German gunners, working parties were provided every day to assist the R.E. tunnellers in making shell-proof dugouts. The enemy's snipers also showed great activity; but, on the other hand, our rifles accounted for not a few Germans, including some snipers.

On the 10th of November the 7th Battalion was relieved by the 8th Battalion and moved back into support in the old British line; and on the 16th it marched into billets at Philosophe.

The 8th Battalion employed most of its time during this tour in improving communication trenches. There were a few casualties. It then spent three days in Brigade reserve at Philosophe, and thereafter once more relieved the 7th Battalion, which had meanwhile returned to the front line. About this time the enemy's artillery became again very active. Occasionally shells appeared to be coming from behind; but probably the truth was that we were being enfiladed from the south. Patrols reported that they had encountered "trip wire," which, when touched, raised enemy rifle fire. On its return, one patrol reported that it had discovered a party of Germans working at wire, and carrying wood, evidently to make themselves comfortable in dugouts for the winter. Fire was opened. The working party disappeared and was not seen again.

## TRENCH WARFARE

The work done by patrols was most useful in enabling us to open fire as soon as the Germans attempted any operations in front of their line, so that they were compelled to remain in their trenches.

On the 19th of November the 8th Battalion returned to Noeux, its usual fate, where it again spent seven days in Divisional reserve. Meanwhile the 7th Battalion left Philosophe for Vaudricourt, a pleasant little agricultural village, near Verquin, where it spent a few days in rest.

On 20th November the men of the 8th Battalion bathed! The original order from the Divisional Staff was that this bathing should be postponed for two days, and that the 9th Gordons (Pioneer Battalion) and Divisional Headquarter troops should occupy the baths in the interval. The 8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers having just returned from the trenches might be presumed to be "lousy," whereas those others were, at least theoretically, clean. Moreover, the 8th Battalion had furnished their billets with clean straw, a luxury indeed which true soldiers might be expected to despise as sybaritic. But the Divisional Staff no doubt reckoned that the two days' interval would, in all probability, allow of much vermin being shed on the clean straw in the billets, and that the new bath-house would thus avoid contamination! Nevertheless, on the earnest representation of the Brigadier and the C.O. 8th Battalion, that the baths were meant for the men and not the men for the baths, the Divisional Staff magnani-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

mously consented to the order being rescinded, and the men bathed!

The 26th of November saw the Brigade once more occupying the front system in Sector D. This sector comprised the "Window," "Alexander Trench" and the "Kink," which was only 50 yards distant from a German bombing post. Consequently we experienced much annoyance from the enemy's hand grenades and catapult bombs. The artillery on both sides was intensely active. The firing line and "Crown Trench" were subjected to "whiz-bangs," and the support line to 5's. On one occasion when the bombardment lasted for two hours and a half, all preparations were made to resist a German attack, but it failed to develop.

The weather was abominable. Frost, thaw and rain made it most difficult to keep the trenches in order, though improvements were constantly being made. The lot of the men at this juncture was not an enviable one; some standing on the fire-step in snow and rain watching the enemy movements, others digging, bringing up rations, or carrying ammunition from the dumps to the front line; often wading through the trenches up to their knees in water, with their clothing wet through and no means of drying it.

To add to our discomforts, the enemy held the now famous Dump as an observation point, and overlooked us. His artillery fire was therefore most effective. At this time we introduced trench mortars into the sector, and these, by the damage they

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caused to the enemy, undoubtedly succeeded in drawing much artillery fire.

On the 2nd of December Lieut.-Col. J. C. W. Connell, D.S.O., handed over command of the 7th Battalion to Lieut.-Col. B. J. B. Coulson. Lieut. and Quartermaster Lord reported for duty, Lieut. and Quartermaster Hopkins having been evacuated sick to the United Kingdom.

On the 3rd of December the battalion moved into the firing line opposite the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The artillery of both sides continued their duel, the German shells dropping mainly into our support and reserve lines, except on the last day of our tour, when they fired with effect on our front line, damaging one or two bays. We gave them one night of trench mortar frightfulness, to which they replied with 5'9s. On the 7th of December we proceeded to Labourse in Divisional reserve.

One Sunday, about this time, a lecture on trench digging was given by Captain Sawyer, at which all officers except the C.O. and those in charge of Church Parades were ordered to attend. The importance of this lecture may be gauged by the fact that no officers, with those exceptions, were able to attend Church Parade, although they had been in the trenches during the two previous Sundays, and were to be in again for two Sundays more. Probably, however, owing to some confusion of ideas in their minds between Church Parades and lectures on Trenches, some of them subsequently gave their opinions about the lecture as if it had been any ordinary sermon. They

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said that they had learnt nothing from it—but whether this was due to the gallant lecturer's having under-estimated or over-estimated their intelligence, is, and must remain, a moot point, until the next time these officers have to dig trenches.

Lieut. H. F. Brigstocke relinquished the duties of Transport Officer, and was relieved by Lieut. J. Wyper. Lieut. J. H. N. M'Leod was appointed Intelligence Officer to the 8th Battalion.

The 8th Battalion, during the spell of trench duty opposite the Hohenzollern Redoubt, had a fairly quiet time. The portion of the line occupied was new to it, and faced the Dumps (*alias* Fosse 8) and the Redoubt. In spite of the proximity of the enemy's trenches, and in spite of considerable shell fire, the casualties received in this area were very small, not even an average of one a day. We regarded that as highly satisfactory! The enemy refrained from dropping shells on our front line when it was close to his own, preferring to bump the communication and reserve trenches, which of course were more lightly held than the front line.

On the 1st of December our Doctor, Captain J. R. G. Garbutt, R.A.M.C., was killed by shell fire.

The remaining days of this tour were spent in cleaning trenches. On the 7th of December the battalion was relieved and marched to Saily Labourse, where it remained in Divisional reserve until the 13th of December. Entraining at Noeux on that date for Lillers, it marched thence to Burbure, to be in Corps rest, unless called up, for one month.



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The 7th Battalion left Labourse on the 13th, marched to Gosnay, where it billeted overnight, and the following day arrived at Burbure, and took over billets vacated by the 1/3rd Battalion London Regiment, on the high ground around the village green.

The 8th Battalion occupied the lower part of the village, which is unhealthy and crammed with middens. One remembers Orderly Room being postponed for an hour or two, on one occasion, while the proprietor of the house, a butcher, killed and dressed a pig in the passage where, on ordinary occasions, the escort and prisoners formed up, and where the Company Commanders interviewed their defaulters.

Home leave was now increased to the rate of three places, including officers, per day. Leaving billets at 7 P.M., and reporting to the A.P.M. at Lillers by 8 P.M., the men were conducted by Divisional Police to a room near the station, where they awaited the departure of a train at 2.48 A.M. to Boulogne, arriving in London that afternoon.

Captain MacGillicudy, R.A.M.C., was appointed M.O. of the 8th Battalion in place of Captain O. J. Day, R.A.M.C., who had been posted to the Battalion temporarily.

A Special Order of the day by Field-Marshal Sir John French, relinquishing command of the Expeditionary Force in France, was published. An order was also published by Sir Douglas Haig relinquishing command of the First Army. Sir John French passed through the streets of Burbure, in a closed car,

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on his way home. The troops lined the streets to give him a send-off.

On New Year's Day 1916 the battalions were entertained at a special dinner. The chief means of jollification were 1 lb. of plum pudding and a parcel from the K.O.S.B. Comforts Committee for every man, with English beer and oranges provided from the Canteen Funds.

From 5th to 7th January the units of the 15th Division took part in an exercise which was apparently intended for the instruction of the various Staffs, more than of the troops employed. The 46th Brigade marched to Estree Blanche, and billeted there. On the second day it marched about 5 miles southwards; halted for an hour and a half, while the Staff discussed the military situation; then about-turned and marched back to Estree Blanche. On the third day the Brigade returned to Burbure. A good deal of rain fell on the second and third days, and the weather was particularly cold, with a strong and biting east wind. Otherwise the troops would have enjoyed the exercise thoroughly.

The battalions marched to Lillers, and entrained for Noeux-les-Mines on the 13th of January, and from thence moved to the trenches in Tenth Avenue, and performed ordinary trench duties in the front line, in support, and in reserve, until the 27th of January—the Kaiser's birthday. Great things were expected of the Boche on that auspicious day. It was thought that he would make a special effort to accomplish something on a grandiose scale, in

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honour of the occasion. An intense bombardment was carried out by the enemy all day and night; three red rockets were fired, and our troops stood to, expecting attack. During the day there was very heavy rifle and machine gun fire, but it gradually slackened towards the evening. Capt. C. H. M. Horne and 2nd Lieut. Miller were killed; 2nd Lieut. J. B. Penfold was wounded, and died the following day.

Lieut.-Col. Coulson having been sent to hospital, Lieut.-Col. C. S. March had now taken over command of the 7th Battalion.

At this time the 16th (Irish) Division arrived in the area, and companies of its various units were attached to battalions of the 15th Division for instruction in trench warfare. Lieut. A. B. Lawson went out on patrol one night, accompanied by a private of the Connaught Rangers. They lost their bearings and remained out all night, hiding in shell holes. The morning was misty, and they were compelled to wait until about 11 o'clock before they could find the direction of our line. Unfortunately, while they were lying in a shell hole, the bald head of the Connaught man drew fire, and he was shot. Lawson returned safely.

February passed without any great event. The constant struggle of the snipers for supremacy was unabated. There were the usual bombing raids and artillery strafes; of our own artillery ammunition, two shells out of three were "duds." A carrier pigeon was seen to fly over our lines and settle in the German lines. Boche aeroplanes flew over the trenches

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at low altitudes. One in particular, early in the morning of the 19th, flew over St Elie, and circling round amid a hail of shells and machine gun fire, was eventually brought down in our lines.

Whilst the 8th Battalion was in reserve at Philosophe, a shell landed in a small room at the top of a house occupied as a billet. There were nine casualties; one man was killed outright, three subsequently died of wounds, and the remainder were wounded. The explosion was confined to this one small room, nobody in the adjoining rooms being in any way injured. There was a great strafe on at the time, and it is difficult to say what kind of shell this was, but it was thought to have been one of our own dud anti-aircraft shells.

So trench warfare continued day after day, week after week, until the 27th of March, when the 15th Division moved back into Corps Reserve. The 7th and 8th Battalions were billeted in the village of Raimbert.

Raimbert is a mining village on a high plateau, and is very healthy. There is no doubt that the men liked it much better than Burbure, and thoroughly enjoyed their month's rest. The surrounding country was magnificent, and the march to Enquin-les-Mines, where we enjoyed three days' outing on Corps manœuvres, was a pleasant change from ordinary routine work.

On re-entering the line, on the 25th of April, we found that as a result of mine warfare it was greatly altered. The enemy's snipers were keenly on the

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watch; and, unfortunately, Private Kesson, who was too careless of his own safety, was shot through the head. After this our men exercised a little more caution, and the snipers of the 8th Battalion under Lieut. Patrick seemed to obtain the ascendancy. The sniping officer undertook the preparation of snipers' posts, and made such good use of them, that the enemy was very careful not to expose himself; but during the four days in the firing line our snipers claimed one "certainty" and another man hit in the head.

With minenwerfers, rifle grenades, light artillery and "crumps," the Hun did his best to keep things lively. Heavy trench mortars of 200 lbs. weight, which he was also fond of distributing at this period, and which our soldiers called "rum-jars," were not so welcome as the kind which reached us *via* the Q.M.'s stores. On the 28th the Regimental Medical Aid Post was blown in by a "pip squeak," burying the sanitary corporal and the M.O.'s servant. Fortunately, the M.O. and his orderly were absent at the moment attending to a wounded man close by. The enemy made a vicious gas attack in the Loos and Hulluch Sectors, but as far as we were concerned, did no damage.

At 9 A.M., on the 29th of April, a mine was blown by us opposite Saps 6 and 7 and "Russian" Sap. The blowing of the mine was a purely defensive measure intended to form an elongated crater, linking up a series of some twenty other craters that had been already made between the lines, partly by our own

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mines and partly by those of the enemy. This object was accomplished without interference from the enemy, and a post was established in the long crater.

From the 25th of April to the 4th of May the 8th Battalion had one officer and thirty-four other ranks casualties.

The 8th Battalion was relieved and moved to Bethune for the remaining seven days of its rest, and was billeted in the Orphanage. Bethune is the hub of this universe. What this town meant to the troops has been sufficiently described by "Ian Hay." We had not had the good fortune to be billeted there before.

Fatigues somewhat interfered with the training of the men, and on the 11th of May the battalion returned to the trenches, occupying the right subsection of the Quarries Sector. On the afternoon of the 11th a heavy artillery bombardment was opened by the Germans on the trenches to the left of the 7th Battalion. It proved to be the prelude to an Infantry attack on the "Kink." The enemy advanced under a box barrage which was very intense. Hulluch Alley and Boyau 99 were flattened. Boyau 99, which was occupied by another regiment, was captured and held by the enemy. In vain were attempts made by counter-attacks to drive him out. The concentrated fire of 5'9s and trench mortars made that impossible.

On the 14th of May the Commanding Officer, 8th Battalion, was told to hand over his battalion to the Second-in-Command, and to report himself to the Brigadier. On arrival at Brigade Headquarters he

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was informed that, by order of the 1st Corps Commander, the Boyau 99 was to be recovered, and that the 8th Battalion was detailed to effect this. Orders were issued that the attack was to be carried out by "C" Company, supported by "A" Company. The attack was timed for 6.45 P.M.

At 5.15 P.M. our heavy artillery was ordered to direct its fire on that portion of the German line which was opposite the trench to be attacked, and along the German trenches on either side. In comparison with the three hours' German bombardment on the 11th, the fire of our heavies was insignificant; and within ten minutes of their opening fire the German guns commenced to form their barrage.

For the purpose of our bombardment our trenches were to be evacuated for about 100 yards. At 6 P.M. the trenches were to be reoccupied, the heavy artillery lifting their fire farther back, and the light artillery playing on the German front line.

"C" Company had orders to pass along "Stansfield Road" until they reached the support trench. Thence the leading half-company was to pass on to the fire trench; and, wheeling into it, was to proceed along the trench, halting at a certain distance from Boyau 98. The left half-company was to move into the support trench; and at 6.15 P.M. both parties were to move up their respective trenches, and form up along Boyau 98. They were to emerge from the trench at 6.45 P.M., when our light artillery was to lift, and fire on the trenches behind Boyau 99. Major Hannay established his Headquarters at junction of

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"Elie Avenue" and "Stansfield Road," and a telephone was set up close by.

"A" Company was to follow "C" Company, and to conform with its movements, turning off by half-companies into the support trench and the fire trench respectively.

By the time the right half of "A" Company got into the fire trench, although officers taking part in the attack had previously reconnoitred the ground, the direction of the trench was lost, and the right half of the supporting company turned up a blind sap. It must be remembered that the trenches at this time had been blown in and levelled in many places.

Punctually at 6.45 P.M. "C" Company, gallantly led by Captain C. H. Crawshaw, emerged from Boyau 98 over the top, followed by the left half of "A" Company, and later by the right half. 2nd Lieut. W. W. Henderson was in command of the left half company. Conspicuously leading his platoon was 2nd Lieut. Clark. He was seen to outstrip his men so that he reached the German line 20 or 30 yards in front of them. The distance across the open ground was about 200 yards on the right, and 150 yards on the left. The leading company had been for an hour and a half under a heavy German bombardment by guns and trench mortars; but without hesitation they dashed across the open. A report was subsequently made by an Artillery Observing Officer on the perfect manner in which the attack was carried out.

Lieut. Clark, unfortunately, met his death; and when his body was picked up it was found that he



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had already fired four chambers of his revolver, and had thrown all the bombs that he had taken with him. The loss of this gallant officer was greatly felt by all ranks. He was an exceptionally fine athlete, and an officer of great promise.

The Artillery Observing Officer stated that on the enemy side a very big German stood on the top of the parapet and hurled grenades which were passed up to him. When, however, it became clear that we were unable to take the trench, he was seen to throw down the remainder of the grenades and to take off his hat. A short time afterwards he was shot. Such is the fortune of war !

As soon as our troops emerged from Boyau 98, it was discovered that the Germans had moved up and occupied their side of our barricade. Consequently these parties had to be dealt with at the very commencement.

"C" Company penetrated into Boyau 99, but was unable to retain its hold on account of the very heavy shell and trench mortar fire. Captain Crawshaw was wounded in four places; 2nd Lieut. K.M'C. Hamilton was killed; Major Hart and 2nd Lieut. Cragg were wounded.

At 8.30 P.M. another attack was ordered. The company best placed and well together was, unfortunately, acting in reserve to the 7th Battalion and could not be spared. It was therefore necessary to take "B" Company, half of which had from an early hour that morning been occupying a part of Hulluch Alley close by Boyau 98, and had been under heavy

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artillery fire all day. The attack was ordered for 10.30 P.M., and exactly at that hour our light artillery were to put up a barrage on Boyau 99.

At the time when orders were issued, the difficulties of the operation were under-estimated. "A" Company, which had been under heavy artillery fire all day, and was now fatigued, had to be withdrawn from the firing line to the point of assembly, and this had to be done in the dark. Further, it was necessary to withdraw them on the top behind their own trench, as, in the immediate front, the ground rose towards the enemy line, viz., Crown Trench.

It was not until shortly before midnight that "B" Company was ready to emerge from Boyau 98, so the attack did not mature. About this time orders were received to consolidate the position in the two remaining hours of darkness.

The German Communique describes this small action as a hand-to-hand encounter.

All ranks behaved splendidly, and the following letter was received by 46th Infantry Brigade :—

"The G.O.C. directs me to inform you that he considers the organisation of the attack on the evening of the 14th May on Boyau 99, and the dash and gallantry with which the attack was carried out are highly creditable to Lieut.-Col. Sellar and the 8th K.O.S.B. H. KNOX, Lieut.-Col. G.S.,

15th Division, 15th May 1916."

Appended to this was a note by the Brigadier :—

"I most heartily concur."

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The casualties were five officers and eighty-five other ranks.

On the 19th of May the 7th and 8th Battalions were ordered to form a composite battalion. In this state the battalions entered the right sub-sector of Hulluch Sector. During the six days of this tour there were sixteen casualties. Three of them were caused by the explosion of a grenade. Pte. Barnes had taken off his equipment, and laid it down in the trench, when suddenly a fizzling sound was heard. He threw his coat over the equipment, but this in no way lessened the effect of the explosion of the bomb. He was severely wounded and died before reaching the Advanced Dressing Station. Two others were also wounded.

On the 27th of May the battalions were relieved by the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and proceeded to Bethune, where their amalgamation was carried out. From the 28th of May 1916 the two battalions formed the 7/8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers.

The process of amalgamation entailed a considerable amount of work in the making of many lists, and in the elimination of N.C.Os. The officers and N.C.Os. surplus to the establishment of a battalion were sent down to the Base on the 30th of May.

Each battalion had an exceedingly interesting, if comparatively short career of usefulness. The action of His Gracious Majesty in conferring on Lieut.-Col. T. B. Sellar the Companionship of the Order of St Michael and St George was regarded by the 8th Battalion as a very graceful acknowledgment of the loyal

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service it had rendered in the Field. The battalion was specially mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's despatches for the good work it had performed in the course of its separate existence.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BETHUNE AND HULLUCH.

#### MINES AND COUNTER-MINES.

THE tobacco factory at Bethune was one of the many buildings in the town taken over for the billeting of British troops. There was ample accommodation in it for a whole battalion. It was in the courtyard of this factory that we assembled after marching in from the trenches, weary and footsore, and with a certain feeling of resentment that these two splendid battalions were now to lose their separate identity. There the practical work of amalgamation took place. All were present on parade and stood to attention while the roll was called and every officer and man appointed to his place in the new unit.

Lieut.-Col. T. B. Sellar took over command of the amalgamated battalion, with Captain T. K. Newbigging as his Adjutant. The clerical work went on apace and before many hours the battalion was ready to take its place in the line.

A great deal of excitement was caused at this time by the report of a German deserter, corroborated by observations of our aviators, that there had been considerable movement behind the German lines; and that some five or six thousand troops had been seen

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to detrain and move forward. In consequence, telephone bells were constantly ringing, and the Brigade Staff were making incessant inquiries as to the battalion's preparedness for a forward move. In the midst of all this tingling one officer rang up Brigade to ask the Brigadier a riddle. What was the difference between a Hun and a Nun? The moment, one would think, was hardly well chosen. Nevertheless the Brigadier took it all in good part and gave such a brief interjectory reply as left no doubt of its accuracy.

The battalion was ordered to be ready at an hour's notice; and on the night of the 28th at 10.20 we received orders to move out to Verqueneul at once. It is pleasing to note that although pay had been issued that day, not a single case of drunkenness occurred amongst the men. This is all the more marked when one remembers that the battalion had been out for only two days after a long spell in the trenches, and that Bethune offers great facilities for enjoyment. There were estaminets for the men, with "vin blanc" in abundance; restaurants where officers could enjoy an excellent dinner; and the "Globe," where one could get a glass of very good Tourtel beer—and often did.

The parade formed up in the dark, and within an hour the battalion was on the march to Verqueneul. It remained there until the 31st of May, and then returned to Bethune. At Verqueneul it was found impossible to obtain billets on the night of our arrival. Most of the companies bivouacked by the roadside

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until the morning, when they were accommodated in farm-houses and barns.

On the 4th of June the battalion relieved the 7th Cameron Highlanders in the right sub-sector of Hohenzollern Sector, running between Boyaux 92 and 97. This 400 yards of line lay exactly opposite the Hairpin Craters; and that old friend of ours, Fosse Way, was the "up trench." Now Fosse Way led almost directly into Goeben Alley, the top end of which became very wide and shallow. The thing to do, therefore, was to trail arms and keep well bent. This was a day or two after the Battle of Jutland, and the Hun seemed rather more full of hate than usual. Our Cameron guide began to show uneasiness. The order to trail arms and to keep low had just been passed when we were spotted. What bad luck for the staunch little lot of thirty-two bombers, who were going to take over the sap-heads, to be greeted like this! Crash after crash sounded, and we hugged into every nook and cranny of old Goeben Alley. Lieut. Walmsley, who was in charge, was sitting under a thin roofing of galvanised iron and one layer of sand-bags, and felt fairly safe, so he said. To go back was not a bit of use, because just as much stuff seemed to be dropping there; and, besides, three platoons were not far behind. As we crouched down, undecided what to do, a message was heard being repeated from one to another, and then appeared a big rusty key, which was solemnly handed to Lieut. Walmsley. "From Major Dennis, the key of Mr Walmsley's wardrobe in his dugout." This little joke acted on us

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like a cocktail. We went on, and arrived to find the Camerons in a bad way, three men severely hit and two killed. Then the Major himself came along and calmed things down in that wonderful way of his. His steadying influence was always there, growing stronger and stronger throughout the battalion.

Headquarters were situated in No. 2 Cut in O.B. I, "C" and "B" Companies in the firing line, "A" Company in support, and "D" Company in reserve. The first day there were no casualties. During this tour in the trenches, from the 4th to the 20th of June, there was again a great amount of mining and counter-mining. One mine was successfully blown by us on the 6th of June in the Hairpin group of craters, opposite the right company. The Royal Engineers reported that it had done considerable damage to the enemy's galleries. The crater that was formed cut the edge of an existing crater, and was commanded by the Centre Sap, which was somewhat damaged when the Hun retaliated with his heavies. The following day the Royal Engineers reported that the mining situation under Alexander Sap was critical, and consequently arrangements were made to clear the trenches there of troops. Our men in the front line were kept in a state of suspense, expecting, at any moment, a hostile mine to explode and blow them into eternity. One was reported under and about 30 yards north of No. 6 Bombing Post. Arrangements were made to establish other bombing posts in readiness to occupy the crater, and the line was evacuated, except by the patrols which were left

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in occupation. The explosion was awaited for days, but nothing happened.

The battalion then had two days in reserve in Lancashire Trench, where there was a marvellous dugout for Battalion Headquarters, and on the 10th of June we relieved the 10/11th Highland Light Infantry in the left sub-sector, with Headquarters in Cannon Street. The H.L.I. made the interesting claim that their snipers had scored thirteen hits after one of our mines had been blown on the morning of the relief.

Constant spade work went on, in making new fire-steps, and in deepening and clearing trenches; day after day fatigue parties were employed in carrying up g——. It was nearly out! In those days we were not allowed to say "gas cylinders"; "Wallahs" was the code name. Other parties, composed mostly of miners, were detailed to assist the tunnellers in burrowing underground.

A patrol under 2nd Lieut. Ure, attempting to cut off a German for purposes of identification, moved round behind the enemy sap-head opposite the left company, but was observed and driven back by enemy machine-gun fire. Seven hostile balloons were up eyeing everything. The new bridge over Reserve Trench, near Battalion Headquarters, was evidently spotted, and was briskly shelled.

We were incessantly plagued by trench mortars and rifle grenades, and lost a number of men. 2nd Lieut. R. G. Millar had his thigh broken. Our casualties for this turn in the trenches were: five O.Rs. killed

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and died of wounds, twenty-eight O.Rs. wounded, and three O.Rs.gassed while working in a mine shaft.

During this tour a company of the 14th H.L.I. (Bantams) from the 40th Division was attached to the battalion for instruction. They were treated as a draft, one platoon being assigned to each of our companies, the men being split up among ours. Afterwards they were re-formed and acted as a fifth platoon to each company. On the completion of their instruction they rejoined their own battalion and were replaced by a company from another unit. These men were good workers, but were so very small that it was difficult to find fire-steps high enough to let them see over the top of the parapet.

On the 20th of June the battalion was relieved and moved out of the trenches by Gordon Alley and Philophe cross-roads to billets in Labourse, where it was to remain in Divisional reserve for seven days. Every night strong working parties were employed carrying stores from Clarke's Keep to Poker Street for the 170th Tunnelling Company, or digging with the 91st Company, Royal Engineers. After these extremely heavy fatigues, which left no time even for training, it is probable that the men were pleased to return to the trenches.

The 46th Brigade relieved the 44th Brigade in the Hulluch Sector on the 28th of June. The battalion occupied the left sub-sector with the 13th Royal Scots on its left. The frontage was from Devon Lane exclusive to Boyaux 93 and 94 (known at one time as Point 54) in front of the Quarries. There was only

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one sniping post in the area, and this was taken over by the sniping officer, with twenty snipers and eight scouts, but during the next few days several others were constructed ; one, on a crater-lip commanding a useful view of the crater-area around. We were now being persistently shelled with large trench mortars, light field-guns and 4'2s. On the afternoon of the 29th of June 2nd Lieut. N. M'Leod, who was accompanying Major Dennis round the line, was killed. It was with universal regret that the battalion lost an officer of such promise. He had acted as Intelligence Officer, and had been employed at 46th Brigade Headquarters. Four days after his death orders were received that he should join the Staff. Major Dennis got the full blast of the explosion of the trench mortar which killed Lieut. M'Leod, and was slightly injured by splinters.

The battalion O.P. in Devon Lane was blown in ; Corporal Webster was killed ; his assistant was buried under the rubbish, and though rescued, suffered afterwards from shell shock. It was unfortunate that trench mortars and machine guns should have been allowed to crowd round an observation post which ought to have been left as undisturbed as possible.

Every day hard work was put in to connect the sap-heads at the bases of the mine-craters and to keep the fire trench in repair, work which in this sub-sector was all the more necessary, as every day the enemy blew in any repairs that had been effected. At night listening posts, consisting of a scout and a

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sniper, were sent out in front of our wire for periods of three hours from dusk onwards. It should be understood that in trench warfare the larger the number of snipers trained and employed the more numerous are the casualties inflicted on the enemy, and the greater is the security gained by keeping him under constant observation.

An enemy sniper who had caused the men in one of our sap-heads some trouble, hitting one man and breaking four or five periscopes, was nicely fooled by the snipers of the battalion. They determined to get him. One of them went a short distance along the sap and exposed a periscope. Immediately, a rifle was seen to be aimed at it from over the enemy's parapet. The periscope was lowered. Meanwhile another of our snipers fixed a sniperscope, unseen, a few yards away, and took careful aim at the spot where the German had been observed. Again the periscope was raised, and as the enemy sniper pointed his rifle to fire, he was shot dead. On another occasion, just after dawn, our snipers saw a number of the enemy, fully equipped, emerge out of the mist that was drifting towards the front of our line. Fire was immediately opened and some of the enemy fell. The remainder sought cover in shell-holes and folds of the ground, where those of them who happened to have any part of their bodies exposed were shot. As the enemy's intentions were not clear, and as they were too close to our lines for safety, it was not deemed advisable to be lenient with them. Our men, who were keeping a sharp look-out for any movement from shell-holes,

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saw now and then what appeared to be a strange gust of mist rising from one of them, and on reflection came to the conclusion that it must be the breath of a concealed Hun. A fine sight was taken on the edge of the shell-hole; and the body rolled over. There were no more peculiar gusts. This was known as the snipers' "breath" story.

Many such tales could be told of the cunning of our snipers; of the various methods adopted for concealing their posts; of watching the shadows at the other end of an enemy loophole; and of the feeling of satisfaction when an enemy sniper was laid low.

The first fourteen days of July were spent in the Hulluch Sector. There was still a great deal of mining; artillery duels went on continually; and serious damage was done by the enemy heavy trench mortars. Captain T. L. Millar was very profuse in his remarks on the efficiency, or rather inefficiency, of the German bomb. It was, in his mature judgment, "no daamd good!" And Captain H. Sutherland would sit on the fire-step speculating on the nature and the course of the projectiles as they came singing through the air towards his trench. Eventually he was slightly wounded in the face. 2nd Lieut. B. Thursby-Pelham, who was with him at the time, was badly wounded in both legs, one being broken above the knee.

Innumerable fatigue parties and perpetual night work with the Engineer companies were beginning to have a depressing effect on our men, but the good news from the South seemed to cheer them up considerably. At 8.50 P.M., on the 8th of July, the enemy

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started a heavy bombardment on our left, and "C" Company caught the fringe of the shelling. Our guns were at first slow in retaliating, but at 9.30 P.M., when green lights were observed, they opened a heavy barrage from Hulluch Road northwards. "B" Company, which was in reserve, moved two platoons forward in support of the 10/11th H.L.I., who were expecting an attack, and sent bombing squads and an extra supply of bombs up Dudley Lane. About 10.30 P.M. the bombardment died down, the enemy having attempted no infantry action, apart from a small bombing affray at Brecon Sap.

The enemy was very quiet during the following morning and afternoon, but at 6 P.M. he blew a mine in the left company's front, totally destroying Sap 5 and about 40 yards of fire trench. Our heavy toll of casualties was due partly to the surprise of the enemy's operation, but mainly to the fact that the Tunnelling Companies were unaware of any hostile mining in that area. It was the irony of fate; for on the previous evening a tunnelling officer had reported that all our mines commanded the enemy's galleries; and that since we clearly had the upper hand, he intended to extend the operations of his section by taking up more front to the southward! The following N.C.Os. and men lie buried under Sap 5 in consequence of the explosion of this mine: Lance-Sergeant T. Blackburn, Lance-Corporal J. Slater, Privates J. Gulliver, H. Snowden, F. Suggitt, A. Tait, C. Taylor, T. Thomson, J. Tyson, J. H. Watson and M. Whewell.

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The falling debris destroyed most of Sap 4 and buried nineteen of our men. Twelve bodies were recovered by our digging parties, who, though they were under machine-gun, snipers' and trench mortar fire, worked splendidly. Four of the twelve were, unfortunately, dead. Captain S. S. Lang, commanding the company, was seriously injured in the head, arm and back. 2nd Lieut. Ure and several snipers did excellent service in keeping down the enemy's fire while our digging parties were at work. Our men toiled all through the night, and by morning had made passable a new fire trench behind the crater, had established a post on the lip, and had partly constructed a new Sap 5 to the post. Our casualties were one officer wounded, five O.Rs. killed and eleven wounded; and eleven O.Rs. who were buried in the mine debris and whose bodies were not recovered.

The following night at 10 P.M. we blew a mine near Sap 2, but no crater was formed, owing to the proximity of German shafts which formed an exit for the force of the explosion. The Royal Engineers reported the enemy at work in their own shaft five minutes before the actual blow. They had overheard one Boche saying in English: "You won't pull my b—— leg again." The Royal Engineers expressed themselves as being very satisfied with the result of the blowing of this mine.

On the 11th of July the enemy showed little activity. Their front and support lines were badly damaged by our concentrated fire. All kinds of trench mortars, rifle grenades and artillery opened

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out on them from 6 P.M. to 6.5 P.M., and again from 6.32 P.M. to 6.37 P.M. During these periods we evacuated the saps and crater-posts as they were close to the targets engaged by our artillery ; but bombing parties and snipers' patrols visited the posts to ensure that the enemy should not occupy them. Retaliation was slight.

The battalion was relieved on the 12th of July and moved back into Brigade reserve in Curly Crescent, O.B.5 and 10th Avenue. With a supreme indifference to our peace of mind the Royal Engineers had installed a mono-rail that reached its terminus in Hulluch right sub-sector close to the Headquarters of the left front company. Consequently, and to our intense annoyance, this point became an immediate target for the enemy's trench mortars and light artillery.

During the warm weather the fetid atmosphere of the dugouts so nauseated us all, that open-air shelters were constructed at Headquarters and elsewhere, in which we could sit out so long as the weather was fine, and whenever the enemy appeared to be shelling in some other direction. The Headquarters open-air mess lay in an old artillery emplacement near Curly Crescent. A path from Headquarters to the mess had been formed by opening up a disused trench which Mother Nature had so bedecked with colour that one might have thought it the entrance to a paradise. One side of the trench was gay with brilliant red poppies rising above a groundwork of yellow buttercups. By the other side, the long grass, bending over



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under the weight of its seed, was thick with tall young thistles in bloom. It was a sight of wild beauty such as no artifice could produce. What price would a gardener with a long purse not have paid to be able to create such an æsthetic triumph!

Looking back on the twelve months spent in this area, one thinks of the hardships and vicissitudes through which the battalion passed, and wonders how any creature could possibly have come through unscathed. The daily list of casualties while we occupied the line was appalling; reinforcements were sometimes slow in coming up, and battalions were thinned to mere skeletons. At one period the infantry had become so reduced in numbers that dismounted cavalymen, armed with rifles and bayonets, were sent to take a turn of duty in the trenches.

There is no doubt that the enemy held the superiority in trench warfare, whether in regard to positions, number of guns, or armaments generally. His snipers, equipped with better telescopic sights and better periscopes than ours, dominated all exposed points in our defence. At night he made use of fixed rifles, which had been aligned during daylight on gaps in our trenches where the men would have to pass: and the regular thud of bullets as they struck the parados made one hesitate before crossing these points. A Headquarters cook, carrying a camp kettle of hot soup from his cook-house to the mess dugout, a few yards along a shallow trench, was shot through the heart by a sniper. This occurred at night a long way behind our front line.

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Shrapnel and 5's were thrown indiscriminately about the front system and on back areas, and yet the German artilleryman was most methodical. He fired at very regular intervals, sometimes at our gun emplacements and sometimes at cross-roads or dumps. Vermelles, owing to the great number of our howitzers and 60-pounders in position among its ruins, came in for a deal of attention. Walking along the streets one often heard the whistle of a shell apparently right overhead, and awaited the inevitable result with curiosity, perhaps with fear. Crash!—and a shower of rubbish was scattered over the roadway. The loiterer would hasten his steps, either towards the communication trench for safety, or along the Philosophe Road, where he stood less chance of being hit. Even the riding horses had the instinct to feel something uncanny about the atmosphere of the place, as they stood, impatient and nervous, awaiting the return of their riders from the trenches; and on leaving they invariably broke into a hard trot, or a canter, to get away as quickly as possible from the danger zone.

The daily life of the officers and men in the front system was not in accordance with our ideas of civilisation. It was like the life of prehistoric days, when nobody washed or shaved, and when men burrowed underground, coming forth only to meet all kinds of unexpected dangers. No clothing might be taken off; and at all times equipment had to be worn and rifles kept close at hand, ready for any emergency, the men having their magazines charged and the officers

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always carrying their revolvers about with them. On one occasion Captain Larkin, who was showing the Brigadier round his company area, had forgotten this regulation. "I suppose you have your revolver with you," said the General. "Oh yes, sir," replied Peter, tapping the whisky flask and the pack of cards which bulged his service jacket, "I always carry it in my pocket."

Dear old Peter! One remembers the shock he got when a shell landed on the top of the sandbagged, corrugated-iron roof of the "cubby" hole in the trench, and how he adroitly prevented the roof from falling on the top of him, by holding up the front portion of it with his hands, while he made a head-long dive, in *deshabille*, forward into the trench.

Everybody did his work uncomplainingly. The officers set an example to the men by their daring and disregard of danger: leading patrols across "No Man's Land"; exposing themselves to risks with at times a flavour of foolhardiness, and rousing the spirit of emulation in the men, so that they, not to be outdone, followed willingly, and often even excelled their leaders in prowess.

Oh, that dreary winter with its long hours of darkness! The sentries standing on the fire-step, gazing over the parapet, or peeping through a loophole watching the movements of the enemy, and ready to give the alarm in case of threatened attack. The relief men huddled up together on the fire-step, trying to keep the warmth in their bodies, awaiting their turn for duty. The various working and ration parties,

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wending their way with difficulty along the endless communication trenches to their respective destinations ; the former, to dig and repair trenches, or to carry heavy boxes of ammunition from the dump to the forward area, picking their footsteps over broken duck-boards, where a false step might mean a broken ankle, or, at least, a splash up to the waist in mud—the latter, trudging along, each man carrying two or three sandbags containing bully beef and biscuits, or the welcome jar of rum, the most precious item of the ration issue, and the one to which the men looked forward most eagerly in the early hours of a cold and wet morning. Woe to the fatigue man who should lose that jar of rum !

The troops occupying the support and reserve lines were also kept busy on fatigue work throughout the night. Returning from their labours in the early morning, they would rest until "stand to," and after breakfast would be set to work in cleaning up the trenches. The afternoons were usually employed in reading or writing letters. Accommodation was better than in the front line, but withal, it was bad enough. There were always the ubiquitous mud, the small elusive foes to bodily comfort, the confinement, the monotony.

The variety of moving back into Divisional reserve at Noeux-les-Mines or Saily Labourse after an extended tour of duty in the trenches was looked upon at the outset as a great pleasure ; but as these brief periods of "rest" were filled up with rigorous training, and as the men were so often employed on work-

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ing duties—with the object, one is almost inclined to think, of preventing their having too easy a time—the prospect of a return to trench life gradually assumed brighter colours, and the next tour was faced without reluctance. Men have been punished for absenting themselves from duty in the trenches, but there is only one known case of abstention from rest. That was the case of one of our men who was so enamoured of Vermelles and its labyrinth of trenches that he remained there while the battalion spent seven days in rest, attaching himself to other units who provided him with food.

A haggard and mud-bespattered lot we were, officers and men alike, as we quitted the line for rest. The first thing to be done on reaching our billets was to turn in and enjoy a good night's sleep. The following day every one was busy cleaning equipment and clothing, and, if possible, bathing, and in a remarkably short time the battalion looked as fit and smart as ever.

The latter part of the period spent in this area was exceptionally trying for all ranks. Trench warfare had been brought to a fine art; one never knew what new and uncanny device for killing and mutilating might be encountered; gas, minenwerfers, flamenwerfers, "rum jars," rifle grenades, and high velocity shells all contributed their quota to the hellishness and horror of war.

Thank goodness, as an offset, there was the town of Bethune to welcome us ever and anon with its friendly inhabitants, its passable hotels, its crowded

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estaminets and its fine shops. It was on the 14th of July, on the evening of the day when the battalion marched in from its last tour of duty in the trenches and before its departure for the Somme, that the famous dinner party was held at the Hotel de France. The occasion was the anniversary of the birthday of Major Dennis. It was also the National Fête Day of France. The Frenchmen present were "celebrating" with much talking, drinking of wine, and acclamation, "Vive les Ecosais!", "Vive les Anglais!", "Vive la France!" No great international event ever passed off with greater éclat.

The good news of the advance on the Somme had cheered us all, and every one hoped that before long the battalion would get its chance of participating in that costly, but glorious, triumph.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SOMME.

AS the month of July wore on, it came to be known that the 15th Division had received orders to move to a new area. Though the usual secrecy concerning military movements was observed, and nobody except the Staff knew, or was supposed to know our ultimate destination, it was generally assumed to be the Somme. The way in which information was kept back, in the name of secrecy, from those who ought to have been told, was often ludicrous. The company cook and the storeman were often better informed than the company officer; the officer's servant, while preparing the morning bath, would often divulge scraps of information which would surprise his master.

The Departmental Corps were unfailing sources of information. Staff-Sergeants and Sub-Conductors became almost overbearing with the weight of the knowledge of an impending move or operation. And their friends used to benefit! Whether, as one might expect, there is a higher level of intelligence in the personnel of corps such as the Royal Army Service Corps than in the Infantry of the line, is an open question. Possibly the members of these corps are actually more intelligent, and were really able to anticipate

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the course of events; but the fact must be taken into account that they were obliged to look ahead in the matter of supplies and stores, and thus had exceptional facilities of acquiring information denied to others.

It was evident, however, that we were going on a long march, and accordingly we made every preparation. All officers' surplus kits, spare mess kit, football gear and other material which we could not carry with us, were stored in a room engaged for that purpose in a private house in Bethune. Baggage was reduced to a minimum. It is surprising how stores accumulate during a stay of some months in one district. When all our necessary worldly goods and chattels were packed on the first line transport, five or six tons of baggage had to be left behind us, the greater part of which had until then been considered absolutely essential. Two or three months later this was forwarded to us at Albert, but by that time we had again formed such an accumulation of stuff that it became a source of great annoyance to the Transport Officer and the Quartermaster.

We did not know what lay before us, but everybody welcomed a change of scene, and eagerly looked forward to the move. We had been so long in one area that a feeling of staleness was creeping over us, which could not be removed by a mere change from the Loos to the Hulluch Sector.

On the morning of the 21st of July the battalion left Bethune and marched to Marles-les-Mines, billeted there for the night, and, on the following morning,



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at 4 o'clock, continued the march to Heuchin. This village is very prettily situated in a valley, encircled by hills covered with trees; and the varied colours of the foliage made a charming picture. Excellent billets and fine weather helped to make our four days' stay exceedingly pleasant. The daytime was spent in marching and hard training; in the evening, the men sought enjoyment in the estaminets, where there was music and dancing. There might be some noise after closing time; but this was generally attributed to men of other regiments: our men always went to bed quietly and put their lights out at once. From Heuchin we marched to Ecoivres, and after resting there for one night, continued the march next day to Villers l'Hôpital. The billets in these two villages were not so good as one could have wished; the men were crowded, and accommodation for officers could hardly be procured. At Candas, which we reached on the 28th, there was a marked improvement in the men's billets; but some difficulty was still experienced in obtaining rooms for officers, owing to the circumstance that the village was already tenanted on long lease by the Equipment Section of the Royal Flying Corps. This place was noted for an excellent concrete swimming bath, made by the Royal Engineers, who were then at work on a new railway line running from Candas to Acheux. The bath, with its spring-board, floating raft and diving stairs, was keenly appreciated by the men.

On Sunday the battalion rested and attended church parades, and resumed the march on Monday

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the 31st, to Flesselles. Here we received orders to be prepared to move to our new area on the 2nd of August. Consequently the Commanding Officer, accompanied by the Lewis Gun Officer, visited the line preparatory to taking it over. These orders were afterwards cancelled, and we remained at Flesselles until the 4th of August, the days being spent in practising movements in artillery formation, rapid fire and open order drill, and in rehearsing an attack under Brigade supervision.

Our next move was to Molliens au Bois. The battalion left Flesselles at 3.30 A.M., and finished the march before breakfast. Early morning starts were found to be much the best way; the heat of the day was avoided; and the men, after cleaning up, had the remainder of the day to themselves for recreation.

On the 5th of August we arrived at Franvillers. From that point Company Commanders visited the part of the line which their respective companies were to take over. All arrangements were made in preparation for a tour of duty in the trenches. Major Dennis was ordered to the 15th Divisional Reinforcement Camp near Albert, as all Seconds-in-Command, and officers surplus to the number of twenty, were to remain there when the battalion moved into the line. Orders were received that the 46th Brigade would relieve the 70th Brigade in the Right Sub-sector—Left Sector, III Corps.

At 5.30 A.M., on the 7th of August, the battalion paraded and moved off by the cross-roads north-west of Heilly, marching along the main Amiens-Albert

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road by companies at 200 yards' interval. That Amiens-Albert road! What a mark for Boche artillery! And yet how rarely he shelled it! Occasionally he would employ his famous "cottar"—that long-range gun of very high velocity, which would land its shell on its target before the boom of the gun from behind the German lines was heard. As a general rule it made a great deal of noise and did little damage. Its bark was worse than its bite! The long tree-lined thoroughfare seems endless, as it leads up hill and down dale, across open country and over a succession of ridges, until at length it descends sharply into a hollow, and enters Albert. Through the town it goes and thence on to Bapaume—and beyond. We knew that it ran to Bapaume, but "beyond" was closed to us.

At this time the road west of Albert passed through a long series of ammunition dumps and re-filling points, innumerable camps and horse lines. On either side were packed Army Service Corps wagons, Divisional Ammunition Columns, Horse Transport of all descriptions, Ordnance Stores and Mobile Workshops. The road was entirely filled by a continual procession of vehicles, horses, and men. Great covered motor lorries, heavy tractors, staff cars, an occasional country wagon, despatch riders on motor bicycles, ambulances, artillery, columns of marching men like ourselves, motor buses, pack-horses, mounted military policemen, and others on foot, regulating the traffic as if in Piccadilly or the Strand, one stream flowing eastwards and the other west,

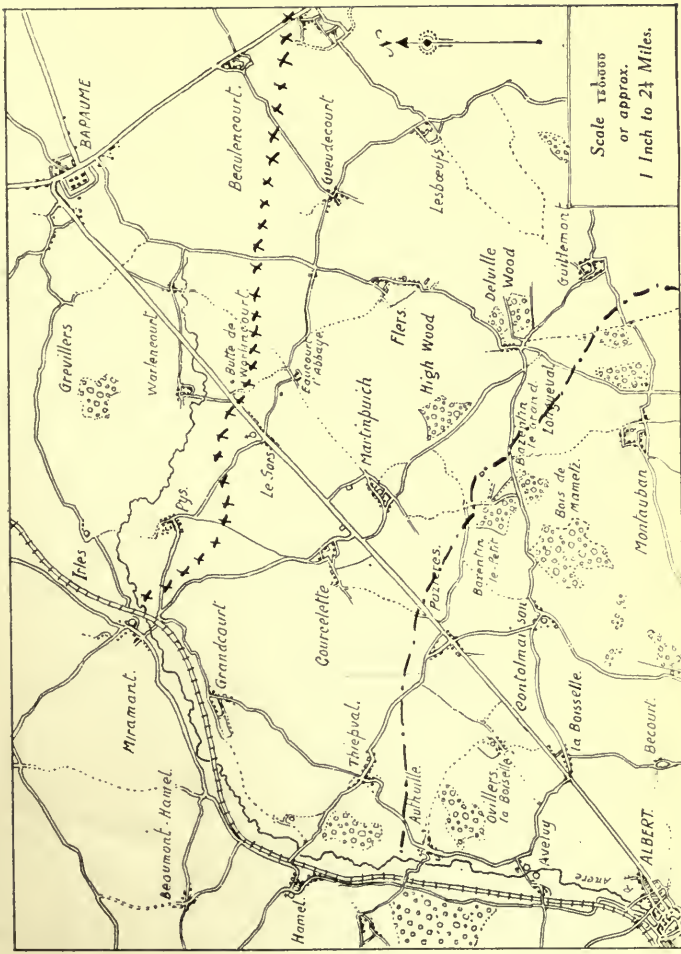
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passing by a hair's-breadth, the swift cars twisting, speeding forward, slowing down, and dashing on again, in and out in the midst of it all, in a way little short of marvellous.

We entered Albert by the Sault railway bridge. In marching through the town one wondered at the number of civilians still living there, considering that the Boche had played havoc with the place by his shell fire. The large cycle factory on the right, near the Cathedral, was merely a shell, its basement covered with bicycle parts; the red-bricked Cathedral itself was badly damaged, and the statue of the Virgin and Child was leaning over from the steeple, held there by its iron stays; some of the houses round about had their fronts knocked out; beds and other articles of furniture were hanging from the upper storeys. Great damage had been done all round the railway station. Factories appeared to have come in for special attention, as if they had been systematically destroyed, not for any military reason, but in order to cripple industry, or simply out of sheer madness. Only a very small part of all this damage that the town had suffered by shell fire had been inflicted before the great offensive on the 1st of July.

The battalion arrived at the transport field, just east of Albert and close to the Becourt Road, about 10 A.M., and halted there for the midday meal, moving off at 1 P.M. for the trenches.

The march southwards from Bethune, and the training received during the halts on the way, had made a marked effect on the efficiency of the



MAP OF SOMME SECTOR

--- Approximate Line taken over by Battalion, August 1916  
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battalion ; its *morale* was higher and its health improved. Officers and men had got rid of that harassed look caused by the strain of continual trench warfare and by the constant fear of the very ground beneath them being blown sky-high. They had been enjoying life in the open, playing football and other healthy games. An order had, indeed, been published, forbidding officers to take part in any games or sport which might involve the risk of accident such as would incapacitate them for duty. They therefore indulged in a gentle game of cricket in the beautiful orchards beside the messes. One company mess, however, thinking that there was nothing dangerous about a "bull fight," challenged the officers of another company to a mild contest. But the struggle waxed fierce and wild, and was brought to an abrupt conclusion by two officers being placed out of action, one with a fractured leg, the other with a dislocated shoulder. The other contestants waited in trepidation to see what the morrow would bring forth. There was no court-martial !

We faced the coming operations on the Somme front with a feeling of relief. The promise of open fighting in the near future held out at least a prospect of escape from the monotony of confined trench warfare. The battalion, looking very fit, marched out and headed for the front, passing through Becourt, where the old British and German lines could be seen, with La Boisselle and the famous big crater away to the left; on through Lozenge Wood, with the shell-stunted trees of Mametz Wood to the right, and to

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the rear the village of Fricourt, now nothing but a few heaps of debris. Movement from this point was by platoons at 100 yards' interval. At Lozenge Wood the battalion was met by guides from the 11th Northumberland Fusiliers who conducted the companies to their allotted places in the line. The battalion front extended from Gloster Alley on the left to the road in S. 2. b. on the right.

The next morning a party of twelve Germans, preceded by a Red Cross flag, was seen leaving the extreme left house in Martinpuich and moving across the open to their front line. As this was reported by the artillery to be a daily occurrence, Lewis guns were turned on them, and three of the party failed to reach the cover of the house.

Battalion Headquarters moved to a dugout built by our troops in Welch Alley, and orders were received to hand over the left of our line to the 12th H.L.I. The relief was finished by 3.30 P.M., our left then being on Welch Alley. In the evening casualties mounted up. A party of ours, working on Lancs. Sap on the right of our line, suffered heavily from shell fire. 2nd Lieut. Walmsley, a gallant young officer, was taking a patrol out from that area at 11 P.M., when a sniper's bullet killed him. The casualties on the 8th of August were: three killed and thirty other ranks wounded.

The morning of the 9th passed quietly with the exception of fairly heavy shelling of "C" Company's front. Another splendid officer, 2nd Lieut. J. H. Lawrie, was killed in the afternoon, several men being knocked out by the same shell. At 12 noon our



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trenches in the front system were cleared, as our heavy artillery were detailed to bombard German Switch Elbow. From 3 P.M. until 4.15 P.M. hostile artillery shelled the right of our line heavily with 5'9s. Fortunately their shooting was inaccurate in that they were firing 30 yards over the trench, and accurate in that they continued to fire on the same place. On reoccupation of the trenches, our sap at point 36 was found to have practically disappeared: several of our shells had fallen short and destroyed it. Our casualties during the day were heavy: seven other ranks killed and twenty-eight other ranks wounded.

Our snipers were kept continually busy with isolated Germans moving in the open in front of Martinpuich. Hostile sniping on our front was also noticeably keener.

The next day passed quietly. We spent the time in getting up wiring material for work at night round Lancs.Sap. Preparations were also made to push forward in the sap to a point where there was known to be an advanced barricade between us and the enemy. A party of thirty men from "D" Company went up to the right company at dusk for this work; but, owing to a heavy fire directed on our front trenches and support trenches from 9 P.M. to 10.20 P.M., the work was rather delayed. At 11 P.M. a row of stakes for wiring purposes was driven in. The centre barricade was reconnoitred and found unoccupied; and some wire in this part of the sap was removed. The Germans appeared to be very jumpy. When they saw our party in the open, they immediately commenced bombing

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from their barricade, at the same time rushing forward a small patrol. Lieut. A. W. Murray, who was in charge of the work party, collected his men, and for a few minutes there was a smart bombing duel. Lieut. Murray was hit in the face, and there were several other casualties. Work on the wire was made much too hot by hostile machine-gun fire, and had to cease.

The casualties for the day were: one killed and six other ranks wounded.

The next day the battalion was relieved in the front line by the 10th Scottish Rifles, and moved back into "C" Battalion area; with "A" and "D" Companies in the Cutting, "B" and "C" Companies in the Quadrangle, and Headquarters in Shelter Wood. A bath was made by digging a large pit, which was then lined with a sail-cloth and filled with water from the water-carts, with a dash of creosol added for hygienic reasons. Our Medical Officer, Captain Parker, did all in his power to ensure the health and comfort of the men.

The battalion remained in Brigade reserve for three days, but there was not much rest. On the 12th, six work parties, each party consisting of one officer and thirty men, carried up wiring material, sandbags, S.A.A. and bombs to Sixth Avenue, in preparation for an attack to be made that night by the 12th H.L.I. against German Switch Line. This attack was to be carried out in conjunction with an attack by the 45th Brigade on the portion of Switch Line opposite their front.

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The battalion stood to arms and awaited orders from the 46th Brigade Headquarters. One platoon of "D" Company from the Cutting, under 2nd Lieut. Ure, was detailed to carry bombs from Middle Wood to the bomb store in Assembly Trench immediately east of Welch Alley. When the attack started all communication trenches were heavily shelled, and this party suffered several casualties. After one journey had been made, and while a second load was being issued at Middle Wood, a shell landed in the midst of the party, seriously wounding 2nd Lieut. Ure. His death, on the 16th of August, deprived us of one of our most valued officers. He was a cool, fearless leader and a favourite throughout the battalion. 2nd Lieut. A. M'Intosh, who was attached to the Brigade as bombing officer, was also wounded; good old "Toffee." Meanwhile the 12th H.L.I. had been held up by machine-gun fire, and had suffered heavy casualties. At 1.30 A.M. orders were received to move up two companies to their support in order to carry out a second attack. Major Hart, with "A" Company, moved up immediately to Sixth Avenue; and "B" Company advanced, a little later, to O.B. 2 and Koyli Trench. At 2.55 A.M. the second attack was cancelled, and "A" and "B" Companies returned to their original positions.

The casualties for the day were: two other ranks killed and seventeen other ranks wounded.

On the 15th the battalion relieved the 10th Scottish Rifles. Captain A.K. Gilmour, who was in charge of a work party in Lancs. Sap, was killed by a shell.

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The casualties for the 15th and 16th were: eight other ranks killed and nineteen wounded.

During the morning of the 17th the German artillery, though active, was not violent; but with excessive work and the continual "stand to" orders that were made necessary by operations on the flanks and by the apparently hostile intentions of the enemy, the men were worn out.

On this day Regimental Sergeant-Major G. Readman was killed. He had been selected to attend a Cadet School in September 1916; and, since his nomination, had been doing duty with "A" Company as an officer, so far as duty in the trenches was concerned. He was looking over the parapet and was shot by a sniper.

During the day the 44th Brigade on our left launched a bombing attack on the Switch Line, and a company of the 10/11th H.L.I., seizing an opportunity when the enemy seemed to be well engaged, joined in the fight, finally establishing a barricade opposite the junction of 70th Avenue and Welch Alley. The enemy was not long in retaliating. At 2.40 P.M. heavy artillery fire was opened on all our lines, and continued until 3.55 P.M., when it slackened, though, even then, it remained more than normal. The shelling cut all our telephone wires, and thus many demands were made on the courage and resource of company and battalion runners, who did some very fine work both on this day and on the day following. 2nd Lieut. J. M. M'Alpin was wounded in the neck by shrapnel, but was able to walk to the dressing station.

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At 6 P.M. the enemy's artillery again became very violent, and practically 80 per cent. of our right company became casualties. There was now every indication that a counter-attack on the part of the enemy was to be expected in retaliation for our capture of part of the Switch, and at 7.30 P.M. companies were warned to be on the look-out.

In the vicinity of Battalion Headquarters things began to grow hot ; one shell blew in the entrance to the dugout and disorganised the telephone system. At 7.35 P.M., owing to the enemy's heavy barrage on Welch Alley and Scots Alley, and the serious number of casualties, the three platoons of " B " Company in O.G. 2 were ordered up to Sixth Avenue to reinforce the front line if necessary. Captain A. R. Brown, who had been acting as a Company Commander for eleven months, and was now in command of the right front company, was hit while carrying a stretcher to a wounded man, and, before he could be removed, was again struck by a shell and killed. The battalion thus lost an officer who by his coolness and level-headedness could ill be spared.

On the following morning, at 6 o'clock, the enemy, estimated at between sixty and eighty strong, attempted to attack our left company, but were fortunately seen in time, crawling up through the mist. They were quickly accounted for by our Lewis gunners and by rapid rifle fire. A prisoner taken later in the day stated that their raiding party had consisted of eighty-three men, and that, so far as he knew, he was the last of the lot. He was in a very

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excited condition when captured, and this statement of his was no doubt an exaggeration.

Our casualties were now very heavy. Besides that, the shortage of officers had become a source of grave anxiety. The number originally with the battalion had been small, and ever since had been reduced by casualties. No reinforcements were available. The companies were making the best of it with an average of three officers each, and these were being worked to death. It was therefore considered advisable to amalgamate "C" and "D" Companies, both of which had borne severe losses and were in a weak state.

Lieut. C. K. Thursby-Pelham and 2nd Lieut. G. J. Mitchell were suffering from shell shock, both having been buried by heavy calibre shells. Lieut. G. A. Fraser, who had taken over command of "B" Company when Captain Gilmour was killed, and who throughout this trying period had conducted himself in a manner which earned him the respect and admiration of all, was hit in the thigh and neck.

The day continued without any real change in the situation except that in some places the trenches were pounded into mere shell holes, and were unrecognisable.

Too much cannot be said in praise of the stretcher-bearers, who throughout the 17th and 18th were untiring in carrying and helping the wounded. Private M'Clure of "A" Company made eight journeys over the open, under heavy shell fire, carrying wounded men on his back. The casualties for these two days were: 1 officer killed and 4 wounded; 31 other ranks

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killed; 163 other ranks wounded, 4 of whom died of wounds; and 27 other ranks unaccounted for.

After this ordeal there followed a rest for ten days, in Bivouac Camp, just off the main road 1 mile west of Albert. Padre Parry, C. of E. Chaplain, had started a canteen in the transport lines, which was a great boon to the men passing through, and this was now transferred to the camp, where it was keenly appreciated by all ranks. The Padre, with the assistance of Private Jackson, went to a great deal of trouble to obtain beer from the breweries at Amiens and elsewhere in the locality, and there was a good stock of biscuits, tobacco, chocolates, tinned fruits and other delicacies.

A bath was made, similar to that in Shelter Wood, and tubs were procured for washing clothes. We erected shelters which (when it was not raining) were quite comfortable, though somewhat overcrowded. A cricket match was arranged between the A.O. Corps and the battalion, and there was many a lively game of football. Altogether it was a most enjoyable and necessary rest.

On the 29th of August the battalion returned to the line, taking over trenches in the Quadrangle, near Bazentin le Petit.

On the 3rd of September the 1st Division made one of their many efforts to take the part of High Wood which still remained in the hands of the enemy, but the effort met with little success. Our Lewis gunners in Clark's Trench and Bethel Sap were ordered to be specially alert during the attack;

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and as a result they put in some good work, when the Germans were falling back from the attacking force; and again when the Huns were caught under our fire, as they were returning to their positions in the Wood. Apparently the Germans did not relish it, for during a hostile counter-attack on Wood Lane, they were seen from Bethel Sap being urged on by their officers to the east of High Wood.

About 4 A.M. a shell burst in a shelter where Lieut. J. S. Wyper and 2nd Lieut. J. Snowie were sitting. Lieut. Wyper received a wound from which he afterwards died: 2nd Lieut. Snowie was unharmed.

On the 5th of September the whole battalion moved into Divisional reserve at Scots Redoubt. There we remained until the 14th, reorganising companies, practising "digging-in" in shell-holes, and rehearsing the assault by wave movements which were soon to be carried out actually, in an attack on Martinpuich.



## CHAPTER VI.

### MARTINPUICH.

IT would have been impossible to perform successfully the various tactics and changes of direction to be carried out by the battalion in the attack on Martinpuich, without the most careful practice beforehand. As a matter of fact we rehearsed these extraordinary manœuvres three times on the day previous to the assault. Ground very similar to the actual country to be fought over was found near the road in front of Scots Redoubt. The advantage of practising an attack with the ground marked out to represent that on which the attack is ultimately to be performed, is obviously very great. With a rehearsal our present-day troops will execute any manœuvre, however difficult. Complicated operation orders, even with verbal explanations, are mighty difficult to grasp; but an actual rehearsal of the operations enables men to understand exactly what is wanted.

At 7 P.M. on the 14th of September the battalion left Scots Redoubt for the Martinpuich sector, each platoon keeping an interval of 200 yards on the march. Every man carried two sandbags, and 10 per cent. of the men carried red flares. Picks and shovels were drawn at the Cutting in Contalmaison,

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

and a large number of men carried smoke bombs for "fumigating" German dugouts.

The 46th Brigade was to attack the south end of the village, with the 45th Brigade on its right, and the Canadian Division belonging to the Reserve army on its left. The 7/8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers was in the centre of the Brigade attack, with the 10th Battalion Scottish Rifles on the right, and the 10/11th Battalion Highland Light Infantry on the left. Each company was to attack on a platoon frontage in four waves, with the exception of "A" Company, which was in support, and was to follow in two waves.

At 4 A.M. on the 15th of September hot tea was served out to the men, and at 5 A.M. the battalion was at its post ready for the assault. "B" Company, commanded by 2nd Lieut. F. L. Hamilton, was on the right; "C" Company, commanded by 2nd Lieut. Murray, in the centre; and "D" Company, under 2nd Lieut. J. Snowie, on the left. "A" Company was in support, under 2nd Lieut. Harkus. Captain Larkin, who had recently rejoined the battalion from Etaples, where he had been employed as an instructor, was acting Second-in-Command, and had made his Headquarters at the junction of Shetland Alley and Cameron Trench. A telephone line was laid to this point.

The battalion's objectives were: (a) Enemy's Bottom Trench; (b) Sunken Road in S.W. corner of Martinpuich (where it was necessary to make a three-quarters left wheel) and the Factory Line (where another wheel, three-quarters right, had to be made

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during the attack). The difficulties of the manœuvre will be gathered from the following instructions :—

The first wave was to move forward to the final objective; the second wave, to make good Bottom Trench. The third wave was to support and join the first wave in Sunken Road; and the fourth wave was to support and join second wave in Bottom Trench. The fifth and sixth waves were to support the second and fourth near Bottom Trench; the second wave to remain in Bottom Trench to make good and to hold it; the third, to follow the first wave to the final objective; the fourth wave to move forward to Sunken Road, and then to remain there to make it good, with the assistance of the sixth; the fifth to move forward to Factory Line, and to assist in establishing a defensive line there and a strong post. The Lewis guns were with their companies.

Battalion Headquarters was in a small, lately cleared, star-shaped dugout in O.G.1, about 900 yards back. Every man carried one day's ration, two bombs and 220 rounds of ammunition. Indication screens, with khaki on the side facing the enemy, and yellow on the other side for our own artillery to see, were carried in the front line.

"Tanks" were employed for the first time, but with doubtful success. Of the five which were in action only one came through. On the morning of the 15th four derelicts were seen out of five tanks that had waddled into the fray. The most appropriate name one heard used for a tank in those days was "Armadillo."

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Our artillery bombardment had already lasted for days when, at 6.20 A.M. on the 15th, the barrage was lifted, and the infantry attack was launched. At 6.45 A.M. the leading platoons entered Sunken Road, driving the Boche before them and capturing three officers and sixty other ranks. Our casualties were slight. The first and third waves at once pushed on to Factory Line, which they reached about 7 A.M. At 7.5 A.M. the sixth wave was consolidating Sunken Road. At 7.35 A.M. O.C. "B" company reported: "Am now at extreme right limit of our final objective. Bottom Trench being consolidated. Casualties about 40 per cent. At present I think more men are necessary to consolidate final objective." At 7.45 A.M. a report was received from the Second-in-Command stating that the troops were holding the final objective.

At 8.10 A.M. a message from the 46th Brigade stated that Royal Engineers were being sent forward to assist in constructing strong posts. They did not construct anything in our line. Parties of German prisoners were organised and used as stretcher-bearers, and assisted materially in clearing the Aid Post in O.G.1.

Two patrols were sent out to the ridge in front of Factory Line, where they found a German dugout, and captured thirteen prisoners, six of whom were officers, one of them a regimental commander.

The battalion medical arrangements were admirably conducted by Captain Parker, R.A.M.C., and his stretcher-bearers. By noon not a wounded man was to be found in our area.

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Our casualties were 10 officers, and about 280 other ranks.

At 2 P.M. an order was received that the 16th Division was to establish a line north of the Martinpuich-Faucourt-L'Abbaye Road along Push Alley, so as to connect up with the 50th Brigade, whose left was Prue Alley, and with the Canadians, whose right flank was believed to be in Sunken Road, in front of the left of the 10/11th H.L.I.

That night the battalion was relieved in the front system, but remained in the trenches until the night of the 16th, when it withdrew to the Shelter Wood area.

The proceedings of these two days had been most successful. An advance of about 1400 yards from Bacon Trench had been made, and five enemy trenches had been captured, namely, Bottom Trench, Tangle Trench, Sunken Road, Factory Line and Gunpit Road.

We captured nine officers and ninety-eight other ranks; but many prisoners in twos and threes were handed over to other parties. Three German machine guns and one trench gun were taken.

The battalion spent the night of the 17th in shelters in the Dingle, and at 9.30 A.M. on the following day was relieved by the 9th York and Lancshires, and marched to Lavieville, where it arrived about noon. *En route* a party of eighty "Bantams" was picked up. They had been transferred to us from the 16th H.L.I., and had been quartered in the transport lines from the 15th inst.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Rain fell during the morning. The afternoon was spent in drying clothes and resting. We were now in Divisional rest after six weeks in the line. The following day the battalion marched to Behencourt.

When the battalion withdrew from before Martinpuich on the night of the 17th, it had suffered, during the operations, the following casualties in officers: 2nd Lieuts. Snowie, M'Farquhar, Murray, killed; 2nd Lieut. Mahood, died of wounds; 2nd Lieuts. Harkus, Holme, Middlemass, Wilson and Skinner, wounded. It moved into rest billets with twelve officers all told, and straight away began training. The battalion had become sadly disorganised by its enormous losses since its arrival in the Fourth Army. These losses were, in officer casualties, 68; in other ranks, including sick evacuated to the United Kingdom and 12 men in hospital in the area, 849. Some of the slightly wounded cases soon returned to the battalion; but the total number of casualties during that period was greatly in excess of the strength of the battalion as it marched down from Bethune and entered the Somme line. The non-commissioned officers' ranks were as much depleted as the officers' ranks. All Company Sergeant-majors were casualties, and their places were filled by two young Sergeants and two Lance-sergeants, one of whom had five days previously been promoted from Lance-corporal. It was in this condition that the battalion entered upon its period of rest and training. Officers who should have been learning platoon work were looking after two companies, and teaching bombing,

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Lewis gun, sniping, wiring and bayonet fighting. The instruction of the battalion had therefore become a matter of considerable difficulty. That the results should have been at all satisfactory was hardly to be expected. And yet in face of these disadvantages it was marvellous how quickly the battalion recovered and was ready to take its place in the line once more. How much credit was due to our energetic Commanding Officer is well known by those who had the honour to serve under him. He was untiring in his efforts to make and keep the battalion efficient, and in his care for the welfare of both officers and men.

The drafts that the battalion received were of unequal value. Men of good physique and appearance joined from the 3rd Battalion K.O.S. Borderers, the Royal Scots Territorials, the Lanarkshire Yeomanry and K.O.S. Borderers Territorials. On the other hand, the Bantams who were posted to us were unsatisfactory in physique, training and marching; so much so, that an order was received that these men were not to join Trench Mortar Batteries or Machine Gun Corps. In other words, work was not to be expected from them which might be expected from other men. When they went into prepared trenches special provision was to be made for them. In criticising the utility of Bantams, one is far from disparaging small men as soldiers, for several of the best men in the battalion were of small build. Judged by their conduct, the Bantams seemed to be very young; and from the reports given of their training they

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appeared to have been changed from one Bantam Battalion to another, from Scottish Rifles to Highland Light Infantry, and so on. They also seemed to be discontented. In addition, a very large proportion of them were found unfit for anything but service in a Bantam Battalion; since, for one thing, they were unable to keep up with other men on the march. It seems regrettable that, if they were unfit for ordinary service, they were not retained in their Bantam formations, instead of being split up and divided among the Lowland regiments. The inclusion of Bantams in Highland regiments has not been heard of.

The billets at Behencourt were the best the men ever had in the Somme area. There was a great need of straw, owing to cold nights setting in; but straw could not be procured. In one company many men were sick with P.U.O. This company had the worst billet of all, the floor being very damp and cold. Blankets were not available.

The battalion worked to a time-table of courses and training which included classes for instruction in the Lewis gun, under Sergeant Burgess; in bombing under Sergeant Smallwell; in scouting and sniping under 2nd Lieut. Patrick, and in bayonet fighting under C.S.M. Wynter of the Army Gymnastic School.

On the 30th of September the following officers were doing duty with the battalion: Lieut.-Col. Sellar, Major Dennis, Captains Larkin, Frew and Newbigging; Lieuts. Brigstocke and Hamilton; 2nd Lieuts. Patrick, Rodger, Goodwin, Dickie and



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Thomson; Lieut. and Quartermaster Goss, Captain Parker, R.A.M.C., and Captain Parry, Chaplain.

On that date the battalion marched to Albert and was billeted in the Rue Carnot; it remained there until the 9th of October, and then proceeded to the Brigade reserve area at Scots Redoubt. In the early days of the Somme fighting Scots Redoubt was considered to be one of the best camps in the reserve area. It consisted of a trench system, which had formerly been the German support line. There were several commodious dugouts which could be made fairly comfortable in dry weather, and which, like all trench quarters, could be most uncomfortable when the weather was wet. The men were not compelled to remain under cover, as the camp was not under enemy observation. Indeed, they were encouraged to come out to the open, and to play football, or to roam about as they pleased. There was very little shelling on the camp; but just to the north, Sausage Valley, which was bristling with our guns, came in for a great deal of attention.

During our stay here the battalion carried on its training programme, and also supplied a number of work parties, which were employed on road-mending at Contalmaison Cutting and other places. Preparations were being made for the coming winter. Roads which were hard and serviceable in summer, in winter would become impassable, often being axle-deep in mud. Such camps as Scots Redoubt, Lozenge Wood and the Dingle, became quagmires; and new camps had to be formed. Nissen huts were erected on either

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side of the Fricourt-Contalmaison Road in order to allow of easy access by transport.

On the 11th of October 2nd Lieuts. Lambert, Laing, Kennedy, Weir and Watson joined for duty from the 4th (Res.) K.O.S. Borderers, and 2nd Lieut. Causley from the 3rd Coldstream Guards.

The battalion paraded at 6.50 P.M. on the 14th, each man carrying a large-sized entrenching tool, two sandbags and two bombs; and, with Lewis guns trundled along in hand-carts, marched to Contalmaison Villa, where it took over reserve trenches from the 13th Battalion Royal Scots. This battalion was commanded by Lieut.-Col. G. M. Hannay, our late Second-in-Command. Colonel Hannay was looking well after the strenuous times he had had, and his battalion was one of the best in the Division. He gloried in his men, and although he sometimes complained that his health was not good, and that he was getting too old for the job, he continued in his efforts to bring his battalion up to the standard of his old regiment.

The 16th of October found the battalion in the front line system, with Battalion Headquarters in 26th Avenue, "C" Company in strong posts at the north-west corner of Le Sars, and "D" Company in O.G.1. "A" and "B" Companies were in O.G.2 and Chalk Pit Trench. The men were set to work at once to deepen and improve these trenches. Towards evening there was a considerable amount of aerial activity and of shelling. The weather was now becoming very inclement, heavy rain fell, and the

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trenches became horribly sticky. The dense mist of the mornings made it necessary for companies to "stand to" for about three hours every dawn. The nights were cold, yet it was a risky matter to light fires, for the smoke would inevitably bring the enemy's artillery upon us. For that reason also it was very difficult to provide the men with hot food.

Throughout the month of October the battalion did very little duty in the front line, and had a comparatively easy time. On account of the very heavy losses in September it was necessary to allow the battalion every chance to reorganise; and, consequently, our stay in the reserve area at this period lasted for many days.

At Albert the men were comfortably billeted in empty houses. In some cases the back walls had been blown out by shell bursts; some had corners chipped off, scarcely one house was untouched by shell-fire. Windows there were none; but biscuit tins were most useful in filling the gaps.

Each company had its own area, and acted independently in regard to its interior economy. Much attention was paid to the cooking and variety of the men's food. The company travelling kitchens, drawn up under cover in a central place, ensured that the men got their food hot.

The canteen was going strong, supplying the men with cigarettes and life's other little comforts. There was a good supply of beer.

Each company ran a separate officers' mess, and so did Battalion Headquarters. The mess-rooms were

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usually fully furnished, just as they had been left, when their former tenants fled from the sound of the guns.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WINTER ON THE SOMME.

IN October 1916 the battalion held a front line sector exactly opposite the village of Le Sars on the main road from Albert to Bapaume. Our line extended approximately from the road, on the right, to a chalk pit 800 yards to the north of the road, on the left.

The surrounding country lacked any outstanding natural feature whatsoever. It was gently undulating land—typical Somme country. Very few trees were left standing, and most of the little squalid villages that once lay dotted over the country had been obliterated by the intense shell-fire of recent fighting. Our front line was on the top of a ridge, and the rather abrupt downward slope beyond it made the Hun forward trenches invisible. Behind the German front the ground rose again gradually, showing the village of Warlencourt and the famous Butte de Warlencourt only a few hundred yards clear of the battalion's right flank, and in enemy possession. Three miles away lay Bapaume. We could see the towers and larger houses of the town, and many were the speculations as to what the different buildings were, and how soon we should be able to view them at a close range. Behind our front line the ground fell

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gradually for about 500 yards. Where it began to rise again, Le Sars had once stood, but now lay battered to pieces. From that point the ground sloped gradually upwards, till finally one could see, about 2 miles behind us, the Pozieres-High Wood Ridge. Thus for several miles in either direction the ground was all on the "forward slope," except in the immediate area of the front line; and, in consequence, movement by daylight was very restricted. The trenches had been knocked to pieces by shell-fire, and the few that still existed were half full of mud and water, and were more like drains than trenches.

Colonel Sellar, during a tour of inspection, was proceeding one morning about daybreak over the open a little behind Le Sars when he and his party were observed, it seemed, by an enemy "O Pip" officer. In any case, shells were thrown over, and the C.O. was hit by some splinters, one of which struck his steel helmet and caused rather a severe bruise on his head; the helmet was badly dented and undoubtedly saved his life. In addition, he received two shrapnel wounds in his left arm. When the wounds were dressed, he was able to walk to Contalmaison Château, a distance of about 4 miles. From that point he was evacuated. Private (afterwards Corporal) Parker, H.Q., stretcher-bearer, who accompanied Colonel Sellar, was rewarded for his labour by being presented at the end of the journey with the C.O.'s mackintosh, a possession which he long cherished.

The command of the battalion now passed to Cap-

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tain J. P. Larkin until Major M. F. B. Dennis returned on the 6th of November from temporary duty with the 12th H.L.I.

Although the season was becoming late for active warfare, the enemy was evidently expecting another attack, and his activity at this time was rather more than normal. We continued to work on some new trenches with a view to handing over the line in as complete a state as possible; but, owing to the sodden nature of the ground, small progress could be made. On the 30th of October the 10/11th H.L.I. arrived in the evening to relieve us; and some of us still retain vivid recollections of the thankfulness with which they were received. The Headquarters of one company were situated in the shaft of an incomplete German dugout which had been deepened only about 5 feet. The bottom of the dugout was mouldy and wet, with water trickling in from the trench above. While waiting to be relieved, we sat on the second step from the top with a small lake gradually creeping up to us, but by the time the H.L.I. arrived, we were perched on the fire-step, with waterproof sheets over our shoulders, dining off an old tin of bully beef which Private Kitts of "B" Company, a servant energetic and cheery under all conditions, had salvaged from the debris over the parapet. During the relief the enemy continued to annoy us, and made the diners' teeth rattle at least once when a shell landed only a few yards beyond the parapet. At length, after much mutual assistance out of sticky trenches and shell-holes, the battalion struggled into more comfortable

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shelters and dugouts round Martinpuich at about 2 A.M. on the 31st of October. After the blessed rum issue there was much scrubbing and cleaning up until the evening, when the 6/7th R.S.F. came to relieve us. We moved back to Lozenge Wood Camp between Fricourt and Contalmaison, arriving there about 11 P.M. The Brigade then became the Divisional reserve.

On the following day we moved still farther back into the deserted houses of Albert, and although these houses were damaged and more or less leaky, they were welcomed as palaces. The town of Albert appeared to us as the very home of civilisation. On the top of the Cathedral hung the famous figure of the Virgin at an angle of about 70 degrees and perilously near some of the battalion billets. Every day one looked up to see if it had fallen during the night. The old belief that the war would end when the Virgin came down, had a firm hold on every one.

The battalion stayed only a few days in Albert, but during that time some of the officers were able to ride over to the Casualty Clearing Station to see Colonel Sellar. He was very easily found, for he had become well known to the personnel of the hospital. In his spare time he had supervised the remaking of the road near the C.C.S. Unfortunately his evacuation to England became necessary, as the shrapnel could not be removed from his arm at the Clearing Station.

2nd Lieut. J. E. Thomson was at this time appointed Transport Officer, a post which he filled with great



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ability, and to the satisfaction of everyone concerned except, perhaps, the "young" officers always eager for an afternoon's gallop. Later he held the post of Brigade Transport Officer until the end of the War.

On the 3rd of November the battalion moved to tents at Millencourt Camp, which stood on high ground, and which might have been a pleasant enough spot in summer. But tents in a field recently ploughed are not desirable residences in the month of November. Some of the officers, however, stayed in the old farm-houses outside the camp, and an idea of the comfort which they enjoyed in these quarters may be gained from the following incident.

Three officers were sharing a certain room. There was a fearful number of rat-holes in the walls of the apartment; but if the snoring of these three particular officers would not keep away rats, nothing could. Nevertheless, on the first night, the rodents attacked officer number one, although they did not molest or even disturb the other two. In the morning the first officer related how the rats had run across his bed, and thrown things at him. He compared them, for size, with cows. The other two contented themselves with asking how much chlorinated water the victim had drunk on the previous night; but they took the precaution of putting broken glass and lime into the holes. As he was dropping off to sleep the following night number two could hear the rats literally throwing the glass in all directions. Number two seemed to have attracted most of their attentions this time. He was discovered out of bed, looking for the candle,

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by number one, who began to cast reflections on his perfect sobriety. Number three officer, still sceptical about the others' adventures, had not been disturbed; but on the following night a rat ran across his face and left a triple scratch on his forehead, where it seemed to have slipped. Then even the remainder of the mess had to believe that there were rats about.

The next move, on the 6th of November, was to Henencourt. This camp was found to be in a much worse condition than the one we had left. The camp was situated in a wood, and consisted of a number of log-huts, some without either floors or roofs. The huts were as muddy inside as out, and the whole aspect of the camp was dismal in the extreme. As the result of a complaint which was sent to Brigade, protesting against being compelled to remain under such conditions, the battalion moved back to Millencourt Camp on the same day. At Millencourt a short programme of training was carried out under the following officers:—

Musketry.	Lieut. H. F. Brigstocke and 2nd Lieut. E. O. Rodger.
Bombing.	Capt. T. L. Millar and 2nd Lieut. G. O. D. Watson.
Bayonet fighting.	Capt. J. Larkin.
Drill.	Capt. J. Frew and 2nd Lieut. Causley.
Lewis gun training.	Capt. F. L. Hamilton and 2nd Lieut. M'Kee.
Snipers and Scouts.	2nd Lieut. J. H. Patrick.

Training was continued till the 13th; the only event of importance being the inspection of the battalion by Sir Douglas Haig on the 10th, when he

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spoke to several officers and men and expressed his satisfaction with the turn-out.

On the 13th we moved farther west to Baizieux, where the conditions were found to be similar to most camps in this area—filthy. All our time was spent in cleaning up the camp. Two days later the 15th Division went into Corps reserve for a well-earned rest, the battalion being accommodated in and around the two villages of Havernas and Wargnies. Billets were good; the men were distributed in private houses and barns; and it was regarded by many as one of the best times during the battalion's active service. We settled down to a period of training and reorganisation, interspersed with concerts and sports. At one of these concerts Mademoiselle de Francqueville and her brother—the son and the daughter of our host at Battalion H.Q.—provided some very popular items. Amongst ourselves, Sergeant Hay's nautical song was possibly the "star" turn.

Before we left Wargnies, to trek back nearer to the line, it was decided to invite our host and hostess to dinner. We had been using their château as Headquarters, and they had done all in their power to make our stay pleasant. The occasion was made as imposing as possible. The Pipe-major and a piper paraded, to play round the table during the meal. As the room was small, the music did not sound pianissimo; and although Monsieur gave utterance to the appreciative remark: "Quelle belle musique," his facial expression was one rather of alarm than of real enjoyment. Nevertheless, the family took a lively interest

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in the band—out of doors—and certainly enjoyed its novelty.

On the 27th of November we moved east again to billets in Warloy. While on the subject of moves, an experiment which took place in the battalion, and deserved more success than it attained, may be related. Two stretcher-bearers, well known in the battalion for their fearless work in the line, were, unfortunately, notorious for their ability to get drunk on any and every occasion out of the line. A well-known senior officer conceived the idea that, if they were given something *big* to carry, then when the battalion reached its destination, they would gladly settle down to sleep instead of making for the nearest estaminet. Accordingly, they were entrusted with the big drum; but it has to be recorded with regret that either they did not carry it far enough, or they carried it too far and made their thirst intolerable. The experiment thus fell short of complete success. The billets taken over in Warloy were good, and the few days at our disposal before moving forward to the line were spent in rounding off the training done at Wagnies. The Divisional Commander inspected the battalion on the 29th.

St Andrew's night was celebrated by a concert given by the battalion Sergeants, at which all the officers were present. It was most successful. There was a whisky famine at the time, but the Sergeant-Major, after a lengthy discussion with a very able P.M.C., eventually managed to obtain enough to give entire satisfaction.

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On the 1st of December we moved nearer the line (one feels inclined to write "nearer Home" here), and were put up in Nissen huts in Bécourt Wood, a short distance north-east of Albert.

For the next few days we were employed in constructing roads; and in a certain amount of reorganising, which was made necessary by the arrival of drafts from home. Our stay in Bécourt Wood proved to be perhaps the most trying time in our history. The weather was deplorable; the hardships were extreme. Routes forward to the line were reconnoitred, and everything was made ready to move forward as soon as we should be called upon to do so.

During this time Sergeant-Major Munro, who had done such gallant and efficient service with the battalion, took over the duties of R.S.M. His work as R.S.M., from that time until he was killed by shell-fire at Arras in April 1917, was one of the chief factors in the maintenance of excellent relations amongst all ranks in the battalion, and in the consequent smooth running and good discipline. It is pleasing to be able at least to write that, when we were in the Arras Sector in August 1918, his grave, although in an isolated position, was clearly marked and in good order. The move forward to the line was made on the 14th of December, when the front immediately opposite the famous Butte de Warlencourt was taken over from the 7th Worcesters of the 48th Division. The "line" was merely an irregular series of shell-holes without wire entanglement in front, and surrounded by a sea of mud and desolation.

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Communication with these posts was impossible by day; and by night it was an extremely difficult matter, as the formation of tracks, or the setting up of any signs to distinguish the posts simply led to their being "given away" to the enemy, who was ever on the alert. In spite of every difficulty a system of taking hot tea to the men in these posts was devised and continued nightly at dusk and before dawn. The tea was cooked in shelters some distance behind the line and carried forward in tins wrapped up in blankets. Every effort was made to ensure that no man should have to stay in a shell-hole for more than forty-eight hours. Small shelters were erected near the cook-houses, where the men who had been occupying shell-holes could get a change of socks, have their feet rubbed with whale-oil and their boots dried. All this was done owing to the prevalence of "trench feet," a disease which had so reduced the fighting strength of some battalions as to make them practically non-existent. Although we did not entirely escape this painful and crippling ailment, the care taken to ensure regular rubbing of feet with whale-oil, and the provision of hot meals, led to the battalion losses from this source being extremely small in comparison with those of other units.

The provision of drinking water was another serious difficulty. All the wells in the immediate vicinity had been destroyed or fouled by shell-fire; and water had to be carried by night for long distances along the duck-board tracks, where these had not been shelled or buried in the mud. The only available

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vessels for the purpose were petrol tins, and these were far from plentiful. The provision of so many auxiliary parties greatly reduced the number of men available for the cutting of new trenches; but finally short communication trenches were cut to the supporting shell-holes, which were then joined up to the forward posts by what one could hardly call a trench, but rather a covered way of approach. All this was done before the battalion left the sector.

On the 17th of December the 10/11th H.L.I. relieved us, the relief being finally reported complete by 3.15 A.M. on the 18th.

The task of getting the men who had occupied these shell-hole positions back to Pioneer Camp—a distance of about 4 miles—was no light one; but this haven of rest—a number of wooden huts in a sea of mud—was eventually reached by the last stragglers about daybreak. There are many stories of the difficulties of these trips to and from the line.

Along the duck-board paths in some of the better organised sectors was a line of posts about 3 feet high, painted with a slightly luminous paint on the side away from the enemy. These posts were intended to serve as guides should the duck-boards be drowned or destroyed by shell-fire. One night when a company was coming from the line, a man leaned back on one of the posts to support his pack for a few minutes' rest, no doubt intending to follow with the next party as it came along. The night was bitterly cold, and as the men had been in the line for some time, they were very tired. The officer with the next

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party was bringing up the rear to prevent straggling, when he noticed a man sound asleep with his pack on the post. He pulled at the man with both hands, but without result. As no tractor was available, the next thing was to find what had fixed the fellow to the ground, since he was too dazed by cold and sleep to realise what was happening. On investigation it was found that the guide-post had slipped in between his back and the pack; and dozing off, he had slid into the mud and had become a fixture to the pole. Before he could be released he had to be lifted straight upwards till his pack was clear of the post.

On another occasion two officers were bringing back a party of men who had been occupying an advanced post, and who were the last to leave. Some distance behind the line there lay across their path an old road along the top of an embankment. The men were heavily laden, and one of the officers was helping some of them to scramble over. He was standing on the top of the embankment, pulling them up one by one, and had succeeded in getting them all across except two, when a shell landed right on the embankment and exploded, with the result that the man who was about to be pulled over next, disappeared from the officer's field of vision. Nothing could be done for a few minutes except to lie on the safer side of the embankment, until the other shells, which were almost bound to follow, had arrived. After a few more shells had burst, and when things seemed quieter, one of the party crawled along the bank and scrambled over to the other side to search



## WINTER ON THE SOMME

for the two men. He found the body of one of the men; but after a search of what seemed like hours, but was really a matter of seconds, no trace of the other man could be discovered. Judging that more shells were almost due, he resolved to cross over to the other side of the embankment and get help to continue the search. On reaching the other side, what was his surprise to see the missing man sitting there having a slight wound on his arm bound up. He also had decided, at the same moment, to cross the embankment, but had done so at a different place and in the opposite direction.

On still another occasion, an officer thus addressed his men before moving back from Martinpuich on the night of a relief: "Now, you fellahs, A'm the only daamed man that kens the way back to Pioneer Camp amongst ye." By making the men realise this point at the outset, he succeeded in getting them to complete the journey as a body, for a rum issue immediately seemed to loom much nearer.

A certain well-known figure in the battalion, who was usually left out of the line to look after cookers, and who, very often, looked for and found other things (not battalion property) for which his cookers then became a convenient repository, was asked how he and his party had fared during the recent gas attack, and whether the attack had affected them very much. "Well, ye ken," said he, "yin or twae o' the mules seemed to be gassed; but aw didna pit on ma gas-mask because aw used to work in the gas-works at hame, and aw thought it wadna affect m' at a'."

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We were once serving next the men of an Irish regiment, some of whom had characteristically bored a hole in their gas-masks so that, should it be necessary for them to wear their masks for any prolonged period, they might while away the time by having a smoke. Unfortunately, before their device was discovered, a gas attack did necessitate the use of masks, and it is feared that no one will ever be able to find out what they thought of their experiment.

Every two days till the 23rd of December we changed over with the H.L.I., alternating between the sector in front of the Butte de Warlencourt and Pioneer Camp. The purpose of this was to combat as much as possible the malady of trench feet by ensuring that at least every fourth night the men had a dry place to sleep in, and that their feet were properly attended to.

Little of interest occurred during these trips. The usual shelling continued in the line, and when we were in reserve, the detested working parties were endless.

On the night of the 23rd, the 46th Brigade went into Divisional reserve; the battalion, after being relieved by the 6/7th R.S.F., moving back to Shelter Wood near Contalmaison. The best available dainties for the men's dinners on the following Christmas day were oranges and beer.

The Brigade remained only four days in reserve, and on the 27th we moved forward to relieve the 9th Black Watch in the sector close to the Bapaume Road, and exactly in front of the village of Warlencourt. We had a quiet journey into the line. The battalion

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had previously held this sector, and the men therefore knew all the "better 'oles."

We fell to the familiar work of strengthening the defences by wiring and cutting of trenches. Until the 4th of January the system of two-day trips was continued, the battalion again changing over with the H.L.I. These constant reliefs had their disadvantages, one of the most serious being that any one returning from leave or hospital had difficulty in tracing the battalion. Another drawback was that every second night was spent in marching up to or down from the line; no trench improvement work could be done; and, as the distances were great, the men who arrived in the line were very tired, and lost a whole night's sleep.

The Brigade again went into reserve on the 4th of January and remained at Acid Drop Camp till the 8th.

The line taken over on the 8th of January was directly in front of the Butte de Warlencourt. Parts of this front were not wired: there was no continuous system of trenches, merely isolated posts on both sides of the line, so that it was a very simple matter to lose one's bearings. Captain H. F. Brigstocke, who was then in command of "A" Company, observed a German wandering between two of our front posts and evidently lost. He immediately went out, accompanied by his orderly, and made the German prisoner; but, on his way back, he seemed to lose direction and moved straight towards one of our flanking posts, the sentries of which were unaware

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that any one had gone out. Captain Brigstocke was making the Hun march in front of him ; and, as the party approached our post with the prisoner leading, the sentry observed the enemy type of helmet against the skyline, and challenged. It seems that the sentry challenged twice, but possibly Captain Brigstocke and his orderly were too engrossed in watching the Hun to pay heed. On getting no reply the sentry opened fire with his Lewis gun, killing the prisoner and Captain Brigstocke and seriously wounding the orderly. Captain Brigstocke had done good work in the battalion and his death was much regretted.

During this tour in the line one of our forward posts was temporarily vacated, as the artillery intended to bombard a post in its proximity, from which the enemy were giving trouble. On reoccupying the post after the bombardment, three Germans were surprised in a shell-hole and bolted on the approach of our men. Chase was given and, after a struggle, a Hun of the 93rd Reserve Infantry regiment was captured, from whom some most valuable information was obtained. It happened that the Division was particularly anxious at this time to get information in regard to the troops opposite our sector: the capture of this man was therefore most fortunate.

The Brigade remained in this sector (with a few more inter-battalion reliefs) until the 16th of January, when it moved back into Divisional reserve at Scots Redoubt. We remained there till the 20th, when Colonel Sellar arrived back from England, fit again after the wounds received in October. He took over

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command of the battalion from Colonel Dennis, who then became Second-in-Command.

The same evening we moved forward and took over the Le Sars Sector from the 8/10th Gordons. Although approach to the sector was of unusual difficulty, the relief was completed by 7.20 P.M. This early hour must be almost a record for a night relief, as reliefs were not as a rule reported complete until about midnight, and sometimes as late as 3 or 4 A.M.

The weather was now very frosty. Life in the line was more tolerable under these atmospheric conditions than when the weather was both cold and damp; but, on the other hand, a clear frosty air invariably brought heavier artillery fire. We were relieved for the last time on the Somme front on the 24th of January, and moved back to Acid Drop South Camp in Brigade reserve; the total casualties for the four days being three killed and one wounded. On the 28th we moved into Divisional reserve in Scots Redoubt. Everyone at once began to try to clean off all the Somme mud, in preparation for the customary round of inspections in all kinds of formations, by Generals of all calibres, at all times and in divers manners, during the brief "rest" period.

On the 31st of January the 20th Australian Battalion took over the camp at Scots Redoubt, and we moved back to Albert, actually to occupy houses for the first time since the end of November. The same length of time, it is to be feared, had elapsed since the men had had an opportunity of bathing, as all the temporary apparatus in the camps had gone out of

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order. The baths were of course only of the spray variety, since water had to be economised. The pipes were frozen, and though, by sacrificing the battalion issue of coal, the bathing apparatus was thawed, the water, after being successfully heated, froze again on the floor where the men were standing. The following are extracts from the Official Battalion War Diary for January: "This intensely frosty weather began on the night of the 17/18th, and continued without a break till the end of the month. Sickness in the battalion seemed to decrease, if anything: diarrhoea abated more than any other illness. Precautions of all kinds had been taken against trench feet, the most satisfactory plan being the dipping of socks in hot whale-oil. This, however, was unfortunately forbidden, and camphor powder was dusted into the socks instead."

"Drafts of 252 O.R. were received during the month, of which one draft, from the 4th (Reserve) Battalion K.O.S.B., was exceptionally well trained. Most of the remainder were practically untrained men, and these were sent to the Divisional Reinforcement Camp for further training."

On the 4th of February we moved back into fairly comfortable billets at Warloy for a period of rest and reorganisation. The continued cold weather led to much foraging and bargaining with civilians for supplies to keep oneself warm.

A shortage of coal led to at least one amusing incident. A very fine tree was observed close to "B" Company's mess, and the enthusiastic P.M.C. of that company approached the owner with a view to prov-

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ing that the tree was of no use whatsoever, as it stood, and that the owner had much better sell it. After a lengthy discussion the Frenchman consented to accept 15 francs; and the felling was begun with great gusto. Though the tree was brought down in record time, it was obvious that none of those who achieved the feat had any pretensions to be an expert woodman, or had ever devoted any study to the "Manual of Military Engineering." Consequently no notice was taken of a perfectly inoffensive little apple tree close at hand; with the result that as the larger one crashed to the ground, the little one was borne down under it.

The owner immediately pronounced it to have been his very best bearing fruit-tree, and demanded proportionate compensation. After a further protracted discussion the price of the tree to the Company Commander was fixed at 75 francs, instead of 15 francs, the Frenchman generously waiving any claim for the heat generated by the argument, though that must have been of some value.

We remained at Warloy till the middle of February, and full use was made of the time in getting every man to realise his particular job. The battalion was largely made up of men who were new to it since the last period of training, and no chance of initiating them into battalion methods had been possible in the line.

Thus ended our service on the Somme. It was perhaps the period of greatest continued hardship in the history of the battalion—a combination of hard fighting, bad weather, frequent isolation of men in

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muddy shell-hole posts, and long relief marches. The extent of these hardships may be partially judged from the fact that the battalion proceeded to the Somme area with twenty-six officers, and that the total number of casualties among officers through death, wounds and sickness during the six months there, was eighty-seven.

We went by march route to the Arras area ; a march which, with our subsequent adventures, forms the subject-matter of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### ARRAS.

NO one felt sorry to leave the Somme area. We had suffered cold and exposure, "trench feet," and other miseries; we had done our fair share of work during one of the most trying periods of the Campaign. It was with a sense of relief that we learned that we were going into the Arras Sector, an area which was reputed to be quiet, and to be more closely in touch with civilisation than those dreary camps along the Contalmaison Road.

We left Warloy on the 13th of February, marched to Beauval, where we stayed for one night; and then on to the village of Hem; billeted there, and, on the following morning, continued the march through Bouquemaison to Rebreuve.

The battalion was not in good condition for long marches. Trench warfare plays havoc with the feet; and, besides, the men were handicapped by the heavy loads they were carrying. No provision had been made for extra transport by which the weight carried might be lessened. On these marches from one area to another a man carried all his kit on his back, besides ammunition and bombs. The Lewis gunners dragged their hand-carts, loaded with guns and ammunition, until they were almost exhausted. It

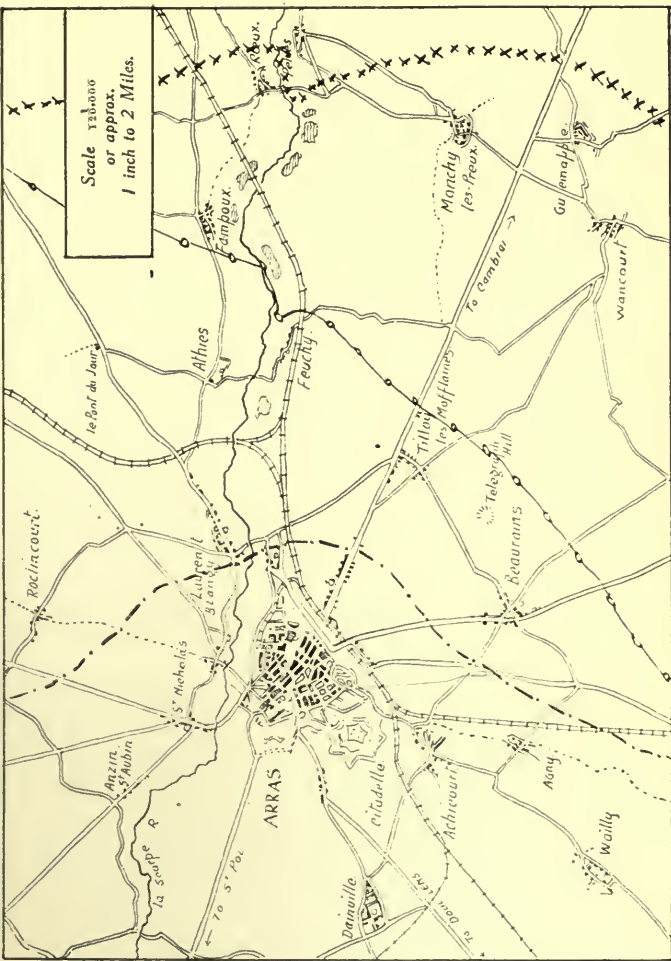
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was a heavy strain even for a strong man; to a weak man it was torture. And yet they struggled on, watching the church steeples of the villages they approached, and hoping the next would be the last. "Buck up, boys, the next steeple is ours."

The 46th Brigade was to be in Divisional reserve. The 7/8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers was billeted at Izel-les-Hameaux, where it remained until the 22nd of February. The usual training was carried out, and the companies were exercised in musketry on the range. The Corps Recreation Hut at Avesnes-le-Comte was secured for the battalion, and a very good cinematographic entertainment was given there.

On the 22nd the battalion paraded at 3 P.M. and marched, by Etrun and the main road, to Arras, arriving at the Museum, where it was to be billeted, at 8.30 P.M. All the men were in one building, while the officers had billets and messes in the deserted houses close by.

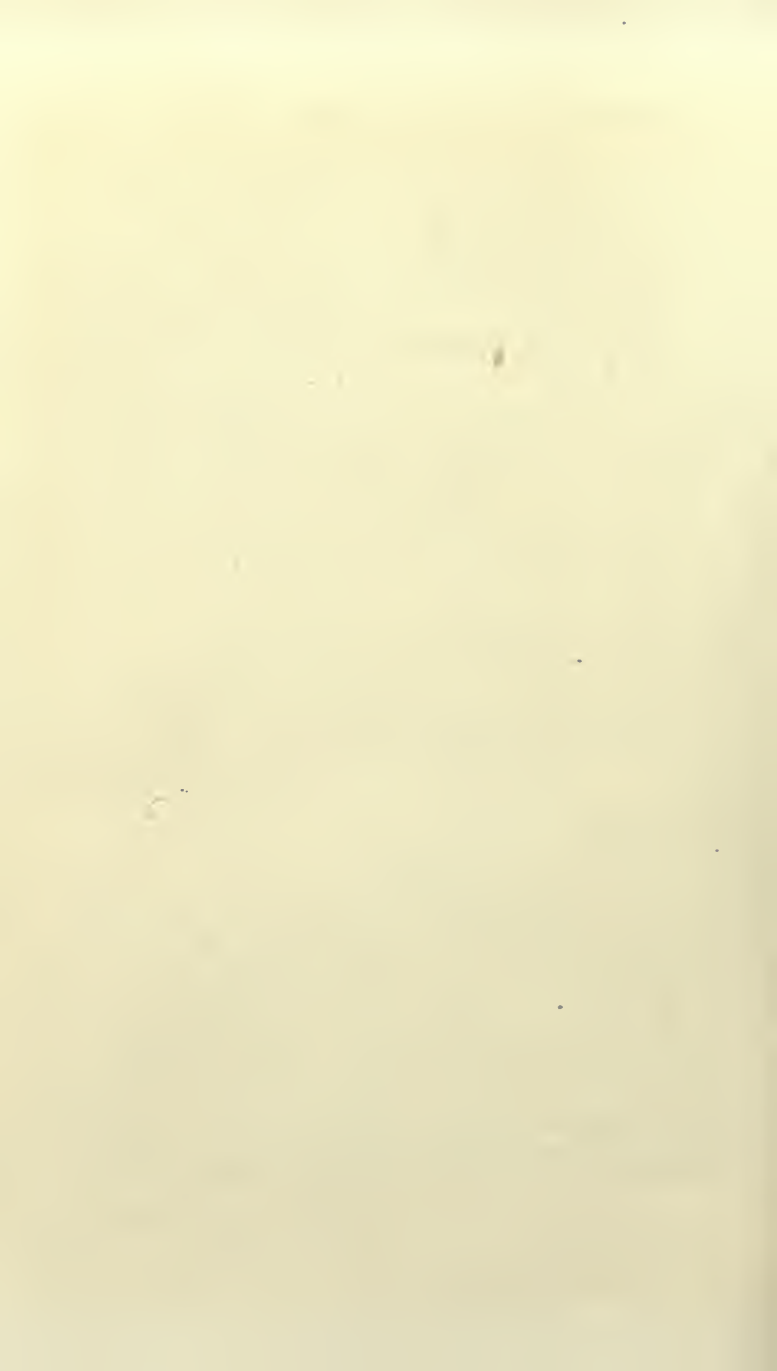
The Porte de Baudimont, a stone archway, over the main Arras-St Pol Road, always received a great deal of attention from the German guns. Shells landed in the roadway at frequent intervals, and sometimes a direct hit was obtained on the gateway, chipping off pieces of the masonry. During the preliminary bombardment, before the Arras offensive, two of our officers were leaving the town by the Porte, when the enemy dropped a "crump" just beyond it. They made a scurry for the shelter of the archway, which they reached just before the next "crump"



Scale 125,000  
or approx.  
1 inch to 2 Miles.

MAP OF ARRAS SECTOR

- -- Approximate Line before 9th April, 1917
- x x x x x " " after 24th " "
- o-o-o " " " 28th March, 1918



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burst, to find a crowd of civilians and soldiers already in occupation, those on the outer edge envying those who had been early enough for a middle position. Our heroes were determined to set a good example to the other soldiers, and to the civilians, by making a brave dash along the road at the very earliest opportunity. After a short interval another shell landed close to the gate, knocking a passing motorcyclist off his wheel. Then the shelling seemed to cease. The gallant pair made the dash, but they had run only a few paces when there was a whistle and a crash—one more “crump” had landed; and the shower of earth and stones which followed gave them reason to think that their rush had been premature. They hurried back to the shelter of the arch and to the amusement of the crowd. They observed, however, that all the shells were dropping between the Gate and “Dead Man’s Corner,” a distance of about 150 yards, beyond which lay safety. They therefore decided that after the next explosion they would immediately make another dash. This they did at the double, or quicker, receiving much encouragement from the onlookers. They succeeded in reaching the corner, breathless but safe.

Arras at this time had been badly knocked about by shell-fire. The Cathedral was practically in ruins, and very few houses had entirely escaped damage. The buildings, however, being principally of stone, were able to withstand the explosion of a shell far better than brick-built houses could have done: a shell bursting on impact merely chipped the stone

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away. For instance, an aviator's bomb dropped in a certain narrow street in the city, tore up the *pavé*, burst the main water-pipe, and threw the debris all over the surrounding buildings, but it failed to do any material damage to the houses on either side, except that it slightly bulged the walls.

The Museum stands close to the Cathedral. It seemed to have received little attention from the Boche gun-fire, probably owing to its close proximity to the more sacred building, which had evidently drawn more than its share of hate. The billets were in the cellars, but there were facilities for enjoying the fresh air, as the grounds round the building were not under enemy observation. After dark the main street, the Rue Gambetta, was a scene of animation. There was a constant stream of traffic passing through it: motor lorries carrying R.E. material, ration limbers, and artillery limbers, all making for the sectors east of Arras. A road-control man stood in the centre of the street, as cool as a London policeman, directing the traffic and, in the event of shell-fire, diverting it to a safer route; or rather, he warned Transport Officers—"I wouldn't go that way, sir, they have just landed two 5'9s right in the centre of the street."

A good number of civilians still remained in the town, and did a brisk trade after dark. Estaminets, where the men could get their favourite wine or French beer, fruit shops and photographers plied their trades, and even the *Daily Mail* had its place of business—until a shell dropped into it. The women-folk continued to clean their doorsteps every morn-

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ing. The railway station and the houses adjacent were very badly knocked about. The Petite Place was a mass of ruins, and what was once the beautiful Hotel de Ville was now a heap of rubbish, though the cellars below it were still used as billets for the troops. The Grande Place also had been badly damaged, but not altogether destroyed. The framework of its buildings was left, giving some idea of its former magnificence; and the cellars here also were used to house troops.

Gas guards were posted at various places to give alarm in case of a gas attack; and other precautions, as laid down in Arras Town Orders, had to be observed. Men were not allowed to move about in the daytime, but after dusk could roam through the town at will.

As we were about to enter a part of the line unfamiliar to us, the Commanding Officer and the Company Commanders visited the trenches occupied by the 9th Royal Fusiliers, and, on the following day, the battalion took over the line in I-3 Sector, 6th Corps. "B" Company was on the right, "C" Company in the centre, "D" Company on the left, with "A" Company in reserve. The reserve company occupied billets and had its headquarters opposite the Linseed Factory. The Battalion Headquarters were situated in the Rue St Michel, in a well-appointed house, furnished just as it had been left by its owner, with piano, easy-chairs, bath (h. and c.) and all modern conveniences — even to the shell which had passed through the roof.

Our first casualties in this sector were suffered in

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consequence of enemy retaliation upon a raid which was carried out by three platoons of the battalion on our right—the 11th Middlesex. Our right sap, which was occupied by "B" Company, was evacuated by our men and used by the raiding party as one of their jumping-off points. We reoccupied it immediately afterwards. The raid was a complete success, twenty-six prisoners being captured and the enemy dugouts damaged. But the enemy retaliated on our trenches.

One of our aeroplanes was brought down in our own lines by machine-gun fire from hostile aeroplanes, the aviator being badly wounded as a result of the fall. The Battalion Intelligence Officer, accompanied by the Brigade Intelligence Officer of the South Africans (who were on our left), reconnoitred the post opposite our extreme left, known as Island Post. Some difficulty had been experienced in locating the post north of the River Scarpe. The post, however, was located successfully as that belonging to the South African Brigade.

A raid was carried out by the South African Brigade, and once again the retaliation was received on our lines, but it did little damage.

On the morning of the 28th of February the battalion was relieved by the 10/11th H.L.I., and moved into cellars in the Grande Place. Battalion Headquarters were situated at No. 12, Rue de Jerusalem.

Five days were spent in Arras, and on the 2nd of March the Brigade moved back into Divisional reserve, the battalion being billeted in huts at Duisans. Strong working parties, consisting of three com-



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panies, were sent out daily to work on a buried cable line. In the evenings concerts were held in the Divisional Canteen.

On the 10th of March the battalion moved back to Ambrines, where tactical training for the forthcoming operations was commenced. The men, in fighting order, were manœuvred over a portion of the ground which had been allotted for training purposes, and which had been prepared by marking out "enemy positions" by means of trenches dug to a certain depth. Particular attention was paid to the proper employment of specialists, and to the trench mortars attached for the operations. Brigade schemes were carried out on the training ground near Denier. The entire training area was covered, and, when final objectives were reached, flares were lit to convey information of the positions to the contact aeroplane which participated in the manœuvres. Whilst the operations were in progress several messages were sent by our signallers to the aeroplane, and communication was maintained throughout. On one occasion the Divisional Commander was present to witness the operations. Two aeroplanes, and certain contrivances to represent tanks were included in the scheme, which was intended to show the handling of the Brigade in an unforeseen situation.

On the 17th of March the following announcement was published from a list of Italian decorations awarded in March 1917—"Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus—*Cavalier*,

"Lieutenant-Colonel T. B. Sellar, C.M.G."

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Before leaving Ambrines for Arras, the battalion was addressed by Brigadier-General Mathieson on the occasion of his leaving to take over the command of the 20th Division. The General referred to the sterling work always performed by the battalion, and said that, since he had been with us, we had always set a good example to the rest of the Brigade. He closed by wishing the battalion equal success in all future operations, and good luck and good health to all ranks. Three hearty cheers were given for the General, on the call of the Commanding Officer, who, in the name of the battalion, wished him God-speed.

Leaving Ambrines on the 18th, we marched to Arras, and took over billets in the Grande Place. Two officers and 150 other ranks were left behind as contact cases, owing to an outbreak of measles. There were no further cases, and this party, after the allotted period of isolation, rejoined the battalion in Arras.

The battalion entered the trenches on the 19th, and occupied the line immediately south of the River Scarpe. Early the following morning 2nd Lieut. Strachan and Private Henderson pushed out from the sap known as Crow's Nest, and reached a point close to the German front line. A German was seen standing in a sap-head, and, refusing to accompany the patrol, he was shot by Private Henderson. The patrol, being discovered, was forced to regain our own lines as quickly as possible. Lieut. Strachan moved along a wall running at right angles to our line. After covering 50 yards he climbed through a hole in the wall, and there found a sentry standing

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with his back to him. Lieut. Strachan picked up a brick and threw it at the sentry, hitting him on the head. The German at once put up his hands; but, on second thoughts, turned to run. Private Henderson then shot him in the head.

About 9 A.M. troops holding the line about 1000 yards to our right raided German trenches. The enemy's retaliation was feeble, and we were able to get into touch with our troops on the north of the river, and to ascertain the exact location of their forward river post. On the night of the 20th a patrol succeeded in entering the German trench opposite the left company. Coughing and talking were heard in the support line, but otherwise there was no sign of the enemy.

Colonel Sellar took over command of the 46th Brigade, Major Dennis replacing him in command of the battalion.

We were relieved in the line on the 23rd, and moved back into Brigade reserve in Arras, occupying the same billets as on the last occasion. Once again large working parties were employed on cable-burying work. On the 27th Colonel Sellar resumed command of the battalion, and Major Hart, Captain Newbigging, and 2nd Lieut. Lang rejoined from the base. After six days in Arras the battalion relieved the 10th Scottish Rifles in the line. The "support company area" cellars were partly untenable, owing to the explosion of a large trench mortar ammunition dump in the morning. All the houses in the neighbourhood were obliterated. Debris was blown to a

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distance of from 200 to 300 yards. One man of the company accommodated in the vicinity was partly buried by the collapse of a house in which he had been billeted, and was imprisoned from the morning until the afternoon. When dug out from under some beams which had crushed his legs, and whilst being placed on a stretcher, he remarked laconically, "Dundee at the double." The spirit of the men was great!

The line was very quiet, except for slow but persistent artillery fire, especially on the back area. There was very little activity in the front line. One strong patrol left our position and succeeded in entering the enemy front line 150 yards south of the river. The enemy trench was found to be blocked with wire and untenanted.

2nd Lieut. J. W. M'Intyre, while on a working party in the front line, died from heart failure.

The battalion was relieved at dusk on the 31st of March and marched to Duisans.

The beginning of April found the battalion billeted in huts at Duisans, where it remained until the 6th, practising various manœuvres in the attack, digging strong points, and holding concerts. "A" and "C" Companies gave a concert one night, and "B" and "D" the next. There was great discussion as to which was the better entertainment. In those days we ran our own shows; at a later time the Division catered for our amusement by a concert party called the "Jocks." The impromptu concert run under company arrangements was often a great success: Cor-

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poral Moss, in his sketch of "Tommy" on the march, carrying his numerous impedimenta, and being urged on by his officers with the promise that the steeple he could see in the distance was the last, used to cause much laughter. Even the officers held a concert, at which there were many stories told, some of them not quite fit for a drawing-room, but, nevertheless, amusing. What could one expect? We were sitting on biscuit boxes, or any old thing we could get for a seat, and what might happen in a few days nobody knew. Two officers of the Royal Flying Corps were present and rendered great assistance. Those who were more quietly disposed left early!

Preparations for the impending offensive were now in full swing. Ammunition dumps were formed along the roadside, where thousands of shells of all descriptions and of every calibre were stacked, ready to be rushed up to the guns. Light railways had been constructed, on which small engines were puffing away, drawing their heavy loads up to the forward area. All night, from dusk onwards, the Arras-St Pol Road was crowded with traffic.

The artillery bombardment, preliminary to the attack, commenced on the 4th, and its effect was enhanced by a discharge of gas. On the 6th, the battalion marched to Arras and occupied cellars in the Grande Place. The New Zealand Tunnelling Company had connected these cellars with the sewer through which the battalion was to pass when entering the attack. The ground east of the Grande Place is honeycombed with "caves," which were

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formed in times past by the quarrying of stone for building purposes. These caves formed admirable shelters from shell-fire, the missiles merely bouncing off the road above. But they were not healthy resorts in which to spend three days on end, for they were damp and cold; and the continuous confinement was very trying. Games were provided, so that the men might have some amusement with which to while away the time whilst waiting to move forward.

Surplus officers and a proportion of specialists, such as Lewis gunners, bombers, snipers and signallers, were left behind at Duisans to act as reinforcements when required. Major Dennis, who was sick and had been sent to hospital, persisted in his efforts to get permission to take part in the battle. He sent imploring notes, asking that a place might be found for him. Finally leaving hospital at his own risk, he came on to Duisans, and brightened up considerably when told that he had been appointed *liaison* officer to the 35th Brigade. His health was fully restored after two or three days of the most strenuous work a sick man was ever called upon to perform.

The great attack on the German trenches east of Arras was timed to take place at dawn on the 9th of April. The battalion left the cellars at 6 A.M., entered the sewer and, an hour later, passed into Bovet Trench to move up by Iron Street, Income Tax, and Blangy to the position of assembly behind Fred's Wood.

Watching the opening attack at dawn from the

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high ground west of Arras, one saw the whole line, from south of the Cambrai Road away north towards Vimy Ridge, suddenly break forth into a blaze of fire. Rockets shooting up in the air and falling with a shower of sparks, Verey lights, and flares of varied colours, seen in the half-light, reminded one of a huge pyrotechnic display. Added to this was the booming of thousands of guns, the crack of rifle fire, and the burst of enemy shells. It was a scene to make a lasting impression on the memory. The big guns well behind our line belched forth fire and destruction; closer in, the field guns and howitzers barked unceasingly, gradually lifting their barrages and carrying them on as the enemy retired; and farther forward, on enemy territory, could be seen figures in khaki moving up the opposite slopes. The attack could be followed by the sharp tiny flashes of rifle fire and the occasional heavier flash of an exploding bomb.

Apart from this, there is nothing spectacular about modern warfare—only a mad rush of men to gain a few yards of ground, and slaughter whilst they are doing so! A fierce struggle onward to the final objective, dodging shell bursts, or lying low before a hostile barrage, waiting for a favourable opportunity, when there should be a pause, to dash through it; and, finally, the satisfaction of knowing that the job has been done.

A sleet began to fall, which, as the morning advanced, turned into a heavy fall of snow, making observation difficult. The attack had been successful

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

all down the line, but the 45th Brigade had experienced great difficulty in displacing the Germans from a part of the Triangle. The Triangle just east of Arras made an almost impregnable position, its three sides being formed by the railway embankments of the Arras-Douai and the Arras-Lens Railways, and a loop-line connecting the two. The Royal Scots Fusiliers had repeatedly attacked this position, suffering enormous casualties; but, shortly after noon, they were successful in wresting it from the enemy.

Meanwhile the battalion had arrived at its position behind Fred's Wood, and awaited the order to move forward to assault Feuchy Redoubt. The positions of the companies were:—"A" Company on the right, "C" Company in the centre, "D" Company on the left, and "B" Company in reserve, 100 yards in rear. Battalion Headquarters was in Gloucester Trench.

At 2 P.M. the attack on Feuchy Redoubt commenced. The battalion pushed on, but, unfortunately, the left and centre companies were held up by our own artillery barrage. Four guns had already lifted the barrage and advanced their fire, but two guns carried on the original barrage for twenty minutes longer, causing several casualties, including our Medical Officer, Captain Parker, who was wounded in the head. The right company passed on beyond the Redoubt (which had been so battered by our artillery fire that it was no longer fit for occupation), and continued the advance towards Feuchy village. 2nd





ENEMY GUN CAPTURED BY THE BATTALION AT ARRAS—9th April, 1917



## ARRAS

Lieut. Strachan and Corporal West, with four men, rushed a party of seventeen Germans who were sniping from the railway bridge, and captured them all.

From this point little opposition was encountered. The battalion, passing through Feuchy village and capturing a number of guns on the way, reached the eastern side by 4 P.M. Many German dead were lying around Feuchy. At 4.45 P.M. the Brown Line had been captured, and there was no sign of the enemy in front. Patrols were then sent out to the northern slopes of Orange Hill to assist the cavalry to cut through. It is generally believed that had the cavalry come through in force at this time, they would have caught the Boche on the run, and the attack might have been made as great a success as we had hoped it would be. Our patrols reported that the country in front was comparatively open, and that the enemy had decamped.

At 7.45 P.M. a message was received from the centre company stating that about 120 cavalry had passed through the line, and that a covering party of one officer and twenty-five men, with four Lewis guns, had been pushed forward for 500 yards as a flank guard against attack from the north.

The casualties for the day were 5 officers and 100 other ranks.

The trophies captured during the operations of the 9th of April were twelve field guns and howitzers and three machine guns.

Early on the morning of the 10th the new line in front of Feuchy had been firmly established and the

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work of connecting strong posts was proceeding. Some units of the 37th Division passed through our line and moved up the slopes of Orange Hill. Communication with the Division north of the River Scarpe was maintained by patrols. The cavalry was patrolling south-east of Fampoux. The day passed quietly so far as we were concerned. The 12th Division on our right made an attack on the Brown Line, an attack which, owing to strong opposition, did not appear to meet with much success.

During the afternoon, the 45th Brigade passed through our line, taking up a position a few hundred yards in front.

At 5 A.M. on the 11th the 10/11th Highland Light Infantry, supported by the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers, was ordered to attack. Great difficulty had been experienced in getting the companies to the assembly area in the Brown Line owing to the darkness. In consequence, "A" and "B" Companies were delayed, and their place was taken by "C" and "D" Companies. The battalion moved off in artillery formation, marching on compass bearings to the objective, which lay 2000 yards in front.

A heavy barrage was encountered on crossing the slopes of Orange Hill, for the troops showed up against the snow; but there were few casualties. The attack was pushed on, and the right company actually passed through the village of Monchy; but the enemy had placed machine guns in the houses to the west of the village and, as our troops advanced, they were met by a burst of fire which told on them severely.

## ARRAS

From our position on Orange Hill some enemy troops were seen retiring from the trenches in Happy Valley. Luckily for them they were mistaken at the time for the 45th Brigade advancing, and so got safely away.

The companies were ordered to confine their energies to the north of the village, as it was evident that they had made a flanking movement and were actually facing Monchy. Many casualties were inflicted on the enemy in the process of mopping up.

The line was now made up, and an advanced post of one officer and twenty-five men, with two Lewis guns, was sent to an old German wired strong point, 400 yards in advance of our right flank. The work of consolidation was continued under fairly heavy shell-fire until 8.55 A.M., when the enemy was reported to be massing troops for a counter-attack.

Battalion Headquarters was in a shell-hole on a ridge to the eastward. Twice during the morning the far lip of the shell-hole was struck by enemy shells.

During their advance our infantry had not received much assistance from the artillery. A barrage had been promised from 5 A.M. onwards; but there was no artillery fire until 11 A.M., when one battery of 18-pounders fired a few rounds. At 2 P.M. another battery suddenly came into action and fired.

Up to about 7 A.M. the attack on Monchy was completely successful. The enemy had evacuated the hill and village. But they speedily re-formed, and with the assistance of several batteries of 5'9s, 4'2s and 77 mm. guns, and with reinforcements which

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were arriving, they appeared to be making preparations for a counter-attack. This fizzled out, and, although there was a large number of the enemy in sight after 2 P.M., they failed to show a threatening attitude. Had artillery support been available, the complete success of this enterprise would have been assured. The enemy was in the open, without any cover, except some half-formed trenches.

The cavalry which had got through formed up in an open space in Monchy, where it was observed and unmercifully shelled, suffering heavily. One of our senior officers, finding a cavalry horse ownerless, near the front line, commandeered it for his own use. Many a wounded cavalry horse was seen lying on the ridge, and was put out of misery by a peace-bringing bullet.

A large number of our men and men of other units were lying wounded in the line of advance. Towards evening, when the shelling had abated, stretcher-bearers were busy collecting them. Snow was falling fast, and those of the wounded who were unable to move lay with a thick covering of snow upon them. The stretcher-bearers could be seen brushing it off the faces of the men in order to recognise them.

Sergeant-major Munro, after carrying away Private Morrison, who had been wounded, was mortally wounded when returning to Battalion Headquarters with the Signalling Officer, Lieut. Reay.

The casualties of the battalion in the fighting on the 11th of April were: 7 officers and 200 other ranks.

The battalion was relieved in the line and moved

## ARRAS

back to the Railway Triangle, where it arrived at dawn on the 12th of April in an exhausted and frozen condition. Tea and rum were issued, and never was a rum ration more appreciated. Breakfast followed, the sun came out, the men came to life again, and tongues were loosed. During the forenoon we returned to Arras, and there congratulatory messages from the Corps and Divisional Commanders were read out to the men on parade.

The following day we marched back to Duisans and rested there for five days. On the 19th we returned to Arras, and took over billets in the Grande Place, with Headquarters in the Rue St Maurice, and from there on the 21st of April Colonel Sellar went to hospital.

It was intended that a further attack should take place on the 23rd of April, and, in preparation for this, the battalion moved into the old British trenches near the Tilloy-Arras Road on the 22nd. At 8 A.M. on the 23rd a move was made to the Harp area, where the trenches in which the 10th Scottish Rifles had spent the previous night were occupied, the battalion again moving forward at 11.40 A.M. to a position in rear of the Brown Line, with its left 200 yards south of the Cambrai Road. Up to this hour it was understood that the first objective had been taken by the 44th and 45th Brigades, but at 2 P.M. orders were received to stand fast, as the enemy had counter-attacked in force, and had recaptured a portion of the ground.

An order was given that the 46th Brigade would attack the Blue Line. This order was subsequently

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amended to the effect that the Brigade would not attack until further orders. The 10/11th H.L. Infantry, not receiving this amendment, commenced the attack, went on past Shovel Trench, and succeeded in capturing a part of the Blue Line. As their flanks were exposed, their position was precarious, and the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers sent up a reinforcement of one company—"C"—which occupied String Trench.

On the morning of the 24th April the battalion was ordered to be prepared to move to the assembly position in rear of the O.B. Line of the previous day. The Brigade was to attack the Red Line at 4 P.M. The advance to this line began at 1 P.M., the battalion, except "C" Company which was already in String Trench, moving by platoons at five minutes' interval, and reaching the area at 3 P.M., with only four casualties, though it was heavily shelled at times during the advance.

The battalion advanced at zero hour in artillery formation with "A" Company on the right, "B" Company on the left, and "D" Company following "A." "C" Company joined in behind "B" Company as the battalion passed String Trench in its advance. As the jumping-off ground of the battalion was about 800 yards in rear of the front line, the advance was made with all possible speed, and this alone saved many casualties, for a barrage of all calibres was put down by the enemy on O.B. 1, and on Shovel Trench.

At 4.50 P.M. the Red Line was captured and consolidation commenced. Cavalry Farm on the right battalion front was reported to be still in enemy



## ARRAS

hands, and it was also reported that many casualties were being inflicted by German snipers and machine gunners posted there. The support line occupied by the battalion extended to the right of the 29th Division, and our left flank was in touch with the 1st K.O.S. Borderers, who, at 6.15 P.M., reported a suspected massing of the enemy on their front. No counter-attack developed. The total casualties for the period from the 23rd to the 26th of April were: 1 officer killed, 4 wounded, and 150 other ranks killed and wounded.

These positions were held without disturbance from the enemy until we were relieved by portions of the 45th Brigade. On the night of the 25th of April the battalion moved back to the old assembly trenches about 2 miles to the rear. Whilst we were there Colonel Sellar arrived from hospital and again took over command of the battalion.

We marched back to Arras by night on the 27th of April, and on the 28th the battalion proceeded to Duisans.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BEHIND THE LINE.

DUISANS! Here we were enjoying life, little more than 5 miles from the line, where we had passed through the ordeal of battle and had endured the rigours of winter. It all seemed so absurd; the lads were actually singing; it was good to realise that one was still alive. There go two lovers, walking in the wood. She holds in her hand a bunch of cowslips that he has picked for her. He helps her over the stile, and together they walk in the sunshine down towards the water meadows. A strange, sweet scene after the winter we have been through. The recent fighting in the snow, the roads blocked with mud-bespattered men, horses, guns, vehicles; men and animals hard put to it to survive the strain—it was all behind us for a time. Surely this was spring! The men were bathing in the stream under the willow trees, reveling to be fresh and clean in body again; or lying in the grass in the sun, to let the cold melt out of their joints and the hate out of their hearts. There was no sign of war; cattle and sheep were grazing in the meadows, old men and women were at work in the fields, and all the world seemed at peace!

Before quitting billets it was the custom for the

## BEHIND THE LINE

Company Commanders to render a written statement to the Orderly Room, certifying that all huts and lines occupied by their companies had been thoroughly cleaned. We had the reputation of a clean battalion to keep up, and the C.O. was most careful to maintain it. On the morning of our departure Colonel Sellar, while inspecting a hut, noticed a loose board in the floor and ordered its removal. Underneath lay a gruesome heap of putrefying cheese, bully beef, pieces of bread, rounds of ammunition, Woodbine packets—a general accumulation of rubbish, left by men of various units since the huts were first constructed. This revolting discovery gave rise to a furious scuttling hither and thither on the part of the Platoon Commanders. The Company Sergeant-major and the Company Quartermaster-sergeant protested the innocence of their company. They had an excellent case. Who could deny that the rubbish had been secreted there by previous occupants of the hut? But murder will out. The finding, amidst the rubbish, of an empty envelope addressed to the Company Quartermaster-sergeant exploded the ingenuous and otherwise indefeasible plea. There was great consternation, and the company staff was on the verge of hysterics. The battalion was, for the next half hour, assiduously employed in collecting the whole of the rubbish in the camp and its vicinity, and in filling the receptacles placed at the entrance to the camp, to overflowing. A transport wagon was then sent along to cart this stuff to the incinerator. Some time after we left, the Town Major of Duisans

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sent in a report that the 7/8th K.O.S.B. had dumped most of its ammunition in the incinerator, to the danger of his men!

One other noteworthy incident of our stay in Duisans was the presentation of medals to some of our men by Lieut.-General Haldane, commanding the 6th Corps.

We left Duisans on the 7th of May, and marched to Fosseux; where the men were accommodated in some huts on the outskirts of the village. The South Irish Horse were a fixture in this place, and had naturally appropriated all the best billets. In the officers' lines they handed over to us such huts as they themselves had no use for. A question then arose over a stove for the officers' mess. There was a stove that apparently belonged to the camp, and as the Paddies had another for their own use, this one was reluctantly placed at our disposal. In justice to the South Irish Horse, it must be borne in mind that they looked upon us more or less as interlopers. They were probably under the impression that patrolling roads in the back areas was a most important feature of the Campaign, more important in fact than the actual fighting as practised by the infantry. However that may be, the stove was fixed up in our mess and did good service for two or three days. Then the S.I.H. informed us that their own stove had broken down, and that the one we were using must be returned. They did not get it. Major Dennis threatened to throw a bomb into it first. This seemed to act as a kind of Solomon's judgment, and

## BEHIND THE LINE

we were permitted to keep the stove. After that we became friends.

Our Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel T. B. Sellar, C.M.G., D.S.O., was now beginning to feel the effects of the severe strain that his untiring energy had entailed upon him throughout the operations on the Somme and at Arras. Constant exposure to the bitterly cold weather of the early days of April had told upon his health. His unremitting activity in personally supervising all kinds of work, in satisfying himself that every detail of organisation was correct, and in visiting the front companies at all hours of the day or night, had seriously impaired his health. On the 9th of May Colonel Sellar left us for home. The battalion was formed up on parade for his farewell address. He wished us good-bye, and formally handed over the command of the battalion to Major Dennis. The officers lined up on either side of the pathway leading from the mess to the road, to bid their old chief farewell. Needless to say, it was a sad parting. He had been such a tower of strength to the battalion, and so unsparing in his efforts to promote its efficiency, that we doubted whether it would be possible to get a Commanding Officer to equal him.

Our stay in Fosseux was rather a prolonged one. We appeared to be nobody's children, passing from one Corps to another. The mornings were occupied with the usual training and the afternoons were devoted to recreation. We played many inter-battalion football matches, both Association and Rugby. At this time we had a first-class Rugby team, composed

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principally of officers. Although there were some excellent Rugby players amongst the rank and file, a good few of them had played on Northern Union rules, and found some difficulty in adapting themselves to the other code. Nevertheless, they ran the officers' team very close, and could give them a good tussle. In one match the officers won by only 2 points, and in another they were beaten by 1 goal. The 12th H.L.I. was beaten 52 points to nil by our regimental team.

Some excitement was aroused about this time by the explosion of a dump on the outskirts of the neighbouring village of Wanquetin. To add to the misfortune of so much ammunition going sky-high, several houses in the village were destroyed. Shells of all sizes hurtled round, splinters flying in all directions; dense columns of smoke, black and green, rose hundreds of feet in the air; explosion followed explosion for hours, until the dump was exhausted. There was a fear that there might be gas-shells on the dump, and precautions were taken to meet that contingency, but the alarm proved groundless. A fatigue party of one hundred men was sent to assist the inhabitants in clearing the debris from their houses. Somebody maliciously reported that these men, instead of rendering assistance to the French, were looking for French beer. It cannot be denied that it was a thirsty job.

Battalion sports were held on the afternoon of the 20th. There was a great attendance of staff officers, and officers from other regiments, a plentiful supply

## BEHIND THE LINE

of refreshments, and a programme of music played by the Divisional band. "D" Company won the inter-company tug-of-war, and proved themselves the best all-round company, scoring the highest number of points, with four 1st prizes, four 2nds, and three 3rds. One very interesting event was the officers' race, in which all officers competed with a handicap according to age. The Quartermaster led from the start and looked like winning, but, unfortunately, he came to grief when about half-way to the tape. Whether his fall was by accident or design remains doubtful.

And now began what proved to be one of the most pleasant and enjoyable periods of rest we had experienced since our arrival in France. We were to spend a month in Corps reserve at Willencourt. As Major Dennis was on leave, the command of the battalion devolved on Major Hart. Leaving Fosseux on the 21st of May, the battalion marched to Sus St Leger, where it spent the night, and continued the move on the following day to Bonnières, and thence passing through the town of Auxi-le-Château to Willencourt, arrived at its destination at 12.15 P.M. on the 23rd.

Willencourt is a pretty little village, about 2 miles from Auxi-le-Château, situated in a valley through which a small river meanders. The surrounding country is hilly, and thickly forested. The Battalion Headquarters mess was in a château on the hill that rises from the left bank of the stream. The château stood in a conspicuous position overlooking the village, and was surrounded by a demesne where one might wander at will. In front of the house was

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a sloping lawn with garden seats on which one could lounge in the sunshine, and watch Madame feed the chickens and little Paul play with his rabbits.

Across the river to the left was a granary which was taken over by the battalion as a billet. It was a large building known as "the Cornmarket," with out-houses, offices, and store rooms for the grain; and it made excellent barracks for the accommodation of the men, with a guard-room near the entrance and a sentry at the gate. The transport wagons were parked within the enclosure, and the horses occupied the stables.

Company officers had their billets and messes in the village. The weather was very warm, and the favourite recreation of the troops after the morning's training was swimming in the river. Inter-platoon swimming and football competitions were kept going: for the former a course was roped off along the river, and for the latter a football ground was marked out, as far as the trees would allow, in a meadow close to the village.

Every morning at an early hour two or three Frenchwomen, with baskets of fruit and chocolates, would take up a stance along the wall by the river, close to the gates of the Cornmarket, to sell their stock to the troops. Among these vendors of good things was one very comely French lass with auburn hair. The men called her "Mademoiselle Ginger." Her trade flourished; the others had no chance beside her, and finally she held the field alone. Whether her apples were the sweetest, it is hard to



## BEHIND THE LINE

say; but certainly the men preferred to buy from her, and to air their French with her rather than with the more elderly women. One day the "Jocks" paid us a visit to give a variety entertainment. The stage was erected in a field, and a dressing-room was constructed with the aid of wagon covers. "Mademoiselle Ginger" was present. Many endearing allusions to her were made in topical conversation, but her knowledge of English was not sufficiently good for her to understand. The leading lady of the "Jocks" looked most charming as she passed round the audience with a hat, making a collection to defray expenses. Mademoiselle, who was admiring the costume and the bits of finery displayed, became so interested, that after the performance, in her curiosity, she persisted in standing near the extemporised dressing-room, to the discomfiture of the leading lady. The poor fellow could not get a chance to put his trousers on, and nobody seemed to be fluent enough to explain to "Mademoiselle Ginger" that the leading lady was not really a lady at all.

Major M. F. B. Dennis, D.S.O., was now authorised to assume the rank of Temporary Lieut.-Colonel whilst commanding the battalion.

Captain J. P. Larkin was awarded the D.S.O. for distinguished service in the field.

"C" Company spent a very pleasant week at Bachimont, where it was attached to the Canadian Forestry Company employed in clearing felled trees and brushwood from the forest.

On the 14th of June the battalion was inspected

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by Major-General Sir Frederick M'Cracken, K.C.B., D.S.O., commanding the 15th Division. Companies were inspected in the attack, on outpost duty, at range practices, and in drill. The G.O.C. commented favourably on the work performed, and expressed special gratification at the smartness of the battalion on parade, and the care and labour bestowed by the men in brightening up their equipment. The Commanding Officer, in a special order, also congratulated all ranks of the battalion on the excellence of their turn-out on parade.

The same day a warning order was received by the battalion to be prepared to move northwards by rail on short notice; and on the 16th of June definite orders for the move were received.

At dusk therefore we marched by Auxi-le-Château, and Vacquie-le-Boucq to Frevent, and there entrained for Hopoutre near Poperinghe, where we arrived about mid-day on the 17th. The camp allotted to the battalion was situated between Poperinghe and Vlamertinghe, and was called Toronto Camp. The accommodation consisted partly of tents and partly of huts.

The battalion relieved the 1/5th South Lancs. in Brigade support on the night of the 19th in the Right Sector at Ypres. The companies were disposed as follows:—"A" Company in the Convent, "B", "C" and "D" Companies in the Infantry Barracks; battalion Headquarters on the Menin Road, 500 yards south-east of Menin Gate. Ypres and its approaches were being shelled intermittently during the relief.

## BEHIND THE LINE

Our first tour of duty in the Ypres salient was not very costly in casualties. Whilst occupying the Infantry Barracks we lost one man killed and nine wounded, but on the first day's actual occupation of the line, only one man was wounded.

The weather was bright and warm, with rain occasionally during the night, and one severe thunderstorm while a relief was being carried out.

The back areas around Vlamertinghe and Brandhoek were often shelled, but the various reserve camps, except Bivouac Camp, received little attention from the German guns.

The battalion moved to the front line on the night of the 20th, and relieved the 1/5th Loyal North Lancs. in St James' Trench, Hedge Trench and Half-moon Trench. These trenches on the whole were in good condition, about 3 feet deep, with breastworks of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet high. There were two communication trenches leading to the front system: Piccadilly, which was in quite a good state, and East Lane, which had been badly knocked about in places. Immediately after we had taken over, two patrols were sent out to reconnoitre the front. One came up against some German snipers in a sap leading towards a crater of ours, and had to return. The other pushed on to the enemy's wire, and found that although there were no actual gaps, the stakes had been knocked down by our shell-fire, and the wire was lying loose.

On the 24th of June our line was heavily shelled by the enemy from 9 A.M. to 12 noon, and again peri-

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odically throughout the night. During the afternoon a German aeroplane was brought down near our lines.

The battalion moved back to Toronto Camp on the 26th, and on the following day took over the new reserve area near Bivouac Camp, or H.16, where strong working parties were employed in digging new gun-pits and unloading ammunition. We returned to Toronto Camp on the 29th of June.

Early on the morning of the 1st of July the battalion marched from Toronto Camp to the Watou training area. Some difficulty was found in billeting, our area consisting of scattered farms. The companies were widely separated from each other, being in some cases, 2 or 3 miles apart. It was a hop-growing district, and at that time of the year the tall poles covered with the climbing plants looked quite picturesque. The men were very comfortable in the outhouses of the farms, and got on exceptionally well with the farmers and their families.

Whilst at Watou the battalion was selected to provide, under Corps arrangements, a platoon composed of efficient men, for the purpose of demonstrating the attack formation, and of illustrating the effect of musketry fire. This platoon, after inspection by the Brigadier, proceeded, under the Platoon Commander, 2nd Lieut. J. Weir, by march route, to Esqueres (5 miles south-west of St Omer), where the demonstration was to take place on the 15th of July.

The Commander-in-Chief of the armies in France, with a number of the G.H.Q. Staff, was present at

## BEHIND THE LINE

the demonstration. The platoon made a display of such excellence as to receive commendation from the Commander-in-Chief, who personally congratulated the officer in charge. Congratulations were also received from the Corps, Division and Brigade Commanders.

In the course of a tour of the battle front His Majesty the King visited the Watou area. The majority of the officers and men of the battalion lined up along either side of the main Watou-Poperinghe Road, and cheered His Majesty as he motored past shortly after midday. At frequent intervals during the morning the Germans had been dropping shells from long-range guns into Poperinghe.

On the 8th of July the battalion, with the remainder of the Brigade, marched to the Broxeele Training Area, and was billeted in the village of Broxeele. The march, which began at 2 A.M., and covered a distance of 16½ miles, was performed in full marching order, and in a severe storm of thunder and lightning. We reached our new billeting area by 10 A.M.

Captain H. W. Sutherland had now rejoined the battalion, and assumed command of "D" Company. Lieut. C. K. Thursby-Pelham took over command of "A" Company vice Captain T. L. Millar, who had gone to Etaples as an Instructor at No. 2 Training School. 2nd Lieut. Dickson ("Lever up, Jake") took over the duties of sniping and intelligence officer to the battalion.

In preparation for the fateful operations which were now imminent, the battalion took part in several

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Brigade tactical schemes in the Rusbrouck area. The frequent presence and co-operation of tanks added a graceful feature to these exercises.

We were then detached, for the time being, from the 46th Brigade, and marched with the units of the 44th Brigade to Winnezeele, a distance of 13 miles ; encamped there for the night, and on the following morning continued our march to the Watou area.

On the 23rd of July the battalion marched by the Scotch Road, north of Poperinghe to St Lawrence Camp, and once again entered the sphere of operations.

We were now on the eve of another eventful phase of the great struggle.

## CHAPTER X.

### YPRES.

BEFORE our arrival in the Ypres Sector the salient had been considerably flattened by the capture of Messines and Wytschaete; yet, even as we found it, it was far from healthy. Those who had never been in Ypres were curious to see the famous old town with its Cathedral and its Cloth Hall, or what remained of them; but no one who had been there before was enamoured by the prospect of revisiting a spot within the most hated area of the whole British line. Such names as "Hell-fire Corner," "Salvation Corner," Menin Gate and Potijze bring back memories of "crumps" and slaughter, of dead horses lying by the roadside, of hard-driven, rattling ammunition-wagons bumping and swaying over shell-pitted roads, and of drivers with a fixed stare urging their willing horses past those death-traps at the gallop. There was nothing like it anywhere else. On the Somme there were other roads to choose from, should one particular track be shelled; at Arras one felt fairly safe in the town; but at Ypres—Hell!

The town of Ypres, as we saw it, was a heap of debris. The Church of St Martin, the Cloth Hall, the old-time houses with their porticoes, were all in ruins. How can one describe it? It might truthfully be

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described as the most tortured of western battle-fields. What harder or better fighting has ever been heard of than that desperate battle fought by the old "Contemptibles," under Sir John French in October 1914; or again, than that terrible struggle six months later when the Canadians, stupefied by the fumes of poisonous gas, clung on to their positions, and with the assistance of other British troops held the Germans at bay, refusing them entry into that desolate old town that seemed to stand there as a memorial to British courage and honour.

Preparations were now being made for the third battle of Ypres. The 15th Division had established its Headquarters close to Brandhoek, and the various units composing the Division were either occupying the line east of Ypres, or, like the battalion, were held meanwhile in reserve in the hutments south of the Poperinghe-Ypres Road.

It was a very different body of men that now lay behind Ypres from that which had left the Arras Sector in May, crippled and spent with the hard fighting round Monchy. The long rest from actual fighting, the strenuous training in the field, the route marches and daily sports had tuned the battalion to a high pitch of excellence; and we were ready for anything Fate or "Dougy" might send us. It is fortunate that soldiers live by the day and seldom allow themselves to reflect. The nerve-racking experiences in the Arras battles were tranquilly stowed away in the lumber-room of memory, and it was only as glorious exploits and adventures that they were re-

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counted in tent or bivvy, when the imminence of another battle and the eager questioning of the young recruits sent men's minds back to the past.

Five days were spent in quiet preparation for the line. Physical drill, box-respirator practice, the distribution of fighting kit, inspection of rifles, S.A.A. and Lewis guns, and demonstrations with No. 27 Grenade filled in the time of waiting. Field training was out of the question, owing to the inevitable restrictions on movement by daylight. On the morning of Sunday, the 29th of July, there were special Church Services, and in the afternoon every man was issued with chocolate and sweets. At night the battalion moved off in half companies, "C" first, then "D", "A", "B", "H.Q." by "C." Track, Kruisstraat, Ecole, West Lane, Half-moon Trench and Haymarket. The relief of the Scottish Rifles proceeded without mishap until our front companies reached Haymarket, where they found another Brigade blocking the way. Confusion and delay followed, as they invariably did when one body of men, fully armed and carrying picks and shovels, tried to pass another, similarly burdened, within the narrow compass of a communication trench. During the process of squeezing through, rifle slings caught on picks, and picks on equipment, while the men behind kept up a running fire of humorous comment on the plight of their comrades. It was unfortunate that the enemy selected the moment when the tangle was at its worst, for an exhibition of nerves. Several batteries of 4.2s and 5.9s suddenly opened out and rained shells on the com-

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munication trench. We had fifteen casualties, and the other Brigade as many more. It was an ordeal even for old soldiers, but it was a cruel baptism of fire for the recruits. The relief was not complete till 2.30 A.M. on the 30th, the disposition then being as follows: "C" Company right front; "D" Company left front; "A" Company in support in St James' Trench from Piccadilly to Haymarket; "B" Company in reserve in Half-moon Trench, and "H.Q." in Cambridge Trench, immediately north of the junction with Haymarket.

The Headquarters officers, Colonel Dennis, Captain Lawson and Captain Patrick had a rather novel experience on their way to the line. They were met by a guide, who was to conduct them by a supposed short cut to Battalion Headquarters, taking particular care to avoid the Menin Gate. After getting hopelessly lost in St Jean they drifted back to Ypres, and at last found themselves in a large open space, where they halted and set their maps, trying to discover their whereabouts and to take bearings by the aid of a flash-lamp. Then after plodding with difficulty along a shell-pitted road for some distance, they found their troubles increased by shells dropping uncomfortably near them on the road. Fortunately, a gun emplacement was close at hand, and they took cover. Here they rested for a time until the shelling had subsided, and then having been directed by the gunners, continued their journey towards the front line. Walking along through the blackness of the night, they were surprised suddenly to find themselves

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at the ramparts, close to the spot they had passed some hours before. Shortly afterwards they descried the Menin Gate in front of them—the very place they had spent the night in trying to avoid. To add to their discomfiture the Boche was “straffing” the Gate when they arrived, and they were compelled to lie down behind a bank, awaiting an opportunity to get through. Timing the duration of two bursts and the pause between, they made a dash through the Gate and along the road, and reached Battalion Headquarters without further trouble. Much concern had been felt for their safety; for it was daybreak before they reached their destination. It was afterwards learned that the place where they had halted to take bearings was the Kaie Cross Roads, that notorious spot in the Ypres area which everybody passed at the double or not at all.

The remainder of that day went quietly, and at night the companies began to move cautiously forward into the position of assembly; “C” and “D” in the front line, “A” and “B” behind the parados of the front line trench.

Silently parties of men climbed over the parapet to the ticklish business of cutting broad gaps in the tangle of wire in front of our trenches. Scouts and snipers crept out into the darkness and the uncertainties of No Man’s Land to act as a covering party to the wire-cutters. A small patrol under 2nd Lieut. Dickson pushed forward in the direction of the Stables and the Mound, to listen with straining ears for any sign of enemy movement in that neighbour-

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hood. At midnight all was reported quiet in No Man's Land.

Quietness in that sense, however, meant no more than that there was no sign of enemy movement between the lines. A stern artillery contest was raging. The very air rushed and reverberated to the roar of heavy guns and the shriek of countless projectiles. Some comfort could perhaps be drawn from the apparent success of our 60-pounders in gradually neutralising the enemy's fire.

In the midst of the fiendish din our first wave began to form up in front of the wire, and luckily completed its formation without a casualty. Soon all was in readiness, and the moment had come to launch the actual assault.

Precisely at 3.30 A.M. the battalion swept forward in four waves, with one company of the Scottish Rifles between the first and second waves, to act as moppers-up. Favoured by darkness and a driving mist that helped to obscure their movements, our troops dashed on; easily overcame the slight opposition which was all the enemy offered; captured in successive rushes his front, support and reserve trenches, and took a number of prisoners. But the conditions that hid our movements from the enemy did not prove an unmixed blessing. There was a tendency on the part of the assaulting waves to lose direction and to incline southwards; and it was a confused assortment of men from the various companies and battalions engaged, that arrived at the Blue Line, our first objective. Then began the diffi-

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cult and vexing work of sifting out the men and re-organising them for a fresh advance on our second objective, the Black Line—a difficulty all the greater as the acting Second-in-Command, Captain Sutherland, three Company Commanders and six Platoon Commanders had become casualties. In the performance of this task the efforts of 2nd Lieut. Causley and 2nd Lieut. M'Call were most conspicuous.

The main struggle was yet to come. Frezenberg Redoubt, bristling with machine-guns, challenged our advance to the Black Line, and we had to pay a heavy toll to get through. The approaches to the Redoubt, too, were covered by machine-guns, spitting death from concrete emplacements and shell-holes on both sides of the Ypres-Roulers Road. Our men pressed stubbornly on, but no sooner did they reach the crest of the ridge than they were held up by a deadly cross-fire from these strong points. Man after man went down before the withering hail. A party from the left company under 2nd Lieut. Causley pluckily worked its way round the left of the Redoubt, and with a rush carried the emplacement on the northern side. Here Causley and another company officer, 2nd Lieut. Connachie, were killed, and it was under the command of 2nd Lieut. Houston that the gallant little party finally captured the strong point. Eight German dead were found next day in the emplacement—a terrible evidence of the severity of the struggle. Meanwhile the machine-guns on the south were attacked, in conjunction with the battalion on our right. Rifle grenades and Stokes

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mortars were brought to bear with telling effect upon these pests. At last the tanks, which had been summoned to our aid, hove in sight, and as they lurched heavily on over the torn ground, like grisly drunken goblins, the enemy's *morale* dropped to zero. From that phase of the action onwards, our right flank met with but feeble resistance. The enemy garrisons surrendered almost to a man, and soon the number of prisoners had mounted up to 160. On our side a terrible price had been paid. Fourteen out of twenty officers, and about forty-five out of every hundred other ranks had become casualties.

It was a sadly depleted but still determined battalion that continued to advance to the Black Line. The severe fighting on the Frezenberg Redoubt had so delayed the advance that we had lost our artillery barrage, and a considerable distance from the centre of the Redoubt to our second objective had to be covered, bit by bit, by platoon rushes, gallantly led by 2nd Lieut. M'Kee. At length, by 9 o'clock, the battalion was "digging in" to the rear of the Black Line. An attempt was made to dig a trench about 200 yards in front; but the position was so heavily shelled, and casualties were mounting up so fast, that the effort was abandoned, and work was concentrated on a trench behind Frost House, where there was more protection and a better field of fire. An hour later the 45th Brigade passed through our front line, and our men breathed more freely, though there was no slackening of vigilance or work. The enemy's shells were still tearing great holes all around us, and sometimes

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taking their toll of men. All day we were harassed by a machine-gun and by snipers that appeared to have been passed over by the moppers-up while the advance was in progress. Communication between companies and Battalion Headquarters was maintained with the greatest difficulty. Our field telephone line was constantly being broken by shell-fire, and only through the grim determination and courage of our signalling section, and through the sacrifice of more than one runner, could we keep in touch. A counter-attack was to be expected at any moment, and to many a man these hours of waiting for it were more trying than the assault. As dusk began to fall, a few men from an advanced post of another unit came back to our line with the report that the enemy was advancing in force, and that their own line had been driven in. Dim figures could be seen approaching. As a measure of precaution a barrage was called for, and the attack, if it was one, was nipped in the bud.

The early morning broke in heavy rain, a deluge that lasted, with intervals, for the next twenty-four hours. Under the downpour the newly-dug trenches began to fall in, and it was no easy matter to keep rifles and Lewis guns in working order. Fortunately, that night passed quietly, for the conditions in which the men were placed could hardly have been worse.

Next day a genuine though feeble attempt at a counter-attack was made by the enemy. During the morning various messages percolated through to Battalion Headquarters, stating that the enemy was

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massing on our front; but at that time there was no indication that an attack was developing. In the afternoon small parties of men from other units began to filter through to the rear, coming from the direction of Beck House, and reporting that a counter-attack was taking place on our left flank. At the same time, the enemy began to shell our front with increased vigour, and we therefore called on our artillery for a barrage. By and by groups of the enemy could be seen approaching the left portion of our line. Climbing out of our sodden and collapsing trenches, we prepared to receive them from behind the parados; but no sooner did our men open fire on them with rifles and Lewis guns, than they began to retire. For two hours more the battalion "stood to" in expectation of another attempt, but the foe had had enough. There was little fight left in him. His *morale* was very low, and it seemed evident that, had there been, at the time, fresh troops in close support, who could have pressed home the advantages already gained, they would have found very little opposition. Johnny Osborne, our Orderly Room Sergeant, who had been given permission, on this occasion, to go over the top with the battalion, avers that he could have held up a Boche counter-attack with two packets of Woodbines. These operations were deprived of that old-time display when, with drums beating and colours flying, a British battalion swept forward to the charge in full view of the enemy, confident that in face of that impetuous onset the foe would undoubtedly turn and run. In those days there were the



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cheering and the shouting during the pursuit, and all the joys of visible victory! How different nowadays, when half a battalion may be killed and wounded without seeing a single enemy; and when shells, trench mortars, grenades and bullets whistle through the air, coming from one knows not where.

The enemy was not defeated, but another small dent had been made in his line. There was no display about it, just a dogged pertinacity. We had been ordered to take the Frezenberg Redoubt, and in spite of the artillery and machine-gun fire that had to be faced, it had been taken. And at what a cost! Yet with all our sad thoughts of the comrades we had lost, the springs of humour still bubbled up, and laughter was not altogether unheard. During the excitement of battle a man may see perhaps a hare run across his front; and without quite knowing why, there being more important game about, he will follow it with his rifle until it is out of sight. He will remember such an incident, and laugh over it, long after he has forgotten more serious things. Memory may fail when we attempt to recall some definite part of an operation, but when we are asked who it was who strolled leisurely across the shrapnel-strewn battlefield, placidly smoking his pipe, we remember it was Lindsay Hamilton.

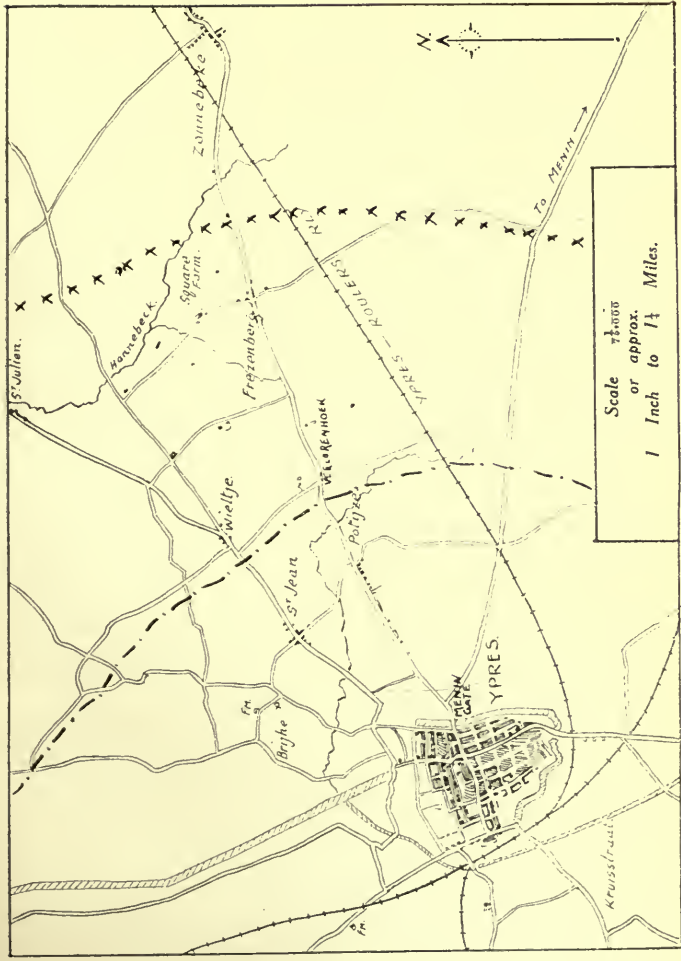
During the forenoon of the 31st, while the attack was in progress, a shelter which had been a German pill-box earlier in the day, was selected for Battalion Headquarters. The bottom of this shelter was covered with water, and some planks had been

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laid, about 2 feet clear of the water, to make a floor. Every one was busily working when Colonel Dennis remarked that the carrier pigeons, which we had in a basket, appeared to be restless. Captain Patrick, thinking he saw some movement under the floor, slipped his hand between two of the planks and felt a coat evidently on somebody's back. A plank was rolled aside, and there, on his hands and knees in the water, was a wounded Hun. As he put his hand above his head, making a sign of surrender and murmuring "Kamerad," he looked very much like a Mohammedan saying his morning prayer. He had hidden under the planks to avoid our moppers-up as they advanced; and he looked decidedly stupid when told in excellent German to get up and not make a silly ass of himself.

What good luck for "C" Company to capture a Boche Headquarters dugout, and to find it replete with excellent wines and cigars! And with what relish the thirsty victors consumed the hot coffee which the enemy had not had time to drink.

After the objective had been taken, a most cheering circular was received. This had been sent round to inform us that the Germans had mined a number of their dugouts and shelters, and that these mines might be expected to blow up about thirty-six hours after the fitting of the fuse. The notice went on to say that these bombs might be traced by looking for odd telephone wires placed about the shelters, or for loose lumps of cement or stones, and by examining the space behind them. These instructions reached



MAP OF YPRES SECTOR

— . . . — Approximate Line, 30th July, 1917  
 x x x x x " " 24th August, 1917

Scale  $\frac{1}{10000}$   
 or approx.  
 1 Inch to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  Miles.



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us just about the time when the bombs should have been ready to go off; and the Brigade had thoughtfully added a note to say that a neighbouring dugout had gone up, and that ours would probably be the next. Our signallers got to work on the wires around the pill-box, but there seemed to be a web of these running in all directions, and leading to all sorts of inaccessible spots. As for loose stones and strange holes, the place resembled a gravel bed and a pepper-box in these respects; so we gave up the search as hopeless, trusting, as we were due to be relieved that night, that the enemy had put extra long fuses on any bombs in our locality.

Just as we were settling down again, the Boche began to shell us, and put a 5·9 plump into the trench. The shell penetrated under our shelter, and we could feel the earth below us being lifted up. We held our breath, and glanced at each other, waiting for the crash. It did not come; the shell was a dud. Ah!

On the following day, the 2nd of August, the relieving battalions passed through our lines and consolidated the position. The battalion moved out of the trenches in the afternoon and marched by Menin Gate and Ypres Station to Groenen Jager, where buses were in waiting to convey us to Oudezeele in the Winnezeele area. A meal of hot soup and tea, served out in an adjoining field, helped to put new life into us. The journey to Oudezeele was made in torrents of rain, and the men arrived drenched to the skin, but in excellent spirits, considering the ordeal

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they had endured. There was many a sad heart, though, as the companies compiled their returns of casualties, and when the collated lists were placed before the Commanding Officer, and it was told how this man and that had fallen, Colonel Dennis, himself the most gallant and fearless of men, could scarcely restrain his tears. Major Hart, who, like his chief, was always to be found where danger was greatest, said, with a catch in his voice: "Sir, so many gallant fellows have fallen that I feel almost ashamed to be alive."

The total casualties during the operations were: officers, 4 killed and 10 wounded; other ranks, 33 killed, 2 died of wounds, 20 missing, and 225 wounded.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SALIENT.

THE camp at Oudezeele was in a shockingly bad condition; the tents were not fit for occupation, and the men had to be crowded into the adjoining barns. Colonel Dennis protested very strongly to the Town Major who, perhaps with the idea of having them well aired for us, had allowed the tents to remain open during the rain. But how often did we have cause to complain of the state of unpreparedness in which we found our rest camps. Away, however, from the harrowing sights and sounds of the battle area, jaded men began quickly to pick up their old sprightliness. Physical drill, route marches, field training and regimental sports helped to build up body and mind anew, and to prepare us for fresh strain.

The C.O. inspected us on the 8th of August, preparatory to the G.O.C.'s inspection on the 10th. The Divisional Commander congratulated the battalion on its admirable work in the attack of the 31st of July, and at the same time conveyed to us the congratulations of the Commanders of the Corps and the Army. But an even more significant testimonial was given later by the enemy themselves. In a list which they published of British Divisions to be feared, the 15th Division held the premier place. There was

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matter for congratulation in that. It cheered us up no end.

A jolly Battalion Sports meeting was held on the day after the G.O.C.'s inspection. It was quite a success. The Battalion Signal Section walked off with most of the honours. The chief trophies on this occasion were two handsome silver cups produced "under battalion arrangements." These cups were made by a secret process which was the sole property of Sergeant Ramsay of the Pioneers. The secret was jealously guarded, the one fact which could not be concealed—it was indeed patent to all—being that the cups were made out of the ever serviceable biscuit tin.

Our time of rest came to an end too soon. On the 15th of August we marched 9 miles to Abeele, where we entrained for the Ypres front again. The battalion got off the train at the Asylum, and afterwards marched to Bivouac Camp, near Belgian Battery Corner.

To our regret we learned that the 10th Scottish Rifles had suffered very heavily on arriving at this camp; a big H.E. shrapnel had burst over them and caused no fewer than ninety-eight casualties. Most of the men wounded were new arrivals, and they must have early acquired a very unfavourable opinion of warfare in general and of shrapnel in particular.

The news that the attack of the 16th (Irish) Division had practically failed, came as a disappointment after the hopes which had been raised by the earlier report of the action. We were not surprised, therefore,



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to get orders to relieve three companies of Leinsters and one company Royal Irish Fusiliers. The frontage taken over extended from the Ypres-Roulers Railway to Frost House, near the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road, and formed the right sector of the 19th Corps. As a result of the attack of the day previous, no definite line was handed over—only a series of detached posts extending along the front for about 1000 yards east of Frezenberg Redoubt. The companies were disposed as follows: "A" right front, "B" left front, "C" right support, "D" left support. Major Hart took command of the battalion for this tour. Colonel Dennis rode up in advance to wish us good luck as we passed through Ypres. The battalion moved from Bivouac Camp about an hour before dusk, so that Ypres was passed before darkness set in. All went well till the old British front line was reached, and then it was found that the guides who were bringing us up were very hazy as to the rest of the way. The subsequent wanderings of the different companies in the desolate region beyond would be difficult to follow. Some of the parties strayed about for an hour or two before they finally reached their positions. Frequent bursts of enemy fire swept the area where we went stumbling on, and in one of these 2nd Lieut. Kennedy and four other ranks were wounded. The relief was not completed till between 1 and 2 A.M.

Immediately on arrival the front line companies had to dig in, as the posts which they were to occupy were only partially made. But where water is struck at a depth of from 18 inches to 3 feet, digging in does

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not go far; and the men had to be content with obtaining concealment from view. Behind the posts a front line was formed by adapting a series of concrete shelters which had once formed enemy battery positions.

Battalion Headquarters were situated in a concrete dugout on the forward slope of Frezenberg Redoubt, and in full view of the enemy, so that any movement there was impossible during daylight. The whole area was subjected to heavy and frequent bombardments, and the Redoubt came in for a generous share of the shelling, day and night. Headquarters were therefore hard put to it to maintain communication with the companies. Working and carrying parties supplied by the support companies had to make their way backward and forward under a brisk shell-fire, and they lost heavily. No fewer than twenty casualties occurred in this way alone. The guns on both sides were unceasingly active. Our artillery followed up a gas-shell bombardment by repeated salvoes from the heavies, to which the enemy replied by searching every yard of our sector with 4'2s and 5'9s, rendering the slightest movement hazardous in the extreme. One shell made a direct hit on "B" Company's Headquarters in the front line, killing the Company Commander, 2nd Lieut. W. M. Douglas, wounding 2nd Lieut. J. Black so severely that he died shortly afterwards at the dressing station, and seriously wounding 2nd Lieut. A. R. Templeton. In the same bombardment three men of the company were killed, and eight were

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wounded. The wounded officers and men had to be evacuated over the ridge at Frezenberg in full view of the enemy, by a long and difficult road to the dressing station at Bavaria House which, like the road, was being frequently shelled. But the stretcher-bearers, and especially those of "B" Company, rose to their duty in the most gallant spirit, and notably Private T. Wright, who received later a well-earned D.C.M. for his courageous work on this occasion. The R.A.M.C. at the dressing station was asked for help and sent up men; but of the two who arrived, one man was wounded before he reached the Company Headquarters, and the other was required to take him back. Private Wright himself made the journey with various assistants time after time until all the wounded were evacuated, and finally he collapsed from sheer exhaustion. The ration parties from the support companies also fared badly. One party from "D" Company made three attempts before they reached the rendezvous at Bavaria House, on each occasion losing several men killed and wounded; and when they ultimately got through, it was only to find to their chagrin that rations had not been brought up, owing to the heavy shelling of Ypres. Orders had to be issued authorising the men to eat their iron rations. All through the following day the violent bombardment of our lines continued, and at dusk Battalion Headquarters were obliged to move back to a less conspicuous position at Bill Cottage, where rations could be brought forward from the rendezvous by daylight. The remainder of this

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time in the line was less racking but by no means quiet, and the news of a probable relief on the night of 20th August was welcomed on all hands. All night long we waited, till even the most optimistic in the front line were beginning to lose hope of the looked-for relief. Little more than an hour remained; dawn would show soon after 4 o'clock. At last the reliefs were seen approaching; explanations were already in progress when the Hun suddenly began to retaliate on our artillery bombardment, and the relieving companies of the 13th Royal Scots were scattered far and wide. Again there was delay. When the scattered parties were finally collected, the relief was hurried through, and no time was lost in getting over the skyline before daybreak. In all the circumstances, our casualties during the relief were remarkably small. When the last party got clear, it was broad daylight. We arrived at Bivouac Camp perfectly exhausted, but very glad to have the prospect of some sleep.

Next day we moved camp to another field near Belgian Battery Corner, but our period of rest was of short duration. On the 23rd of August a warning order arrived, instructing us to be ready to go again into the line. That evening, in order to be nearer the front area, we bivouacked near the Vlamertinghe-Ypres Road.

For some time we had been very short of officers. Five, for duty with the four companies, had been all we could boast latterly; so the return of several officers and other ranks from leave and from Courses

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of Instruction, as well as the arrival of reinforcements, considerably improved the battalion as a fighting unit, and enabled us to carry out some fresh training.

Definite orders for the line came on the 26th, and we marched through Ypres in pouring rain, as a temporary unit of the 44th Brigade, to relieve the 8/10th Gordons north of the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road in the old German support and reserve lines, with Headquarters in Mill Cotts.

The way up, after we passed Menin Gate, was fraught with peril, and we were wonderfully fortunate to reach our position with only a few casualties. Several times we came under a sudden concentration of shell-fire, happily always of short duration, that compelled us to "get down to it" wherever we happened to be, some lying flat in the mud, and others floundering into a flooded trench, or hanging on to the insecure lip of a shell-hole half-full of filthy green water. We presented a sorry spectacle when we arrived to take over, some of the men being caked with mud from head to foot, and with rifles and equipment in a deplorable condition. The state of the trenches was so execrable that there was little opportunity of recovering our natural appearance and self-respect. The men worked in mud, slept in mud, and ate mud with their rations; in fact they thought of everything in terms of mud. The weather was boisterous and wet, and to make matters worse, "Jerry" was obviously jumpy, and seemed unable to give over throwing "iron rations" at us. The men declared that he only stopped to snatch a hasty meal, and they

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expressed a fond hope that he got plenty of mud with it. In the night the enemy scored one unlucky hit direct on "A" Company's Headquarters, wounding three officers, Capt. G. O. D. Watson, the Company Commander, and 2nd Lieuts. J. Rae and J. D. Scott. After this, Lieut. Royce took over command of the company.

"B" Company's Headquarters received two direct hits, one of which killed two signallers and wounded three officers' servants.

On the night of the 28th of August the battalion moved up to the front system to relieve the 8th Seaforths. During the next forty-eight hours we were actually to regret our departure from the abominations of the reserve trenches. Our track lay right across the open towards Square Farm, and the enemy shelled us heavily the whole way up. Now we blessed the mud which but a short time before we had heartily cursed. For if it had not been for the thick gluey state of the ground, there would have been few of us left to tell the tale. The shells plunged, nose first, into the soft surface, greatly lessening the zone of danger. At times, too, we came under machine-gun fire, and lost another valuable officer, 2nd Lieut. R. R. Douglas, who was fatally wounded by shell-fire while trying to get his company into its new position.

Some of the men were dispersed in narrow ditches half-full of mud, and to them at least these two days and nights were one long nightmare; something, that to recollect even now, sends a shiver down the spine. The trenches were too shallow to allow of the

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men standing up, and the only thing to do was to lie down in the mud, while the enemy's guns raked us mercilessly, with hardly a break. Battalion Headquarters at Square Farm came in for a deal of unwelcome attention, but owing to the solidity of the structure little damage was done. The enemy had been at considerable labour to make the Farm as strong as possible; it was protected by 5 feet of reinforced concrete, and the interior was furnished with every available comfort. These concrete structures appeared to be built round most of the farm-houses in this sector; and they made a formidable line of strong points. The Hun had also made admirable use of a number of derelict tanks in the neighbourhood. These, sandbagged round, and defended by machine-gunners, constituted another line of obstacles which an attacking force must have found extremely troublesome.

Those who occupied Square Farm will long remember it as one of the hottest places on that front. The approaches to it were veritable death-traps, where no one ever chose to linger. In order to lessen the risks that messengers ran in entering or leaving the Farm, a forward Report Station was established in Pommern Redoubt, under Captain F. L. Hamilton, who was then acting as Second-in-Command.

On the 29th of August "B" Company went forward to relieve the H.L.I. in the left sub-sector of the 44th Brigade front. The battalion resumed its place as a unit of the 46th Brigade.

The 61st Division was now on our left. Our front,

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including part of Hill 35, skirted the eastern side of Pommern Redoubt, and linked up with the 10th Scottish Rifles on our right. The position on Hill 35 was so near to the enemy line that it escaped most of the shelling; but from the point of view of physical discomfort, it would have been hard to find a worse. Rain and the heavy soil had filled the front line fully knee-deep in soft watery mud; and there during the day, in order to be out of the enemy's sight, the men of the garrison were obliged to sit on the fire-step with their feet in the quagmire. "A" and "B" Companies shared one headquarters. It consisted of a very small sap, covered in by two stretchers, and protected at the open end by waterproof sheets to screen the light. The bottom of the sap was covered with sticky mud, from which it was scarcely possible to extricate one's feet. During the first night, rain fell steadily, and just as steadily dripped from the stretchers above. Battalion Headquarters, of course, required the usual map, showing dispositions, position of machine-guns, and various other details—"As soon as ever possible, and not later than 3 A.M." With an A.B.153, a copying pencil, and a candle, kept alight with great difficulty, as the only appliances, and with very little room for sitting and none for movement, this was by no means a simple matter.

The next order—"You will *immediately* get into touch with the troops on your right and left"—was also more easily said than done. It was pitch-dark, and the rest of the world seemed quite untenanted, with the exception of the lines opposite, from which



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rose the customary display of coloured lights. In the morning, by means of alternately crawling and wading, we got into touch with the 61st Division and took a sketch of their positions. From the hill there was a fine view of the "strafes" on Square Farm, Pommern Redoubt, and Frezenberg. After dusk, some digging was done on new posts that had been selected during the day; and a patrol was sent out to gather any information that could be gleaned of an enemy position on the crest of the hill.

On the night of the 30th we were relieved by the 2/5th Warwicks and the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers. The casualties for this tour were: one officer killed, three officers wounded, and twenty-six other ranks killed and wounded.

After a day spent at Bivouac Camp, we proceeded in buses by Poperinghe to a point near Arneke, and thence marched to billets in the vicinity. Thus ended our experience in the famous salient. Our losses had been very heavy: many were the fine officers and men left behind in that desolate region round the Frezenberg Ridge.

To replace the casualties a new draft arrived, including Lieut. G. A. Whyte and 2nd Lieuts. Carnachan and Jackson of the Scottish Horse. Just before the battalion moved, on the 2nd of September, a Frenchman, resident in those parts, suddenly discovered that the new draft had been billeted close to some fruit trees of his. He at once seized on the opportunity of making a little money, and put in a claim for 200 francs on account of damage to the

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trees, and loss of the fruit. As one or two twigs had certainly been newly broken, and as in spite of every appearance to the contrary, there may possibly have been a few green apples there at one time, an attempt had to be made to have the claim settled. He was offered about a quarter of his demand, and finally accepted 80 francs. The members of that particular draft may be identified by their paybooks. Under that date will be found in each man's book a debit entry of 2 francs.

That evening the battalion marched to Bavinchove, near Cassel, and entrained once more for the Arras district. By midnight we had reached Aubigny, and from there we marched to Duisans, halting for breakfast on the road. We arrived at the old familiar haunts, feeling too tired to notice the personage on the duck-board track juggling with a rifle. Later on some of us came to the conclusion that it must have been the Portuguese sentry presenting arms.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SCARPE VALLEY.

AS we marched along the stately St Pol-Arras Road once again, everything seemed to be conspiring to cheer us. All was quiet—no gun-fire, not even the drone of an aeroplane. The pure air and the serenity could not but revive us. "The fortune of us men, that are the moon's men, doth ebb and flow like the sea." So one of Shakespeare's soldiers says. The very stars seemed human enough to blink at us. And there was Vimy Ridge, quiet and dim against the sky, assuring us that the Hun had been driven back. Returning *joie de vivre* could be heard in the ring of the men's voices, as we bivouacked at the roadside for hot tea. But it was the sight of the sun rising over the green trees about the little white houses and red roofs of Duisans, and the shadows on the cool grassy fields sparkling in dew, that made one's blood tingle with joy. What a contrast to pock-marked Frezenberg, or scorched, monotonous "H.16." After an hour's sleep one felt that the world could offer nothing better for the moment than to let one be, drowsing on the delicious greenness.

The companies were put into the old huts that they occupied in February and in March, and for neighbours we had "our oldest allies." The trans-

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port lines were in an orchard strewn with windfalls of apples and plums. The mules and the cooks were laughing, but Mess-Sergeant Burbidge managed to get a share of the goods. For the first three days we were kept busy in cleaning up, reorganising and training. A game of football was played with the Portuguese, and an intensely funny game it was. To complete our enjoyment we were saved from a "thanks parade" by the timely arrival of this message: "The Commander of the 5th Army bids good-bye to the 15th Division with great regret. Its reputation has been earned on many battlefields, and has never stood higher than now. He wishes it all good fortune and many further successes in the future. 'Will ye no come back again?'"

From Duisans the battalion moved to Rifle Camp in the valley under Fred's Wood. The Quartermaster's stores and the transport lines were established in a capacious but derelict house and a ravished garden at St Nicholas. All was still comparatively quiet; Arras was reviving, flowers could still be seen in some of the gardens; even the trees of Blangy were green. The Scarpe looked very attractive: Colonel Dennis and Major Hart said they enjoyed a swim in the river at Fampoux, while waiting for the return launch to Arras Basin. For, at that time, there was a regular time-table of sailings on the Scarpe, not to speak of the light-railway system in the valley, with branches running to every useful corner that was hidden from direct enemy observation. It all seemed magical. The 12th Divi-

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sion ran "The Spades" in the Arras theatre; the New Zealand tunnellers had a tennis court; an officers' "Rest House" was being built in the public gardens.

Until we went to Berneville the Division was now more or less about the Scarpe Valley. Battalions were spending about eight days in the first trench system, eight days in support, and eight in reserve billets at Arras. When we were in support we generally lived in Nissen huts, but sometimes it was a matter of living in trenches, and on occasions a company that should have been relieved had to remain in the first system in order to strengthen the relieving battalion. There were working parties in the caves at Fampoux and Roeux which spent weeks at a stretch sleeping in the bowels of the earth, as it were. Just east of Athies, the Brigade wiring party under Captain Henderson, ate, played, schemed and slept below the ground. During all this period the Transport Section was having what must have been the best time in its existence thus far. They had comfortable billets in the cellars under the debris of the ruined houses, rations generally went forward by river or rail; good stables were built for the animals. The Quartermaster and the Transport Officer could stroll down of an evening to the cinema theatre or to a concert in Arras, and dine afterwards at the comfortable club or in a civilian hotel, with company, wines and cigars hard to get even in London.

Those in the trenches, too, had a better time than usual. It was so quiet that Jimmy Hay made ovens in the rearward trenches, and sent hot food forward;

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and when we took over from the 2nd Essex in the line on the 6th of September, a canteen was established near Headquarters and supplied the men with their favourite dainties. We set to work at once on the trenches, in particular revetting the front line; but with the exception of a heavy barrage on the 13th, the enemy continued to be remarkably quiet and well behaved. On the night of the 15th, the 10th Scottish Rifles relieved us. "A" Company under Lieut. Royce was left in Happy Valley, as the Rifles were low in numbers. On the 19th, "B" Company under Captain Weir relieved "A" Company, and by the 23rd the whole battalion was back at Rifle Camp. During this period the battalion was reinforced by several officers, including 2nd Lieuts. Fenwick, Wyper, Jamie, Dryburgh, Gormley, Lindsay, Torrance, Haining, M'Cubbin; and 373 other ranks. The following N.C.Os. and men were awarded the Military Medal for gallantry in Flanders: Sergeant A. Duncan, Private Cavanagh, Private P. Gray, Lance-Corporal J. Moss, Lance-Corporal J. M. Rooney, Lance-Corporal H. Waring. Sergeant E. Ridley, M.M., received a bar to his medal.

On the night of the 1st of October the battalion relieved the 9th Black Watch, taking over a front extending from the River Scarpe on the right flank, to within about 300 yards of the Chemical Works of Roeux. The support companies were in shelters dug into an embankment 1500 yards from the front line. Close behind were several lagoons with facilities for bathing, and for fishing too—when Mills' bombs

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could be obtained. Even shooting parties went out, after the wild fowl, until a General was nearly "pinked," and then an Army Order put a stop to the sport forthwith.

For the eight days of this tour we were on the never-ending job of improving the trenches and digging new ones. We practised communication by carrier pigeons, visual signalling and power buzzer. There was constant patrolling, especially along the river bank. "F" post, immediately south of the Scarpe, was taken over and manned by one officer and twenty-two other ranks. As the garrison of "F" had several times been snaffled by the enemy, we established telephone communication with the post, and otherwise gave it particular attention. One night a patrol of the 10/11th H.L.I. found it deserted. As on previous occasions the first information of the loss of the post had been obtained by overhearing German telephones intimating the snaffle, the H.L.I. were keen to show their smartness. Their Headquarters immediately rang up Brigade and gleefully reported that the garrison of "F" post had been captured; only to be informed that the K.O.S.B. had been ordered to withdraw temporarily on account of a strafe. The enemy was becoming rather more active as the time went on, but we had only seven casualties, and of these one man was killed and four were wounded by a single trench mortar shell. Rations and stores went forward by barge from Blangy Lock to Crump Wharf.

On being relieved by the 10th Scottish Rifles the

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battalion went to Middlesex Camp, about 500 yards north of Blangy in the old "No Man's Land." Fatigue parties were for ever being sent up to the forward area during this spell; on one night the battalion supplied no fewer than 240 other ranks.

Major Whigham, who had just joined from the United Kingdom, took over command of the battalion while Colonel Dennis was gone to the 2nd Division to give a lecture on our operations at Ypres.

When we moved into Divisional reserve, the battalion was billeted in Arras. Those who had been there at the time of the battle of Arras in April, found it now a very different place. Divisions and smaller units had their own entertainments, open to all; there was a huge canteen; the Y.M.C.A., the Church Army, the Scottish Churches' Huts were humming with life. "Your comedy," wrote Marshal Saxe to Favert about 1746, "I do not regard simply as an object of amusement; it enters into my political views and into my plans of military operations." But in our case amusements were not restricted to officers. Our Divisional concert party, "The Jocks," were in full swing, and "The Frolics" packed the house by the fame of their songs. Civilians opened their estaminets and their fancy-good shops, fish shops, green-grocers' shops—shops of any sort, so long as they could boast a roof. Happily, when the enemy shelled, he devoted himself to the railhead down in the Goods Yards.

When the battalion went into the line again, it moved up by light railway. The enemy was more



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active on this tour, shelling in particular the communication trenches: our casualties were four killed and fourteen wounded. Just before "stand to" one morning a German of the 38th Division showed himself and was brought in—a lucky identification, for it was very much wanted. On the night of the 8th of November a party of three officers and fifty-six other ranks attempted to raid a short section of the enemy's trenches north-east of Monchy-le-Preux, but did not succeed in getting any farther than the Boche wire. The wounded were all brought back. Work in the trenches was endless. When we came into Stirling Camp, which was on the west side of the railway embankment between the Arras-Roeux Road and the Scarpe, our whole time was consumed with cleaning up and fatigues, and while we were in Arras fatigues were so heavy that they interfered with training.

On the night of the 18th of November we relieved the 9th Black Watch while it was doing "stunts." On the following night raids were made by the battalions on our right and left; and as it was dark, we began, when the enemy trench mortars had ceased firing, to carry up smoke-bombs and to put up a series of dummy figures. At 3 A.M. gas projectors were successfully discharged from the battalion sector, the retaliation being so weak that we suffered no casualties. At 6.20 A.M., when the Cambrai attack opened, we released smoke, and raised the dummy figures. The enemy immediately put up coloured lights and opened a fairly heavy artillery fire, supplemented by machine-gun fire, keeping it going on the front system

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and the communication trenches till between 7.30 and 8 A.M., when their barrage died down. Throughout the day our artillery was firing in heavy bursts at irregular intervals. Next morning about daybreak the enemy seemed to be still nervous and was restlessly active with his artillery and trench mortars. At 6 A.M. the 10/11th H.L.I. on our right made a raid and found the enemy on the alert and in strength. It was on this tour that a "mystery" cropped up over a boat on the Scarpe. The Scarpe at this point formed a defence for our right flank. Behind our front trench, as it were, but on the south side of the river ran a front trench of the enemy. From the apex of the angle formed by our trench and the river there could be seen a broken ridge, and, underneath it, something dark. Now Fritz had been harassing the posts near the river, and three times had actually bagged the garrison of "F" post intact. The dark thing below the bridge, which could be seen only as a shadow, might be a boat. So one night a patrol under two stout-hearted officers went out stealthily along the river bank. They soon discovered that they could not in any case capture the "boat" except by swimming for it. Two men were eager to do this, but it was so intensely cold that they were not allowed to try. There was nothing for it but bombs. While the patrol was making a fiendish din with bombs, and more or less intent upon hitting the dark thing under the bridge, a Hun ran out from a post across the river, and soon afterwards a trench mortar circulated through the air almost unheard, and burst in the middle of the

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party. No one was injured, and the patrol made off without waiting to carry their investigations any further. Before we finished the tour a man got across the Scarpe by means of a rope, but could see no boat. Some thought that the dark object was merely a piece of broken masonry; but whatever it was, it was hit by bombs!

After a night and a couple of days in huts, we took over a part of the line from the 61st Division in the Chemical Works Sector. It was a particularly quiet sector. There was scarcely any firing from 5 A.M. on the 30th of November until 7 P.M. on the 1st of December. With the exception of "C" Company which had to occupy three posts in Lancer Lane, the battalion was relieved on the sixth night and moved back to trenches north-west of Fampoux, where there was a good water supply, and where some of the dug-outs were brilliantly lit with electric light.

Fatigues were the order of the day. There was an immense amount of wiring to be done. While we were in Divisional reserve in Arras, there were also Brigade fatigue duties to perform, and at the same time the whole battalion was under orders to be ready to move forward at two hours' notice; for an unusual stir had been observed in the enemy back areas. "Stand to" was ordered daily, rouse at 5 A.M. and breakfast at 5.30, with the normal daily routine beginning at 9.30.

Christmas was once more drawing near, and, as by Christmas Day the battalion was to be in the front trenches, arrangements were made to hold our festivi-

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ties on the 16th of December. At the usual dinner hour the men had a solid meal, rounded off by the contents of parcels from home and by special Christmas delicacies from the Expeditionary Force Canteen. The officers' mess room was profusely decorated with evergreens, baubles and brightly coloured paper streamers. Beautifully painted menu cards were presented by "Maps," Private W. P. Willocks. Sergeant Burbidge and Corporal Jackson had been wondrously successful in procuring the oysters, turkeys and trimmings of a memorable Christmas dinner. Toasts were drunk to "The King," "Colonel Sellar," and "Absent Friends"; conversation buzzed, and songs were sung until "Auld Lang Syne" brought the gathering to its close.

From the night of the 17th until the 27th the battalion was in the front trenches. The weather grew colder, and on Christmas Day there was a fall of snow. In order to maintain the festive spirit of the season, the Y.M.C.A. made a kitchen near the Battalion Headquarters and served out hot cocoa and biscuits to our men, and in fact to all who passed on the road between 7 P.M. and 1 A.M. on the 24th, 25th and 26th. We made arrangements with the Y.M.C.A. to keep the kitchen going for the remainder of our time, and hot cocoa was carried to those in front by a party from the reserve company. We were in the front line, with a break of two days in the support trenches, until the night of the 1st of January, when we were relieved by the 2nd Scots Guards.

The afternoon of the 2nd of January saw us on the



GROUP OF OFFICERS—January 1918



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march to Berneville, which is a small clustering village on fork roads, with just sufficient cubic capacity per man to fulfil the regulations. The weather of the first two and a half weeks of January was vile. Fields became quagmires; snow, wind and rain came through the roofs of the men's billets, sometimes all three together. Corps sent a few engineers with limited time and material to make repairs; and certain repairs were made just before the fine weather returned.

The Commanding Officer inspected the battalion on the 5th of January. Next day there was a New Year dinner in the cinematograph hut, when comforts from the Regimental Committee were distributed. These were hailed as an inestimable boon. During dinner, in a scene of great enthusiasm, the C.O. toasted "The Regiment," and amidst a thunder of cheering a list of New Year Honours was read, which included the names of Colonel T. B. Sellar, C.M.G., who received the D.S.O., Sergeant J. Osborne who received the M.S.M., and Sergeant Joe Carmichael who received a long overdue D.C.M.

The Divisional Commander inspected the battalion on the morning of the 17th, and expressed his pleasure at the turn-out.

Next day, in delightfully sunny weather, we began to train in the Wailly area, practising "attack in the open." In the course of this training Colonel Dennis once flew over our heads and finished up by popping off Verey lights from his aeroplane at a bunch of the officers.

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On the 19th the battalion beat the Scottish Rifles and the 10/11th H.L.I. in the Brigade Tug-o'-war Competition, and on the following day won the final against the 12th H.L.I. On the 30th, after some very exciting heaves, we pulled over the team of the 8/10th Gordon Highlanders, and won the Divisional Cup. The success of the team was largely due to the training and coaching of Sergeant Dillon.

Many an evening at Berneville was pleasantly spent at the Divisional cinematograph or at concerts provided by one unit or another; and at a later stage of our stay there, boxing competitions filled up some very entertaining afternoons.

But this time of training and recreation could not last for ever. It ended on the 6th of February. In the darkness of a winter's evening the battalion once again entered Arras, ready to meet a deluge of Huns. A few weeks later the deluge came.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DEFENCE OF ARRAS.

AS the conditions at Berneville had been rather miserable, there was a general feeling of relief in the battalion on leaving that village to enter Arras once again in Brigade reserve; the 15th Division taking over from the 4th Division on a three Brigade front with one battalion in reserve.

The whole battalion was billeted in the Ecole des Jeunes Filles, in peace-time a large and well-appointed boarding-school. One of the lady teachers who had remained in occupation since the beginning of the war in spite of the periodical shelling to which the building had been subjected, now conducted classes in French for the benefit of the troops; and delivered lectures, illustrated by lantern slides, on the various cities of France. She had been awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French Government for bravery.

The preliminary rounds in the Army Rifle Association's Competition were fired on the 7th of February. The Competition was organised and prizes were given by the A.R.A. to encourage shooting, under service conditions, throughout the Army. The Competition, briefly, was one of platoon teams, including Lewis guns, firing at figure targets at different and

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unknown ranges while advancing over the open from one firing point to another. Points were awarded for hits, style and time. After the best teams within battalions had been selected, these fired within the Brigade; and the Competition was continued throughout Divisions, Corps and Armies, each formation being represented by its winning team.

The Competition within the battalion was won by Platoon No. 16, commanded by Lieut. T. Gormley. The same platoon subsequently won the Brigade Competition, beating a team of the 10th Scottish Rifles in the final. The battalion representatives were, however, narrowly beaten in the Divisional final by the 11th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. They scored the highest number of hits, but finished a good second, only seven points out of several hundreds behind the winners.

Efforts to keep the men amused were not neglected, and on the 8th of February the battalion attended a performance of "Robinson Crusoe," which was given by the Divisional Concert Party at Arras. The seats for the entertainment were paid for out of the battalion canteen funds.

At this time the Brigade was reorganised on a three-battalion basis. The 10/11th and 12th H.L.I. Battalions were transferred to other Divisions, and the 46th Brigade was then composed of the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers, the 10th Scottish Rifles and the 9th Black Watch, transferred from the 44th Brigade. One Machine-gun Company and one Trench Mortar Battery were also included. The inclusion of the

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Black Watch was the first real departure from the non-kilted character of the Brigade.

On the 13th of February the battalion moved forward to relieve the 10th Scottish Rifles in Brigade support in the left sector of the Divisional front. We took over at a point near Happy Valley which led up from the River Scarpe towards Monchy, on the eastern side of Orange Hill, that outstanding feature in the surrounding landscape. Steps were taken to hold up the enemy offensive that might be expected to come as soon as the weather permitted. Our job was to provide large working parties which were detailed to carry up and erect wire, to deepen existing trenches and make new ones, and to provision strong points. Wiring parties consisted of one officer and ten men. Three of these parties succeeded in erecting in five nights no less than 1000 yards of good entanglements, although the work had to be carried out in the dark, and in spite of the fact that the enemy was covering the whole area with gas-shells.

On the 19th, when the battalion took over the front sector from the 10th Scottish Rifles, our 1400 yards of frontage ran from the River Scarpe on the left to a point near the Pelves-Monchy Road. Battalion Headquarters were in Welford Reserve trench, about 1000 yards from the front line.

During this week in the line "B" Company carried out a venturesome raid. The party, under 2nd Lieuts. Paton and M'Quade, succeeded in outflanking an enemy post and intended to rush the garrison, but, unluckily, they were spotted when getting into posi-

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tion. The Hun was very alert. 2nd Lieut. M'Quade was wounded and the party was compelled to return without any prisoners from whom we might have identified the units opposite to us, but it was satisfied that casualties had been inflicted on the enemy.

A great deal of work was done at nights on a system of shell-hole defences between the first and second line trenches. The largest shell-holes were dug out, stocked with ammunition and supplies, and camouflaged. The idea was that these holes should be manned in case of a threatened attack; and, as they were well isolated, it was hoped they would miss any barrage that the Hun might lay down on the well-defined trenches.

On the 10th of March the battalion was again disposed in Brigade support in Happy Valley, with Battalion Headquarters in an "elephant" shelter close against the bank.

On the next day, orders were received that battle positions should be taken up during the night. An unusual amount of activity was observed in the enemy lines, the constant harassing fire was becoming more vigorous, and altogether it was thought that an attack was coming very soon. The battalion was reported in position before midnight. Breakfasts were eaten before dawn, and we "stood to" from 5 A.M. to 7 A.M. Battle stations continued to be manned for the next three days, but no enemy attack developed. The "wits" of the battalion surpassed their normal facetiousness on the subject of this procedure.

On the evening of the 16th we were relieved and

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moved back into reserve, occupying huts in Tilloy Wood about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Arras on the Cambrai Road. This position had been chosen instead of Arras itself because of its closer proximity to the line, and in the hope that if the enemy attacked, it would save many casualties, the town and the few conspicuous roads leading out of it being sure to be heavily shelled. Colonel Dennis, who had left on the 1st of March on a month's leave, was wired for, and arrived back to resume command, having made the crossing in an aeroplane. Major A. E. Burnett was officially appointed Second-in-Command of the battalion from the 19th of March.

In spite of its position Tilloy Camp was shelled, but we had very few casualties, for the huts had all been made splinter-proof by banking up the sides with sandbags and revetting material.

On the 21st of March orders were received to move two companies forward to man the reserve trenches on the summit of Orange Hill, as the Hun had attacked on a wide front at dawn. The battalion had been kept in a state of constant readiness for any sudden move; "A" and "D" companies, complete with extra iron rations, entrenching tools and full battle kit, were in position on Orange Hill within two hours from the time the order was received, although they had covered a distance of fully 2 miles to get there.

The remaining companies cleared up the camp; surplus blankets and stores were sent back to the transport lines; and when the attack developed, the transport, which had been stationed in the south-east

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outskirts of Arras, was moved back to Dainville under a scheme previously prepared.

The heavy stores were sent to Boulogne, and in this connection we must not forget to mention that the officer who had selected the surplus material, and who was noted for the cut and fit of his garments, had taken the opportunity of sending away a rival's superb tartan slacks amongst the stores. This was not only annoying, but serious.

The transport, ably led by Lieut. J. E. Thomson, with Sergeant M'Vittie as Transport Sergeant, were very much cheered, on their way back to the new lines, by meeting an agitated Staff Officer, whose object in life at the time was to assure every one that there was no danger, and that they must not get excited. That night the transport slept much more peacefully.

As the enemy's intentions were not yet clear, "B" and "C" companies were moved forward at daybreak to occupy Jerusalem Trench on Orange Hill, from which the other two companies had been withdrawn the previous night. The attack, however, seemed to be continuing farther to the south. The battalion then received orders to take over a frontage of 800 yards on the summit of Orange Hill, from the Arras-Cambrai Road northwards to the junction with the 4th Division. Battalion Headquarters were situated in a small dugout in Invergordon Trench, about 300 yards behind Jerusalem Trench.

Then orders were received to fill in the gaps in the wire on our front; and finally the order came that

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the troops in front of us were to evacuate the trench systems they held, thus giving up Monchy-le-Preux. Only one company from each Brigade was left to hold the Brigade fronts, and these companies had instructions to fall back as soon as the enemy approached in force. For us, that night was spent in deepening trenches and getting ammunition into position. The 10th Scottish Rifles took over the southern portion of our front, leaving us with 500 yards. Soon after daybreak on the 23rd, the enemy put down a heavy barrage on the front trenches; the companies in front of us gradually fell back; by 10 A.M. they had all passed through our new front line. At 10.30 A.M. the Hun could be seen on a line drawn north and south through Monchy, but although he pushed some distance farther west, he did not press on against our line. The intensity of the enemy's fire gradually increased during the next few days: Arras could be seen going up in clouds of dust. Life for us still consisted, however, in deepening trenches and carrying up ammunition, until "Der Tag" arrived with dawn on the 28th.

If ever the lid was taken off Hell, it must have been on the 28th of March 1918. The battalion was the left unit of the Brigade and also of the Division. The 4th Division joined us in a composite post in Pelves Lane on the north, and the 4/5th Black Watch held the front line on the south; while the 10th Scottish Rifles acted as Brigade reserve 2 kilometres behind. Following a preliminary bombardment of great intensity, the Hun attacked about 6 A.M., using his

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dreaded liquid fire. His numerous aeroplanes, too, machine-gunned us for a horrible half-hour, until our squadrons appeared in the sky and chased them back. The units on our right were more exposed than we were, and so heavy were their casualties, that they found it impossible to hold up the enemy, who was attacking in his old massed formation. Our own artillery was doing a great amount of shooting, but not at close quarters, as the situation was very obscure; and even then, we suffered not a few casualties through our own gunfire being "short."

"A" Company, on our left front, reported that they were holding their own; and Colonel Dennis therefore decided to pivot his battalion on its left flank, and thus to form a line of resistance running practically east and west. We then linked up on our right with the 10th Scottish Rifles, who had sent out a company to meet us in order to help us to fill the gap.

Unfortunately, we could not get into touch with Brigade except by runners, because the buried cable test-box near Brigade Headquarters had been blown up, and all telephonic communication forward was severed. We held on stubbornly to our new line till about noon, when we were ordered to come back on to the crest of Infantry Hill and to conform to the general line which was being held to the south. In this new line we were unmercifully shelled. The weather broke down, and we spent a long, miserable night out in the open in rain and sleet. At dusk we made a rearrangement of our front, by moving for-



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ward for several hundred yards. The Huns saw us coming, and quite a number of them, thinking that it was a counter-attack, "got a move on" eastwards also.

So ended the 28th of March. We knew that we had been "up against it," and though we had given ground, we felt sure that we had been the masters of the situation. This was fixed in our minds so firmly, that many of us were convinced that it was not necessary for us to come back at all. But, then, we were only a minute unit in a huge defensive operation. Little did we think, however, that we had baffled Ludendorff to such an extent that he was afterwards compelled to affirm that his failure to take Arras on that day was really the beginning of the end.

For this operation Captain Patrick was awarded a bar to his M.C., and Captain G. A. Whyte, who commanded "A" Company, an M.C. 2nd Lieut. M. Fenwick, our Intelligence Officer, did very gallant work, for which he was recommended for the M.C., and was mentioned in Despatches.

Field-Marshal Earl Haig, addressing a meeting of Lowland Scots in Edinburgh, on the 1st of December 1919, said:—

"In the great German effort of March 1918, one of the most critical days of the battle, as we learned from Ludendorff himself, was the 28th of March, when the enemy attempted to break through the northern hinge of our defence east of Arras, and failed with enormous loss. One of the British Divisions that played a distinguished part in breaking up that

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mighty attack was the 15th Scottish Division, and the battalions in the line included the 13th Royal Scots and the 7/8th King's Own Scottish Borderers."

During the time that we were endeavouring to arrest the enemy advance on Orange Hill, the details of the battalion were being marshalled into a fighting force to form a last line of resistance. The following account of the doings of this unit is well worthy of mention under the title of "The S.O.S. Battalion." (S.O.S. is the name given to the coloured lights put up by the front line infantry in calling for artillery support when it is seen that the enemy has begun to attack.)

### *The S.O.S. Battalion.*

On the 28th of March 1918, the British Army was putting up the S.O.S. on a wide front. The Hun was attacking in force on the whole Arras Sector, threatening the long-suffering old town with complete destruction.

Orders were issued that all personnel of the 15th Division left out of the line, including bandsmen, shoemakers, tailors, cooks and Orderly Room clerks, should be immediately organised into a battalion of three companies (one for each Brigade), and held in readiness to withstand the onslaught of the Hun. The details of each battalion formed one platoon. Major Kennedy of the 6th Camerons was in command and Major F. L. Hamilton, M.C., 7/8th K.O.S.B., O.C. 46th Brigade Company, acted as Second-in-Command.

Within two hours from the receipt of orders, the

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battalion was organised, equipped, and on the move to the trenches east and south-east of Dainville. This line was organised for defence, Battalion and Company Headquarters were occupied, and every one was settling down, when fresh orders arrived. The Hun onset had evidently proved less strong than had been anticipated. The unit which had been designed to defend the last ditches of Dainville was now to be thrown into the line near Tilloy in the hope of saving Arras from destruction.

There was some doubt as to the exact place in the line which the S.O.S. Battalion was to fill, but "guides would be provided," so onward it marched to meet the foe.

The K.O.S.B. and the Scottish Rifle platoons kept in close touch as they marched through Achicourt and Ronville; but by some misfortune the Black Watch contingent failed to follow up. On approaching the Cambrai Road, they realised that the Faubourg St Sauveur was not exactly the proper place to halt in the circumstances, so they switched off into the old British lines outside Arras, south of the Cambrai Road. No guides could be found, so Captain Foulis of the Scottish Rifles decided to make an attempt to locate the Brigade Headquarters, which were known to be in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile the troops found what shelter they could, and waited patiently in the pouring rain.

As it was very dark and all lights were carefully concealed, it was no easy matter for Captain Foulis to find his objective; but he returned at about 11 P.M.

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with the news that the companies were not wanted at Tilloy, and were to occupy a position in the Ficheux-Telegraph Hill switch-line in front of Beaurains. The news that he brought convinced every one that the 15th Division had not been completely wiped out, or even deprived of the power of making a further resistance if necessary. The Division was still holding a line in front of Tilloy, and the 9th Gordons (Pioneer Battalion) had been put into the line on the right, where a gap was said to exist. The position on the front of the 3rd Division was reported to be "obscure." This of course was taken to mean that the 3rd Division had been practically wiped out, and that the taking over of their front by the "S.O.S." was the only hope of stemming the onward rush of the Hun. So far, nothing had been heard of the Black Watch contingent. However, the loss of a platoon was nothing in these times; so the remainder, under the direction of Major Kennedy and a guide of the 9th Gordons, made their way by platoons at 200 yards' distance.

The Ficheux-Telegraph Hill switch-line was indicated by deep red lines on the map, but on the ground it was by no means so obvious; and after passing what was left of Beaurains, the guide began to show some doubt as to the precise location of the line.

After a long search, a tape was discovered pegged down in such a way as to suggest that a line had at least been surveyed. It was thereupon decided that this line must come into actual existence forthwith. A definite sector was allotted to each platoon, in

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front and support lines, with orders to get under cover before daylight. It was now after midnight, so that the task prescribed was no light one for amateurs in the art of using pick and shovel.

Such was the general enthusiasm, however, that when day dawned, scarcely a head could be seen. The Boche gunners did not altogether ignore this new line, but that was never allowed to interfere with the progress of the good work; for was not the Hun's machine-gun by day infinitely more dangerous than his shelling by night?

Perhaps these trenches were not strictly orthodox in pattern, but at all events they were original. Sergeant Butler, master shoemaker, and his stalwart team produced a masterpiece in trench-making; the trench fitted them exactly. Other parts of the trench were obviously intended for the man with a 42-inch chest, and suddenly there came parts to suit the dwarf with a 34-inch measurement. What about traverses? Well, they would materialise later. The hand of the expert was apparent in the section designed, but not yet completed, by those who in normal times recorded, on the map, lines of perfect trenches in bright blue and red, from which issued belts of coloured fire, to the satisfaction of the most exacting "brass-hat."

About dawn it became evident that the situation was not quite so desperate as people had imagined. After all, the 3rd Division, or a remnant of it, was still hanging on to part of Neuville-Vitesse and other positions in the neighbourhood; and so, after "stand

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to," the more venturesome began to stroll over the ground in front, and got into touch with some Canadians who had suddenly appeared on the right flank during the night. Others of the "S.O.S." devoted themselves to the exploration of a deserted Y.M.C.A. hut, and Quartermaster's stores, in the camp adjoining, until their movements came under the notice of the Hun, who thereupon summarily stopped the appropriation of goods which had not been indented for on the proper Army Form. Later on in the day it was discovered that on the forward slope a line of partially dug trenches did exist, and several remarks that had previously been made, reflecting on Staff Officers in general and map-makers in particular, had to be withdrawn.

Except for occasional shelling directed principally upon the cross-roads in Beaurains near the Battalion Headquarters, the day passed uneventfully. During the night some work was done on the trenches in front, and between midnight and 2 A.M. the 1st Canadians arrived and took over the line. The march back to Dainville was finished before dawn, and the adventures of the "S.O.S." Battalion came to an end. No casualties occurred in the K.O.S.B. contingent. The Black Watch, failing to gain touch, had moved up to Tilloy and finally joined their own battalion, where they fared much worse than did their comrades who had valiantly stepped into the breach on Telegraph Hill.

After the 28th of March certain slight alterations were made in the method of holding the line, but the

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battalion continued in the front sector of the area till the end of the month.

The work of deepening and improving the trenches, wiring, carrying up explosives and rations, was still continued under frequent interruptions from enemy artillery fire; though, luckily, his fire was not accurate. No doubt he had changed his battery positions, and had not yet had leisure to register our trenches.

The battalion casualties from the 28th to the 31st of March were: 2nd Lieut. Laird and 10 O.R. killed; 1 O.R. wounded and missing; Lieut. Forbes Dennis, 2nd Lieut. G. Jackson and 36 O.R. wounded; and 39 O.R. missing. In a number of cases the bodies of these men were afterwards recovered.

The conduct of all ranks in the battalion during the operations on the 28th cannot be too highly praised. The strain of waiting to be attacked was unbroken, but every man bore himself with admirable spirit.

By the 1st of April we were beginning to settle into new trenches quite comfortably. On the morning of the 2nd the enemy attempted to raid one of the small shell-hole groups thrown out in front of our main line; but his effort was repulsed and one dead German was left behind, whose body was identified as having belonged to the 161st Infantry Regiment, 12th Division. An automatic pistol was picked up by Sergeant Rowan of "A." Company, a trophy which was to prove of value to its owner later on. It may be noted that a raid on the battalion on our right, and later, one against the battalion on our left, had both been fairly successful, and this success had apparently

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made the enemy bolder than usual. He succeeded in taking prisoners from the battalion on our left, and in capturing a Sergeant-Major of the right battalion, who was issuing rum to certain outlying posts. It is not known whether the S.M. had the time and the presence of mind to dispose of the remainder of the issue satisfactorily before he was captured.

The Germans made another attempt against the battalion on the night of the 2nd of April. The particular post attacked lay in an old gun-pit. The raid was quickly repulsed ; some of the enemy were hit ; the remainder scattered ; one of them was seen to run into a neighbouring pit. Sergeant Rowan gave chase along a passage connecting the two pits, and shot the Hun with the pistol taken the previous night.

On the morning of the 6th a German approached one of our posts. Private Shaw of " D " Company immediately dashed out and secured him. It turned out that an enemy relief was in progress, and that this man had lost his way and had gone off in a wrong direction. Our artillery was immediately informed, and in all probability caught the Huns in the act of carrying out the relief.

On the evening of the 7th of April the 10th Scottish Rifles took over from us, and we moved back into Brigade reserve in the Ronville Caves. These caves lay on the south-east outskirts of Arras, and had been made by joining up old underground workings in order to give cover for the reserves in the April attack of 1917. They had numerous exits near the old British front line, and even as far back as the centre



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of Arras itself, a distance of about 2 miles along the main passage. The caves were deep enough to give absolute security against shell-fire ; they were, besides, protected against the entry of gas, and were lit by electricity. But they were so damp that the health of the battalion suffered, the Medical Officer having as many as fifty sick men to deal with every day, during our stay there till the 12th of April.

A draft of 150 O.R. joined us while we were in the caves, but fifty of these were boys under the age of nineteen, and were retained at Brigade Headquarters to act as fatigue men.

After two days in the front sector of the Blangy, or second system of trenches, we moved one stage farther back to cellars in the Grande Place, Arras ; and in the evening moved again with the whole Brigade into Divisional reserve at Agnez-lez-Duisans. The battalion was accommodated in Marne Camp, where it remained till the 21st of April, training, reorganising, and cleaning up.

Another draft of 134 O.Rs. arrived during this rest-period, and brought the battalion nearly up to strength.

Sports were held on the afternoon of the 20th, the chief feature being the officers' mule scurry, won by Colonel Dennis on " Donald," the battalion's fastest mule. There was also a band race, in which each competitor played his own particular instrument as he ran ; and an officers' flat race of 100 yards, in which each officer was granted a start of one yard for every year over the age of the youngest. This

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event was won by Lieut. J. K. Ballantyne, who seemed to be starting half-way up the course as viewed by a "back-marker."

On the 21st of April we moved forward again and occupied cellars in the Petite Place, Arras, in Brigade reserve. The cookers went forward also, so that every one was made very comfortable.

On the 23rd we left Arras at noon by companies for the "Y huts"—an encampment of wooden huts at Etrun, 4 miles west of Arras. In the afternoon we discovered that this "rest" was to be of short duration, as the Division was required farther north, owing to the Huns' activities against the Portuguese near Festubert. We learned also that the battalion would "embus" on the following day as part of the 15th Division for transference to the 13th Corps, then holding the line north of the La Basse Canal.

At 7.45 A.M. on the 24th we moved off to the embussing point for Burbure, with the exception of the transport, which was brigaded and proceeded separately. The Division then became part of the 1st Army reserve in the 13th Corps area.

We occupied the upper part of the village of Burbure, the part which the 7th Battalion had occupied in 1915; and many friendships that had been made at that time, by men who were still with the battalion, were pleasantly renewed.

Inspections, sports and training filled in the time. At midnight on the 28th we received a warning order that we were to return to Arras. Definite orders were received at 4 A.M., and at 9 A.M. the

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transport moved off. After strenuous work in cleaning billets, the battalion fell in to march to Pernes Station, there to entrain. Just as we were on the point of departing, a Staff car dashed up to inform us that the move was "off," and that other cars had been sent after the transport. The battalion had therefore to be dismissed; and before another meal could be prepared, had to wait till the transport returned with the cookers. It was late in the evening when the transport came back, very tired and very cross.

On the 2nd of May orders were again received that we were to return to Arras to rejoin the 17th Corps, and although up to the last moment there was great scepticism, the orders turned out this time to be final. We left Burbure and all the old friends there, and once more started for Pernes Station, where we entrained, arriving about 4 P.M. at Maroeuil.

On our arrival at Arras we were billeted for the night in the cellars under the Museum, and on the 4th we took over from the 8th and 10th Canadian Battalions a front line which ran from Fampoux Village on the north to the south-east end of Feuchy Village on the south. Our front thus lay astride the River Scarpe for about 800 yards on either side. The Battalion Headquarters were situated in the embankment at the east end of the "railway triangle." The following three days passed uneventfully, except that efforts were made to improve and strengthen our front and to better communication on either flank and across the river.

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Our front was held by a series of posts at distances of from 100 to 200 yards apart, with alternate posts, in some instances, which were manned at night. Work by day was almost hopeless, as most of the front was under observation from the surrounding heights.

Information given by German prisoners led to the belief in higher quarters that the enemy was about to attempt another offensive on the Arras front; and, in consequence, our artillery was kept very busy and the battalion "stood to," prepared for any eventualities. The Hun, however, gave no sign of any intention to attack, and did not even make any vigorous reply to our artillery fire. Nevertheless the tension seemed to continue so long as the tour lasted; constant listening patrols had to be kept out in front to give the alarm; and reports on the situation had to be sent in at stated intervals. We were relieved on the 11th of May by the 8th Seaforths and moved back to Portsmouth Camp on the Arras-Lens Road, where we remained till the 16th of May, every night providing working parties, up to 500 men strong, for work on the reserve lines.

On the 16th we relieved the 13th Royal Scots in the front line west of Gavrelle, with "B" and "D" Companies in the front line and "A" and "C" in reserve. The ground had previously been in the enemy's hands up to the time of our Arras offensive in April 1917; and as the whole of the sector was on the forward slope, little movement was allowed by daylight, and all cooking had to be done at night; but, on the other hand, thanks to the enemy's inactivity, a great deal of work was overtaken between dusk and dawn

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in clearing up and improving the trenches. Battalion Headquarters were situated in a strange old series of gun-pits where one gun still stood pointing towards Arras. Guesses at the age of this gun varied from 50 to 250 years, and the general impression was that it had been placed there as a decoy, and that the proper gun position was some little distance away.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### RAIDS, PATROLS AND RELIEFS.

THE 18th of May was a quiet day on the battalion front. After dark, work was begun on a series of shell-hole positions, about 150 yards behind our line, which were prepared by cutting down the forward face to make a fire-step. These positions were selected in order to minimise losses from artillery fire on our trenches.

Early on the morning of the 19th, as Lieut.-Colonel M. F. B. Dennis, D.S.O., accompanied by his runner, Corporal Adamson, was returning from a tour of the trenches, he was struck by a trench mortar shell and killed. They were passing an opening in the trench when the shell landed, and Corporal Adamson, who happened to be partly protected by the trench, was knocked down, but with the exception of a slight shock, escaped injury. There was very little activity at the time, and the trench mortar shell was one of the very few sent over that morning.

The body of Colonel Dennis was brought down to the transport lines in Agnez-lez-Duisans at midnight, and placed in a hut, which had been prepared for the purpose. A sentry was posted at the door.

It had been decided that the burial should take place in the cemetery at Ecoivres, situated on the



LIEUT.-COLONEL M. F. B. DENNIS, D.S.O.





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western slope of the hill on the summit of which stands the picturesque ruin of the old Mont St Eloy Abbey.

At 12 noon on the following day, the escort lined up at the door of the hut in two ranks facing inwards, and the coffin, covered with the Union Jack, was borne out and placed on a gun-carriage by the bearers, Captain and Quartermaster J. Goss, Captain T. L. Millar, Lieut. J. K. Ballantyne, Lieut. J. E. Thomson, Lieut. W. Ovens, and 2nd Lieut. J. M'Millan. Then the cortege, preceded by the pipe band of the battalion playing "The Flowers of the Forest," moved off at the slow march through the village of Agnez-lez-Duisans. Owing to the fact that the battalion was holding the front line at the time, it was possible to send only a small detachment from each company to act as followers. Captain H. K. M'Kee, M.C., was in command of the escort.

Following the gun-carriage was "Blackbird," Colonel Dennis's charger, with empty saddle, led by the groom, Private M'Quade. As the cortege approached the cemetery at Mont St Eloy, the band again played "The Flowers of the Forest," and all officers of the 15th Division who could possibly attend, including Major-General Reed, V.C., and his Staff, joined in the procession here. At the entrance to the cemetery the cortege halted and the coffin was transferred from the gun-carriage on to the shoulders of the bearers, who carried the body through the cemetery to the graveside.

The Burial Service was read and the body laid to

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rest, and Rev. R. F. Hirst, C.F., then gave a short oration. Most of us felt a lump rise in our throats, and some were in tears, for had we not lost a gallant commander and a dearly-beloved friend?

After the body was placed in the grave, three volleys were fired in the air; the pipe band played "The Death of the Chief," and the bugles sounded the "Last Post."

A special stone cross was made in the regiment and placed over the grave, but the "Graves Registration Commissioners" objected to its erection. This memorial was therefore removed, and a simple wooden cross put in its place. Many expressions of sympathy were received by the battalion, amongst them being the following from Major-General H. L. Reed, V.C., commanding the 15th Division:—

"Please accept yourself and convey to all ranks 7/8th Battalion K.O.S.B. my most sincere sympathy on the loss of your splendid and gallant Commander, Lieut.-Colonel Dennis."

The command of the battalion passed to Major F. L. Hamilton, M.C., until the arrival of Major A. E. Burnett, who had been in charge of the Divisional Reception Camp.

On 21st May reconnoitring parties were sent out, one of which reached the enemy lines, but was detected by a German sentry and came under fire. Sergeant M'Vittie, M.M., of "D" Company, was killed by a rifle bullet, shot through the head. His body was brought down to the transport lines during the night, and on the following afternoon he was buried with

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military honours, in the British military cemetery at Duisans.

The battalion moved back into Brigade support, being relieved by the 10th Scottish Rifles. Battalion Headquarters were in the railway cutting, and the companies spread out over the area between the Gavrelle and the Fampoux Roads. Thus day after day passed with an occasional change of sector; sometimes we were in the front line, sometimes in support; and beyond that, there was very little to relieve the monotony of our existence. Lieut.-Colonel Hart, D.S.O., after recovering from his wound which he received during the great German advance in March, when he commanded the 7th Royal Scots Fusiliers, rejoined us on the 26th of May, and took command of the battalion. On the 1st of June the battalion was relieved by the 8/10th Gordons, and moved back into Divisional reserve at Portsmouth Camp, situated along the Arras-Lens Road, west of Roclincourt. The relief was carried out under somewhat difficult conditions; for while it was proceeding the enemy was paying us back for a raid that had been made upon his trenches by the Division on our right; as well as for a gas discharge to which he had been subjected opposite the battalion sector. In the course of his retaliation he treated us with gas-shells so profusely that we were compelled to use our box respirators. It is quite a simple matter to put on a box respirator when one is stationary; but during a relief on a dark night, when one is struggling over country pitted with shell-holes, it is not exactly a

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joke. Yet we had only one casualty from gas. It is remarkable also that although the riding horses, which were waiting near Cam Valley, came in for a liberal share of this gas strafe, not one of them was affected.

During the eight days which the battalion now spent in reserve, we entered upon a programme of recreational training. There were inter-platoon football matches; squads of N.C.Os. and men were sent to the 9th Gordons Pioneer Battalion for instruction in wiring; the Commanding Officer inspected all the companies; and we were subjected to the usual training in trench warfare.

About this time Lieut. J. A. Pettey, Medical Officer, American Army, reported his arrival to relieve Captain Fairley, R.A.M.C. A charger was of course provided for the doctor, but, unfortunately, our new M.O. had still to acquire experience in horsemanship, and on the occasion of his first trip to the trenches he caused great amusement among the men by dismounting involuntarily.

On the night of the 9th of June the battalion relieved the 6th Cameron Highlanders, taking over the sector extending from the River Scarpe on the left, to the junction with the 56th Division, about 150 yards south of the Arras-Douai Railway, on the right.

Three days after the relief a party consisting of 2nd Lieut. A. Gormley, Sergeant Wightman, Private Ferguson, Private Griffin and Private Pankhurst of "D" Company, while out on patrol, was bombed by an enemy post and scattered. A second party, with

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Captain W. W. Henderson, Lieut. W. Torrance and C. S. M. Kent, went out to search for the missing patrol, and after great difficulty found Sergeant Wightman and Private Ferguson, who were both badly wounded. Sergeant Wightman, who afterwards died of his wounds, was in great pain, and when the party attempted to lift him, groaned so loudly that the Boche heard him, and opened fire on the patrol. 2nd Lieut. Gormley could not be found, and it was presumed that he had been killed or captured. We learned afterwards from German prisoners, taken by "A" Company, that he died of wounds while in the enemy's hands. Private Ferguson had received seventeen wounds, but recovered. Captain W. W. Henderson and Lieut. W. Torrance did some gallant work on this search patrol.

We often visited the ruins of Athies Mill, where roses were in full bloom, and gathered bunches to decorate the mess tables; or made our way across to the lake at Athies, officers and men, to enjoy the pleasure of a swim. These days were very quiet.

On the 19th of June the battalion front was extended to Broken Lane and Feuchy Trench, and on the morning of the 21st the Battalion Headquarters came in for a lively bombardment, about 150 H.V. shells bursting in the vicinity. There were no casualties; three of the Orderlies' bicycles were badly knocked about. Our artillery replied later with commendable spirit, and gave the Hun a generous dose of his own physic. A few days afterwards, during a short burst of shelling by the enemy, Brig.-General

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Lumsden, commanding the 46th Infantry Brigade, was killed in New Trench whilst accompanying the Divisional Commander on a tour of the trenches in the battalion area.

That night the battalion made a successful raid, capturing six Germans and one machine-gun. The raiding party consisted of seven detachments, each with a definite task to perform. Two officers were detailed to accompany the party, which was to enter the enemy's position in Iceland Trench, situated near the village of Feuchy on the south side of the railway. For several nights before the raid active patrolling was carried out by "A" Company in the neighbourhood of Iceland Trench; and as a result much valuable information was gleaned in regard to the enemy's dispositions. Zero hour was 11.30 P.M. At 11.15 the raiders were in position in front of our wire. Prompt to the moment our artillery opened up a perfect three-minutes barrage on the objective, and immediately upon the lifting of the barrage the raiders moved forward, and a few minutes later entered Iceland Trench, and set to work to demolish it. Many Huns who showed signs of resistance were killed. Having accomplished their task, the officers in charge of the raid fired the two red Verey lights which gave the signal to withdraw. 2nd Lieut. J. Dryburgh was severely wounded by shell-fire on the way back to our lines. He was carried down to the dressing station and conveyed to hospital, where he died a few hours afterwards. Bugler Dodds was killed by shell-fire on the parapet while sounding the withdrawal.

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2nd Lieut. J. Dryburgh and 2nd Lieut. G. A. Haining were the officers of the raiding party, and did excellent work, for which 2nd Lieut. G. A. Haining was afterwards awarded the Military Cross.

Our casualties for this tour in the trenches, including those in the raid, were: one officer died of wounds, one officer missing, believed killed, two officers wounded, five O.Rs. killed or died of wounds, four O.Rs. missing, and thirty O.Rs. wounded.

On the 25th of June the battalion was relieved by the 8th Seaforths, and once again returned to Portsmouth Camp in Divisional reserve.

One had often wondered why the Germans did not shell Portsmouth Camp, as it was under easy observation from Monchy and from Greenland Hill. It was however accepted as quite a safe spot until the night after the battalion, on this occasion, settled there; when the Boche for some unaccountable reason turned his guns upon it, and inflicted on us the loss of five O.Rs., killed or died of wounds, and fifteen O.Rs. wounded. One shell in particular dumped right into the Medical Officer's hut, and another scattered the tailors and the shoemakers.

The next morning the enemy shelled the camp again, and part of the battalion was thereupon moved about 500 yards westwards to a hollow that was not under observation. While we were in reserve, Major-General Reed, V.C., inspected the battalion, and congratulated the men of "A" Company who took part in the raid, on their great achievement.

We had now been over two months in the line,

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whilst the Canadians had been out in rest-billets some miles behind us, holding sports and undergoing special training. During the next few days a rumour was current that the Canadians would shortly relieve us.

The days passed without anything of importance happening until on the 10th of July we received a warning order that the 15th Division would probably be relieved by a Canadian Division on the night of the 12th of July. The following day advance parties of the Canadians arrived. It was a beautiful summer evening, all was quiet and still and the whole country was bathed in the glow of the setting sun, when two stalwart Canadian officers reported at "A" Company Headquarters in Lemon Trench to reconnoitre the company area before relieving us. It was just dinner-time and we invited them to sit down with us. They gladly accepted, for they were tired and hungry; and, for our part, we were mightily pleased that there was at last a prospect of relief. Our guests seemed to be rather surprised at the way we lived in the line. "By Jove," said one of them, "you do live like great gentlemen." They were charmed with our dugout, which to be sure had previously been a Brigade Headquarters, and was uncommonly well boarded, each officer having a cubicle to himself. They thought it a top-hole place; but we knew that the Hun had it spotted, and that his 5'9s had a disconcerting way of bursting in a spot hard by, which had once been the site of a Brigade Mess, but which we had put to a much humbler though necessary use.



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Before we started on a round of the company trenches, we were all standing at the entrance to the dugout, when a Boche plane came overhead. Sergeant Lavery had a shot at it with his rifle and instantly the Boche turned for home. "That wis a guid yin, Jamie," the men shouted, "ye turned him that time."

When we had completed the round of our trenches with the Canadian officers we returned to the dugout and entertained them after the manner of Scotsmen.

On the night of the 12th the battalion was relieved by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion, and after handing overposts and trench stores, and such things, we marched out to Arras.

During the day the enemy had shelled Cam Valley and Fampoux Road very heavily, but fortunately at night when the relief was in progress there was a period of calm, and the battalion reached Arras without loss. The men for a few hours were billeted in the Museum. Headquarters were at Rue-des-Murs-St Vaast. The following afternoon the battalion marched to Anzin; entrained there on the light railway in open trucks, and proceeded to the Caucourt area; detrained at Villers Chatel, and thence marched to billets at Gauchin-le-Gal. At first we were under the happy impression that we were out for six weeks' rest—but no! On the 15th of July we were warned for a further move. Early the next morning we marched through a heavy downpour of rain to Savy, a station on the Arras-St Pol Railway where we were to entrain

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for—we knew not where. The battalion arrived at Savy Station drenched to the skin. The station yard was packed with troops; trains were being hurriedly loaded with transport and baggage; all the trains were about three hours late in starting; but after a long delay we bundled in and were off for our unknown destination.

As hour after hour went by, and as we took note of the towns through which we passed, it became evident that we were bound for pastures new. At length we were informed that we were to join the 22nd Corps near Rheims, and were to detrain at Chalons. At a later stage of the journey, however, these instructions were cancelled, and we were ordered to join the 10th French Army under General Mangin in the Soissons area.

Though we did not know it as yet, we were now to bear our part in a *coup de main* which was to prelude a series of hammer blows that finally broke the Hun's heart.

## CHAPTER XV.

### WITH THE FRENCH AT SOISSONS.

ABOUT 4 A.M. on the 17th of July 1918, the battalion detrained at Pont St Maxence. The change of destination which had been made during the journey south had the troublesome result that the advance party sent forward to prepare billets arrived only a short time before the rest of the battalion. The village allotted to us was Les Ageux, which lay about 2 kilometres distant from the station. Our billeting operations in the village derived more than ordinary interest from the fact that we were the first British troops to visit the neighbourhood, with the exception of a few who had passed through in 1914.

Arriving at such an untimely hour of the morning, the advance party naturally found some difficulty in inducing the civil population of Les Ageux to get out of bed and offer the right hand of friendship. Some one, however, discovered that important functionary, the Maire; the village was then divided into areas, and the companies were left to make the best of the situation.

In the course of investigating his area, one C.Q.M.S. came upon evidence of previous military occupation, and hurried off to tell the O.C. advance party that he had found a guard-room. With rising

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

hopes the officer accompanied him to have a look at the place, and there on the door, in the dim morning light, he read the notice: "Prenez garde au chien."

Shortly after dawn the battalion marched into the village with pipes playing, but dawn is not a time of day when any lively signs of interest may be expected from a civilian population. Each company marched to its area, piled arms, and "fell out"; while officers and N.C.Os. busied themselves in an endeavour to find the billets which it was alleged had been assigned to them. "D" Company was sent to find billets in St Martin Longeau. "B" Company, in search of a suitable mess and officers' quarters, cast longing eyes on a very promising detached house, with a large garden behind it. Every door and lower window was tried without success. The place was undoubtedly "bien fermé." At last an aged civilian volunteered the information that it belonged to a soldier who had gone to the war. The neighbours denied all knowledge of the key. The problem was solved by Lieut. J. C. Wilson, who borrowed a ladder with which he was just able to reach a small window above the front door. After great difficulty he squeezed himself through this window, and with the aid of a screw-driver removed the locks from the doors. The house was found to be most suitable, and showed traces of previous occupation by French officers. "B" Company promptly took possession, and breakfast was nearly ready when a Frenchman made his appearance, with a brass label hanging round his neck and a

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French soldier at his back. For a moment things did not look quite so settled. This imposing-looking person, who turned out to be the caretaker, was conducted over the premises, all locks having been first neatly replaced, and was assured that every care would be taken of the mansion. His attention was particularly drawn to the fact that other people had evidently been digging up the potatoes in the garden; and gradually he became more affable, till finally he shook hands affectionately, said "Bonjour" a great many times, and took his departure. "B" Company then proceeded to make the most of their unexpected success.

The stay at Les Ageux was brief but pleasant. The weather was fine, and there was the River Oise to swim in. On the evening of the 18th we moved again, "A," "B," "C" and "H.Q." Companies to La Bruyere, and "D" Company to Catenoy. The day had been warm and the daily training had been carried out, so that when we reached our new billets every one was ready for a good sleep. But sleep did not figure prominently in the plans laid out for us. Orders arrived during the night for a move at 3.30 A.M., and just as daylight was breaking we marched out. After going about 8 kilometres, we reached a point where a halt was made, while buses, provided by the French Army, passed by and formed up, ready to take the whole party on board.

Meanwhile news of a successful attack by the French and Americans south of Soissons sent our spirits soaring, and set us speculating as to our des-

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tinuation. The 15th Division at this time formed part of the 22nd British Corps attached to the French Army, and was under the orders of the Commander of the 10th French Army, General Mangin.

We were packed into the buses near the village of Cinqueux, and were taken by a long and circuitous route, over dusty and bumpy roads, for about twelve hours of a broiling day, till at last we were dumped down on the outskirts of the woods near Haute Fontaine. Our route, though not the most direct, was strictly laid down, for on every road available, other units of the Division were being hurried forward at the same time. As we rolled along, hour after hour, through one French town after another, the surprise and interest of the inhabitants at the sudden appearance of the British in their midst was very evident. These towns were packed with French troops that were being held in reserve; great fellows in their prime, whose fine physique and bearing aroused our admiration. At length we came to the end of our journey. We had been twelve hours on these jolting lorries, practically without a halt; the heat was terrific; we were covered from head to foot with a fine layer of dust that made us all look grey-haired and grey-skinned; and every bone in our bodies was aching. After a meal by the roadside we marched into the woods, where each company was allotted a small sector of the ground, and was left to make the best of it. We shook the dust off our clothes, washed in the puddles of marshy water on the edge of the forest, and lay down to rest. Under the stars we slept

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well; every one was much too tired to grumble. The following day passed pleasantly, but towards evening the weather suddenly changed, and about dusk a thunder-storm broke. The trees above us rocked and swayed. Torrents of rain fell all night long; a cold wind blew till daybreak; sleep was impossible. With the morning, however, the storm cleared, the day came bright and breezy, and gave our soaked clothing the chance of drying, and us the chance of a little sleep.

On the evening of the 21st of July we left the woods of Haute Fontaine. The night march that followed was long and exhausting. The road lay at first for some miles across high open country, through wheat-fields fully ripe but still uncut. The moon was too big and bright for comfort; we could hear the Boche aircraft overhead, searching for the moving columns; and as our route was so exposed, we took the precaution of marching close into the side of the road, where a rough track on darker soil helped to conceal the movements of our column from the observation of the enemy aviators. Had we marched along the centre of the white, dusty, moonlit road, we should have been easily detected, with disastrous results. Of a sudden we saw an enemy aeroplane flying very low and straight over our heads. The battalion immediately came to a halt, and we breathed freely again only when the Boche turned off to our right and flew clear of us. A minute later his load of bombs was ruthlessly dropped with a terrific explosion into a house 200 yards away, where a light was burning.

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The house, it was understood, was occupied by American troops.

The enemy planes also bombed some other parts of the road, and inflicted a few casualties on another unit of the Division. All through the night we slogged on, pestered from time to time by the approach of the Hun aircraft. But as the night wore on, we became too tired to take much interest in the proceedings overhead. Dr Pettey was discovered *en route* riding fast asleep with his arms round the neck of his horse. It was broad daylight before we reached our destination, which was part of a great forest near St Pierre Aigle. A few days previously the battle had raged through these woods. The fine beech and oak trees were splintered and torn, the ground was littered with the wreckage of the fight. After places had been assigned to the companies, we threw ourselves down as we were, at the foot of the trees, and slept in the morning sun. The woods were full of Frenchmen, whose horizon-blue uniforms, or red fezes, glistened everywhere among the trees. The roads around were thronged with motor lorries hurrying forward French troops and the swarthy Algerians and Senegalese of the French Colonial regiments. Every little while large bodies of Americans, marching down from the line, passed along the road that flanked the forest.

There followed a period in which the 15th Division was engaged in fierce fighting. Under General Mangin a great offensive had begun, which was destined to prove the beginning of the end. But at this



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stage the fighting was very stiff, and our losses were heavy.

On the day after our arrival at St Pierre Aigle we relieved the 1st American Division in the line near Buzancy. The relief promised to be a tedious affair. We were being rushed into the line, uncertain as to the precise position of the Americans. Colonel Hart rode forward earlier in the day to reconnoitre; the battalion followed in the afternoon. Our prospects were not made any the rosier by the news we received on the way up, that we were to attack next morning. Our American guides, however, proved efficient, and the relief was completed by 2 A.M. By good fortune, too, we had picked up our rations for the following day. There had been some difficulty in getting supplies forward to the Division owing to the unexpected change in our destination, and rations were not forthcoming with their accustomed regularity. The Supply Column turned up at all hours of the day, and one remembers how a benevolent Supply Officer, arriving with his ration lorries at Haute Fontaine during the early hours of the morning of the 21st, failed to notify the battalion, and gave our portion to other units. An exasperated Quartermaster demanded rations, and got bully and biscuits! But what the Army Service Corps could not do, our master cook did; for he produced from the blue sufficient fresh meat to feed a Brigade! It was the other side of the story, however, this afternoon. True, we marched off from the wood without rations, but half an hour afterwards the supply wagons turned up and the Quarter-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

master's staff got to work at the double. The rations were soon divided up and loaded on the limbers; mules were yoked in, and the transport set off at the gallop along the Château-Thierry-Soissons Road. But what a road! Motor lorries, ambulances, guns, ammunition limbers, pontoon wagons, Staff cars, horse-transport and troops of all nationalities, going to or coming from the line. Small wonder that the Transport Officer held out little hope of his drivers forging ahead quickly enough to catch the battalion before it was too late. But if there was not much room on the road proper, there was a little more in the ditch at the side, and as limbers and mules are specially constructed for ditch-work, the steaming teams eventually brought the distance between them and the last company down to nil. After that, all was well, and we had the satisfaction of being the only battalion in the Division to get rations forward that night.

On taking over from the Americans, we established Battalion Headquarters in a small bank of rising ground about 1 kilometre due north of the village of Charantigny. Having received instructions from Brigade that the battalion was to attack at dawn on the 23rd, Headquarters hastily prepared detailed orders for the operation. Preparing orders was one thing, getting them forward to the companies was another. The night was dark, the ground was wooded and marshy, it was entirely new country to all of us, and the company runners who were sent out to report the relief complete, were unable to find their way to

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Headquarters. Headquarters encountered the same difficulty in getting out orders for the attack: experienced runners returned more than once for re-directions: it was about 4 A.M. before the forward companies were located, and the attack was timed for 5 o'clock. There was little time to spare.

"C" and "D" Companies were in the front line on the western edge of a small plateau north-west of the village of Buzancy. "A" Company was in support in a wood in rear, and "B" Company was in reserve in another wood 1000 yards from the front line. The French were on the right, and the Scottish Rifles formed a defensive flank on the left, linking up with the 45th Brigade.

Our objective, it appeared, was the plateau north of Buzancy, and to take the plateau meant an advance of 1000 yards from our front line, and the out-flanking of the village of Rozieres. The 10th Scottish Rifles were to support the attack, and to form a defensive flank to the north, keeping touch with the 45th Brigade. The task of taking Buzancy was entrusted to the French Division on the right. The execution of all these plans was well known to be a matter of great difficulty. Apart from the natural strength of his position, the enemy had shown his determination to avoid, at any cost, such a disaster as now threatened him, should his line in the Château-Thierry region be cut. We were in totally unknown country. No one in the battalion had seen the position by daylight, the men were fatigued after a long and difficult relief, and there was no opportunity of resting. Company

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Commanders were still busily preparing their orders when the preliminary bombardment opened; and their orders had to be sent out under the enemy's fire.

Promptly at 5 A.M. the barrage fell, and two minutes later the attacking companies went over. But the barrage was woefully ineffective, with the result that as we swept forward we were met by a withering machine-gun fire, and at the same time the supports in the wood behind were hotly shelled. In spite of all, the line was advanced some 200 yards; then any further advance became impossible. Both the leading companies had lost heavily; nevertheless they succeeded in holding on to the ground they had gained. Meanwhile "A" Company in support moved up to our original line, and "B" Company in reserve took up the position in the wood that "A" had left. Happily neither of these companies suffered seriously, though the ground over which they moved was heavily shelled. A company of the 10th Scottish Rifles that was sent up in support of the battalion was less fortunate. Their Company Commander was killed, and they had many other casualties. When it was seen that the front companies had suffered so severely that a further advance was impossible, the supports and reserves were gradually pushed forward to strengthen the line, and to protect the left flank, which was now exposed. Communication with our Headquarters was extremely difficult: no message from the forward companies got through to Headquarters till 6.10 A.M., and the first that did arrive ran thus: "No artillery

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support on our front. Being held up by machine-gun fire; casualties heavy."

Meanwhile the French Division attacking Buzancy failed to make any progress. At 10 A.M. orders arrived that the French would strike once more for Buzancy at 11.45 A.M., and that the battalion and the 10th Scottish Rifles would conform to the French line and defend their flank. At the last minute this operation was postponed till 8.30 P.M., and ultimately it was postponed indefinitely.

So matters stood when, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy attempted a counter-attack on our left front. He was quickly stopped by Lewis-gun fire.

An hour or so later in the day Colonel Hart went out, accompanied by Private Moseley as Orderly, to make a personal reconnaissance of the ground in front. He had the bad fortune to be caught in a sharp bombardment just about 500 yards from Headquarters, and was severely wounded by a shrapnel bullet in the shoulder and the upper part of the chest. Moseley succeeded in bringing the C.O. in, and without loss of time our wounded Commander received attention at the advanced dressing station. His wounds, however, were of so serious a nature that he was prevented from rejoining the battalion until shortly after the signing of the Armistice.

All that day our position was maintained, and before the battalion was relieved by the 9th Royal Scots in the early hours of the day following, a line of outposts had been dug about 150 yards from the original front line. We then moved back in Brigade reserve

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to a little valley near the village of Chazelle, where Major F. L. Hamilton took over command from Captain Weir, who had been in charge after Colonel Hart was wounded.

To every one's delight, six men of "B" Company, who had been reported missing, arrived at Battalion Headquarters on the 25th of July, looking like Bairnsfather models. It appeared that, when the relief was made, their post had not been located. Left behind when the battalion moved back to Chazelle, they held on to their position, close to the enemy line, till the early morning of the 25th, when they arranged for one of their number, Private Spare, to crawl back to our lines and investigate. Spare got into touch with the Seaforths, and from them learned that he and his comrades had "missed the bus" by twenty-four hours. These men had been without supplies for nearly two days.

Our casualties on the 23rd of July were very heavy. Of the officers Lieut. Cowley, 2nd Lieut. J. B. Sloan, 2nd Lieut. A. B. White and 2nd Lieut. J. Wyper were killed, and ten of the remaining fifteen were wounded. Thirty-two other ranks were killed, 63 wounded and missing, and 214 were wounded.

Among those who were killed was one of the finest and most popular N.C.Os. the battalion ever had, Sergeant Dillon, who fell early in the morning while leading with his company in the attack. He was known throughout the Division as the coach of the tug-o'-war team which won the Cup in January 1918 at Berneville.

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On the 25th the battalion moved into trenches on the north-east of Chaudun, with Headquarters occupying a cellar in the village; and on the following day moved once more, in heavy rain, to wet and uncomfortable trenches north-east of Cravançon Farm. About 8 P.M. on the 28th orders arrived that on that same night we were to relieve the 1st Battalion, 72nd Infantry Regiment of the 87th French Division, which was in the line south of Villemontoire. Hurried plans were made in regard to the route to be taken and the disposition of the companies. Major Hamilton went on in advance to the Headquarters of the French unit that we were relieving; and the battalion followed by a cross-country route. The French officers gave us every assistance; the guides did their duties remarkably well, and the relief was effected without any serious interference from the Hun.

The battalion was now disposed in depth, "B," "A," "C," "D." The 46th Trench Mortar Battery (two officers and fifty-two other ranks) was sent to reinforce us. "B" and "A" Companies Headquarters were frequently shelled at night, and in other parts of the battalion area the enemy used gas freely.

We were now on the eve of a further attack. Orders were issued on the 31st of July. The attack, which was part of a plan to eject the Hun from his large salient between Soissons and Rheims, was to be made chiefly by the 9th Royal Scots and the 10th Scottish Rifles, on our right. We were ordered to conform to their advance, and to maintain touch on the left with the 45th Brigade, who were bringing their

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right flank slightly forward to the main Château-Thierry Road east of Villemontoire. The immediate objective of the attacking battalions on the right was a series of knolls and copses strongly held by the enemy, to the north-west of the Bois d'Hartennes. On our own front there were several derelict French tanks, one of which was occupied by the French and two by the Huns. The ground in front was perfectly open and easily swept by the enemy's machine-guns. Our total strength at the time of going into this action was 10 officers and about 260 O.R.

On the afternoon of the 31st our artillery shelled the derelict tanks occupied by the Germans. Little effect was produced, but we were encouraged by the promise that our opening barrage would be sufficient to keep down the enemy's machine-gun fire. The signal for the attack on the following morning was given by a French aeroplane dropping coloured lights to indicate, as it was understood, that the assault would begin forty minutes later.

At 9 A.M. on the 1st of August the attack was launched, but in spite of a most determined effort, it was found impossible to make any real headway. The Boche machine-guns in the tanks swept the whole front. A renewal of the attack met with no better result. 2nd Lieuts. Shannon, Lewis and M'Millan were killed while getting out orders for this phase of the assault; and repeated attempts to reach the Hun tanks resulted only in further heavy casualties. By nightfall the action was over, and at midnight the 8th Seafortns arrived to relieve us. We

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marched back to trenches between Charantigny and Vierzy, where the remainder of the night was spent. Two days later, the Division was relieved by French troops.

The result of these operations was that we had held a considerable force of the enemy in front of us, and by persistently attacking him had prevented his reinforcing other parts of his tottering line; thus helping to bring about the defeat which caused him to retire to the Vesle, thereby flattening the large salient between Soissons and Rheims.

The following wires were received from General Mangin :—

To 7/8th K.O.S.B.

Following from General Mangin, Commanding 10th French Army, dated 2/8/18, which should be communicated to all ranks when occasion permits AAA Begins AAA Forward! The victory of the 1st August puts the finishing touch to that of the 18th July and is ending in a rout AAA The roads are bad but the rain is hurting the Boche too AAA Scratch them !! Bustle them!! Overrun their feeble centres of resistance where they are vainly trying to stop our victorious advance AAA This evening the 10th French Army must be on the line of the River Vesle AAA Ends AAA

From 46th Infantry Brigade.

To 7/8th K.O.S.B.

General Mangin Commanding 10th French Army sends the following, dated 2/8/18, to the 15th Division AAA Today's success has been made possible by the conduct of all concerned and particularly by sacrifices of the Scottish AAA Ends AAA

From 46th Infantry Brigade.

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The French Commander also issued a General Order in the following glowing terms:—

XE ARMÉE  
ETAT-MAJOR  
3E BUREAU

*Au Q. G. A., le 5 Août 1918.*

### ORDRE GÉNÉRAL, No. 343.

OFFICIERS, SOUS-OFFICIERS ET SOLDATS DES 15E ET 34E  
DIVISIONS BRITANNIQUES.

Vous êtes entrés dans la bataille à son moment le plus rude. L'ennemi vaincu une première fois, ramenait contre nous ses meilleures divisions, en nombre plus considérable que les nôtres.

Vous avez continué à avancer pied à pied, malgré sa résistance acharnée, et vous avez gardé le terrain conquis, malgré ses violentes contre-attaques.

Puis dans la journée du 1er Août, vous avez enlevé, côte à côte avec vos camarades Français, la crête qui domine toute la contrée entre l'AISNE et l'OURCQ, et que ses défenseurs avaient l'ordre de tenir coûte que coûte.

Ayant échoué dans sa tentative pour la reprendre avec ses dernières réserves, l'ennemi dut battre en retraite, poursuivi, bousculé, pendant 12 kilomètres.

Tous, Anglais et Ecossais, jeunes soldats et vétérans des FLANDRES ou de PALESTINE, vous avez montré les magnifiques qualités de votre race, le courage et l'imperturbable ténacité.

Vous avez fait l'admiration de vos compagnons d'armes. Votre pays sera fier de vous, car vos chefs et vous avez eu une large part dans la victoire que nous venons de remporter sur les barbares ennemis des peuples libres.

Je suis heureux d'avoir combattu à votre tête et je vous remercie.

[*Translation.*]

*Army H. Q., 5th August 1918.*

### GENERAL ORDER, No. 343.

OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE  
15TH AND 34TH BRITISH DIVISIONS.

You entered the battle at its fiercest moment. The enemy, already once vanquished, again brought up against us his best divisions, considerably outnumbering our own.

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You continued to advance step by step, in spite of his desperate resistance, and you held the ground won in spite of his violent counter-attacks.

Then, during the whole day of the 1st of August, side by side with your French comrades, you stormed the ridge dominating the whole country between the AISNE and the OURCQ, which the defenders had received orders to hold at all cost.

Having failed in his attempt to retake the ridge with his last reserves, the enemy had to beat a retreat, pursued and harassed, for 12 kilometres.

All of you, English and Scottish, young soldiers and veterans of FLANDERS and PALESTINE, you have shown the magnificent qualities of your race: courage and imperturbable tenacity.

You have won the admiration of your companions in arms. Your country will be proud of you, for to your chiefs and to you is due a large share in the victory that we have gained over the barbarous enemies of the free.

I am happy to have fought at your head, and I thank you.

MANGIN.

The General Officer Commanding the 1st Army issued the following Special Order:—

### SPECIAL ORDER

BY

GENERAL SIR H. S. HORNE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.,

COMMANDING FIRST ARMY.

The following letter from the General Officer Commanding, 17th (French) Division, to the General Officer Commanding, 15th Division, is published for the information of all ranks:—

27th August 1918.

MON GÉNÉRAL,

After relieving your Division in the pursuit on the Vesle, I established my Headquarters at Buzancy. I found there the traces still fresh of the exploits of your Scottish soldiers, and the officers of my staff were able to see clearly what hard fighting you had had to gain possession of the village, and above all, of the park.

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Wishing to leave on the spot some lasting tribute to the bravery of your soldiers, I entrusted to one of my officers, Lieutenant René Puaux, the task of erecting there, with the material at hand, a small monument, emblematic of the homage and admiration of my Division for yours.

This monument has on it a medallion on which are inscribed thistles and roses, and beneath, the words: —

*“Here the noble thistle of Scotland will flourish  
for ever among the roses of France”;*

and beneath,

*“17th French Division  
to  
15th (Scottish) Division.”*

This monument was erected on the highest point of the plateau, where we found the body of the Scottish soldier who had advanced the farthest (on 28th July 1918 —Buzancy).

The photograph of this monument has appeared in the last number of the journal *L'Illustration*. I thought you would be glad to have a few copies of the photograph, which I send you herewith. They convey to you, together with the memories which I have kept of our short meeting at Vierzy, the expression of my esteem and my admiration for your valiant Division.

Will you please accept, dear General, the expression of my sincere regards.

(Signed) C. GASSOINS.

(Général de Division C. GASSOINS,  
Commanding 17th (French) Division.)

I am confident that this testimony of the true feeling of comradeship which exists between our ally and ourselves will be highly appreciated by all ranks of the First Army.

H. S. HORNE,  
*General,*  
Commanding First Army.

First Army Headquarters,  
15th September 1918.



MONUMENT ERECTED BY THE 17<sup>TH</sup> (FRENCH) DIVISION  
TO THE 15<sup>TH</sup> (SCOTTISH) DIVISION AT BUZANCY,  
AUGUST 1918



## WITH THE FRENCH AT SOISSONS

The task of the 15th Division with the 10th French Army had now been accomplished, and on the 3rd of August the Division began to move back once more to the area of the 1st British Army. The battalion marched to Vierzy in the expectation of embussing there; but as no buses appeared, we were compelled to march the long, weary road to Soucy, where we billeted for the night, some in houses, but the majority in the large caves close by.

The buses arrived next day and took us on, half of the battalion to Monceaux, and the remainder to Cinqueux. Meanwhile lorries with our blankets, packs and stores had gone under orders to La Bruyere, only to find, to the great astonishment of the escort, that the village was empty. Parties were sent out to search for the battalion, and by and by they struck upon our tracks.

The French people of the district gave us a very warm welcome. The story of the exploits of "Les Ecosais" at Buzancy had preceded us, and the smiles, salutations and significant gestures with which we were greeted were unrestrained. One untoward result of French cordiality was seen, however, on the 6th of August when we left for the north. A number of our men did not seem to realise that the liquid refreshment of which the French people pressed them to partake was cognac, and not the comparatively innocuous though somewhat insidious *vin blanc*. The march to the station at Pont St Maxence provided ample scope for the energies of the Second-in-Command, Captain Patrick, who was

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

left behind with the regimental police to bring in the stragglers. Ultimately we reached Gouy-en-Ternois, where in beautiful weather we enjoyed ten days' rest and recuperation.

In the course of a speech at Edinburgh, on the 1st of December 1919, Field-Marshal Earl Haig of Bemersyde, K. T., said:—

“ In the great Allied counter-attack south of Soissons, on the 18th of July 1918 and following days, the 15th Division took part with French and American Divisions; and Royal Scots and King's Own Scottish Borderers displayed the greatest gallantry in the fight for the Buzancy Plateau. When the 15th Division was withdrawn, their place was taken by the French Infantry Division, which, I am informed, numbers among its battalions the descendants of the Regiment of Picardy. And there, on the highest point of the Buzancy Plateau . . . the French Division erected a monument, on which was inscribed: ‘ Here the thistle of Scotland lives for ever side by side with the roses of Picardy.’ ”



## CHAPTER XVI.

### LOOS REVISITED.

OUR stay in the village of Gouy-en-Ternois was blest with splendid weather. It was rather too warm for route marching, but signallers, scouts, snipers, Lewis gunners, and such specialists, had every opportunity of making good progress in their classes.

Five new officers joined the battalion: Lieut. Gracie, M.C., who was formerly in the 1st Battalion; and 2nd Lieuts. Clarkson, Mellalieu, Nesbitt and Thomson from the Border Regiment. 2nd Lieut. Cathcart and Lieut. N. Lee, of "Batty" bomb fame, rejoined. Lieut. Norman Lee had served with the 8th Battalion, and on account of his erudition in the science of chemistry, it is believed, was appointed bombing officer. He carried on the good work most successfully until one of his own "Batty" bombs, acting like a boomerang, rolled back on him down an incline and wounded him. Hence the sobriquet by which he was known.

On the 10th of August Lieut.-Col. H. W. Sutherland took over the command of the battalion.

Quartermaster-Sergeant Heywood took up his appointment as R.Q.M.-Sergeant on the 12th of August. The post had been rendered vacant by the departure of R.Q.M.-Sergeant Hunter for an officers'

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Cadet Battalion, with the object of obtaining a commission.

A ceremonial parade of the 46th Infantry Brigade was held at Gouy on the 12th of August, when the decorations awarded by the French authorities for the actions at Soissons were presented by Major-General H. L. Reed, V.C. Major F. L. Hamilton received the Legion of Honour and the Croix de Guerre; Lieut. Jamie, the Croix de Guerre; Sergeant Blake and Private M'Kinnon, stretcher-bearer, received the much coveted Médaille Militaire; and seven others of the rank and file were awarded the Croix de Guerre.

A résumé of this period, however scant, must not fail to make mention of an incident in the military career of our Medical Officer, Lieut. J. A. Pettey of the American Army. He wore the American uniform, but sometimes, out of his love for the battalion, he sported a glengarry cap. He was a good fellow and did very strenuous work in the Champagne region, for which he was afterwards awarded the Military Cross. One night, after the hard time at Soissons, he and Major Lindsay Hamilton found themselves in the Officers' Club at St Pol, seeking relaxation. He was wearing his glengarry at a jaunty angle, when he bumped up against an American officer, and very naturally asked him in the course of conversation, what Division he belonged to and whereabouts the Division was located. On hearing these questions addressed to him by an officer of apparently mixed nationality, the American looked askance, and a few

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moments later, announcing himself as one of the Intelligence Staff, ordered Lieut. Pettey to follow him. Our M.O., though seething with indignation, had no option but to follow, and was brought up before an American Divisional Commander under suspicion of being a spy. The General spoke to him like a father; but all's well that ends well. The affair was subsequently explained to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

One day we received instructions to parade as strong as possible for a short lecture by a gentleman from G.H.Q. on physical training and bayonet fighting. The spot chosen for the discourse was at some distance from our quarters, and the route we took thither was not by any means the most direct. That is by the way. The talking over, the lecturer announced that his Sergeant-Major, who was none other than the famous boxer, Jim Driscoll, was prepared to give any one a few gentle punches, if so desired. Blake of "A" Company faced the music for a few rounds, and if he hardly administered the knock-out blow, he at least made a better shape than any one from the other battalions represented.

Our hopes of having a long vacation at Gouy were rudely shattered on the 16th of August by the news that next day we were to relieve a unit of the 56th Division, which was in the line in front of Arras. The battalion left Gouy in motor-lorries about tea-time on the 17th of August, arriving in Arras about 9 P.M. as dusk was falling, and taking over from the Kensingtons before midnight. Battalion Head-

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quarters were on the Cambrai Road just behind Tilloy Wood. We had a quiet time in the line, so quiet indeed that "Brigade" inferred that the Hun was moving back on Monchy, and ordered the Scottish Rifles to patrol in force by day. The Rifles, however, did not meet with much success, for they found the Hun still on the spot. Our stay in this sector was very short: we were relieved on the 22nd of August by the 3rd Canadian Division, fresh from their great Amiens triumph and ready for anything. As a matter of fact, they pushed forward at this point a few days afterwards; but that is not for this narrative.

We stayed a night in Arras in our old familiar haunts in the Museum, and soon after dawn next morning marched to Anzin and entrained on the light railway for Château de la Haie. As was too often the case in those strenuous days, we were not expected; and we had to mark time for some ten hours, while another battalion cleared out of the camp that we were to occupy. Perhaps the Corps Horse Show, which was being held in a huge park a stone's-throw from the camp on the day we arrived, had thrown our movements into comparative unimportance. After two brief days in congenial surroundings in the château grounds, we moved again towards the scene of war.

This time our front was on the historic battle-field of Loos. Before going into the line we spent a few days in a camp near Hersin, where we were fairly comfortable. Other units of the Division were not so

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lucky; the Divisional Reception Camp was badly strafed one night, and twenty-five or thirty men, who were going on leave the next morning, were killed. On the night of the 27th of August we relieved the 13th Middlesex Regiment in the sector immediately in front of Loos. It was a quiet and uneventful relief, very different from others in which the battalion had taken part in the same sector two years and a half ago. The first night, the "old brigade" were unable to sleep in their excitement to see if the Towers of Wingles were still standing as of yore. Morning dawned, and there were the towers! But what a change since the battalion was last in the sector! Fatigue parties walked along the parapet of Posen Alley in broad daylight, and Battalion Headquarters were connected by tunnels with the farthest east sap-head.

We left the trenches on the night of the 2nd of September, and moved to Mazingarbe, where we enjoyed exceptional opportunities of entertainment. The "Jocks" were giving three performances weekly in the Cinema Hut, and the Divisional Cinema was showing pictures on the other evenings.—

Battalion Sports were held in a field on the outskirts of the village on the 6th of September, and were a great success; "A" Company won the Points Competition rather easily.

About the middle of September the battalion was called upon to carry out a raid into the enemy's trenches with the following objects:—

- (1) To secure identification.

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- (2) To find out the enemy's method of holding the line: whether his front trenches were abandoned or not.
- (3) To test his resistance and artillery support.

The battalion was, at the time, holding the line in the Loos Sector. It was finally decided that the raid was to be carried out just north of Bois Hugo on a front of about 800 yards, and that the raiders should penetrate to the enemy's reserve line, a distance of some 850 yards from our front system.

The raid was carried out by "A" and "B" Companies on a frontage of about 400 yards each, with one platoon each of "C" and "D" Companies attached for the purpose of mopping-up the three or four enemy trenches which it was necessary to cross on the way.

The raiders were taken back to Mazingarbe, where they devoted three days to careful practice of the operation, over ground taped out to represent the trenches which would be crossed.

The general idea was that the raiders would be assembled in parties in our front trench at zero hour, and that the artillery would then put a heavy barrage on the enemy front to be assaulted. At the same time a raid would be simulated by discharging gas and putting down a barrage on some 1500 yards farther north, with the object of diverting the enemy's attention and his fire from the real affair.

The raiders would then advance in two main waves, with the moppers-up following close on each wave; the artillery gradually lengthening its range to keep

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in front of the infantry until the final objective was reached.

The length of time the raiders were to remain in the enemy trenches was definitely fixed, and signals were arranged in order to attract their attention when the time was up. The whole operation was under the orders of Captain Deans, who advanced with the second wave.

At zero hour, 4 P.M., on the 18th of September, the men were in our front line along the main Lens-La Bassé Road. They advanced rapidly over the enemy front and support trenches without encountering serious resistance. On moving towards the enemy reserve line, however, they were met by heavy machine-gun fire from the right front, and "A" Company, which was on that flank, suffered heavily.

On the left of the attack the reserve line was reached by pushing along three communication trenches; but owing to the weakening of the raiding force by casualties it was not possible to reach the final objective on the right. The Boche retreated down the communication trenches as our men approached, and we took no prisoners; but identification was secured by Sergeant Baillie from a dead sentry who had been killed in the German support line. Letters and post-cards found on the body gave complete information as to the man's regiment and division.

Some very fierce encounters took place along the communication trenches, but the most vigorous resistance of all was encountered in the reserve line,

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which, unfortunately, our artillery had not seriously damaged. This phase of the assault cost us many casualties. It was thus proved that the enemy's reserve line was his main line of resistance and that the garrisons of the line in front were merely outposts. The enemy artillery barrage did not come down until several minutes after his "S.O.S." lights had gone up, and it was very weak and scattered.

The performance of all ranks in the raid was excellent, but particular mention must be made of the two Lewis gun teams of "B" Company, supervised by Privates Reid and Morrison. These guns took on several enemy machine-guns which were thinning our numbers, and succeeded in silencing them, although Private Morrison's team had the whole front of the radiator-casing of their gun shot off. Both Reid and Morrison received the D.C.M., and well deserved it.

Captain M'Kee, a volunteer for the raid, gallantly led a party which succeeded in reaching the enemy reserve line and effectively bombed the garrison. For his work in the raid Captain M'Kee received a bar to his M.C.

The stretcher-bearers did splendidly under very trying circumstances; not a man whom it was at all possible to bring in was left behind.

It will thus be seen that all the objects of the raid were attained; although, as was inevitable, our casualties were heavy, because of the eagerness and gallantry with which our men pressed the attack, and also because of the stout resistance put up by the enemy.



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The raiders suffered the following casualties:— Killed: Captain Deans, Lieuts. Gracie and Hopkins, and 12 other ranks. Missing: 5 other ranks. Wounded: Lieut. Tod, 2nd Lieuts. Irvine and Pritchard, and 30 other ranks.

The honours awarded for the raid were: 1 bar to M.C., 2 M.C., 2 D.C.M., 8 M.M.

The total numbers participating in the raid were: 10 officers and 180 other ranks.

We now come to a time when it appeared to be more than probable that the Germans on our front would be compelled to withdraw to the Haute Deule Canal. Nothing momentous happened, but a feeling of expectation seemed to pervade the very air.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE ADVANCE.

THE closing days of September 1918 found the battalion holding the line in the Hulluch Sector, opposite Cité St Elie. Every one was optimistic. There was a general presentiment that at last the long, stern struggle for supremacy in trench warfare was about to be rewarded, and that the Boche would give way. In other parts of the allied battle-line he was being pressed back. Hope ran high that in this sector, also, and before many days, the enemy would be compelled to evacuate those deeply entrenched and strongly fortified positions that he had long held against our hardest efforts.

Day after day we looked out on the old familiar scene, and on the same old landmarks at which we had often gazed in 1915: the Hohenzollern Redoubt, around which there had been such desperate fighting three years before; the distant Towers of Wingles, from which the enemy overlooked all our positions; and beyond, the wide stretch of open country that appeared to us like the promised land. In September 1915 we had confidently expected an advance eastwards at least as far as Lille. And now, again, we were anticipating the occupation of that city, as the first step towards the end of the War.

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Elaborate plans were made for every conceivable emergency: the issue of typed and printed matter became colossal. Every means was taken to harass and annoy the Hun, and to hinder him as much as possible in his preparations for retirement. Our artillery literally poured shells upon his back areas; patrols were constantly on the prowl, watching his movements; and there was many a "scrap" between our parties and his.

The enemy's artillery fire also increased. It may have been retaliation, but it was more probably an attempt to conceal his intentions. One night just after dusk he put down a very heavy barrage on the left flank of the battalion, and made a small raid on a part of the line held by the 10th Scottish Rifles, who were occupying the sub-sector on our left. The raiders succeeded in entering the front system, and drove in the garrisons of two posts. A few yards to the right, along the trench on which the attack was made, there was a post held by some of our men. Our post opened fire on the raiders and checked them, inflicting heavy losses as they retired.

The enemy at this time was concealing his movements so effectively that, in order to find out whether he was holding the line in force, and to test his power of resistance, a dummy attack on a wide front was planned. Should he show signs of weakness, the attack was to be pressed home. The troops, therefore, were issued with an extra day's rations; entrenching tools, bombs, and the full complement of ammunition were served out, as for a real attack.

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At daybreak our artillery opened a heavy bombardment on the enemy's lines, the scouts advanced over the open ground towards the hostile trenches, while the remainder of the battalion was kept in close support, ready to push forward should the opposition be weak. But after advancing a short distance, the scouts were met by a heavy fusillade of machine-gun fire, and were forced to return to the cover of the trenches, to await a more favourable opportunity.

Meanwhile the German heavy guns were scattering H.E. shells over our back areas. Noeux-les-Mines was badly treated. At all hours of the day and night heavy projectiles whistled overhead on the way to the coal mines, where they would crash sometimes on the slag heaps, doing little damage, and sometimes into a miner's cottage, killing women and children. It was evident that the Boche was contemplating an early retirement, and having a good supply of ammunition on hand, was thinking that he better pop it off rather than carry it back to the Rhine. In spite of this shelling, the miners of Noeux-les-Mines carried on their industry uninterrupted; bringing the coal to the surface and loading it on to the railway trucks, or clanking along the *pavé* streets in their wooden clogs, as they went to and came from their work, in the early morning, at noon, or late at night. The women cleaned their doorsteps, the children still played in the streets, and Divisional Headquarters at Bracquemont continued to sandbag the walls of the houses in which they were quartered.

Mazingarbe, being an agricultural village, did not

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suffer so much attention as Noeux-les-Mines. There were several camps in its immediate neighbourhood, and the village itself was full of troops, but it was rarely shelled. Occasionally, as a reminder that he knew we were there, the Boche would send over a few shells in the direction of the huts, or along "The Avenue" where the various Headquarter Messes were housed.

One evening in particular—it was the 2nd of October—the enemy's artillery fire became fast and furious. We were holding the front line due west of Cité St Elie. It had been quite a normal day, and the evening had been quiet. Suddenly, about 9 o'clock, the Hun began an indiscriminate bombardment. His shells were hurtling through the air and falling in all kinds of unexpected places, as if he wished to get rid of his ammunition as quickly as possible. The Hulluch and Vermelles Road came in for a good share of the iron that was being distributed, and a certain Bridge quartette at Battalion Headquarters, in Chapel Alley, got a rude awakening when a whiz-bang struck the roof of the shanty which served as a mess-room. But the game continued, and so did the shelling.

Later in the night the firing gradually decreased, and in the early morning an abnormal quietness reigned. A prisoner captured by the 8th Seaforth Highlanders, who were holding the line on our right, stated that his regiment had been ordered to retire during the night.

About 7 o'clock in the morning the two forward

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companies went over the top, and pushed on to Cité St Elie without meeting any sign of opposition; and ere long the whole battalion moved forward, putting into operation to meet this emergency one of the many schemes of advance with which we had previously been deluged.

Great interest was aroused as we passed landmarks which we had regarded with curiosity years ago, but which, until now, we had never been able to inspect at close range. Two of the Wingles Towers had "gone up" in the early part of the day, and the third tower, as we approached, rose bodily into the air, and then crashed to earth amidst a vast cloud of reddish-brown dust.

Our prearranged objectives were reached without opposition shortly after midday, and arrangements were at once made to place advanced posts in the strongest defensive positions, to get up further supplies of ammunition, rations and water, and to undertake other necessary work. There were great difficulties to be overcome; for we were now on the farther side of what was possibly the "deepest" system of trenches in France. This trench-system extended in depth for 4 or 5 miles, and supplies had to be brought up along roads—where any existed—that were now mere shell-pitted tracks.

By the evening our front line was advanced to the railway running into Wingles. The utmost care had to be taken in moving forward, for the Hun in his retreat had set a great variety of "booby traps," which were death to the unwary. The measures taken

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to avoid these "booby traps," however, were so successful, that, although scores of deadly devices were unearthed in the ground over which we passed, only one man in the battalion was killed by such Boche tricks. The enemy had displayed great cleverness in the making and placing of these contrivances, many different types of which were discovered in the battalion area by the Australian Tunnellers, who were attached to us for that special purpose. The following description may serve to illustrate the nature of some of the Hun traps.

Near the entrance to a comfortable dugout part of the timbering had been removed, the earth behind had been excavated, and a large H.E. shell, side by side with a gas-shell, had been placed in the cavity. The woodwork was then replaced. Into the nose of the H.E. shell a detonator was screwed with the striker-pin held away from the charge by a thin copper wire running down the centre of a glass tube filled with acid. The action was, that the acid gradually corroded the wire, which in a few days, according to the strength of the acid, would snap and allow the striker-pin to fire the charge. The explosion of the H.E. shell would wreck and block the entrance to the dugout, would burst the gas-shell and smother the imprisoned men in gas. The shelter selected by our Medical Officer was one place in which such a device was discovered. Another type of trap was designed for defence against tanks, and consisted of two large shells set upright in holes dug in the ground 6 feet apart, with the noses of the shells about

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1 foot below the surface. Above them, just clear of the nose-caps, was laid a horizontal plank with its ends resting on two wooden slats nailed to two strong upright struts sunk in the earth. The trap was then covered with grass or earth, to resemble the surrounding soil. The action was, that if a light body—say a man—walked on the plank, the slats would hold; but a heavy thing, such as a tank, would break the slats and force the plank down on the special nose-cap attached to the shell; and the tank would then probably be missing.

Other traps were simply left in the open, and usually consisted of some tempting object—a rifle or helmet or some such thing—with a bomb concealed beneath it. It is believed that the man whom we lost was killed by picking up a German leather belt that was attached by a string to a bomb.

The enemy had now got his guns into position on the east side of the Haute Deule Canal, about 5 miles behind his original front line; and he caused us no small trouble by his artillery and machine-gun fire.

On the morning of the 5th of October "A" and "B" Companies were detailed to push on to the canal at Pont-a-Vendin. They started at dawn, and very soon met with a rather stiff opposition in the shape of machine-gun fire from houses on the canal bank. By noon, however, they had taken up a position within 200 or 300 yards of the west bank, from which the enemy had now finally withdrawn.

There were one or two exciting episodes in the



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course of that morning. Lieut.-Col. Sutherland, accompanied by Montgomery, one of the runners, walked to within 50 yards of an enemy machine-gun post, and tumbled into a friendly ditch just in the nick of time. Early in the morning a few of the signallers, Sergeant Nivison, Wilson, Pow and others, ran a "line" out to the front companies; but evidently things were not going quickly enough for them, for the Sergeant and another of the party actually had a telephone in working order in front of the scouts, and in communication with Headquarters. A machine-gun somewhat disturbed their peace, however, so they switched off the instrument *tout de suite*, and crawled at the double to the nearest shell-hole, to await a more favourable opportunity for buzzing.

During the afternoon, rumours of a relief were afloat and these were verified by the appearance of the 1/5th Gordon Highlanders, who thereupon took over from us. The relief was completed in daylight, and about 6 or 7 o'clock we set out for Mazingarbe. It was "a long, long trail": we reached the huts sometime after dawn, very weary, but greatly satisfied to have been on ground that had been denied to us for four long years.

The previous day's advance had not been made without cost. Five of our men were killed, and Captain G. A. Whyte, M.C., and ten men were wounded.

We remained at Mazingarbe for six days, our main duties being the provision of parties to clear up the Hohenzollern trench system, collecting ammunition, bombs, and other stores from the old trenches, and

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placing the salved material in dumps on the Hulluch-Vermelles Road. On parade the troops were practised in advancing over the open, and in other movements of open warfare.

On the 9th of October Battalion Sports were held once more. It was at this gathering that a famous Tug-of-War was pulled—married officers and a tree, versus single officers!

On the following day the battalion left Mazingarbe for the last time and moved forward to the neighbourhood of Loos as reserve battalion to the right Brigade. During the next three days orders regarding impending moves flowed in; and at length, on the 13th, we received hurried instructions to relieve two battalions of the Brigade on our right, at a point about 5 miles distant from Loos. This was no enviable task, as we had little knowledge of the ground, and the night was dark and wet. There was nothing for it but to buckle to, so off we set about 7 o'clock. We had to make for the Headquarters of the Brigade on the right, where we were to be met by guides to conduct us to the front line. After an hour's tramp we reached the spot indicated, only to find that the guides were missing; but profiting by many a former sad experience of the same sort, we sought and found them, and once more set out on our way. The going was very heavy, and our tempers were not at their best. We were calculating that we must have staggered through the mud for much more than 5 miles, and that we must be nearing our destination, when suddenly the guides led us into the entrance to the

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Loos tunnel! The language was vile. Here we were, after tramping for four hours, back to within 500 yards of the spot from which we started. How we ultimately negotiated that relief passes understanding. Our forward companies managed somehow to get to their appointed positions before daybreak; but a company of Corps Cyclists, which had been attached to us for a few days, was so exhausted that it spent the night in the tunnel, and reached its destination the following day.

In the morning, when we had time to take our bearings, we found that we had two companies in Annay and two in reserve 1000 yards south-west of that village. From various signs, it appeared that the Hun was holding the bridge-heads at this point of the canal very lightly; and orders were therefore given to prepare to rush his posts, to consolidate, and if possible to get patrols across the canal. This was not an easy undertaking. There were no bridges over the water, and there was great difficulty in getting rafts sufficiently strong to carry patrols across. The Engineers, however, came to the rescue with a frail gangway of duck-boards and petrol tins, hastily constructed and thrown over to the other side. The 9th Royal Scots were on our left and were to cross over at Pont-a-Vendin. The canal at this point forms an L-shaped bend, running at first north and south, and then turning sharply eastward. We were posted on the bottom of the L. Soon after daybreak Corporal Kempshall, D.C.M. and Lance-Corporal Muff, M.M., with several other scouts, succeeded

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in crossing to the north-east bank without encountering any resistance. They advanced as far as Epinoy, and found that the Hun had again taken to his heels.

It was evident that at one time the enemy had contemplated serious resistance on the line of the canal. There was a number of heavy, half-finished concrete emplacements and other defensive works on the roads, and at various strategic points; but these preparations had been cut short, presumably by the quick pressure of our advance.

It is worthy of note that in Pont-a-Vendin, the town on the east bank of the canal at its angle, there was found the body of one of our men who was missing after the raid of the 17th of September. The body was recognised by the identity disc, and by the special arm-band, which was worn for the raid, and which was still in position. There seem to be only two explanations of the fact that the body was found 4 or 5 miles away from the scene of the raid; and neither of them is complimentary to the enemy's humanity. Either, the man was wounded, and was being taken to hospital, when he died on the way, and his body was thrown down at the side of the road; or, he was captured unwounded, and was being taken to the rear for examination when, for some reason, he was shot by the enemy, and his body left where he fell.

Judging by the distance our scouts, and the scouts of other battalions, had pushed forward, it was evident that the enemy had made a considerable

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retirement. Immediate efforts were therefore made to bridge the canal, so as to enable supplies to be brought up in case of a long advance. The Divisional Pontoon Section had a great time in this their first real experience of bridging in the War. They performed their work as if it had been a daily occurrence; and although four pontoon bridges were thrown across the canal, there was only one recorded accident, and that was caused by a pair of horses becoming restive on one of the bridges, and plunging over the side into the water. Both horses were drowned, but fortunately the driver was saved. The smaller bridges, formed by lacing trench-boards together and floating them on petrol tins, were most exciting. Our Adjutant, when crossing one of these temporary gangways, failed to notice that one of the petrol tins was punctured. The result was that the combined weight of the Adjutant, his revolver and his full kit, tilted the trench-board to an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ ; and he passed an exciting two or three seconds, during which he swayed, thus encumbered, on the edge of the board, over 15 feet of water, before he stumbled in the right direction.

For some obscure reason the battalion, though the first to cross the canal, was withdrawn to the western bank, and did not finally cross until the next day, when we pushed on to Carvin, and found quarters in the deserted houses of Epinoy on the outskirts of the town. The villages which we passed through had been recently evacuated by the civilians, and there was evidence that in many cases the windows and

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furniture of the houses had been deliberately smashed by the exasperated enemy.

The next morning we were early astir, and about 8 o'clock we left Epinoy for Wahagnies. It was a very misty morning, and the companies had difficulty in keeping in touch, although they were only 100 yards apart. At La Neuville we came upon civilians for the first time since the advance had begun; some of them in their own houses, and others on the road, presumably returning to their old homes in the devastated area.

The houses now began to look fairly intact, except those that stood near cross-roads, or at railway crossings. At such points the Boche had blown up the track in the hope of hindering our advance, and in consequence the houses round about had suffered badly. Every possible means had been taken by the enemy to impede us. Every telegraph pole had been cut down; every road-crossing and culvert had been blown up; and all the railways had been effectually destroyed by blowing a bit out of each length of rail and by exploding a large bomb at intervals on the track. Although the enemy had ruthlessly pursued his plan of destroying everything likely to help us, it was noticed that he had not, at this stage of his retreat, deliberately destroyed private property. But the farmyards were pitifully empty; there was not even an odd fowl to be seen.

The villages through which we were now passing were naturally in a state of great excitement and hilarity that was not without its pathos. They were

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enjoying their first day of freedom for four long years. The people were enthusiastic in their shouts of welcome; bunting was spread across the streets from house to house; national flags were draped from the windows and over the doors. Our destination on the 19th of October was Capelle, which we reached about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, having had to wait till the enemy cleared out. We had no actual fighting, but the Scottish Rifles, who were in front, espied the retreating enemy once or twice during the day. We captured one German who had apparently had enough of walking eastwards and seemed to be yearning for a change. In this town the Hun had abandoned a huge hospital, the condition of which as he left it, dispelled all doubt that his evacuation had been according to prearranged plan.

It was at Capelle that the battalion spent its last night on active service in France.

On the afternoon of the 20th of October we crossed the frontier into Belgium at a point near La Glanerie. An instance of great capacity for handling men in an emergency occurred at this place, and must not be omitted. The Battalion Intelligence Officer, who at the time was on probation prior to joining Brigade Headquarters Staff, was in charge of our H.Q. Company, which had been detached from the battalion for billeting purposes. Setting out with his company to rejoin the battalion, he toured the country for two hours or thereby, and then came to a town, the surroundings and the buildings of which seemed strangely familiar. Marching up the streets, he was

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horrified to see, a few yards in front of him, the very Headquarters which he had imagined were now miles behind. The comments of Harris and the remainder of the company on thus entering La Glanerie for the second time, must remain unrecorded.

Our progress was now slower, as the leading troops were encountering opposition from the enemy's machine-guns. The 10th Scottish Rifles, who were still in front, suffered a few casualties. The enemy was apparently trying to keep us back from the River Scheldt, and it was thought that he might be preparing to make a stand on the line of the river.

On the 21st we reached Guignies, a village about 3 miles from the river, and there we settled down for the night. No further progress was made on the following day: the 10th Scottish Rifles were in touch with the enemy in front of Wez Velvain. The Hun was evidently intending to hold the line of the Scheldt, and dispositions had to be made to dislodge him. We relieved the Scottish Rifles in the front positions on the 23rd of October. Our advanced posts were practically on the west bank of the canal east of Wez Velvain, except on the left flank, where the enemy still held both banks. The battalion front extended for about 2000 yards, opposite a series of morasses, which at certain parts stretched eastwards to a depth of nearly a mile. The line was held by placing small groups of men in or near the houses overlooking the canal; and the supports occupied the strongest cellars of the houses in the two villages situated on the canal banks, within the battalion area.



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The Germans made a stand here for over a fortnight, and during that time, though our casualties were slight, we were subjected, especially during the night, to a prodigal shelling with H.E. and gas-shells.

The village of Wez Velvain itself suffered very badly, and it was a difficult and trying job to persuade the people to evacuate their homes, which were every night becoming more untenable. The villagers suffered a great many casualties, and yet several days elapsed before evacuation of the forward area by the civilian population was completed; and then, only because it was insisted on.

A considerable number of barn-door fowls, which had been left behind by their owners and had escaped death by shell-fire, were appropriated by our men for food, as rations were unusually scanty. It was no uncommon sight to see a fowl making a vain dash for life, and in a remarkably short time the birds became so apprehensive that they took to the trees at the very sight of khaki. In order that the inhabitants should not be the losers by these depredations, a sum of money from battalion funds was sent to the Maire of the district, estimated to cover the value of the chickens that had been devoured.

Battalion Headquarters were established in the large and luxurious château of Wez Velvain. The château was shelled every day and night; and although it was never directly hit while we were there, quite a number of shells landed too close for comfort, and we were much annoyed by German gas, with which the whole neighbourhood was deluged.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

The fruit from the orchard had only recently been gathered, and as the store-house and greenhouses had been hit by shells, full advantage was taken of the "open market." The number of turkeys, geese and chickens around the château noticeably diminished; but it need hardly be pointed out that even poultry are not immune to the effects of shell-fire.

The houses in the adjacent villages began to resemble those near the old line, for though they were under bombardment for a comparatively brief period, the bombardment was of a particularly lavish, persistent and vicious nature. Schemes to effect a crossing of the canal now began to be mooted, but it was understood that we should not be called upon to make the attempt until the troops on our flank were in line with us. Those on our left flank were still a mile or more from the canal. The whole Divisional front was held by the battalion, and the troops on either flank were therefore of other Divisions. Patrols were ferried across the canal on a small raft to inspect the morasses on the farther side, and these they found to be impassable.

On the 27th of October the battalion was relieved by the 9th Royal Scots. With some regret we left our comfortable quarters at Wez, and moved back to Basse Rue. On the following day we marched to Deroderie, as the accommodation in the former village was not sufficient.

The 46th Brigade was relieved by the 44th Brigade on the 29th, and the battalion moved back and took over billets from the 4/5th Black Watch in L'Ecuelle,

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## THE ADVANCE

a small village on the outskirts of Taintignies. On the completion of the relief, the 46th Brigade was in Divisional support.

On the 30th of October Lieut.-Col. H. W. Sutherland, who had been suffering from gas poisoning during the last few days, was compelled to go to hospital, and the temporary command of the battalion passed to Captain J. H. Patrick.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ARMISTICE.

OUR billets in L'Ecuelle were insufficient and unsuitable. Some of the men were lodged in leaky barns and some in houses where they occupied the same rooms as the civilians. The billets had also the reputation of being subject at night to persistent strafing with gas and H.E. shells; and our predecessors had had a number of losses in horses and in men. The village was badly provided with cellars, and the few which existed were packed to the roof with "civies" every night.

There was one such cellar underneath the room that we used as Headquarters Mess. Forlorn-looking people, old and young, used to file through the mess-room night after night at dinner-time, murmuring a "Bon soir" as they came in. We used to discuss at dinner how many and what kind of civilians would shortly arrive to stow themselves into this narrow den. The record number was sixteen, of both sexes and of all sizes. The cellar was of concrete, about 12 feet in length, 5 in width, and 5 in height, and without any ventilation whatsoever. A few old mattresses covered the floor. No theories as to how these people settled down at night, or how they found themselves in the morning, were ever propounded.

## THE ARMISTICE

The battalion now entered on a period of training and reorganisation, disturbed more than once by warning orders of impending operations to force a crossing of the Scheldt Canal. On the 3rd of November reconnaissances were made in co-operation with the Commanding Officer of the 91st Field Company Royal Engineers; and positions on the canal, in front and to the south of the village of Hollain, were selected, where pontoon bridges were to be placed by the engineers to carry the battalion across. The rôle to be played by the battalion in the scheme of advance was that of executing a feint attack on the southern half of the Divisional front, which ran along the west bank of the Scheldt for about 3500 yards.

The canalised River Scheldt was the main feature of this part of the country. It was from 30 to 50 yards wide, and very deep; an attempt to touch the bottom with a 19-foot pole failed. Forward from the Divisional front the ground was sharply divided in two by a canal which joined the Scheldt north of Hollain, and which ran in an easterly direction.

To the north-east of the angle formed by the two canals the ground rose sharply to a considerable height, where the town of Antoing, a suburb of Tournai, came down almost to the river-bank, and thus afforded a vast amount of shelter to the enemy.

The ground for about 1 mile square on the south-east of the canal junction was fen-land, and when we first reached the canal bank the fen was partly flooded. A number of ditches at short intervals could be seen running across it in every direction. These

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

ditches were found by patrols of the battalion to be from 4 to 12 feet in width and from 2 to 6 feet in depth. Beyond this marsh-land the ground rose gradually to a fair height, and was topped by a big forest. This was the part that was to be attacked by the battalion. On our side of the canal the land was dry, undulating, and fairly close.

The main crossing was to be made on the northern portion of the Divisional front by the 44th Infantry Brigade and two battalions of the 46th Brigade. The 7/8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers was to make the attack on the southern portion. The object of this attack was to secure bridge-heads of a sufficient depth and frontage to allow the heavy artillery to pass across the river without serious interruption. The bridge-heads to be secured embraced the villages of Gueronde, Fontenoy and Bourgeon.

Before arrangements for these operations were completed, the enemy evidently closed the locks which controlled the draining of the land over which the battalion was to attack. The fen gradually disappeared, and the whole low-lying stretch of country became one vast sheet of water that was practically impassable. The flooding of this marsh-land, together with some developments on the left flank of the Division, led to the definite abandonment of this scheme of attack.

During our first week in L'Ecuelle the Hun continued to harass the whole district at nights with a horrid combination of H.E. and gas-shells. One night, in particular, he strafed the village with a

## THE ARMISTICE

vengeance. Many houses were hit by fragments, and one of the companies had to vacate their billets and adjust gas-masks, but by good fortune there were no casualties. On examination in the morning it was found that three separate shells had dropped right into three very small gardens which lay between houses that were occupied as billets. None of the houses had been directly hit.

On a subsequent night the enemy devoted most of his attention to the Quartermaster's end of the village, and the next morning a prominent figure in that department was heard to remark that his enthusiasm for the War had rather cooled during the night.

One afternoon we were much cheered to hear the shells passing overhead in the direction of Brigade Headquarters ; but the whole aspect of the situation was changed when the report reached us that the battalion post-limber, which had been at Brigade collecting the mail, had been hit. Our worst fears, however, were not realised. It was found that the driver was only slightly wounded and that the mail-bags were safe.

A new scheme was now formulated for forcing the canal. This involved a crossing on the northern portion of the Divisional front, with very limited objectives, by the 44th and 46th Brigades at separate positions north of the canal junction, leaving the southern portion of the front unattacked. The bridge-head objectives were the same as in the previous scheme. The battalion front ran from the village of Bourgeon

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

to the canal junction immediately south-east of the hamlet of Vezonchaux.

Before this scheme could be completed the enemy withdrew from his positions owing to the pressure to which he was being subjected both on the north and on the south. Orders were immediately received for a forward movement to a position in the wood surrounding Lannoy Château, where the battalion came under the orders of the 44th Brigade. It was found possible to cross the canal by a pontoon bridge that was all but completed immediately south of Antoing. We pushed forward to relieve the 4/5th Black Watch by Bruyelle, Grevecoeur, and Fontenoy. Guides were picked up in Vezon. This was on the 9th of November.

The progress of our troops was rapidly becoming simply a triumphal march. With pipes and drums at the head of the column we passed through towns and villages newly liberated from under the heel of the Boche. The people had seen the last of the Germans less than a day before. What scenes of joy there were! Belgian and French flags, and improvisations of the British colours fluttered at every window. In spite of the prying eyes of the Germans, who greedily seized every pretext for inflicting fines and punishments, the inhabitants had hidden these flags for four years against this very day. What clapping of hands, and shouts of welcome! "Vive l'Angleterre!" "Vivent les Ecosais!" "Vivent les libérateurs!" A woman would rush out from the crowd, fling herself upon an astonished Jock, and kiss him on both cheeks, not in the spirit of mere hilarity but under

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genuine emotion. At a halt, women would seize embarrassed Borderers by the arm, and drag them into the houses to give them a cup of steaming coffee. Some people were laughing ; others almost crying. As we moved on, flowers were thrust into our hands. Dr Pettey, mounted on his dappled grey charger at the rear of the column, was covered with a profusion of nosegays, wreaths and miniature flags that almost concealed him from view. At times a burst of laughter would go up from the steadily marching column, but for the most part the men did no more than shout an occasional word of greeting in army French. Here and there on our route through the country a woman—usually an elderly one—would go wild with joy, and leap and dance along the road at the head of the pipers. When the pipes and drums struck up on entering a town the excitement, the emotion, the cheering, the cries, the delight, were indescribable. “The Day” had come!

As the relief of the Black Watch was proceeding, orders came that the battalion would remain in support ; consequently the companies were billeted in the surrounding villages of Vezon, Bertincroix, and Wasmes. The civilians were all eager to welcome us, and there was no lack of comfortable billets. Touch was maintained with the Black Watch during the night, and all the roads leading forward were picketed. No sign of the enemy was visible, except that here and there the sky was lit by the glare of a distant fire.

On the march there was now less evidence of systematic pillaging and destroying, and more of hurry.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Few of the cross-roads had been blown up; a number of road mines had been left in various stages of preparation; and many of the telegraph poles had been allowed to remain standing. The attention of the enemy seemed to have been chiefly directed to destroying the railways, and this he had done very effectively. Now and then we passed the carcass of a horse lying at the roadside, where the animal had apparently died of exhaustion. It was noticed that large pieces of the flesh had been cut from these carcasses, to be used, in all probability, as food.

On the following day our advance continued, the battalion being still under the orders of the 44th Brigade and in support to the 4/5th Black Watch. Our route lay by Bertincroix, Lignette and Pipaix, to Vieux Leuze, where we had orders to billet. The battalion marched into Vieux Leuze about noon, and practically the whole population turned out to welcome us. The pipe band aroused tremendous enthusiasm; but the pipers and drummers had some difficulty in playing the companies past, on account of the insistence with which the civilians pressed them to drink hot coffee and various other kinds of refreshment.

Battalion Headquarters were established in the monastery of St Jean de Dieu, a confraternity devoted to the care of feeble-minded men. The monks were exceptionally hospitable. The guest-room was set aside for us as a mess. M. le Superieur personally put at our disposal the crystal, cutlery, china dishes, silver and linen stored in the cupboards of the room.

## THE ARMISTICE

Among the monks there were several Englishmen, a Welshman and an Irishman, with whom we had many interesting conversations, and one of whom was particularly eager to know whether we had any English newspapers. Some of them had come from the monastery belonging to their order in Lille, where they had been very harshly treated by the Huns. It happened to be Sunday, the 10th of November, and on learning that our Padre was anxious to have Divine Service, the Superior at once offered to give him the use of a large ward in the monastery, where the men might be assembled. When it was found impracticable to assemble the men for this purpose, a number of the officers gathered with Padre Ferguson for a service in the mess-room.

During the afternoon the C.O. made a reconnaissance of the positions occupied by 4/5th Black Watch with a view to our passing through in the morning and continuing the advance. For probably the first time in the history of the battalion it was possible on this occasion to visit the outposts on horseback. No signs of hostile activity were to be seen: the outposts were engaged for the most part in washing and in making friends with the civilian population. Several volunteer parties of soldiers were busily engaged in helping the civilians to fill up the huge craters which yawned where the Hun had mined the road-crossings. As we expected to advance at an early hour of the following morning, "A" and "B" Companies were sent forward on the afternoon of the 10th to Erveau, a small village about midway be-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

tween Vieux Leuze and Blicquy, so that the preliminary march in the morning should be shortened.

The battalion had orders to pass through the outpost line at 8.30 A.M., on the 11th of November, and to continue moving forward, keeping touch with the units on either flank, until certain definite objectives, about 7 miles distant, had been reached. Outposts and pickets were then to be thrown out, and the battalion was to halt for the night, and to move forward again the next day.

"A" and "B" Companies passed through the Black Watch line at 8.30, "C" and "D" following in half platoons at 400 yards' distance. The battalion then came again under the command of the 46th Brigade; and the advance was continued on a two-Brigade front, the 44th Brigade on the right, with the 1/5th Gordons in front; and the 46th Brigade on the left, with the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers in front.

Rapid progress was made till about 10.30 A.M. The front companies had just crossed the Dendre Canal near Tongres Notre Dame by two swing-bridges, which the enemy had failed to demolish completely, when a verbal message was received from the Brigade to the effect that an Armistice had been concluded with the enemy, and that the battalion would remain in its present position.

Shortly afterwards the news was confirmed by the Brigadier in person, who forthwith decided what villages we should occupy. Distant firing could still be heard, but possibly it was only the explosion of demolition charges.

## THE ARMISTICE

The news of the Armistice was received by the men very quietly. They were spread in small parties over a wide area, and had no chance of giving full vent to their feelings, but every face was wreathed in smiles.

"I'd like fine to be in Blighty the night. It'll be a great night this at hame; something doin', I'll bet." "Ay," said another, "an' there'll be a guid few tears too."

One man was fastidiously adjusting his steel helmet, when another gave him a resounding slap on the back, shouting, "There's nae use o' yer tin hat noo, ma lad." It was almost impossible to realise it.

In eager, laughing groups the men stood about, chaffing over the news, with odd little silences that betrayed an undercurrent of deeper feeling. Then the word of command rang out, and we fell in to finish the day's march.

The Brigade and the Battalion Operation Orders for this last advance as issued on the evening of the 10th of November are set out below :—

### *SECRET.*

#### 46th INFANTRY BRIGADE NO. B. M. 1866.

1/9th Royal Scots.	O.C. No. 4 Coy. Train.
7/8th K.O. Sco. Bord.	44th Inf. Bde.
10th Sco. Rif.	45th Inf. Bde.
46th L.T.M. Bty.	15th Bn. M.G.C.
"C" Coy. 15th Bn. M.G.C.	ADMS, 15th Division.
15th Division.	CRE, 15th Div.
70th Bde. R.F.A.	45th Fd. Amb.
15th Divl. Arty.	91st Fd. Coy. R.E.
"C" Section No. 3 Australian Tlg. Coy.	
"F" Coy. 9th Gordons (P).	O.C. 9th Gordons (P).

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

*Ref. Tournai 5 1/100,000.*

15th Division will continue advance to-morrow on two Bde. front, 46th Inf. Bde. taking over Northern half of Div. frontage at 0830 hours, at which time 7/8th K.O.S.B. will again come under orders of B.G.C. 46th Inf. Bde. AAA Cavalry Corps is advancing to-morrow on Soignies and Nivelles AAA Northern Div. Boundary Blicquy—Moulbaix—Attre (all inclusive) AAA Inter-Bde. boundary Aubechies—Tongres Notre Dame (both inclusive to 46th Inf. Bde.)—Chievres (exclusive)—Brugelette (inclusive) AAA Objective for the day bridge-head general line cross-roads half mile N.E. of S in Chievres—Attre (incl.) AAA 7/8th K.O.S.B. will act as Vanguard to Brigade to-morrow 11th inst., passing through present outpost line held by 4/5th Black Watch, at 0830 hours, and will seize and hold bridge-head as given above AAA On relief 4/5th Black Watch will sideslip South into 44th Inf. Bde. area clearing Blicquy at 1000 hours AAA Transport route Blicquy—Chapitre—Ormeignies—Tongres AAA Blaton Canal will be crossed at bridge which is intact in the immediate vicinity of the Church at Tongres Notre Dame AAA This bridge has been crossed and is being guarded by the K.E.H. AAA O.C., 7/8th K.O.S.B. will form a preliminary bridge-head with one company to cover the crossing of his Battalion AAA He will endeavour to cross at other points at the same time AAA 91st Fd. Coy. R.E. will be prepared to make any possible repairs to partially demolished bridges AAA One company 9th Gordons (P), one section 91st Fd. Coy. R.E., and party of No. 3 Australian Tlg. Coy. will move with 7/8th K.O.S.B. to make good above mentioned roads AAA 7/8th K.O.S.B. will be responsible for their billets AAA Two sections "C" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn. and B/70th Battery, 70th Bde. R.F.A. will also move with 7/8th K.O.S.B. to render any assistance if opposition is met with and in consolidation AAA Arrangements for rendezvous of M.G. Sections to be made between Commanding Officers concerned AAA "C" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn. (less 2 sections) will move with 10th Sco. Rif. AAA Preliminary moves of remainder of Bde. group as follows

## THE ARMISTICE

AAA 10th Sco. Rif., with "C" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn. (less 2 sections), and 91st Fd. Coy. R.E. (less 1 section) who will reach Vieux Leuze at 0830 hours and move between 10th Sco. Rif. and "C" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn., to Blicquy AAA 1/9th Royal Scots to Erveau AAA Time of start 0830 hours AAA Routes as convenient to be reconnoitred by units concerned AAA 3 Batteries 70th Bde. R.F.A., "A" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn., 45th Fd. Amb. and 46th L.T.M. Bty. will not move until receipt of orders from Bde. Hd. Qrs. AAA Bde. Report centre will be established at cross-roads half mile S.W. of *A* in Autreppe at 1000 hours, to which place all reports will be sent AAA Following will rendezvous at report centre at above mentioned hour AAA B.G.C. 46th Inf. Bde., O.C. 70th Bde. R.F.A., O.C. 15th M.G. Bn., O.C. 91st Fd. Coy. R.E., and representatives of 45th Fd. Amb., "A" Coy. 15th M.G. Bn.; and Seconds-in-Command of 10th Sco. Rif. and 1/9th Royal Scots with two mounted orderlies each AAA Move of Headquarters as follows AAA Dismounted personnel of Bde. H.Q. and H.Q. 15th M.G. Bn. and party of No. 3 Australian Tlg. Coy., at 1030 hours to Brigade Report centre AAA Transport of Bde. H.Q., 70th Bde. R.F.A., and 15th M.G. Bn. at 1100 hours to same place AAA Transport route will be notified to all concerned AAA Acknowledge AAA Addsd all concerned.

46th Infantry Brigade, R. ORRED,  
10th November 1918. *Captain, Brigade Major.*

**SECRET.**

7/8th SER. BN. K.O.S.B. OPERATION ORDER NO. 12.

Ref. Map. Ath. 1/40,000.

10.11.1918.

Tournai 1/100,000.

1. Battalion will take up Advance to-morrow as Vanguard of 46th Inf. Bde. which is Left Brigade of Division.

*Boundaries—Northern* Blicquy—Moulbaix—Attre (all inclusive).

*Southern* Aubechies—Tongres Notre Dame (both inclusive) Chievres (exclusive) Brugelette (inclusive).

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

### *Information.*

- (1) 1/5th Gordons are on Right Flank and 55th Division on Left.
- (2) An independent British force of Cavalry or cyclists may be working in front of Battalion and all ranks will be on the look-out for same and exercise caution.

*Objectives—First.* Grid line dividing N. 26 & 27 and T. 2 and 3.

*Second.* Grid line dividing N. 28 & 29 and T. 4 and 5.

*Third.* Canal (crossing by Bridge near Church Tongres Notre Dame which is intact and is being guarded by the K.E.H.).

### *Fourth and Final.*

General line Cross-roads O. 34.d. Central to Attre (inclusive).

### *Inter Company Boundary.*

Line passing through S. 10.d. 8.4, T. 3.b. 8.9, thence road to T. 6.b. 5. O. E. of Canal Grid line E. and W. between O. 27 and 33.

- (1A) On reaching Canal if there is only 1 Bridge available "A" Company will get over first and push N.E. forming Bridge-head to allow "B" Company and remainder of Battalion over. "B" Company will follow when all "A" Company are over. Should Bridge be available in "B" Coy.'s Sector both Coys. will get over independently and form Bridge-head on general line of last objective. On reaching this Coys. will push out patrols to picquet roads running East.

### 2. *Starting Points.*

"A" and "B" Coys. will move off in time to pass through Outposts of 4/5th Black Watch by 08.30 hours. Coys. will take over from like Coys.

Right Company H.Q.

S. 11.c.

Left           "           "

S. 5.d. 8.6.

These Headquarters it is understood have been reconnoitred by Company Commanders to-night.

"C" "D" and H.Q. in order named at 200 yds. interval



## THE ARMISTICE

will pass Starting Point road junction X.5.c. Central at 06.45 hours. "C" and "D" Coys. will arrange to get in touch with H.Q. of "A" and "B" respectively at points mentioned above at 08.30 hours. After getting in touch, "A" and "B" Coys. will move forward. Front sections of Supporting Coys. will follow about 400 yds. in rear of front Coys.

3. Battalion H.Q. will be at Château Blicquy at 08.30 hours. When front Coys. have reached First Objective H.Q. will move to Cross-roads T.7.b.9.2. After Second Objective to Cross-roads T.3.c. After Third Objective to road junction T.17.a.95.95. After Final Objective to Château O.27.a.

4. Report Centres will be established by Signals at above points as soon as front Coys. have cleared them and messages should be sent to these Centres for transmission to H.Q.

Front Coys. will report immediately each objective is reached by forward platoon. Rear Coys. will also report immediately each objective is reached.

5. *Attached Personnel.*

"A" and "B" Coys. will each pick up 1 Section M.G.C. at S.8.a.95.80. at 06.45 hours.

Three Tunnellers have reported to each forward Company. (These men must NOT go in advance of forward Sections.) 1 T.M. (Stokes) and 4 boxes ammunition are attached to "B" Coy. Right platoon. "A" Company can send for this if required. 1 Company 9th Gordons (Pioneers) with Battalion H.Q. 5 Scouts are attached to each forward Company.

*Artillery.*

Request for assistance of Artillery to be made to Battalion H.Q. giving Objective, map reference and latest hour Artillery may shoot, *e.g.*, "M.G. T.1.b.6.6. 11.30 hours," meaning "Shoot at M.G. T.1.b.6.6. 11.30 hours, and we will not go to within 250 yds. of T.1.b.6.6. until after 11.30 hours."

6. *Lewis Guns.*

Each Company will carry 6 Lewis Guns and 16 drums per

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

gun on the man. H.Q. Company 1 gun on top of limber only.

### 7. *Transport.*

Company Commanders will arrange for Cookers and L.G. limbers to be outside Château Blicquy at 08.30 hours.

Cookers will be sent forward if situation permits. T.O. will arrange for officers' horses to be at Coy. etc., H.Q. at necessary hours.

Remainder of Transport to follow on as arranged direct between T.O. and Q.M.

Mess cart, Maltese cart and H.Q. L.G. limber to follow H.Q. Company.

### 8. *Cooking arrangements.*

All rations to be put on man to-morrow and camp kettles carried. Suggest midday meal (which could be eaten at halt between 11.00 hours and 12.30 hours) should be tea and dinners could be cooked when on Final Objective.

9. R.A.P. will move with Battalion H.Q. and wounded or sick will be sent there.
10. Watches will be synchronised at Blicquy Château at 08.30 hours.
11. Dress: Steel helmets will be worn so long as Battalion forms Vanguard of Brigade and Box Respirators slung.

P. REAY, *Lieut.*

A/ADJT. 7/8th (SER.) BN. K.O. SCOTTISH BORDERERS.

Issued.

23.45 hours.

10.11.1918.

- Distribution—
- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. C.O.                 | 11. Signals.        |
| 2-5. Coys.              | 12. "C" Coy. M.G.C. |
| 6. I.O. and M.O.        | 13. R.S.M.          |
| 7. 46th Inf. Bde.       | 14. File.           |
| 8. T.O. and Q.M.        |                     |
| 9. B.70. Bty. R.F.A.    |                     |
| 10. Aus. Tunn. Section. |                     |

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CLOSING SCENES.

THE situation of the battalion after crossing the canal at Tongres Notre Dame, on the afternoon of Armistice Day, was as follows:—"A" Company, under Captain A. B. Paton, M.C., occupied a large farmhouse midway between Tongres Notre Dame and Tongres Saint Martin. "B" Company, under Captain J. Weir, M.C., had pushed on to Mevergnies; "C" Company, under Captain H. K. M'Kee, M.C., to Brugelette; and "D" Company, under Captain W. W. Henderson, M.C., to Arbre. Battalion Headquarters were at the Château de Maffles. "B" and "C" Companies, being in advance, took up a line of outposts which they held till the 18th of November, when the cavalry passed through on the way to occupy Cologne.

The outpost sentries had received orders to allow civilians to pass westwards, but not eastwards. Three priests, unaware of this order, came in from Gages to buy food, and when they attempted to return through the outpost line were rather startled on finding themselves arrested as spies. They protested their innocence, they cried, and after a great deal of trouble, for them, were allowed to go their way.

The reception given to the British troops by the

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

inhabitants of the villages was most enthusiastic ; banners were hung across the street displaying devices such as, "Honour to our Allies and Liberators" ; flags were flying from every house ; girls embraced the troops, snatching the opportunity at the same time to appropriate their shoulder-titles and cap-badges—at least so the men subsequently explained the numerous deficiencies in these details of uniform.

The town band at Chievres played the "Marseillaise" as we marched through the crowded, cheering square ; and as, in their enthusiasm, the musicians rendered this honour even to solitary transport wagons passing through the town, they were kept playing that inspiring tune well into the night.

At the Château de Maffles M. Smits, the "lord of the manor," welcomed the Headquarters officers with the greatest cordiality. His best apartments were put at their service, he would not hear of their dining apart, but must have them at his own table ; his household servants helped to wait upon them ; and in every way he sought to show that he regarded them not as persons thrust upon him by military necessity, but as guests whom he was pleased to entertain. On the previous night he had seen the Boche machine-guns posted along the railway that runs immediately in front of the château, and had sat in his chair for hours listening to the Boche shells whining over his roof, wondering, no doubt, whether his home was to be engulfed in the storm of battle. The upper rooms, which could be reached by a separate staircase, had already been used as

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## CLOSING SCENES

Headquarters by a German Division. M. Smits was not a bit sorry to see the last of these undesirables quit his house. He had shown them no favour, and in return they had treated him harshly. Because, for instance, he had planted on his estate a few tobacco plants in excess of the numbers stated in the inevitable Hun census of pigs, hens, cattle, crops and trees on his property, his whole crop of tobacco was confiscated, and he was heavily fined. He had succeeded, however, in concealing from the enemy some things more important even than tobacco. For one thing, his choicest wine had for years been safely buried in the ground, and before dinner on the evening after our arrival it was carefully resurrected under the twinkling light of a lamp, by a fatigue party of a few men specially selected for their discretion.

"Gentlemen," he said at dinner, with a delicate sarcasm, "I think we drink this glass to—Coblentz!" It was the town to which we were supposed to be on our way.

"Gentlemen, I think we drink one glass to—the U-boat!" Again the irony rippled in laughter round the table.

Earlier in the day M. Smits had invited the entire population of the neighbouring village of Maffles to come to the château to hear the pipe band play. A great crowd of villagers—old and young—assembled in the afternoon, and stood for an hour in a bitterly cold wind listening, with marked interest and no little curiosity, to the pipers and drummers, as they

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

marched smartly up and down on the gravel sweep between the château and the lake, playing the liveliest of quick steps, strathspeys and reels.

Colonel Sutherland returned from hospital on the 13th of November; and on the 16th Colonel Hart, having recovered from his wound, rejoined the battalion and resumed command. Hearing that the Division was going on to Germany, he had rushed up post-haste, only to find Headquarters comfortably billeted at the château with no sign of a move. Arrangements had been made for a Special Thanksgiving Service, to be held in the church at Maffles, to which the officers were invited. On Sunday morning, therefore, after an earlier service conducted by Padre Ferguson in the château park, they lined up outside the church and awaited the arrival of the Maire and councillors, who at length appeared in their imposing chains of office, and headed by the Belgian flag. The officers followed in rear of the procession, and were met at the door of the church by the priest, who conducted them to a row of chairs within the chancel. When the service was over the priest came forward and shook hands with Captain Henderson, and with the Maire. Colonel Hart, who had taken a seat some distance farther along the row, missed this little attention. No doubt it was intended for the Commanding Officer, but Henderson took it without a blush. The priest's mistake, indeed, was quite excusable, seeing that Henderson was wearing an exceptionally smart pair of riding boots for the first time. These boots had been very much envied.

## CLOSING SCENES

After the service the pipe band, under Pipe-Major Halliday, played to an admiring crowd in the open space in front of the church. The kilt of the pipers seemed to be a subject of much discussion among the ladies.

On the following day Headquarters moved to the château and village of Attre, where they remained until the 24th of November.

The officers who enjoyed the hospitality of the Château de Maffles will never forget their very pleasant stay there. The courtesy and geniality with which M. Smits from day to day added to his kindness will always remain in their grateful recollection.

Meanwhile the companies were having a gay and festive time in their respective villages. On entering Brugelette, on the day of the Armistice, "C" Company was met by the town band—three brass instruments and a big drum. The people showered flowers over the troops; but flowers are a poor substitute for food when one is hungry. There had been no opportunity for a meal since the company left Leuze. This, however, was quickly remedied; for no sooner had the troops halted in the Grande Place than the inhabitants began to offer them fruit and sandwiches, asking endless questions, "pinching" shoulder-titles as souvenirs, and, as the whim seized them, picking out men and taking them under their personal care for accommodation. This, of course, was contrary to orders; but, under the circumstances, the officers could do nothing; so they decided to wait till the

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

enthusiasm of the welcome had subsided. When they went to billet the company it had disappeared ; the men were eventually found scattered about the town in various houses, being regaled with roast beef and *pommes de terre*. Captain M'Kee rapidly became a great favourite with the inhabitants, who looked upon him as a kind of uncrowned king, sent there to settle their disputes.

On the 22nd of November the battalion was inspected by the Divisional Commander, Major-Gen. H. L. Reed, V.C. After the inspection he addressed the battalion, saying how pleased he was with the excellent turn-out of the men, and how glad he felt that we were still keeping up the reputation of the regiment.

Lieut.-Col. Hart issued the following order :—

“The Commanding Officer wishes to congratulate all ranks on the good turn-out at the inspection to-day. The cleanness and smartness on parade and when marching past, showed a whole-hearted keenness of each individual to do his best. It is this spirit, and the loyal co-operation of all ranks, that have maintained the high standard of efficiency displayed to-day.”

On such an occasion our thoughts turned back to our first Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col. T. B. Sellar, C.M.G., D.S.O. A day or two before the inspection he telegraphed as follows :—

“To Colonel H. P. Hart.—Congratulations to you and all ranks at successful termination of battalion's activities. Its good reputation, maintained and en-



## CLOSING SCENES

hanced under each succeeding Commander, proves sterling qualities of men who form the battalion and have maintained best traditions of Regiment."

The following reply was sent from the battalion:—

"All ranks join in thanking you for your congratulations. We are proud to feel that the spirit with which you imbued the battalion still lives, and has helped us to successful conclusion."

On the 24th of November the whole battalion moved into the convent at Brugelette. For some days previously strong fatigue parties had been employed in clearing away the filth left by the Huns, who had used this place as a School of Instruction. The Sisters of the convent were most kind in doing all they could to make the men comfortable. They allowed us the use of their well-equipped laundry; the dormitories were handed over as billets, the *réfectoire* was converted into a concert and lecture hall; and electric lighting, for which we supplied and fitted wire and globes, was provided free. As there was now more leisure, all kinds of sports were encouraged, frequent company concerts were given, and occasionally the Divisional Cinema provided an evening's entertainment, so that the time never hung heavily. Several hours of every day were taken up by educational classes, which were formed under an army scheme of training, to prepare the troops for a return to the vocations of civil life. Captain Henderson was appointed Education Officer, and, when he left, the duties of supervision were taken over by Captain W. Torrance. The Scheme of Education

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

included classes in English, French, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Farming and Gardening. Men who wanted instruction in one branch or another of mechanics were sent to the various workshops at the base, or were attached to the Battalion Pioneers. Instruction in Carpentry was given by Pioneer-Sergeant Ramsay. Colonel Hart gave a very interesting lecture on his experience in Rhodesia, Lieut. J. Lindsay lectured on Salesmanship, and a most amusing address was given by the Rev. Studdard Kennedy ("Woodbine Willie") on Demobilisation. He kept the men in roars of laughter from beginning to end ; his choice of words and his jokes were original; and everybody went away happy, with a much clearer idea as to the chances of early demobilisation, or of retention for the Army of Occupation.

In sport, Association football took precedence of all other games. The battalion team played several matches against the Royal Scots and the Scottish Rifles ; but as these matches, though arousing keen interest, gave only a few of our men the opportunity of playing, it was decided to run an Inter-platoon Competition. There was ample ground available on a wide stretch of common that had been long used as a German aerodrome. The scheme caught on right from the start. Lots of chaff and counter-chaff came from the supporters of the opposing teams, and peals of laughter rent the air. At one match an excited supporter of "C" Company was heard to shout : " Now then, Number 9, run through them ! " Unfortunately, Number 9 was not in the running.

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So many men were now leaving the battalion to be demobilised that it was found very difficult to turn out platoon teams of eleven-a-side, and the teams were therefore reduced to five-a-side. Bad weather turned the clayey ground into a quagmire ankle deep in mud, but this by no means prevented the matches from being played; on the contrary, the games became more exciting and afforded still greater amusement.

Our stay in Brugelette began in grand style with a two days' Brigade Sports Meeting, on the 25th and 26th of November, on the Hun aviation ground. Points were given to decide the winner of the Inter-battalion Challenge Cup for Athletics. The 9th Royal Scots were first, with 35 points; the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers second, with 27 points; and the 10th Scottish Rifles third, with 22 points.

The battalion was first in the Driving Competition, and first in wrestling on mules. Our team of wrestlers held an unbeaten record; nothing in the Division could stand, or rather sit, against them; they beat the best team in the 44th Brigade.

First in the 100 yards was Captain M'Kee, who sprinted in splendid style with bare feet. The battalion was first in the Inter-company Relay Race, the Mule Race and the Tug-of-War. The Tug-of-War team put up an excellent record. In January 1918 they won the Divisional Cup, and since then had been pulled over once only, losing on that occasion to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

A Brigade Race Meeting was also held on the avia-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

tion ground on the 5th of December. There were several exciting races, but for the battalion the most interesting was the three-furlong race for chargers under 14 hands. Captain H. K. M'Kee, M.C., rode "Blackbird," the late Colonel Dennis's black mare. There was great difficulty in getting the horses away, and when they eventually did get off, it was a bad start. The starter could not get them back; and the whole course was run, "Blackbird" winning by about four lengths. Owing to the false start, the race had to be run over again, still with the same result; "Blackbird," seeming to realise the fact that she was the first officer's charger to be posted to the 7th Battalion at Bordon in 1914, and that she had the credit of the regiment to uphold, spread herself like a little mouse to the gallop and went like the wind.

On the 7th of December a detachment of five officers and 100 rank and file marched to Willaupuis, where they lined the route along which His Majesty King George passed on his way through the Corps area.

On the 16th of December we said good-bye to the convent at Brugelette and marched to Soignies. The greater part of the battalion was billeted in the tannery for the night; and the next morning we continued the march, with the remainder of the 46th Brigade, to Tubize. As we approached Tubize, the Divisional General waited by the roadside to inspect the Brigade as it marched past him.

On the day following we moved to our destination at Braine-l'Alleud, a town which stands on the very



GROUP OF OFFICERS—December 1918



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edge of the historic field of Waterloo. The whole Brigade was billeted in the town. The horses of the Brigade transport were stabled in the farmyard of Hougomont—Hougomont still haunted, one might fancy, by the shades of our ancestors who fought in the great fight that raged round that famous old building. There was a peculiar satisfaction in the thought that our advance should end on the very field where, a hundred years ago, British arms determined the destinies of Europe.

The people of Braine l'Alleud did not appear, at first, to be particularly pleased to see us; and did not give us the hearty welcome that we had received from other Belgian villagers. It was now more than a month since the Armistice had been signed, and two other Divisions had already been billeted in the town. Popular enthusiasm had begun to wear off. Our men, however, quickly found their way into the good graces of the townsfolk, and were soon enjoying all the comforts of the town.

The 15th Division was now being broken up, and the battalion was diminishing in numbers day by day. The company officers' messes were amalgamated in one mess at Headquarters, 33 Avenue du Parc, the commodious and beautifully appointed town residence of Madame Van Ham, who, with her daughter and her household, did everything in her power to make us feel that we were welcome. Many a memorably pleasant evening was spent under her roof during the ten weeks of our stay at Braine l'Alleud.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS.

Billeted for the most part in private houses, the men were treated as members of the household; and, although food was scarce, were often invited to sit down at table in the family circle.

On one occasion a whole beast was offered to the officer commanding "C" Company, and though he pointed out that the men were getting rations which really did not need to be supplemented in this way, absolutely no refusal would be taken.

"D" Company at this time occupied an empty warehouse, which did not yield the domestic comforts enjoyed by the other companies. The budding poets of the company were nevertheless inspired to give vent to their emotions in the following verses:—

When we arrived at Braine l'Alleud,  
Our feet were sore, but hearts were true.  
The drums did beat, the pipers blew  
When gallant "Don" came marching through.

We turned down the Rue de Jamb,  
And, round the corner, there did stand  
The warehouse we should occupy,  
And on the floor and shelves to lie.

And every morning at Réveillé  
We to the dining-hall did rally,  
And there our sumptuous meals were spread  
(We wished to h—— we'd lain in bed).

A few days hence we're trim and neat,  
For picking paper off the street,  
And on parade we're often told  
That "Don" is worth its weight in gold.



## CLOSING SCENES

On Christmas Eve we had such treats,  
And oh! the shops and lighted streets,  
All thronged with bonnie, cheery wenches,  
Oh! what a difference from the trenches.

The Christmas dinner was a treat,  
With "boko" \* speech and "boko" meat;  
To one and all we wished good cheer  
When we knocked back our pot o' beer.

Our Brigadier, a right good sport,  
And Colonel Hart of the same good sort;  
They each did us a visit pay,  
And long remembered be that day.

On Hogmanay, it took the bun  
For happy crowds and harmless fun,  
The auld wives in their stocking feet  
Did dance upon the *pavé* street.

High on the chapel there, the clock  
To '18 paid the farewell knock.  
Like flashes frae a gun the lassies  
The khaki lads bestrewed wi' kisses.

On education and pleasure bent,  
The following days our time we spent  
Counting, reading, writing, thinking,  
Football, boxing, dancing, sprinting.

By Hougomont and Mont St Jean,  
By Belle Alliance we've often been,  
The Museum and Panorama round,  
Brown's Hotel and the Lion Mound.

And now our boots and buttons shine,  
For we've been warned for the Rhine,  
So fare ye weel to Braine l'Alleudl  
All hope of demobilisation subdue.

\* French: *beaucoup*.

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On Christmas Day the men were entertained at dinner in three halls which were requisitioned for the occasion. These were gaily decorated: the tables groaned under the weight of the steaming victuals, and the dinner was followed by dances that kept up the merriment far into the night.

At the Sergeants' dinner in the evening there was a positive overflow of good spirits—as even Sergeant Hay confessed.

The officers of the battalion were invited to a sumptuous repast at Headquarters Mess. Long will the memory of that festive occasion remain! The table spread in Madame Van Ham's chaste *salle-à-manger* was a dream: the viands had been brought from far and near: every one was in the happiest humour. Towards the end of dinner Colonel Hart rose and, with a seriousness of manner which for a few sentences completely mystified the company, proposed the toast of "The Maire and Corporation of the Town of Braine l'Alleud." The speech which followed had absolutely nothing to do with the subject; the Colonel expatiated, with many amusing touches, on the great changes in warfare which had taken place since the British had fought at Waterloo! There were very few of the Waterloo veterans left in the battalion, he remarked—only the Quartermaster and himself!

With a disconcerting suddenness he stopped by coupling the "toast" with the names of three of the officers, who had thereupon to respond in impromptu speeches amid a running volley of badinage from

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both sides of the table. Then came the *pièce de résistance* of the evening. The C.O. announced that Captain Goss would tell us how we closed the gates of the farm of Hougomont! Captain Goss played off by calling attention to the fact that there was in our mess an officer who was a direct descendant of the soldier who had captured a standard at Waterloo. Had we not seen the picture of that gallant Scots Greycutting down a Frenchman and seizing the standard? The descendant maintained that for this act his ancestor had received the V.C. Some one quietly remarked that the V.C. was of a somewhat later date; but, nothing daunted, the gallant Quartermaster warmed to his theme. The bubbling mirth of the company would have disconcerted any less determined orator. Captain M'Kee's ludicrous interruptions in French convulsed the table in laughter. In vain the speaker pleaded for a little seriousness. "Mind you, gentlemen . . . ." For answer, the hearers only rocked with glee. No part of the evening's entertainment was more thoroughly enjoyed. The genuine enthusiasm of the speaker for his subject, and his courageous struggles to overcome the unseemly levity with which his most innocent or most serious remarks were taken, created a situation, the tickling humour of which he himself was unable to resist. How long the speech lasted it is impossible definitely to say; but about midnight the company was gradually dispersing to visit the various dances that were going on in the town.

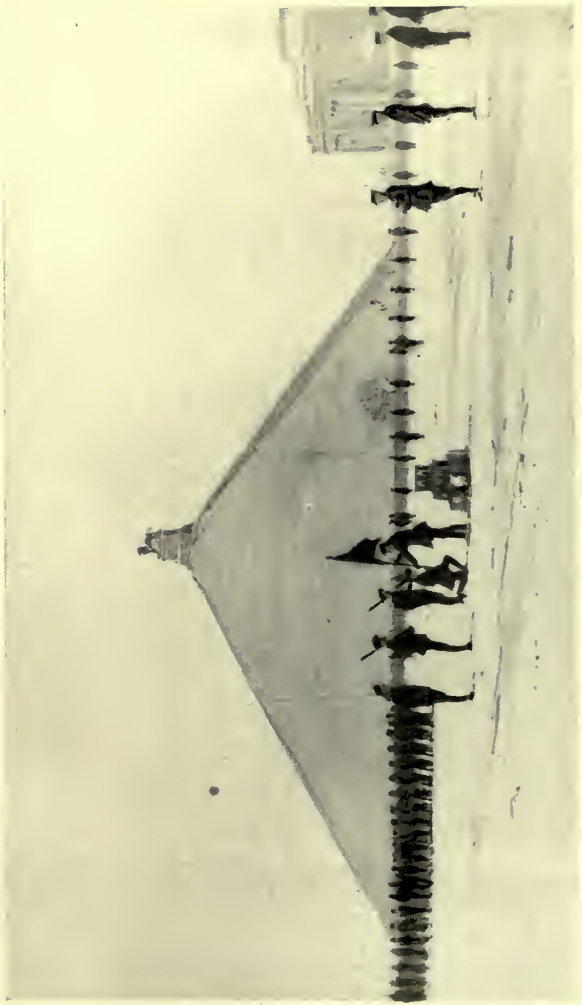
Two nights later an excellent entertainment was

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

given by the Battalion Concert party in the Kursaal. The first part consisted of a "revue," arranged by R.Q.M.-Sergeant Heywood, and was followed by the "merry and tragical" play of "Pyramus and his love Thisbe," from "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The play was presented in the costume of the period, and was very cleverly staged. Captain Henderson made a remarkably fine Bottom ; unfortunately, when he tried to draw his sword, it refused to come out ; until, after both tender and violent treatment, it at length came away, scabbard and all. Captain Gaskell as Snout, the tinker, scored a palpable hit, especially in his representation of the wall.

On the 27th of January 1919 a special Brigade Parade was held on the battle-field of Waterloo, on the ground immediately east of the Lion Mound, for the presentation of the King's Colour to the 7/8th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers.

The day was bitterly cold, the ground was covered with snow, and a biting east wind was blowing. The fine powdery snow in the air sometimes completely hid the Lion from view. The battalion was formed up in line facing north, Colonel H. P. Hart, D.S.O., in command. Major-Gen. H. L. Reed, V.C., the Divisional Commander, and Brig.-Gen. V. M. Fortune, D.S.O., were present, and at 11 A.M. Lieut.-Gen. R. M. K. Butler, K.C.M.G., C.B., commanding the Third Army Corps, arrived on the ground and was received with the general salute. The battalion then formed three sides of a square. The Colour was consecrated, according to the form



PRESENTATION OF BATTALION COLOUR ON THE FIELD OF WATERLOO  
BY LIEUT.-GEN. R. M. K. BUTLER, K.C.M.G., C.B.



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of service appointed for use in Scottish Divisions. The service was conducted by Rev. F. Stewart, Assistant Principal Chaplain, Fifth Army; assisted by Rev. J. Ferguson, C.F., attached 7/8th K.O.S.B., Acting Senior Chaplain (P.Cs. Department), and Rev. J. H. M. Macdonald, C.F., acting Senior Chaplain (C.Gs. Department), 15th Division.

After a most impressive ceremony Major J. H. Patrick, M.C., handed the Colour to the Corps Commander, and the flag was then presented to Lieut. G. A. Haining, M.C., who received it kneeling. The Colour, with escort, rejoined the line, after which Lieut.-Gen. Butler addressed the battalion. He said :—

“ I have to-day presented your battalion with its Colours. It is usually presented by His Majesty the King, but I have been delegated to act for him to-day. Your battalion has an honourable record in the field, and I am sure you will always maintain its traditions. This ceremony is rendered all the more impressive when we consider that it is taking place in the very centre of the battle-field of Waterloo, one of the most important battles in which the British Army has ever fought.”

The Colour was then trooped. Captain A. B. Paton, M.C., was in command of the escort, and 2nd Lieut. W. E. Berry carried the Colour.

The Colour party consisted of C.Q.M.-Sergeant J. Martin, Sergeants W. Bailey and J. Blake.

The battalion, and the detachments of the 1/9th

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Royal Scots and the 10th Scottish Rifles who had kept the ground, marched past before the Corps Commander, and the ceremony ended.

The following letter was received from Brig.-Gen. V. M. Fortune, commanding the 46th Brigade :—

“ Will you please convey to all ranks on parade on 27th my congratulations on their very smart turn-out and steadiness on parade. The trooping of the Colours after very little practice was carried out in a way that would have brought great credit on a battalion in pre-war days who would probably have had a fortnight's practice. The parade and general turn-out was a great credit to your battalion and also to the Brigade, for which I wish to thank you and all ranks in your battalion. As the Corps and Divisional Commanders said: ‘ It will always be a day which the 7/8th King's Own Scottish Borderers will remember and be proud of.’ ”

On the 19th of February the Tug-of-War Competition for the Divisional Cup was held at Braine-le-Château. On the morning of the 19th the battalion, parading as strong as possible, with three gas rattles, a melodeon, and the one remaining piper, marched to the scene of combat. So great was the enthusiasm that the team had decided in the event of defeat to disappear off the face of the earth. The 9th Gordons had scratched, so that only four teams were left in the semi-final. We were to have pulled the 1/8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and were thirsting to take revenge on them for our one and

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THE TUG-OF-WAR TEAM  
Divisional Champions 1917-1918-1919



## CLOSING SCENES

only defeat. The fresh draw, however, made the contests as follows :—

71st Brigade R.F.A. *v.* 7/8th K.O.S.B.

1/5th Gordons *v.* 1/8th A. & S. Highlanders.

Now, there was no doubt that when the team of the 7/8th K.O.S. Borderers formed up on the rope, numbered off, proved distance, "odd numbers across the rope, march," the precision of this performance so demoralised the opposing team that the game was practically won before it started.

"Take the strain, heave!" Our team pulls beautifully together, the 71st give way and are nicely forming a procession, when suddenly a big dog belonging to a Staff Officer becomes excited and enters into the sport by seizing the seat of the breeches of our anchor, Captain Thorpe. Fortunately, the dog met with little resistance; Thorpe was going the same way. Sergeant Hay, appearing on the scene with a big stick, applied it to some effect—on the dog. The stick broke; but the dog behaved himself afterwards. Two easy pulls against the 71st, and we were in the final.

Then we met the Gordons, who had proved victorious against the Argylls, and who now, by some superhuman effort, began to pull our team over; but the strain was too great for them, and after a tough struggle they collapsed. The second pull was comparatively easy; and Corporal Lamont marched on to the field playing, "The Blue Bonnets over the Border." We had won the Competition two years in succession.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

General Sir W. R. Birdwood, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., personally complimented the coach on having such a well-trained team.

Brig.-Gen. N. A. Thomson, C.M.G., D.S.O., afterwards presented the Cup, and each member of the team received a silver medal. Our team was—

Captain R. P. Thorpe.

C.S.M. W. Tully.

Sgt. A. Surgenor.

„ J. Gray.

„ A. Blake.

„ D. Craig.

„ J. Worthington.

Pte. G. Elliot.

„ R. Adamson.

„ J. Dalziel.

Coach, Captain and Quartermaster J. Goss, M.C.

In the Tug-of-War Competition for the Brigade Athletic Cup we met the 1/9th Royal Scots in the final and beat them, thus adding to our chance of winning this Cup, which was given for the highest number of points in an All-round Athletic Competition amongst the battalions of the 46th Infantry Brigade.

In the Football Competition for the Benson Cup we met the 1/9th Royal Scots in the final round, having previously beaten the 10th Scottish Rifles in the first round. The result of the final was a win for us by three goals to one. Cups were coming in! In this match the play was fast, and at times furious, and during the excitement a little questionable play crept in, neither side being altogether free from it. This caused a slight show of temper, which spread

## CLOSING SCENES

to the spectators when the Royal Scots scored the first goal. However, a few quiet words from the referee, Captain Paton, smoothed things over. Private Young, as usual, did excellent work, and Lce.-Corp. M'Taggart played a hard game. C.Q.M.-Sergeant Lewis was responsible for two goals, and Lce.-Corp. M'Taggart for one. The team was—

Lce.-Corp. Morris.  
Pte. Welsh.  
„ West.  
Lce.-Corp. M'Taggart.  
Pte. Young.  
„ Scott.  
C.Q.M.-Sergeant Lewis.  
Lieut. Lindsay.

2nd Lieuts. Cathcart, Thomson and Stark.

On the 3rd of March, amid a great turn-out of the inhabitants of Braine l'Alleud, and, in sober truth, amid the tears of one here and there in the crowd, Captain A. B. Paton, M.C., Lieut. J. Lindsay and 160 other ranks—men who were not releasable for demobilisation—left the battalion to join the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers at Dunkirk; and two days later the remainder of the battalion, now few in number, moved with Cadres of other units of the 46th Brigade to Tubize, where they stayed for about three months awaiting embarkation orders.

Lieut.-Col. H. P. Hart, D.S.O., who was on leave, and who was due to rejoin the battalion on the 9th of April, unexpectedly received orders for his repatriation to Rhodesia, and sailed shortly after-

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

wards. He wrote a farewell letter to the officers of the Cadre, and a telegram was sent in reply, wishing him God-speed.

On the 12th of June the Cadre left Tubize for home. An equipment guard, consisting of Captain Goss and twelve other ranks, was left behind in charge of the vehicles and stores, which were eventually loaded on to barges at Antwerp, whereupon the responsibility of the guard ceased.

On Wednesday, the 18th of June 1919, the Cadre Colour party, commanded by Captain P. Reay, M.C., with Company Sergeant-Major Surgenor carrying the Colour, and with Sergeant Adamson, D.C.M., M.M., Sergeant Kenyon, M.M., Sergeant Jackson, M.S.M., Private Anderson, and Piper Lamont as escort, was met at the railway station, Hawick, by the Provost, Magistrates and Town Council; and, preceded by two bands, marched, amid scenes of great enthusiasm, to the Town Hall, where the Colour was handed over to the Provost, as representing the Town of Hawick, for safe keeping.

Major J. H. Patrick, M.C., and many old members of the battalion were present at this historic ceremony.

The Colour, and the four Cups which were handed over with it, were placed in a prominent position in the Town Hall. There they repose, and there they may be seen by any former member of the battalion who may desire in future years to look on them once more, in their final resting-place.

After the presentation the Town Council entertained the Colour party at dinner in the Tower Hotel.



THE CADRE COLOUR PARTY  
Hawick, 18th June, 1919





## CLOSING SCENES

On the following day the citizens of Hawick continued their hospitality in a less formal but not less cordial manner, and on the 20th of June 1919, the members of the Colour party proceeded to Kinross for demobilisation.

Thus the 7/8th King's Own Scottish Borderers passed out of existence as a battalion. The record of its achievement remains in proud and unfading memory.

THE END



# APPENDICES.

## I.—ADMINISTRATION.

### (A) GENERAL.

THOSE who joined the regiment during the first few months at Bordon will remember the difficulties that had to be contended with in *clothing* and *equipping* the men of the two battalions.

No civilian clothes could ever stand, without showing signs of wear, the hard usage they got at Bordon Camp. Pants began to get frayed and threadbare, toes were sticking out of boots; and altogether it was high time the Ordnance Department at Aldershot were doing something. They, however, were too busy equipping the first 100,000 to deal with us as yet.

After a while supplies did begin to trickle in from Aldershot. Quartermasters of battalions vied with each other to be the first to clothe and equip their men. Special arrangements were made for transport to bring the supplies from Aldershot to Bordon; and the R.Q.M.-Sergeant would often return triumphant with half a dozen pairs of boots and a few tooth-brushes. The invariable question was: "What did we get from Ordnance to-day?"

Lieut. and Quartermaster F. Hopkins, with R.Q.M.-Sergeant Duncan, looked after the 7th Battalion; Lieut. and Quartermaster J. S. M<sup>c</sup>Arthur, with R.Q.M.-Sergeant Goss, the 8th Battalion.

As a temporary measure, until proper standard marching boots could be manufactured, the Government had bought up all available boots in the country,

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some of patent leather, some of compressed paper, and some with pointed toes—the worst kind of boots that could possibly be selected for training men to march in. Nothing better could be got.

In course of time we were supplied with uniforms that were anything but uniform. Some men were lucky enough to get a pair of tartan trews, of any pattern except that of their own regiment. Others got blue trousers with a red stripe. Jackets were of all varieties, mostly of English County Regiments, some with blue facings, some with buff, and others with white. And when the cold weather came, civilian greatcoats were issued. Each man who could produce his own greatcoat was allowed ten shillings; at least, that was the allowance promised. This, then, was the uniform of our 7th and 8th Battalions during the early days of the War—capped with a blue “brodrick” with a shiny leather peak, the 7th Battalion wearing a strip of Royal Stuart tartan in the front of their caps to distinguish it from the 8th Battalion.

Very proud we felt when, some weeks after our formation as units, each battalion was issued with 100 drill-purpose rifles, followed shortly afterwards by an issue of 100 service rifles. We were supplied in addition with a lot of unserviceable rifles and obsolete buff equipment; but, notwithstanding these disparities, the battalions very quickly began to assume a business-like appearance.

After the 46th Brigade arrived at Winchester, service dress clothing was issued to the men. The obsolete uniforms and civilian greatcoats were withdrawn and packed off to Moses & Son. They had served their purpose. And what a deal Moses & Son made out of them!

On the 19th of March 1915, Lieut. and Quartermaster J. S. M<sup>c</sup>Arthur was promoted Captain and Adjutant of the 8th Battalion, and R.Q.M.-Sergeant

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J. Goss was promoted Lieut. and Quartermaster to fill the vacancy. C.Q.M.-Sergeant G. Cumming was promoted R.Q.M.-Sergeant.

While stationed at Parkhouse Camp the two battalions were marched over by companies to the Ordnance Stores at Tidworth, and there handed in their D.P. rifles, receiving service rifles in exchange. The new 1914 pattern leather equipment was also issued about this time. At Chiseldon, in June, we received our mobilisation store equipment ; harness, wagons, water carts and travelling kitchens.

A consignment of glengarry caps appeared, but these were refused as being of a wrong pattern. They had to be taken, however, as no others were forthcoming; and they were worn until tam-o'-shanters were issued at Allouagne in July. Before embarkation each man was supplied with a new suit of service dress uniform, and a pair of standard pattern boots, which were certainly not as comfortable or as serviceable as the regulation ammunition boot.

The two baggage wagons were loaded with the Mobilisation Store equipment and with officers' valises, each of which was supposed to weigh 35 lbs. These were loads that took some drawing: in France they overflowed into one or two motor lorries.

Each battalion began with two *Lewis guns*. In July 1916 this number was increased to four per battalion. Later, the number was increased four at a time, until shortly before the Armistice there was a total of thirty-six guns, *i.e.* eight per company, and four for anti-aircraft purposes.

Of *Anti-gas Appliances*, the first to be issued was a small respirator, which was placed over the mouth and fastened at the back of the neck with tapes. This was not of very much use, as the eyes were exposed, and, moreover, the gas could be inhaled through the nostrils.

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We were next issued with the P. Helmet. The eye-pieces were of mica fitted into a piece of flannel which had been dipped in a chemical preparation. It was drawn over the head and tucked in under the shirt. The P.H. Helmet was an improvement on this; then came the P.H.G. Helmet, which had better eye-pieces and a stronger chemical prophylactic. Two of these were carried by each man in satchels slung over the shoulders. A pair of gas-goggles was also issued for protection against lachrymatory gas, which affected the eyes only.

Finally came the small box-respirator. It consisted of a mask with glass eye-pieces, a mouthpiece and nose grip. It fastened on to the head with elastic bands, a rubber tube connecting the mask and the container through which the purified air passed. Constant drills were necessary, and frequent inspection for the detection of faults. These box-respirators proved a most effective protection against enemy gas.

The first *Bomb* to be used was the common jam-tin variety; it was rather a dangerous weapon. Then came the cricket-ball grenade, a globular-shaped arrangement; and the cylinder-shaped Batty bomb. Finally the Mills grenade, Nos. 5 and 23, and the Hales rifle-grenade superseded all others.

A special cup was used for firing the No. 23 grenade. It was made of an upright piece of iron, the base fixing on to the bayonet standard, and the top opening out to form a cup large enough to carry a bomb resting on the muzzle. A rod was attached to the base of the bomb and passed down the barrel of the rifle, the length of rod required for various distances being regulated by means of a range rule.

For the No. 5 grenade, the Grenade Discharger was used. This was a heavier cup, about 6 inches high, fastening over the muzzle of the rifle with two clips and a screw. The range was regulated by the

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angle at which the rifle was held; and a grenade could be thrown up to a distance of 300 yards.

Another means of throwing bombs was the catapult; but the catapults were heavy and clumsy, and did not carry much favour. Their principal use was at Schools of Instruction, where their possibilities were displayed to admiring novices.

Two kinds of *Periscopes* were used, the No. 9, or box periscope, about 2 feet long and 4 inches square. This was too easily spotted by the enemy. The Vigilant mirror was more popular. It fitted on to the bayonet, and could be held on the parapet without attracting much attention. It was also a most useful little shaving glass.

A reserve of *S.A.A.* was maintained on the limbered wagons allotted for that purpose. When this reserve became depleted, further supply was obtained from the Divisional Ammunition Column. A special reserve of *S.A.A.* and of bombs was always kept in the trenches at Brigade dumps, enough to supply all immediate demands in case of attack.

*Steel Helmets* were first issued in June 1916, and were found most useful against shrapnel fire, and also as wash basins.

In the 8th Battalion, before the Amalgamation, the greater portion of the *Orderly Room* work was done in the trenches; but afterwards it was found that the clerical work could be more satisfactorily carried on if the Orderly Room Sergeant was left out of the trenches; and only the minimum of writing was done in the line. On the Somme, Sergeant J. Osborne, formerly Orderly Room Sergeant for the 7th Battalion, built himself quite an imposing hut out of odd pieces of wood and two or three wagon sheets. Here he carried on the Orderly Room work in close touch with the Quartermaster's Store. Great admiration was felt for Sergeant Osborne when in

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1917 at Ypres he volunteered to go over the top. After he was invalided home, he was succeeded in the Orderly Room by Sergeant Agar, who, with Sergeant Whitehead to assist him, carried on the Orderly Room work to the end.

Before the Amalgamation, the following were the Company Quartermaster-Sergeants of the 7th Battalion :—

C.Q.M.-Sergeants. — Suttar, Martin, M'ulloch, and M'Guckan ;

Sergeant Master Cook.—Sergeant Merchan ;

Pioneer Sergeant.—Sergeant M'Kay ;

and of the 8th Battalion :—

C.Q.M.-Sergeants.—Ballantyne, Whitten, Lower-son, and Wilby ;

Sergeant Master Cook.—Sergeant Swift ;

Pioneer Sergeant.—Sergeant Ramsay.

After the Amalgamation, Lieut. and Quartermaster G. Lord was posted to the 7th Corps Cyclists Battalion, and Lieut. and Quartermaster J. Goss remained with the 7/8th Battalion, with R.Q.M.-Sergeant T. Hunter as Quartermaster-Sergeant.

The Company Quartermaster-Sergeants of the battalion then were :—Martin, Whitten, Blewitt, and M'Guckan—four excellent Quartermaster-Sergeants who tried to out-do each other in looking after the men of their companies.

Martin remained with the battalion to the end and was promoted Company Sergeant-Major. Whitten was invalided home, and was relieved by C.Q.M.-Sergeant Jackson. Blewitt left for a Cadet School with a view to getting a commission, and M'ulloch again became Quartermaster-Sergeant of "C" Company. He was succeeded by C.Q.M.-Sergeant Keane, who left after the Armistice on demobilisation. M'Guckan was invalided after a rather strenuous time, and was relieved by C.Q.M.-Sergeant Lowerson. He



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also applied for a commission, and was relieved by C.Q.M.-Sergeant Chidley, who was ultimately sent to the Corps Demobilisation Staff.

Sergeant Swift was an excellent *Master Cook*, and the battalion benefited greatly by his services. When he was returning one night from the trenches where he had been to inspect the men's food, a shell burst very close to him, and knocked him insensible. He lay out for some hours, and eventually reached Vermelles in a very bad state. After this he was attached to the Divisional Canteen for some time, and returned to the battalion as C.Q.M.-Sergeant ; but he was ultimately invalided home, and the duties of Master Cook were taken over by Sergeant James Hay.

This history would not be complete without some mention of "Jimmy" Hay. He was a most important man in the battalion ; for it must be remembered that an army marches on its stomach ; and, as our marching was ever good, the cooking must have been good also. A man of vast and varied experience from Hawick to China, he had previously been in the Navy, had served with the gun's crew of H.M.S. *Powerful* during the South African War, and wore the ribbons for that campaign.

The face of this old tar told a story of hard and rough times ; of storms, and of many other things with which he had come into contact. Jimmy never failed to let it be known that cooking was a dry job. Nevertheless, he did his work well ; kept the cooks up to the mark ; and was most conscientious in keeping the travelling kitchens irreproachably clean. The army cookery expert, after an inspection of the culinary department of the battalion, gave the following report : "The cooking arrangements of this battalion are excellent. The cook-house is kept scrupulously clean ; care being taken to ensure the

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food being well cooked and varied." On one occasion, just after leaving the Somme, General Mathieson brought some cooks of another unit to note the cleanliness of, and take an example by, the kitchens of the 7/8th Battalion K.O.S. Borderers. As those cooks, in consequence, were thirsting for his blood, our Master Cook voluntarily confined himself to camp for several days afterwards.

Sergeant Hay had served continuously with the regiment since the formation of the 8th Battalion, not only as Master Cook, but in many other capacities. He assisted at all battalion concerts, and was a great asset: his rendering of that well-known poem "Bowl About" will never fade from recollection.

Our first introduction to him was at Winchester, where one night, entering the Quartermaster's Store on returning from town, with a bottle of beer in each pocket, necks showing, he suddenly encountered the Orderly Officer and the Sergeant-Major, who were waiting for Staff parade. He made a rush for the door, caught his foot in the mat, and fell flat. His great boast was that the bottles were not broken.

He was once brought before the Commanding Officer, charged with stealing coal from a dump 2 kilometres distant. His defence was: "No, sir, Aw wudna gang so far as that." He knew a nearer seam!

Sergeant Hay was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for good work, and had well deserved it.

The *Mail* was brought up from the Base on the supply trains to the Divisional rail-head, and was then carried by Royal Mail motor wagons to the Brigade Post-offices, where the battalion postmen called daily and received the letters.

Corporal Dobbie was our postman, and a better could not be found throughout the Army. He took a fatherly interest in all of us, and in our letters. Should we be remiss in writing to our wives and

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sweethearts, Dobbie would gently hint that we could not expect to receive letters if we did not write any.

The *Quartermaster's Stores* were often dumped in the middle of a field, or in a disused trench, with a tarpaulin, propped up by wagon poles, as a covering. This was the case particularly on the Somme, where the greatest difficulty was found in keeping blankets and equipment dry. Elsewhere it was usually possible to get a building of some sort ; and, in default of a roof, wagon covers served the purpose.

When the battalion was returning from the line to a reserve camp, blankets and other necessaries were sent forward beforehand, and were placed under charge of the Company Quartermaster-Sergeants ready for issue to the companies.

Changes of underclothing were drawn from the Divisional Laundry, and were issued to the men ; and during cold and inclement weather clean socks were frequently sent up to the men in the front line.

*Baths* were established at various centres, where the men periodically got a bath and a change of underclothing.

The *Canteen*, which was first started by Padre Parry at Cheape Spur on the Somme, gradually developed until it was able to provide the men with a means of spending their money on their favourite comforts with advantage to themselves.

The profit, or rather the 5 per cent. discount allowed by the Expeditionary Force Canteens, where most of the supplies were purchased, was utilised to provide chocolates and biscuits for the men immediately on their return from a trip to the trenches, or to pay for a performance at a theatre or cinema ; and, latterly, for the purchase of fresh vegetables to supplement the insufficient Government issue.

For a long time the sale of goods by the E.F.C. was uncontrolled, and units possessing a canteen

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could purchase as much as they required. But as the number of regimental canteens increased, this liberty had to be limited, and purchases were restricted in proportion to the ration strength of the various units.

Much of the success which attended the Battalion Canteen was due to the untiring efforts, on behalf of the men, of Sergeant Jackson, who had really been in charge of the canteen since its inception.

For a time, at Arras, we ran a *Barber's Shop* in the battalion, but owing to the shortage of men this had to be closed; and the barbers went into the trenches with their companies.

The *Shoemakers* did great work in keeping the battalion well shod. They and the *Tailors* were kept back at the transport lines, where most of their work was done. Corporal Campbell did excellent work in charge of the tailors. A small equilateral triangular piece of dark blue cloth was worn by officers and men on each sleeve, just below the point of the shoulder. This was the battalion distinguishing mark, by which men of the K.O.S.B. could be picked out at a glance from other units of the Brigade. The 9th Royal Scots wore a red triangle, and the 10th Scottish Rifles a dark green, of the same shape and size.

In September 1918, when the battalion returned to the Loos Sector, the Stores and Orderly Room were located at Bracquemont, a short distance along the Arras Road from Noeux-les-Mines.

Lieut. J. K. Ballantyne was at that time Assistant Adjutant, and was established in a château exactly opposite the building occupied by Divisional Headquarters. One morning a shell struck the lower part of the wall directly below the floor of our Orderly Room. Part of this shell entered the cellar; but, strange to say, nobody was hurt. Padre Somerville's rain-coat was torn to ribbons (for which he claimed compensation), and there was a deal of dust

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about. Then came the time when Stores and Orderly Room were brought up close behind the battalion, moving first to Philosophe, then on past Wingles to Pont-a-Vendin, and finally to Vieux Leuze, where, on the 11th of November, while waiting to follow the battalion, the Orderly Room Staff learned that the Armistice had been signed.

### (B) TRANSPORT.

The first line transport is a most necessary and important part of the equipment of an infantry battalion. Its chief duties consist in carrying reserve ammunition, entrenching tools, signalling equipment and other stores when the battalion is on the march; conveying rations and ammunition when the battalion is in the line; and carting road sweepings and refuse, under the orders of the Town Major, when the battalion is in rest.

The transport of the 7th and 8th Battalions was not completely formed until a few days before their embarkation for France. A number of riding and heavy draught horses had been posted to each battalion at Bordon; and one Studebaker wagon had been issued temporarily, for transport work. Other wagons could be procured, if required, on application to the Transport Section of the Royal Army Service Corps. By and by a proper first line transport began to be formed. A message would be received from the Ordnance Department, asking for horses to be sent to Chiseldon Station to draw certain vehicles which had been forwarded for the battalions by rail. These vehicles might be, one day, a number of limber wagons—those double-box, four-wheeled tumbrels, so admirably adapted for getting over rough ground; another day, travelling kitchens or water carts—until

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our wagons were complete. Each battalion was issued with ten limber wagons, four travelling kitchens, two water carts, one officers' mess cart, and one Maltese, or Medical, cart; which, with two supply and two baggage wagons, kept with the Divisional train, completed the number of vehicles allotted. There were fifty-four animals, comprising eleven riding horses, one each for the Commanding Officer, the Second-in-Command, the Adjutant, the Quartermaster, the Transport Officer, the Medical Officer, the four Company Commanders and the Transport Sergeant; eight heavy draught horses for the travelling kitchens; twenty-six light draught horses or mules, seven pack ponies, and two spare animals.

Transport drivers and grooms were trained helter-skelter. Several of them went through courses of instruction hastily organised to teach them the care of horses, and how to ride and drive, or at least how to sit on a horse's back without falling off. There was no time for much else. Fortunately, there were a good many men in the battalions who could ride, and who understood horses. At first there was some difficulty with the mules; but it is wonderful how docile these animals become when they are well treated. Many of the drivers preferred mules to horses.

When at length the transport left Chiseldon for Southampton, there were still some drivers who were not quite up to the standard, and who would have been more at home on their feet than in the saddle; but they soon became acquainted with their animals and learned how to control them.

A few days after our arrival in France Lieut. C. H. M. Horne, who had been acting Transport Officer of the 7th Battalion, was relieved by Lieut. E. Gwilt. Gwilt was a great horseman, with a wide experience of racing stables, and what he did not know about horses and their treatment was not worth knowing.

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He had been posted to the battalion from the training centre at Bradford. Lieut. H. F. Brigstocke had charge of the transport of the 8th Battalion. He was afterwards appointed Brigade Transport Officer, and was specially commended by the Brigadier for the excellent work done by the transport while it was under his charge.

When the 46th Brigade first entered the Vermelles Sector, the transport was stationed at Houchin, about 2 miles west of Noeux-les-Mines. Its daily work consisted in keeping the animals in good condition and always ready for any emergency, and in conveying rations, ammunition and stores up to Quality Street or Maroc, after dusk. Evening by evening the wagons required for this purpose were lined up on the Noeux-les-Mines Road under charge of the Transport Officers, and then crept slowly along towards Noeux, not being allowed to pass the monument at the junction of the Mazingarbe and Arras Roads before a certain hour, as the road was under observation from Wingles Towers. Thence along the Mazingarbe Road, and on to Quality Street, where the rations were distributed to the companies, or the ammunition was unloaded at the dump. The wagons then returned to their lines.

During the Battle of Loos excellent work was done by the transport of the Brigade. Lieut. Gwilt made a gallant dash along the Lens Road, under very heavy shell-fire, and took several thousand rounds of small-arm ammunition into Loos. He had nine horses killed or wounded, and two or three wagons wrecked by shell-fire. After Loos the transport of both battalions was quartered among the ruins of Philosophe. Horses were stabled in drawing-rooms, or what had once been drawing-rooms, but were now merely the roofless remains of four walls. The wagons were concealed as much as possible from enemy observation in outbuildings or under

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cover of the houses; the men selected the houses which had suffered the least for their own billets; and the Transport Officer and the Quartermaster chose a small room at the back of the corner shop, where they slept and had their meals. A few yards distant from our part of the village there was a quarry where there were two big guns that were a source of annoyance, fetching down plaster and bricks upon us every time they fired. The Germans also felt annoyed by these two guns, and often retaliated upon them. Fortunately for us, the Huns had the range to a nicety, and managed to dump their shells in the quarry every time. The horses became quite familiar with the noise, and appeared to be unconcerned even when a shell burst near them.

From *Philosophe* the nightly procession of limbers, carrying up rations to the battalion in the line, wended its way over the railway crossing and along the *Lens Road*. Verey lights flare up in the dark sky, apparently almost encircling us; shrapnel bursts in the distance; tear-shells thud on the ground close at hand; nose-caps whirl and sing along the road, sometimes narrowly missing the wagons; eyes begin to water; the situation is far from comfortable. At length we dip into a hollow, turn to the left along the *Benifontaine Road* and reach the dump by the *Crucifix* outside *Loos*. The dump is crowded with wagons of all descriptions; some have brought up engineers' material, and others rations or ammunition. The enemy was continually throwing shrapnel over *Loos*, but it was mostly directed on the pilons, or "towers,"—a famous landmark, and the dump escaped. There was always a frightful congestion of traffic at this point during the early hours of the night, and it was found necessary to issue control orders, by which the wagons, after



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unloading, had to pass on towards the town, and circle round to return by another route.

During the battalion's sojourn in the Loos Sector the transport was stationed in one or other of the villages in the area, according to the sub-sector that was being held. At one time it would be Saily Labourse; at another, Labourse or Noyelles. At this latter place there was a certain spice of danger. The Boche was fond of shelling Noyelles, more than any of the surrounding villages. It was under his observation, and he could see the Wireless Station, and the continual movement of troops and transport. Many a time the Transport Officer and the Quartermaster sat in their billet expecting "the next one" to land on top of them. One shell did land in a house opposite, and left just four bulged walls standing. After we had left the district, our poor old billet met its fate. It was absolutely demolished. We never learned if the mother and her two daughters who lived in the house reached the shelter of the "cave" in time, and escaped injury.

Padre Symington will remember his last quarter of an hour in this house, when he was under orders for home and began to doubt if he would get away in time to catch his train.

While the battalion held this sector, and in fact all through the Campaign, the transport was very lucky in getting off with few casualties.

In the 8th Battalion Lieut. Brigstocke had returned to his company, and the duties of Transport Officer were taken over by Lieut. Jas. Wyper, who carried on the work until May 1916, when he was granted three months' leave to South America. Lieut. Chalmers then took charge. At the Amalgamation Lieut. Gwilt remained with the battalion; and Lieut. Chalmers, with Sergeant Henry and a few drivers, took the surplus animals and wagons to

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an entrenching battalion which had recently been formed, and which was without transport.

On the Somme, the transport was encamped in a field immediately east of Albert. This field was at the end of a valley running up from Thiepval, and was under enemy observation. When that fact was pointed out to a Staff Officer he said, "Oh! that is all right; the Germans will have something else to think about shortly." But, in spite of his assurance, that very night six H.E. shells, or more, dropped in the camp and killed five animals. The first landed just off the lines; the second broke the picketing rope and dropped underneath a group of horses and mules, disembowelling them; the third landed close beside a tent occupied by Major Dennis and Lieut. Gwilt, and a piece of the metal passed through the canvas. It so happened that near the tent there was a shallow trench into which this shell dropped, and the outward force of the explosion was thereby checked; otherwise, the tent and its occupants would undoubtedly have had little chance. The remainder of the shells went wide.

Immediately afterwards the drivers turned out and stood to their horses; and a new camp was selected some distance off, in an area belonging to another Corps, where we encamped under protest, but out of observation.

At this period of the Somme offensive the work of the transport was very heavy. Wagons were being constantly requisitioned to carry up material for road-making, timber for making dugouts, and ammunition for dumps. Most of the work in the forward area was done after dark. Starting at dusk, with a string of wagons, to find one's way by unrecognisable tracks past Fricourt and Mametz Wood to Middle Wood, or some such dump, one had a task by no means enviable. The roads were full of shell-

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holes ; a dead horse lay here and there by the way-side ; the roar of guns all around was incessant ; and the bursting of incoming shells added to the tension. The drivers, sitting the saddle grim and silent, guiding their horses past shell-holes and other pit-falls, plodded on to their destination through the darkness of the night, returning to camp in the early hours of the morning. They had not, indeed, the hardships of trench life to contend with, but their nightly ride, with its attendant difficulties and uncertainties, called forth a display of courage and a determination to assist their comrades who were fighting in the trenches, which were truly admirable.

During the daytime our observation balloons overhead were frequently shelled ; and the enemy aircraft, which seemed at this stage to have the upper hand of ours, were continually flying over us, seeking information or dropping bombs. One morning, in particular, they came over in coveys. Our drivers stood by their horses, and watched the bombs exploding in the adjoining fields ; but no bombs landed near us.

Early in September 1916 Lieut. Gwilt fell sick. He was ordered to hospital, and ultimately was sent home. After a few weeks' delay, owing to the shortage of officers, Lieut. J. E. Thomson was appointed Transport Officer. Thomson thereafter held the post until the termination of hostilities.

One remembers those wretchedly trying times at Cheape Spur, by Bécourt Wood, where the roads, after being up to the horses' bellies in mud, suddenly became hard with frost, deep-rutted and slippery, with sheets of ice where a day before there had been sheets of water ; and the daily struggle along the rough track from the lines to La Boiselle to pick up rations ; and then the bitterly cold ride up the Bapaume Road to Gilbert Alley.

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The rat-catching sport, in which Padre Parry took a keen interest, afforded a welcome means of relaxation. He could often be seen with a few men delving away at old dugouts, and with little "Nell," the transport dog, waiting to spring on the rodents as they were driven out of their holes. One day we had a bag of fifty beauties.

Then came the march to Arras, and the comparatively easy time the transport had in that area. During the Arras offensive the transport was stationed at Duisans, with advanced lines on the Arras-St Pol Main Road, where the pack ponies which were to be used for carrying up rations and water, whilst the advance was in progress, were picketed.

How often we rode by Dead Man's Corner and through the Porte de Baudimont, feeling safe under cover of the houses in the Rue Gambetta, and then out at the other end by the railway station—not knowing the moment when a shell might blow us sky-high—and on through Blangy, Rifle Camp and Feuchy to Fampoux. Latterly, in the good days after the offensive, rations and stores for the forward area were brought to the lock at Blangy, where they were loaded on to lighters run by the Inland Water Transport Company to Fampoux Lock, and thence on to the Three Arches, where fatigue parties from the battalion unloaded them.

It was a happy time, too, at St Nicholas in the ruined château which we took over after the Divisional A.P.M. had vacated it. The transport lines were in the grounds, and one had every convenience that could be looked for on a campaign. True, the "Cottar" often fired shells in our direction, but as they were not intended for us, we ignored them as far as possible. And the German time-fuse anti-balloon shells often burst overhead, littering the camp with shrapnel. On one occasion the Transport

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Officer found two shrapnel bullets, which had whisked through the corrugated iron roof of his hut, lying peacefully on his bed.

Then followed the trip to the Ypres Salient, and the nightly journeys along the Corduroy Road, through Ypres, by Hell-fire Corner and Salvation Corner, through the Menin Gate, and on to Bavaria House, to get food and ammunition up, during the offensive of July and August. Lieut. J. E. Thomson, as Brigade Transport Officer at this time, did some remarkably fine work, for which he was mentioned in despatches. Transport Sergeant J. Urquhart was awarded the Military Medal for gallant conduct displayed on the night of the 22nd-23rd of June, on the Ypres-St Jean Road. The road had become completely blocked by wrecked wagons and dead and wounded horses, and was still being subjected to very heavy shell-fire when Sergeant Urquhart took charge of the situation, and, by his personal example and conduct, steadied the men under him, and succeeded in clearing the road and averting further casualties. He had previously been mentioned in despatches for consistent good work. A few months afterwards he went to a Cadet School, prior to being commissioned as an officer.

In March 1918, when the Germans made their great offensive, the transport was called on for a hard and exciting effort, under constant shell-fire, in removing stores back from Ronville to Dainville.

In July, when the battalion entrained at Savy for the Soissons Area, the horses were put into closed cattle-trucks, the same kind as the men used, each truck being marked "40 men or 8 horses." Most of the animals walked up the gangway into the truck quietly, but one large grey mule objected, and would not be persuaded. He looked around for something on which to vent his spite, saw a man, and pretended

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to kick him; then a bright biscuit tin attracted his attention—he sent tin and biscuits flying across the station yard. All attempts at persuasion failed, until the Transport Officer came along with a nose-bag full of oats; and, walking backwards up the gangway, induced the refractory mule to follow.

Throughout the fighting at Buzancy the transport never failed to keep the battalion supplied with rations and rum, even under the most dangerous circumstances.

Then followed the period spent at Bracquemont, and the pushing back of the German army, until that eventful morning at Vieux Leuze when we learnt that the Armistice had been signed, and that the War was practically finished.

One cannot help expressing admiration for the personnel of the Transport Section. The splendid example set by Lieut. J. E. Thomson in the performance of his arduous duties was devotedly followed by his non-commissioned officers, Sergeants Urquhart and M'Vittie, Corporal Bulloch and Lce.-Corporal Blakey. These N.C.Os. never hesitated at danger, and could always be relied upon to carry the most difficult job through to the end. Admirable, too, were the coolness and intrepidity of the transport drivers, men who needed no urging, but who would always carry-on, day or night, uncomplainingly and unhesitatingly—a credit to themselves and to their battalion.

And the poor old horses and mules now sold and scattered throughout France and Belgium; some towing barges along the canals, others dragging tradesmen's drays through Brussels; and one big docile mule pulling a cart about the streets of Tubize, and stopping at the doors of houses whilst his master collects empty bottles! Does he ever dream of the dignified position he once held; of how he used to

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dash, maybe, up the Menin Road with a load of ammunition; or is he content to pursue his humble calling, as carrier of empty bottles and old rabbit skins?

### (C) COMMUNICATIONS.

In the long course of the War the ways and means of communication in battle have improved and expanded so much that the methods and appliances of four or five years ago seem to belong to the era of the bow and arrow. Flags and lamps, as methods of signalling, were useless in the trenches. They would have given the positions away. New methods had to be devised and developed. More progress was made in the Wireless Section than in any other; and this is borne out by the fact that when the Boche located a wireless station he would pound it with 5'9s. Early in 1916, for instance, we had a wireless station at Noyelles-les-Vermelles. It was under observation, and had been located by the enemy. Shell after shell was fired at it, at first wide of the mark, but gradually getting nearer, until two shells in succession were dropped right into the building. The operators and the apparatus were in the cellar beneath, and escaped injury. The next shell broke the wireless pole in two, right in the middle. Remarkably good shooting for a range of perhaps 4 or 5 miles!

In the trenches, communication was maintained principally by means of the telephone; and when that failed, or when a message had to be sent to some spot not connected by telephone, a runner was employed. The signallers and the runners worked together. It was generally granted that the battalion signallers and runners were a very fine lot of men, always smart on parade, keen and clever on the playing fields, and, above all, diligent and untiring in their duty. The

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credit of that was to a great extent due to the N.C.Os. who served with the section at one period or another. Of the Sergeants there were Crampton, Bell, Carmichael, Nivison and Kenyon; good, all-round, reliable fellows, who were esteemed by their officers and respected by the men. Bell afterwards became Instructor to the newly-formed Machine-gun Battalion of the Division, and Carmichael went to Army Headquarters to specialise in wireless. Nivison, who had sound technical knowledge, brought the section up perhaps to its highest pitch, and one or two of the most creditable performances in the field were done under his supervision. Kenyon was the outside specialist, and many a dreary and oft-times "hot" hour of work he and his linemen spent, up and down the trenches, when the line went "Dis."

On one occasion, when the battalion was holding the front east of Le Sars, a certain German machine-gun post was causing a deal of inconvenience. It was decided to knock this post out by artillery fire. 2nd Lieut. M'Kee was to go out to a small quarry with a telephone, to observe for the artillery. Sergeant Kenyon and Private Kelleher, as linemen, were sent out with the observation party, to lay a line from the forward company Headquarters to the quarry. The line was laid up to within 50 yards of the observation post, and then the wire gave out. It was about half an hour before daylight, and there was not sufficient time to go back for more wire. Yet it was imperative that the line should be complete before enemy observation was possible, otherwise the labour would have been in vain. They were giving it up in despair, when Private Kelleher spied a coil of barbed wire, and said, "Let us put in that barbed wire." No sooner said than done! And no copper line could have served the purpose better than that barbed wire! The machine-gun was put out of action.



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Of the junior N.C.Os., Corporals Edwards and Fleming, and Lce.-Corporals Lisle, Paton, Jamieson, Fish and Grieve were the best known. It is hard to single out any one of these as being better than another; several of them did long and faithful service with the battalion. One also remembers careful operators such as Webb, Wheeler, Brownlie, Worall, Blakeman and Smith; and sterling linemen like Pow, Wilson, Harris and "Pigeons."

In trench warfare the duties of the Signal Section were more or less a matter of routine; during the winter of 1917-18, in particular, everything went like clockwork. In battle, on the other hand, a great deal depended on luck; though, of course, unless all arrangements were cut and dry before going into action, no amount of luck would bring about successful communications. During the Arras offensive on the 9th-10th of April 1917, a useful telephone line was kept in working order between the old German front line and Feuchy; and afterwards from Feuchy, where Brigade took up its residence for thirty-six hours, forward to the outskirts of Fampoux. On the 11th and 12th however, at Monchy, the runners did most of the work; for the terrific shell-fire precluded any hope of keeping a line in working order. In this respect Ypres was practically a repetition of Monchy, except that quite useful work was done with a power buzzer at one forward station. From Ypres it is a big jump to Soissons. Perhaps it was that in the interval the men had greatly benefited by their training and experience; at any rate, it was at Soissons that the Signal Section achieved what must be put down as its greatest feat. All worked night and day for ten long days, runners trekking or crawling forward through swamps which were being churned up by heavy shell-fire, or cycling back on the roads with despatches to rear Headquarters; signallers laying

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lines, repairing lines, rolling up lines, and searching for cable to lay more lines. Always the same question day after day, night after night: "Where can we get cable?" On the 1st of August the battalion could boast of never having been out of communication with Brigade for more than ten minutes at a time. This was due to the untiring energy of Sergeant Nivison and his men, each of whom had his duty told off explicitly, and was always lucky enough to get his specific duty done without mishap. Consequently, Brigade was enabled to keep in touch with all its units by using our line as a "main," to which other units were "teed in."

Mention must be made of another special performance. It was in the final stage of the War. During the advance from Loos to the Haute Deule Canal, a distance of over 5 miles, there was again a shortage of cable, but, by utilising lines which the Boche had left behind in his hurried retreat, communication was maintained between the forward companies and Battalion Headquarters without any interruption. One morning Nivison, Pow and Wilson went out at dawn to start with the attacking platoons, which were just on the canal, and at one stage of the action, when the advance was held up by the enemy, this bold party actually had a telephone in operation in front of the scouts!

The officer who was responsible for the efficiency of the signallers was "Pip" Reay. He was awarded the M.C. for gallantry and good work at Soissons.

Of signal offices many stories could be told. The best office was probably in Arras during the battalion's first visit in February 1917. One recalls that château on the Douai Road, where the gold-fishes sported in a huge glass jar, and where there were no less than three pianos among the lumber stored in the operating room. The pill-box at Ypres, too,

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where a shell went right under the "floor" without exploding, is memorable. Here it was that in the heat of the attack, when lines were broken and the C.O. was at his wits' end, a famous message came through. Colonel Dennis was informed that communication had been restored, and that a message was coming through from Brigade. He was greatly relieved, and waited eagerly a few minutes for the message, which, to his disgust, read: "Leave train will leave Poperinghe to-morrow at noon."

Sergeant Joe Adamson was the chief runner, and was most adept at negotiating map references and locating obscure people. Wherever he went, and in whatever circumstances, under shell-fire, or soaked to the skin, he always had a smile; and delivered his message with a smartness that did him credit. A splendid soldier.

Then there were the two Montgomeries. Between them they performed so many gallant deeds that even the awarding of medals and bars went wrong, and a great deal of correspondence was entailed before the confusion was properly cleared up. Other faithful runners were M'Vinnie, Kitchen, Aldred, Baillie, Moseley and Murray, all of whom by their excellent work, often under the most trying and dangerous conditions, did much to enhance the good name of the battalion in which they served.

### (D) BILLETING.

When a British regiment disembarked at Boulogne, a French Interpreter was at once attached to it for the purpose of acting as mediator between the troops and the civilians in their dealings with each other. The Interpreter's duty did not, as was sometimes assumed, include the search for billets. At Zutkerque,

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nevertheless, our Interpreter was asked to find billets for the battalion; but when, after two hours, he had secured accommodation for two men only, it was thought advisable to detail an officer with a knowledge of French for that duty; otherwise, the men were likely to suffer a long wait for a place where to lay their heads.

At a later stage of the War Town Majors were appointed, who had charge, among other things, of billeting. All buildings available for billets were numbered; and small boards were hung outside at the doors, showing the accommodation. That simplified matters greatly.

The French people were generally very kind, often putting themselves to inconvenience to find room for us. In one small house at Noeux-les-Mines, in the early days, three officers were billeted in the kitchen, sleeping in their valises on the floor. Each morning, at 4 o'clock, Madame would come down to the kitchen, make her coffee, smile at the officers, and with a pleasant "Bon jour," pass out to her daily toil in the fields. Another very old lady had two officers billeted with her, whom she took under her personal care, tucking them in at night, and bringing them coffee in the early morning! One occupied her best bedroom, and the other slept on the floor in the sitting-room. The officer upstairs was sick, and the old lady persisted in nursing him herself, not allowing his servant into the house. One night the servant contrived to get in. The old lady was heart-broken. She looked upon it as a reflection on her nursing abilities, and cried bitterly.

Before the departure of the battalion from one village for another, a billeting party, consisting of an Officer, four Company Quartermaster-Sergeants, and a N.C.O. representing Headquarters Company, went on ahead to the new district, in order to

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have all billets arranged by the time the companies marched in.

The billeting officer had a task of a kind not eagerly sought for; but all the other members of his mess invariably explained to him what a good job it was that he had been selected, and how unfortunate it would be if he refused, and an officer of another company were chosen; for then the best billets would be sure to go to the wrong people.

The billeting party usually assembled in the early hours of the morning outside the Orderly Room; and the officer in charge received instructions from the Adjutant, who, as a rule, was still in bed. The party would then leave on bicycles. On arrival at its destination, it might find that more than one battalion was to be billeted in the village. In that case the Staff Captain settled all difficulties between the various officers. If the billeting officer knew his job, some telling and subtle work could be put in at this stage, in order that the best end of the village might be secured for his own battalion.

After the battalion area had been selected, the officer had, in the first place, to put himself to the trouble of riding round it, to pick out the best part of it for his own company; always, of course, being careful to see that the Colonel and the Headquarters Mess were well provided; for, if the Commanding Officer, during his inspection of billets, should discover that a company mess was better housed than his own, then woe betide the billeting officer!

After dividing up the area, and showing each company representative his part, the officer had next to face the ordeal of interviewing the civilians. This part of the proceedings led to all kinds of receptions, from being kissed in front of the Sergeants, to being volubly cursed in French, and having the door violently slammed in his face. One owner took the

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course of locking and barring his doors and windows, and betaking himself and his family to the garret, in the hope that the attack would not be pressed. As it was necessary that this house should be occupied as a billet, the officer summoned a gendarme, who, forcing an entrance through the window, brought the whole family downstairs, and to reason.

Another old fire-eater threatened each member of the party with a poker, and could be quietened only by the "garde civique," who was found to be an old man of sixty, without any kind of uniform, who spent his time digging his own "kailyaird." The two were left to fight it out, and eventually the guardian of the law won. Before we left the village, however, we were on such good terms with the old fire-eater that he actually offered to let us use his fire for cooking purposes—a great concession.

The disfavour with which the civilians regarded the idea of lodging British troops—where any disfavour was shown—arose, no doubt, more from a natural reluctance to having strangers in the house, than from any desire to be disobliging. One might expect to find the same disinclination amongst the inhabitants of our own little villages. When our stay in a village was of any length, the men were almost invariably on excellent terms with their hosts.

There is plenty of work for the billeting officer. After the company areas have been allotted, he goes round them again, to satisfy himself that everything is correct. He finds, perhaps, that one company is short of men's billets; or that another has no officers' mess; or, it may be, that a stable cannot be found for the Colonel's horse. Transport lines must be found, and a suitable place for the Quartermaster's stores. He is helping the Headquarters Sergeant to square up the billets for "H.Q." Company, hoping to get on quickly with all that still remains to be done, when

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he hears in the distance the strains of a pipe band! A hurried glance at his watch brings home to him the fact that it is now the hour of the battalion's arrival, and that guides have to be posted at the entrance to the village, to conduct the companies to their places. Leaving that to the Sergeants, he dashes out to meet the Adjutant, who has ridden on in advance. Interrogation begins at once. "Have you got a good Orderly Room? . . . What about the Guard Room?"

"Lord," thinks the billeting officer, "I've forgotten the Guard Room." But he answers cheerfully, "Yes, a fine one," hoping that he will be able to square it with the Provost-Sergeant to keep the prisoners out of sight until he has found a convenient Guard Room.

Then the battalion comes along, and the Commanding Officer shouts, "Billets! show me my place." The poor fellow knows that there is nobody to show the Quartermaster his stores; and he hears the Transport Officer shouting for his transport lines. However, off he goes with the Colonel, for at any cost the C.O. must be made comfortable. On the way he learns that the signallers are grumbling because they have not sufficient room, or that "Jimmy" is on the war-path because the cooks are not under cover. He takes the C.O. to H.Q. Mess, and shows him his billet, which is just next door. He assures him, "Everybody is inside, sir," hoping that the Colonel will settle down for an hour or two, until the billets are squared up a bit.

Leaving the C.O. comfortable in the Mess, "Billets" goes out to finish his work, and finds the Quartermaster and the Transport Officer riding up and down the street together, looking for his blood.

The Transport Officer politely asks why some of the horses are not provided with stables; and the Quartermaster says, "Damn it! I must have a store. We can't leave the stuff in the open."

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Finally, this martyr to duty creeps along to his own Company Mess, to find that a meal is just finishing, and that there is nothing left but a bit of bully and some French beer. He is sitting down to this frugal fare, when the Company Commander demands: "Why did you let 'Don' Company have all the good billets? I have just seen Captain Smith-Jones's billet. It is twice the size of mine, and he has a bath-room." Poor "Billets" reflects that possibly his Company Commander has caught a glimpse of the nice demoiselle in the house where Smith-Jones is lodged. But he merely mumbles, "I'm sorry; but I will find a better place for you on the morrow."

He then sets out to collect the billeting certificates, in order to make up the list that he has to hand in to the Maire. On the street he meets one of the C.Q.M.-Sergeants, who says: "Please, sir, the Madame of our Company Commander's billet has locked the door and refuses to let anybody in. And I have still thirty men on the street. . . ."

Such was an average day in the life of a billeting officer when the battalion was on the move. To picture a day when things went wrong, and when the civilians proved refractory, would be too heart-rending. But to "Billets" it was enough if, at the end of his long-suffering efforts, the comfort of the battalion had, for the time, been secured.



## II.—COMMANDING OFFICERS AND DURATION OF THEIR COMMAND.

### 7TH BATTALION.

- Until 22nd July 1915 Lieut.-Col. G. DE W. VERNER (to hospital on this date).  
22nd July 1915 . Major B. J. B. COULSON assumed temporary command.  
9th Sept. 1915 . Lieut. - Col. VERNER resumed command.  
25th Sept. 1915 . Lieut. - Col. VERNER died of wounds.  
27th Sept. 1915 . Major J. C. W. CONNELL, 2nd K.O.S.B., assumed command.  
2nd Dec. 1915 . Lieut.-Col. COULSON took over command.  
12th Jan. 1916 . Lieut.-Col. COULSON to hospital. Capt. BIRD assumed temporary command.  
17th Jan. 1916 . Major MARSH took over command.  
20th May 1916 . Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR assumed command of the Composite 7/8th Battalion.

### 8TH BATTALION.

Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR.

### 7/8TH BATTALION.

- 29th Oct. 1916 . Lieut.-Col. SELLAR wounded.  
6th Nov. 1916 . Major M. F. B. DENNIS assumed temporary command.  
20th Jan. 1917 . Lieut.-Col. SELLAR resumed command.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

- 9th May 1917 . Lieut.-Col. SELLAR left battalion and proceeded to United Kingdom. Major H. P. HART assumed temporary command.
- 27th May 1917 . Lieut.-Col. DENNIS took over command on return from leave.
- 1st March 1918 . Lieut.-Col. DENNIS granted one month's special leave. Major A. E. BURNETT assumed temporary command.
- 14th March 1918 . Lieut.-Col. DENNIS recalled from leave.
- 19th May 1918 . Lieut.-Col. DENNIS killed in action. Major BURNETT assumed temporary command.
- 26th May 1918 . Lieut.-Col. H. P. HART took over command.
- 23rd July 1918 . Lieut.-Col. HART wounded. Major F. L. HAMILTON assumed temporary command.
- 10th Aug. 1918 . Lieut.-Col. H. W. SUTHERLAND took over command.
- 31st Oct. 1918 . Lieut.-Col. SUTHERLAND to hospital. Capt. J. H. PATRICK assumed temporary command.
- 16th Nov. 1918 . Lieut.-Col. HART resumed command.
- 22nd March 1919 . Lieut.-Col. HART left for United Kingdom pending demobilisation. Capt. P. REAY (Adjutant) assumed command of Cadre.

### III.—HONOURS AND AWARDS.

#### (a) OFFICERS.

C.M.G. . . . .	1	O.B.E. . . . .	1
Bar to D.S.O. . . . .	1	Bar to M.C. . . . .	4
D.S.O. . . . .	5	M.C. . . . .	28

"Mentions," 29. Foreign Decorations, 5.

#### (b) WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

V.C. . . . .	1	M.M. and 2 Bars	1
M.C. . . . .	1	M.M. and Bar . . . .	3
D.C.M. . . . .	21	M.S.M. . . . .	9
M.M. . . . .	113	"Mentions" . . . .	24

Foreign Decorations, 13.

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#### (a) OFFICERS.

(Note.—Awards are shown in order of (1) rank held at Date of Award ; and (2) where there are several Officers of the same rank, according to Date of Award.)

#### C.M.G.

Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR . . . . . June 1916.

#### Bar to D.S.O.

Lieut.-Col. M. F. B. DENNIS, D.S.O. . . . . January 1918.

#### D.S.O.

Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR, C.M.G. . . . . December 1917.

Major H. P. HART . . . . . January 1917.

Capt. M. F. B. DENNIS . . . . . November 1915.

Capt. (Act. Major) J. P. LARKIN . . . . . June 1917.

Capt. (Act. Lieut.-Col.) H. W. SUTHERLAND . . . . . March 1919.

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### O.B.E.

Major T. BLACKBURN . . . . . June 1919.

### Bar to M.C.

Capt. C. K. THURSBY-PELHAM, M.C. . . . . January 1918.  
 Capt. J. H. PATRICK, M.C. . . . . July 1918.  
 Capt. J. WEIR, M.C. . . . . August 1918.  
 Capt. H. K. M'KEE, M.C. . . . . October 1919.

### M.C.

Capt. T. K. NEWBIGGING . . . . . January 1916.  
 Capt. C. H. CRAWSHAW . . . . . June 1916.  
 Capt. W. W. HOME . . . . . „ 1917.  
 Capt. J. S. McARTHUR . . . . . „ „  
 Capt. A. B. LAWSON . . . . . July 1917.  
 Capt. W. W. HENDERSON . . . . . May 1918.  
 Capt. G. A. WHYTE . . . . . July 1918.  
 Capt. A. B. PATON . . . . . August 1918.  
 Capt. and Quartermaster J. Goss . . . . . March 1919.  
 Capt. W. PARKER (R.A.M.C., attd.) . . . . . January 1917.  
 Capt. J. A. PETTEY (M.O.R.C.,  
 U.S.A., attd.) . . . . . February 1919.  
 Lieut. S. GRANT . . . . . January 1916.  
 Lieut. F. L. HAMILTON . . . . . September 1916.  
 Lieut. J. WEIR . . . . . October 1917.  
 Lieut. P. REAY . . . . . August 1918.  
 2nd Lieut. C. K. THURSBY-PELHAM . . . . . January 1916.  
 2nd Lieut. H. KENNEDY . . . . . June 1916.  
 2nd Lieut. G. P. RANDALL . . . . . „ „  
 2nd Lieut. R. R. HARKUS . . . . . January 1917.  
 2nd Lieut. J. H. PATRICK . . . . . „ „  
 2nd Lieut. J. H. STRACHAN . . . . . July 1917.  
 2nd Lieut. A. B. DICKSON . . . . . January 1918.  
 2nd Lieut. J. F. IRVING . . . . . „ „  
 2nd Lieut. A. M'CALL . . . . . „ „  
 2nd Lieut. H. K. M'KEE . . . . . „ „  
 2nd Lieut. G. A. HAINING . . . . . August 1918.  
 2nd Lieut. S. R. IRVINE . . . . . October 1918.  
 2nd Lieut. W. MELLALIEU . . . . . „ „

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### Mentioned in Despatches.

Lieut.-Col. G. DE W. VERNER . . .	January 1916.
Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR . . .	" "
Major G. M. HANNAY . . .	" "
Capt. M. F. B. DENNIS, D.S.O. . .	" "
Capt. T. K. NEWBIGGING . . .	" "
2nd Lieut. C. K. THURSBY-PELHAM .	" "
2nd Lieut. W. G. HERBERTSON . . .	" "
Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR, C.M.G. . .	June 1916.
Capt. H. W. SUTHERLAND . . .	" "
Capt. J. P. LARKIN . . .	" "
Lieut. A. R. BROWN . . .	" "
2nd Lieut. H. KENNEDY . . .	" "
Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR, C.M.G. . .	December 1916.
Major M. F. B. DENNIS, D.S.O. . .	" "
Major H. P. HART . . .	" "
Capt. T. K. NEWBIGGING, M.C. . .	May 1917.
Lieut. J. D. BROWN . . .	" "
Lieut. and Q.-Master J. Goss . . .	" "
Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR, C.M.G., D.S.O. . . . .	December 1917.
Lieut.-Col. M. F. B. DENNIS, D.S.O. . .	" "
Major H. P. HART, D.S.O. . . .	" "
Capt. and Q.-Master J. Goss . . .	" "
Lieut. J. E. THOMSON . . .	" "
Lieut. E. M. S. HOUSTOUN . . .	" "
Lieut. M. FENWICK . . .	January 1919.
Lieut. W. TORRANCE . . .	" "
Lieut.-Col. H. P. HART, D.S.O. . .	March 1919.
Capt. (Act. Lieut.-Col.) H. W. SUTHERLAND, D.S.O. . . . .	" "
Lieut. J. D. SCOTT . . .	" "

### Foreign Decorations.

- Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR, C.M.G., D.S.O., Chevalier of  
Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus.
- Lieut.-Col. H. P. HART, D.S.O., Croix de Guerre.
- Lieut.-Col. B. J. B. COULSON, Croix de Guerre.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Major F. L. HAMILTON, M.C., Chevalier of Legion of Honour and Croix de Guerre (with Palm).

2nd Lieut. W. D. JAMIE, Croix de Guerre (with Palm).

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### (b) WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

(Note. — Rank shown is that held at Date of Award. Names are arranged alphabetically, irrespective of rank.)

#### V.C.

15851 Piper DANIEL LAIDLAW.

#### M.C.

10537 C.S.M. (Act. R.S.M.) J. A. MUNRO.

#### D.C.M.

13964 Sergt. J. ADAMSON, M.M.  
14397 Pte. J. BOULD.  
16985 Corpl. J. BULLOCH.  
15612 Sergt. J. CARMICHAEL.  
7529 Sergt. J. COLTHART.  
5012 C.S.M. R. DOUGLAS.  
16713 Lce.-Corpl. J. FINDLAY.  
13145 Pte. R. HARDMAN.  
13384 Lce.-Corpl. S. HARGREAVES, M.M.  
44013 Sergt. C. HAWTHORN.  
17068 Lce.-Corpl. V. KEMPSHALL.  
14712 Sergt. D. M'FARLANE.  
13120 Pte. J. M'VINNIE.  
14248 Pte. J. MOONEY.  
13367 Pte. N. MORRISON.  
21980 Sergt. J. MURFIN, M.M.  
13645 Corpl. J. RAE.  
25156 Pte. W. REID.  
13699 Lce.-Corpl. J. M. ROONEY, M.M.  
200202 Sergt. J. S. WAUGH.  
40336 Pte. T. WRIGHT, M.M.

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### M.M.

- 13964 Corpl. J. ADAMSON, D.C.M.  
6195 Pte. R. AITKEN.  
22129 Pte. J. AITKEN.  
16629 Pte. A. ALDRED.  
16187 Sergt. J. E. W. ALDERSON.  
40115 Lce.-Corpl. D. S. ANDERSON.  
15781 Lce.-Corpl. G. ASHTON.  
29909 Lce.-Corpl. G. BACON.  
200734 Pte. W. BAILLIE.  
15529 Corpl. H. BEDDALL.  
27810 Pte. T. C. BELL.  
9917 Lce.-Corpl. J. BRANNON.  
14173 Sergt. H. T. BROWN.  
19197 Sergt. J. BROWN.  
16528 Sergt. T. BUCKSHAW.  
11874 Pte. R. BULLOCH.  
12003 Lce.-Corpl. G. CARMICHAEL.  
27413 Pte. R. CLARK.  
17153 Sergt. C. S. CRAMPTON.  
18710 Corpl. A. CRUICKSHANKS.  
40943 Pte. A. CRUICKSHANKS.  
25578 Pte. F. M. CULLEN.  
14634 Pte. D. DAVIES.  
22465 Lce.-Corpl. D. DOVER.  
27737 Sergt. A. DUNCAN.  
14315 Sergt. H. ECCLES.  
40139 Corpl. H. B. EDWARDS.  
11825 Pte. J. FITZPATRICK.  
21973 Pte. J. GAVANAGH.  
16795 Lce.-Corpl. W. GRACIE.  
40286 Pte. P. GRAY.  
14140 Sergt. J. HAMILTON.  
15205 Lce.-Corpl. G. HAMPSON.  
13384 Lce.-Corpl. S. HARGREAVES, D.C.M.  
14021 Pte. A. HARRIS.  
15480 Pte. T. HARPER.  
15121 Lce.-Corpl. H. HARVEY.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

- 13767 Pte. J. HAZLEHURST.
- 15006 Corpl. F. HEALEY.
- 27785 Pte. J. HENDERSON.
- 8648 Pte. G. HENDERSON.
- 8344 Sergt. J. M. HUME.
- 17740 Pte. W. HUNTER.
- 13579 Pte. H. IRVING.
- 7611 C.Q.M.S. D. JACKSON.
- 14777 Pte. J. JAMIESON.
- 43137 Corpl. J. E. W. JOHNSTON.
- 17003 Sergt. W. KENT.
- 13888 Pte. R. KENYON.
- 13457 Sergt. D. KERR.
- 21345 Pte. A. LEISHMAN.
- 17506 Pte. W. LOCKWOOD.
- 21164 Pte. J. M'BRIDE.
- 15013 Pte. D. M'CLURE (M.M. and 2 Bars).
- 9798 Sergt. A. G. M'CORMACK.
- 10317 Sergt. J. M'DERMOTT.
- 13522 Pte. J. M'GOWAN.
- 29506 Pte. T. D. MACKAY.
- 15823 Sergt. W. M'QUILLAN.
- 14277 Sergt. A. M'VITTIE.
- 20317 Sergt. J. MACK.
- 27425 Pte. H. MATHESON.
- 40861 Pte. P. MATHIESON.
- 17950 Pte. G. H. MAY.
- 18125 Pte. F. MAYBURY.
- 33178 Corpl. W. MELROSE.
- 14992 Pte. W. MONTGOMERY (M.M. and Bar).
- 15376 Pte. R. MONTGOMERY.
- 14248 Corpl. J. MOONEY, D.C.M.
- 44016 Pte. C. H. MORRISON.
- 27801 Pte. F. W. MOSELEY.
- 21491 Corpl. J. J. MOSS.
- 18161 Lce.-Corpl. A. MUFF.
- 17954 Lce.-Corpl. J. MUIRHEAD.
- 21980 Sergt. J. MURFIN, D.C.M.
- 11388 Sergt. S. MURRAY.



## HONOURS AND AWARDS

- 12164 Corpl. J. MURRAY.  
12293 Sergt. S. B. NIVISON, M.S.M.  
15125 Pte. T. PARKER.  
14271 Pte. W. PATON.  
19958 Pte. D. PEPPER.  
15124 Sergt. W. PRICE.  
15458 Pte. F. J. QUINN.  
22398 Pte. J. W. RANKIN.  
7498 Lce.-Corpl. E. REILLY.  
15631 Corpl. E. RIDLEY (M.M. and Bar).  
17093 Sergt. G. ROBINSON.  
13699 Lce.-Corpl. J. M. ROONEY, D.C.M.  
10922 Sergt. P. ROWAN.  
14270 Corpl. J. SHAW.  
15941 Corpl. J. SLATER.  
14471 Sergt. J. SMART.  
10556 Corpl. J. W. SMITH.  
13874 Corpl. T. STEPHENSON.  
14242 Lce.-Corpl. P. SYME.  
11042 Pte. D. TAYLOR.  
28814 Pte. J. TAYLOR.  
28838 Lce.-Corpl. S. THOMAS.  
11782 Sergt. J. THORNTON.  
15931 Lce.-Corpl. R. TINKLER.  
29310 Sergt. W. TULLY.  
40217 Sergt. J. TWEEDIE.  
16507 Sergt. J. URQUHART.  
17846 Corpl. W. WARD.  
15955 Lce.-Corpl. H. WARING.  
40196 Lce.-Corpl. J. WAUGH.  
19909 Sergt. J. F. WEST.  
22117 Corpl. J. WIGGAN.  
15961 Sergt. J. H. WILBY.  
40845 Pte. E. D. WILKIE.  
13007 Corpl. T. WILLIAMSON.  
12888 Sergt. J. WORTHINGTON.  
40336 Pte. T. WRIGHT, D.C.M.

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

### M.S.M.

- 14617 Sergt. T. AGAR.
- 8352 Sergt.-Piper J. BALLOCH.
- 7704 Sergt. J. HAY.
- 14535 Sergt. R. JACKSON.
- 14858 Sergt. J. W. KIPPEN.
- 13528 Sergt. L. MILLS.
- 14172 Sergt. A. MORRIS.
- 12295 Sergt. S. B. NIVISON, M.M.
- 14497 Sergt. J. OSBORNE.

### Mentioned in Despatches.

- 13964 Lce.-Corpl. J. ADAMSON, D.C.M., M.M.
- 14397 Pte. S. BOULD, D.C.M.
- 12003 Lce.-Corpl. G. CARMICHAEL, M.M.
- 20415 Pte. B. CHAPMAN.
- 8062 R.S.M. C. COWPER.
- 17153 Sergt. C. S. CRAMPTON, M.M.
- 8159 Sergt. J. T. DILLON.
- 15089 Sergt. J. GILL.
- 14013 Pte. W. HANRATTY.
- 13384 Pte. S. HARGREAVES, D.C.M., M.M.
- 13635 C.S.M. J. HILTON.
- 13888 Pte. R. KENYON, M.M.
- 10317 C.S.M. J. M'DERMOTT.
- 10810 Sergt. S. MELVILLE.
- 14172 Sergt. J. MORRIS.
- 14384 Lce.-Corpl. D. MULHOLLAND.
- 10537 R.S.M. J. A. MUNRO.
- 44106 Pte. M. O'NEILL.
- 13699 Pte. J. M. ROONEY, D.C.M., M.M.
- 17094 Corpl. H. SHERROCKS.
- 17203 Corpl. J. STEPHENSON.
- 16507 Sergt. J. URQUHART, M.M.
- 10473 Pte. S. WEBB.
- 22117 Pte. J. WIGGAN, M.M.

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### FOREIGN DECORATIONS.

#### **French Medaille Militaire.**

- 27755 Corpl. A. BLAKE.  
18698 Pte. N. M'KINNON.

#### **French Croix de Guerre.**

- 27755 Corpl. A. BLAKE.  
40943 Pte. A. F. CRUICKSHANKS.  
17938 Pte. J. FORRESTER.  
18698 Pte. N. M'KINNON.  
14248 Sergt. J. MOONEY, D.C.M., M.M.  
13973 Pte. R. POW.  
14288 Sergt. J. RALSTON.  
14471 Sergt. J. SMART, M.M.  
11806 Pte. H. WOOD.

#### **Belgian Croix de Guerre.**

- 13596 C.S.M. H. GILLIVER.  
10317 C.S.M. J. M'DERMOTT, M.M.

## IV.—CASUALTIES.

### (a) OFFICERS.

<i>Note.</i>	<i>Totals.</i>
K—Killed . . . . .	57
DW—Died of Wounds . . . . .	11
w—Wounded . . . . .	99
WP—Wounded and Prisoner . . . . .	4

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Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

Before Loos .	DW	Major G. S. D. FORBES.
Battle of Loos .	DW	Lieut.-Col. G. DE W. VERNER.
	DW	Major H. M. FORSTER.
	K	Major T. A. GLENNY.
	K	Capt. F. R. HUTT.
	K	Capt. H. T. CRUICKSHANK.
	K	Capt. H. H. SMITH.
	K	Capt. P. NEWTON.
	K	Capt. P. L. LETHBRIDGE (Adjt.).
	WP	Capt. T. BLACKBURN.
	w	Capt. M. F. B. DENNIS.
	w	Capt. H. P. HART.
	w	Capt. W. W. HOME.
	w	Capt. S. S. LANG.
	K	Lieut. J. M. SELLAR.
	K	Lieut. J. R. G. GARBUTT (R.A.M.C.).
	K	Lieut. J. SCOTT.
	K	Lieut. J. W. JARVIS.
	w	Lieut. J. D. DENNISTON.
	w	Lieut. A. K. GILMOUR.
	w	Lieut. J. FREW.

## CASUALTIES

Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

Battle of Loos	K	2nd Lieut. P. C. DRUMMOND.	
	K	2nd Lieut. W. G. HERBERTSON.	
	K	2nd Lieut. I. R. ARDILL.	
	K	2nd Lieut. S. G. M'CLENNAND.	
	K	2nd Lieut. J. L. S. ALLAN.	
	K	2nd Lieut. W. HADDON.	
	K	2nd Lieut. F. M. C. TOD.	
	K	2nd Lieut. M. C. DE B. YOUNG.	
	WP	2nd Lieut. P. M. ROSS.	
	WP	2nd Lieut. H. G. MITCHELL.	
	W	2nd Lieut. A. J. M. TUCK.	
	W	2nd Lieut. W. G. KERR.	
	W	2nd Lieut. C. K. THURSBY- PELHAM.	
	After Loos, until Amalgamation	W	Major H. P. HART.
		W	Capt. C. H. CRAWSHAW.
		W	Capt. J. S. M <sup>c</sup> ARTHUR.
		K	Capt. C. H. M. HORNE.
W		Capt. C. B. BIRD.	
K		Lieut. A. BOOTH (R.A.M.C.).	
W		Lieut. J. D. BROWN.	
K		2nd Lieut. J. B. PENFOLD.	
W		2nd Lieut. C. HANBURY.	
W		2nd Lieut. T. J. GLOVER.	
W		2nd Lieut. A. E. O. CROMBIE.	
W		2nd Lieut. G. P. RANDALL.	
W		2nd Lieut. I. D. SCOTT.	
K		2nd Lieut. J. LAMONT.	
W		2nd Lieut. J. H. PATRICK.	
W		2nd Lieut. W. THOMSON.	
W		2nd Lieut. D. CHALMERS.	
W		2nd Lieut. A. M. LITTLE.	
W		2nd Lieut. A. M'INTOSH.	
W		2nd Lieut. W. W. HENDERSON.	
W		2nd Lieut. W. W. BARTON.	
W		2nd Lieut. N. LEE.	
K		2nd Lieut. R. CLARK.	

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

After Loos, until	K	2nd Lieut. K. M. HAMILTON.
Amalgamation	W	2nd Lieut. J. CRAGG.
After Amalga-	W	Major M. F. B. DENNIS.
mation in	W	Capt. H. W. SUTHERLAND.
Hohenzollern	W	Capt. S. S. LANG.
Sector.	W	Capt. A. R. BROWN.
	K	Lieut. J. H. N. MACLEOD.
	W	2nd Lieut. A. B. LAWSON.
	W	2nd Lieut. B. THURSBY-PELHAM.
Somme, before	K	Capt. A. K. GILMOUR.
Battle of Mar-	K	Capt. A. R. BROWN.
tinpuich.	W	Lieut. A. W. MURRAY.
	W	Lieut. G. A. FRASER.
	W	Lieut. F. L. HAMILTON.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. H. LAWRIE.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. B. WALMSLEY.
	W	2nd Lieut. A. M'INTOSH.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. M. URE.
	W	2nd Lieut. J. M. M'ALPIN.
	W	2nd Lieut. C. K. THURSBY- PELHAM.
	W	2nd Lieut. G. J. MITCHELL.
	W	2nd Lieut. D. T. HOLMES.
	W	2nd Lieut. A. B. LAWSON.
	W	2nd Lieut. J. H. PATRICK.
	DW	Lieut. J. WYPER.
Martinpuich,	W	Lieut.-Col. T. B. SELLAR.
15th Septem-	K	Lieut. H. F. BRIGSTOCKE.
ber 1916, and	K	2nd Lieut. G. SNOWIE.
Winter on	K	2nd Lieut. FARQUHAR.
Somme.	K	2nd Lieut. MURRAY.
	K	2nd Lieut. C. C. MAHOOD.
	W	2nd Lieut. R. R. HARKUS.
	W	2nd Lieut. C. M. HOLME.
	W	2nd Lieut. MIDDLEMAS.
	W	2nd Lieut. J. C. WILSON.
	W	2nd Lieut. W. H. ALLAN.

## CASUALTIES

Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

Arras Front, up to and includ- ing Battle of Arras, 9th to 11th April 1917.		2nd Lieut. J. W. M'INTYRE (died).	
	w	Capt. W. PARKER (R.A.M.C.).	
	w	Lieut. W. W. HENDERSON.	
	k	2nd Lieut. G. SUTHERLAND.	
	k	2nd Lieut. J. M. M'ALPIN.	
	DW	2nd Lieut. J. JARVIE.	
	k	2nd Lieut. G. G. LANG.	
	w	2nd Lieut. W. IRVING.	
	w	2nd Lieut. G. O. D. WATSON.	
	w	2nd Lieut. A. B. DAVIDSON.	
	w	2nd Lieut. J. H. STRACHAN.	
	w	2nd Lieut. E. O. RODGER.	
	w	2nd Lieut. E. C. I. CROFTS.	
	w	Lieut.-Col. M. F. B. DENNIS.	
	Cavalry Farm, 23rd to 25th April 1917.	w	Lieut. W. THOMSON.
k		2nd Lieut. W. A. HOWARD.	
w		2nd Lieut. P. REAY.	
w		2nd Lieut. N. D. KENNEDY.	
Battle of Ypres, 31st July 1917.		w	Lieut.-Col. M. F. B. DENNIS.
		w	Capt. A. B. LAWSON.
		w	Capt. H. W. SUTHERLAND.
		w	Capt. D. ELDER.
		k	Capt. F. G. CAUSLEY.
		k	2nd Lieut. W. CONNOCHIE.
	DW	2nd Lieut. A. M'CALL.	
	k	2nd Lieut. A. H. ALLAN.	
	w	2nd Lieut. C. T. TOD.	
	w	2nd Lieut. A. B. DICKSON.	
Frezenberg and Square Farm.	w	2nd Lieut. J. G. DICKIE.	
	k	2nd Lieut. BRYSON.	
	DW	2nd Lieut. T. A. SKINNER.	
	w	Capt. G. O. D. WATSON.	
	k	2nd Lieut. W. M. DOUGLAS.	
	DW	2nd Lieut. J. BLACK.	
	w	2nd Lieut. A. R. TEMPLETON.	
	w	2nd Lieut. N. D. KENNEDY.	
	w	2nd Lieut. R. M'GEORGE.	

## 7/8TH KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

Frezenberg and Square Farm.	w	2nd Lieut. J. D. SCOTT.
	w	2nd Lieut. J. RAE.
Arras Front, Sep- tember 1917 to 10th July 1918.	DW	2nd Lieut. R. R. DOUGLAS.
	K	Lieut.-Col. M. F. B. DENNIS.
	w	Capt. G. A. WHITE.
	w	Capt. H. B. MORGAN (R.A.M.C.).
	w	Lieut. A. E. FORBES-DENNIS.
	w	Lieut. J. F. IRVING.
	w	Lieut. G. J. MITCHELL.
	w	Lieut. W. G. DOUGLAS.
	w	2nd Lieut. T. M'QUADE.
	w	2nd Lieut. T. G. MENZIES.
	w	2nd Lieut. G. JACKSON.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. LAIRD.
	K	2nd Lieut. T. GORMLEY.
	DW	2nd Lieut. J. DRYBURGH.
	w	2nd Lieut. G. A. HAINING.
Soissons, Buz- ancy, Ville- montoire, 22nd July to 3rd August 1918 (attached French Army).	w	Lieut.-Col. H. P. HART.
	w	Capt. I. TAYLOR.
	w	Capt. A. B. PATON.
	K	Lieut. V. COWLEY.
	w	Lieut. S. WILSON.
	w	Lieut. E. M. S. HOUSTOUN.
	w	Lieut. J. C. WILSON.
	K	Lieut. J. M'MILLAN.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. B. SLOAN.
	K	2nd Lieut. A. B. WHITE.
	K	2nd Lieut. J. WYPER.
	w	2nd Lieut. M. FENWICK.
	w	2nd Lieut. J. M'CAULEY.
	w	2nd Lieut. K. LIDSTER.
	WP	2nd Lieut. W. M. HONEYMAN.
K	2nd Lieut. J. SHANNON.	
K	2nd Lieut. A. J. LEWIS.	
Loos Front, 15th August to Armistice.	K	Capt. H. M. DEANS.
	w	Capt. G. A. WHITE.
	K	Lieut. G. B. HOPKINS.



## CASUALTIES

Engagement or Period  
of Trench Warfare.

Loos Front, 15th	K	Lieut. J. GRACIE.	
August to	W	Lieut. C. T. TOD.	
Armistice.	W	Lieut. S. R. IRVINE.	
	W	2nd Lieut. R. T. PRITCHARD.	

### (b) OTHER RANKS.

KILLED . . . . .	644
DIED OF WOUNDS . . . . .	236
DIED OF DISEASE . . . . .	14
MISSING—PRESUMED KILLED . . . . .	255
TOTAL DEAD . . . . .	1149

NUMBER MISSING AND NOT ACCOUNTED FOR (viz., Killed or Prisoners, not ascertained at time of compilation) . . . . .	156
PRISONERS REPATRIATED . . . . .	54
WOUNDED (estimate based on proportion of Killed and Wounded) . . . . .	5100





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