

THE
QUORNIAN.



Volume II.

No. 10.

MARCH,

1918.

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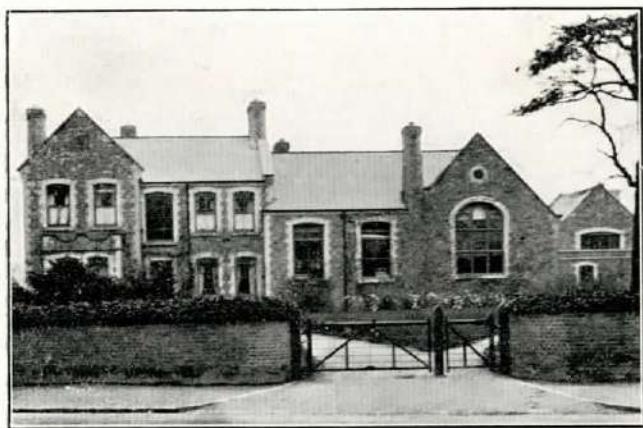


Photo by SHUTTLEWOOD.]

[QUORS

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EDITORIAL.

THE sum of one pound has been raised by the School for the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland British Prisoners of War Fund, organised by Mr. Percy Wright, two hundred and forty penny tickets having been sold by Grace Sanders, each entitling the holder to participate in a Prize Drawing. None of our purchasers were lucky enough to secure one of the fifty-four winning numbers; but Mr. Wright is to be congratulated on realising for the Fund by his venture the sum of £550, clear of expenses.

* * *

We have to thank J. A. MacVinish for the donation of a remarkably fine collection of eggs of British and foreign birds. They are in excellent condition, and will shortly be displayed in the window case in the school corridor. Not all of the specimens are named, but perhaps some enthusiastic ornithologist will supply this omission, making use of the Leicester Museum for the solution of any difficulty that may arise.

One football match was played against the Mill Hill School, at Leicester, during the Autumn Term. The result was a win for Quorn, with three goals to one.

* * *

Alice Turner, in a recent letter accompanying some interesting post-card views of Easthampton, says:—"I am writing this letter with the arm of a chair for a desk; for if we sit far from the stove we get quite cold, as the thermometer this winter has fallen as low as 32° below zero on many mornings, and we can get only a little coal. The winter has been very severe, and many people have suffered greatly."

* * *

Alec. Branson writes:—"I have been working on aeroplanes for the last three years, and have studied at the Technical Institute, where I obtained a First Class Certificate for Mechanical Engineering (Seniors, Course I.)" He hoped to obtain a commission as a flying officer, but has been disqualified on account of a slight defect in his sight, necessitating the wearing of glasses; so he has perforce to carry on in the workshop for the present.

R. G. Bowler is not in the R.N.A.S., as announced in our last number, recruiting for the branch of the service which he desired to enter having been closed on the evening before he was due to join. He at once enlisted in the Royal Navy, where, after a twelve weeks' course of seamanship, he hopes to take up wireless telegraphy or gunnery. "I am aboard a large training ship," he says, "which has from 700 to 750 boys aboard. . . . The food is good though rough, and the decks, tables, etc., are spotlessly clean. There are many conveniences for games and recreation, and the band of the Royal Marines plays selections daily at intervals. . . . This afternoon all the boys have been on a route march of about eight miles, and marching four

abreast the column looked most smart, every boy wearing his blue sailor collar and looking spick and span in every detail. . . . I was vaccinated yesterday, and at the time of writing my arm is in plaster; the day before yesterday I underwent an operation on my throat, and I have to see the dentist on Monday, so I'm in the wars."

Cecil Day has recently joined the North Staffordshire Regiment.

I am indebted to Miss D. Skipworth for the following information concerning some Mountsorrel boys, some of whom I had been unable to trace before.

Boyer, Pte. W., Army Pay Office.

Burton, Sgt. A. G. G., Leicestershire Regt., (invalided home in 1916; wounded in 1917).

Canning, Sapper A., Royal Engineers.

Harrington, Pte. F., Canadian Signal Company.

Lee, G. H., Royal Navy (?).

Moore, Sgt.-Major W., Instructor, Surrey Regt.

Morris, Pte. R. C., Leicestershire Regt.

Freer, W., Munitions.

Morris, T. O., Munitions.

Peberdy, H. V., Munitions, Engineer.

* * *

The section "Old Quornians and the War," with the articles which follow it, have been "passed by the censor," and must not therefore be altered; so I give in this unusual position such late news as has recently come to hand.

Mr. Andrews has been through a special course of training at G.H.Q., and is now employed as a "sound-ranger," for which occupation his knowledge of physics and mathematics has proved very useful. He wrote on February 4th:—"We left G.H.Q. a fortnight ago, and managed to reach here after three days' travelling, though the distance actually covered could have been accomplished in two hours in England. As there were six of us going to this army, you can imagine that we enjoyed ourselves.

We have four officers with this section. The O.C. is a Scotchman who studied under Prof. Barkla at Edinburgh, so we have something in common, as Prof. B. was at King's. The second-in-command is a Welshman, who has lived in South Africa for about twenty years, and is over military age. The third is an Irishman, who has been out in the Far West for some time; so altogether we are a mixed lot, but so far no international quarrels have arisen.

Owing to unfavourable weather we have not much to do, and the recent hard frosts have damaged most of our lines, and put us out of action. Luckily these mishaps are soon rectified. . . .

This place was once a château with extensive gardens and stables. This must have been used as a hospital by the Germans during the Somme battle, as they have left an extensive cemetery behind them, and the dates on the crosses agree with those of the battle. When this area was evacuated, they blew up the château, so that all that remains is a heap of débris and a large crater in which we can see the twisted remains of bedsteads, etc. We actually live in the stables, and are quite comfortable."

In a letter dated January 17th, Frank Bunney says:—"It was our misfortune to spend Christmas in the front line, amidst the snow and the severe frost and cold. Had we been at home, I suppose we should have revelled in it all, for it was truly the old-fashioned Christmas weather; but though the scenic effect was pretty, we thought it no joke to be in the line. Then, too, the brilliant moonlight nights added to the ordinary dangers of night working parties,—one showed up so clearly against a pure white back-ground.

We had the greatest difficulty in keeping warm when lying down in the small dug-out, with just room for three to lie down packed together, but not enough for us to sit upright. . . . I nearly got frost bite, but luckily escaped that.

One or two little incidents will engrave this last Christmas on my mind. On Christmas Eve we had an extra 'stand to,' for a gas attack was expected to be launched against us; but, though it did not come off, it made us uneasy and fidgety. Early next morning I was not awakened by the joyful ringing of bells, but by a lively gunfire on both sides; that quieted down though, and then we had such a sumptuous dinner—things went wrong somewhere, for we got a cold potato which had been frosted after it was cooked, and a little bit of half-raw meat,—'some' dinner on a cold day, and Christmas day of all things. The two corporals and myself had just finished our tea, and were sitting talking together in the bivi (?) prior to going on working parties, when Fritz gave us a nasty shock, for a shell burst in the parapet quite close to the bivi; the concussion threw us backwards, and put the light out; the next thing we heard was the groaning of the corporal next the door; we found he was wounded in both legs, but we thought not seriously, though we expected it meant 'Blighty' for him; we now hear he may never run again, so it's worse than we thought; we all had a narrow escape, for next morning we found several bits of shrapnel in the little dug-out. Soon after the explosion we went out working in a snow blizzard, and so ended Christmas Day."

Arthur Cart has been through a ten days' course of pioneering, and came out first on the examination list, with 115 marks out of 125.

Tom Williams says:—"I should be glad if, when happier times come—which I hope are not far off, we could manage an annual meeting of O.Q.'s, not merely from the Leicestershire district, but also from further afield. We could then perhaps have a social evening, and some of us Old Boys would be able to go over some of our travels again." [Many O.Q.'s are looking forward to such a re-union, and it shall certainly be arranged, when the proper time comes.—Ed.]

J. H. Laundon informs me that he has been invalided for Home Service since his illness. "I shall never forget the real battle of Arras," he writes. "It was terrible, Germans and English falling in all directions; the Germans were simply ploughed down by our artillery, and the tanks did good work, but most of them got stuck in the mud at the finish."

* * *

I am indebted to an anonymous Old Quornian for an article entitled "Over the Top," in which he graphically illustrates the meaning of this phrase to our men at sea. I regret that this article must be held over for future use.

E. W. H.

THE CADET CORPS.

This Term we have lost one member and gained three recruits. Some boys of eligible age have joined the C.L.B.; others are not joining the Cadet Corps because their parents object to "militarism."

With regard to the former, I must point out that unless there are strong reasons for joining the sister organisation, it is the duty of every boy who has any claim to the possession of a proper *esprit de corps* to join his School unit.

With regard to the latter, it seems to me that the objection arises from a confusion of ideas,—a mistaken notion of the meaning of a word. For what is militarism? Is it synonymous with military training or military discipline? I think not.

Military discipline teaches ready obedience, strict attention to and concentration upon one's own business, so that each may work in unison with the rest, towards a common end. Military training teaches neatness and cleanliness in clothing and person; promotes physical fitness; educates the eye, the ear, the limbs, and the brain; and above all inculcates the duty of unselfishness and self-sacrifice for the good of others, even to the death.

Militarism, on the other hand, denotes the dominance of a military caste; teaches the pernicious doctrine that might is right; places the material good of the state above the

welfare of humanity; and involves the lust of power and the oppression of the weak and helpless, whether nations or individuals.

"Defiance" is the motto of militarism, "Defence" of military training; and it is because militarism is rampant now, that military training and discipline are necessary—nay, more necessary than ever before, as the only human means by which we may suppress militarism,—we hope, for ever.

* * *

The Commanding Officer has approved of the following promotions:—Cadets C. A. Squire and M. A. Neal to be Lance-Corporals.

* * *

Teams of eight and four respectively have been entered for the Imperial Challenge Shield (Junior) Rifle Competition, organised by the National Rifle Association, and for the Cadets' Spring Competition, organised by the Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs.

E. W. H.

BALANCE SHEET.

March 31st, 1917.

Receipts.	£ s. d.	Payments.	£ s. d.
Balance in Bank,	29 9 10	Due to Treasurer,	0 2 9½
Leicestershire County Council,	2 5 0	Cheque book,	0 2 0
The Rawlins Trustees,	7 6 8	Cadets' equipment,	6 7 11
Cadets' subscriptions,	2 12 6	Corps expenses, in- spections, etc.,	3 13 0
Quorn V.T.C. (rent),	1 10 0	Officer's uniform,	5 0 0
Cadets' equipment,	8 4 1½	Military books,	1 3 8
Ammunition sold,	0 3 6	Apparatus,	1 12 3
Bank interest,	0 6 8	S.M.R.C. subscription,	0 5 6
		Ammunition, targets, etc.,	0 6 7
		Postages & sundries,	0 17 6½
		Office equipment,	0 3 0
		Balance in Bank,	26 13 6
		Cash in hand,	5 10 6½
			£51 18 3½
			£51 18 3½

June 18th, 1917.—I have audited the foregoing accounts to March 31st, 1917, and find them correct.

GEO. WHITE, Hon. Auditor.

OLD QUORNIANS AND THE WAR.

Time was, when, in this island realm of ours,
A tyrant sovereign claimed "the right divine
To govern England wrong." In those dark hours
Men left the shop, the desk, the mart, the mine,
To fight for liberty. Our Founder's sire
With Cromwell's heroes rode; and, on that day
When Naseby saw the King's high hopes expire,
He bore his part, nor faltered in the fray.
A mightier tyrant now, with treacherous guile,
Has trampled treaties under foot, and strives
To harness to his yoke a vanquished world.
In noble scorn of servitude so vile,
Our Founder's sons will venture forth their lives,
Till from his throne the monstrous fiend is hurled.

Time was, when Pestilence, with baleful breath,
Blew o'er the land, and, with his stealthy stride
And hideous grin, to his gaunt brother, Death,
Gave young and old, the husband and the bride,
Fond sister, gallant brother, parent, child.
Our Founder's father dwelt amidst the dead
To tend the living, when, in panic wild,
Both faithless priest and coward doctor fled.
He died. He lives. And now our Founder's sons,
Fired with his spirit, cross the seas to quell
Demons more deadly—soul-destroying Lust,
Hate, Lies, foul Murder,—by the filthy Huns
Loosed into Chaos through the gates of Hell.
Freedom shall conquer still. In God we trust.

In Memory of

Claude Harold Barrs, 1908-1911.
Charles George Frisby, 1905-1907.
George Frederick Lester, 1907-1909.
John Theodore Michinson Lewis, 1904-1906.
John Harry Spence, 1906-1909.
George Whittle, 1895-1896.

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

C. H. Barrs, so his mother writes, "was called to the Forces on the 23rd of March, 1916. He joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, and was made Lce.-Corporal five weeks afterwards. On August 12th he went to France, and on November 14th following he was reported missing, but now killed on that date at Butte de Warlecourt."

His Officer writes: "He was one of the very best boys, and one of the most trusty and truthful. My fellow officers and men join with me in offering you our deepest sympathy, for we were all deeply grieved when we heard that 'he never came back.' He would never flinch from doing his duty, no matter at what cost. He was a boy we shall all greatly miss."

His late Platoon Sergeant also writes: "I was in company with your boy from the time when he came to Walker (?) and afterwards . . . and I came out to France on the same draft as he, so that he has been in the same company as I since he enlisted. I am pleased to testify to his sterling qualities as a soldier, and in my experience of men in the last eight years in the Territorial Force I consider that he was just the type of lad we require. Undoubtedly, had he still been with us, he would have had very good prospects of rapid promotion. . . . It may be some consolation to you to know that he died a hero's death, fighting for our beloved King and Country, and the cause of freedom and liberty, and always did his best, very often in great difficulties, to uphold the honour and ancient traditions of our famous regiment."

His mother adds: "Claude made a fine soldier. He was 6ft. 1in. in height, and was always a very good lad, and a great believer in the Temperance cause. He was our only child."

C. G. Frisby attested under Lord Derby's scheme, but was not called up until the twenty-ninth of January in last year, when he went to Brocton Camp, where he died of pneumonia, after only two days in hospital. I remember him as a quiet steady worker, who won the respect of his masters and schoolfellows by his sterling honesty, his imperturbable good nature, and his earnestness of purpose. He was one of those boys whose unobtrusive goodness may exercise a better influence upon their companions than the brilliance which attracts, but which, if misapplied, may do more harm than good. His sturdy

build and apparently hardy physique were such that one would have expected him to bear unharmed the hardships of camp life; the greater, therefore, was the shock when we heard that he had succumbed, though many others less robust than he have won through.

G. F. Lester, dreamy and artistic, almost effeminate, has met his death on the field of battle. Even now it is difficult to picture him in soldier's garb, or facing shot and shell; and imagination recoils at the thought of such talents as his being wasted in the welter of war. Wasted? Perhaps not! Who knows? At any rate, he did his duty; and this thought may be a nobler inspiration than any artistic result that he might have achieved, if he had lived the life planned out for him.

John Lewis's happy disposition, his fearless and adventurous nature, and his many "scrapes" are too well known among us to need present notice. They have indeed been referred to more than once in our pages. In our last number I mentioned that he had a second time been rescued from the sea after his vessel had been torpedoed. I have since heard that he was the only officer saved on that occasion. Joining the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment soon afterwards, he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, and became gunner and bombing instructor. He went to the front early last June, and was wounded immediately after his arrival. He made a rapid recovery after a short stay in hospital, rejoined his regiment, and was killed in action on August 1st. A service was held to his memory at St. Peter's Church, Mountsorrel, on Saturday, August 25th.

J. H. Spence was hit by a piece of trench mortar shell on January 22nd, last year, and killed instantly. His commanding officer and the chaplain of the regiment write of him as a very fine man, upright and honest, and a hard-working soldier, who died a noble death. Harry Facer, writing on January 10th, says: "A few days ago I dropped across J. H. Spence, who was then with the Sherwoods. He was as usual, smiling all over his face." Again later he writes: "Poor old Jack, he was a good sort." These words from an old schoolfellow, short and unconventional, are very much to the point and need no comment, for they express what we all feel, whether of appreciation of a fine character, or of grief for his loss.

J. E. Burnham, whose death was announced in our last issue, "was killed," says a correspondent, "in one of the enemy's ten-minute spasms of hate near Hooge, being hit by a whizz-bang shell just after the battle of Hooge . . . and Frank Birkin, one of the Quorn Terriers, was killed whilst trying to do what he could for him."

* * *

Mr. Andrews writing in June, soon after his arrival in France, says: "The whole countryside speaks volumes for the English occupation; and, in a district very much like Lincolnshire, and with English spoken, it is hard to imagine one is in France. . . . I took a draft up the line about a fortnight ago. The average stay at the base for an officer who has not been out before is ten days or a fortnight, during which time a course of training has to be passed through, involving the carrying of a pack, full equipment, rifle and two gas helmets, the whole 'Christmas tree' being topped by a tin hat. As you can imagine, it finished me off, so I had a week's light duty as a consequence. . . . Another important item of news is that I have a son and heir, born on May 1st."

A short time afterwards he went into the line,—a hot quarter near the Belgian front. He got to his trench early in the morning when a German "strafe" was in progress, but fortunately escaped by a miracle. Shells were falling uncomfortably near, and one of them knocked in the parapet, bowled him over, together with his orderly (who was wounded), and when he emerged from the débris he found that his side pocket had been pierced by a fragment of shell, whilst another piece had gone through his breast pocket and shirt, and there were three fragments in his gas helmet, though he himself was untouched.

At the time of writing he was in a quieter part of the line, but on August 12th he wrote as follows from a hospital in London: "Since writing to you I have had another move—this time one of the best I have had,—back to Blighty. On August 1st I walked into some shell gas, with my sergeant. We must have absorbed more than the regulation amount, as we soon developed symptoms of shell gas poisoning. We stuck it for two days, and then had to see the M.O., who sent us down the line. I finished up at the base hospital at ———; but, as my pulse was irregular

and stomach upset, I was eventually shipped to the above address on the 9th. . . . I have been kept in bed, and am being fed on a German fancy diet,—egg and milk and sugar every two hours. I shall be glad to get a square meal."

In a subsequent letter he says: "When I left the battalion, Col. Toller was in charge of the Brigade as Acting Brigadier. He told me that he had seen the cadets at the end of an officers' meeting, so he did not have time to say very much; from what I remember, he said that they were doing very well, and he seemed much interested in them." Again, still later, he writes: "Exciting events have taken place at this hospital, as, on Tuesday, we had 363 exchanged prisoners from Switzerland, and 400 more came to-day. They all look very well, and the medical people say that they have been well looked after—but not by the Germans. I have spoken to several, but cannot get anything more than firm lips and a set face, when asked about their treatment in Germany. We have a Brigadier General here who was in the retreat from Mons, and he recognised two or three of his old company. They told him that the majority of the deaths were due to starvation, and that the parcels from England were their main means of support."

Mr. Andrews has since spent some pleasant weeks as a convalescent at Eaton Hall, and at Harwarden, and was to have come to Quorn in December; but his correspondence has unaccountably ceased, and his present whereabouts is unknown.

Bertie Bates has recently gone out to France; he wears a marksman's badge on his sleeve, and has passed with distinction as a signaller,—the result, he says, of his work as a School Cadet and a Boy Scout.

C. B. Brown has been in hospital with neuritis, contracted through standing in mud and water in the trenches. He is now at Shoreham. His younger brother, Herbert, is employed in clerical work on Salisbury plain, and his eldest brother, R.J., who has recently joined the R.N.A.S., has passed both the medical and air tests, and by this time probably has received his commission as a flying officer.

R. H. C. Brown, (no relation to the former), has been discharged from the army, on account of nervous debility and a weak heart.

Frank Bunney has had a chequered career since he joined the London Scottish in December, 1916. When in camp near Winchester, in January last, he had serious trouble from blood poisoning as the result of vaccination. In May he went to France, where he was for a time held back by dental trouble; but, after going into the line, he got trench fever and rheumatism, and consequently was sent back to a base hospital on the coast. During his convalescence he was employed for a time at his old trade, in painting and lettering water tanks and so forth, and executing a drop curtain for one of the camp theatres. During the months that he was away from the battalion he missed some heavy engagements, in which his regiment, at terrible cost, covered itself with glory; but he has since had his full share of fighting, and has come through with two slight wounds, and two marvellous escapes from death, both on the same day. The London Scottish were specially mentioned by Sir Douglas Haig for their memorable services near Cambrai in November, and the story of their magnificent achievement has become public property. Frank has consequently been allowed by the censor to write freely of his experiences in a letter of which, later, I shall give the substance under the heading "The London Scottish in Action." The letter was written in pencil, under great difficulties and after a tiring march; some parts of it are not easy to read, and some were hastily put together. My version, therefore, is not a verbatim copy, but I have not altered it more than was necessary for my purpose, and, in no case, I think, so as to misrepresent the writer's meaning.

Douglas Clare, who went to France in July, and has been in some tight places with the Berkshire Regiment, was married on November 16th, in Manchester. After a short leave he returned to France, where, I believe, he is now employed behind the lines as adjutant to his battalion.

George Dodson, after many months in hospital, has now been discharged from the army.

Mr. Fawcitt was severely wounded, near St. Julien, on August 16th. "His regiment," writes Mr. Andrews, "went over at dawn, Fawcitt being in command of 'B' company, as the company commander was at the 5% (?) dump. He didn't get very far before getting a bullet through the chest and right shoulder." Writing to me in October

from the English hospital, where he was then well on the way to recovery, Mr. Fawcitt says: "It seems a long time since the end of my term of duty at the Rawlins Grammar School, but I have always many pleasant and interesting recollections of my experiences at Quorn. . . You have every reason for congratulation on its record of war service."

Cyril Frisby, who has passed as a first-class gunner in the Royal Marine Artillery, wrote from France on April 18th: "I am writing to thank the Old Quornians for their good wishes, and for the parcel, which arrived here while the stunt was on. We were in action night and day, till we became out of range. Afterwards we had the pleasure of firing back Fritz's own shells, for several of his 5.9 guns, complete with 800 rounds of ammunition, were captured. . . It has been rough out here at times, but gunners have a holiday compared with the infantry. I cannot write more this time, as I am just going off to an observation post with one of our officers. I saw a grand sight last week, when we made the attack, for I was lucky enough to be right forward."

Thirlby Hack has at last been awarded the Military Medal for his heroic conduct on May 13th, 1915. He is now a troop-sergeant.

The following extracts from two of Willie Heap's home letters may be of interest:—

March 7th, 1917. "During the last five weeks we have had a fairly lively time. . . One afternoon we went out to repair a telephone line; and, when we returned to our billet, we found that a shell had arrived before us, and made a hole through the walls. Some of the men would have it that the mice or rats were responsible for the hole, but I say it was a shell. No one was in the billet at the time, so we merely had to dig our kits out of the débris, and the war is still carrying on. . . I have also had the opportunity of seeing two Boche aeroplanes brought down in an air duel. It is a fine sight, but one cannot help feeling sorry for the men, when one sees them taking their last dive to earth."

May 12th, 1917. "You may be surprised to hear that I am now living in a Boche dug-out, and I can assure you it is really a fine place. It is almost sixty feet deep, and has three feather beds, a table and three chairs; so you will understand it is quite a large affair. I must not forget

to tell you that the walls and ceiling are covered with wall paper. . . You would be very surprised if you could see how comfortable the Boche makes himself. I have been in quite a number of dug-outs and cellars, etc., where he has had mirrors hanging on the walls, and ornaments, tables and chairs in nearly everyone. I suppose he found the articles in the houses deserted by the French people."

Since writing these letters Willie has been gassed, but he appears to have quite recovered, and was looking remarkably well, when I caught a glimpse of him at home on Christmas leave.

Cecil Hickling is expected home, in order to go into training for a commission. Perhaps, some day, he will favour us with more of his excellent descriptive letters. They should make an interesting book after the war.

Whilst our last "Quornian" was in the press, I received a long and most interesting letter from Mr. Lidster, unfortunately too late to print at the time. His Christmas message was duly delivered to the School, so it only remains now to give our readers the rest of the letter. Though a year old, it is not out of date,—such letters never are. I give it now, therefore, under the heading "Shell Shock—Before and After."

By way of postscript to that letter may I add the following note. Sergt. G. Carvill, writing to thank Marian Jones for a parcel of books sent to his men, says: "Mr. Lidster was very much liked by the platoon, while he was here. They are talking about him nearly every day, and there is not one who would not like to see him back again. If you see him, will you please give him the platoon's best respects, and tell him we shall always be pleased to hear how he is going on."

He has not gone back yet; for after some months in hospital, owing to shell shock and to several operations on the nose, he has recovered, but is now engaged in England, at his old work—physical exercises and bayonet training.

He has definitely resigned his post in the School, as he intends to take Holy Orders after the war. His Hebrew studies in the trenches have done well for him, for he has been offered, and has decided to accept, a post on the staff of a Theological College, as a lecturer on Biblical Languages. It is hardly necessary to say that we wish him every success and happiness in his chosen career, which will give him

opportunities for good beyond those which he enjoyed at Quorn. The School will always remember him with affection, and we are sure he will always keep a warm place in his heart for the School.

J. A. MacVinish has now been discharged from the army. Since this time last year, when we had to mourn the death of his brother, Hector, he has lost another brother, Fred, and his father as well, both of them after long and distressing illnesses. All Old Quornians who know him and his family will join me in the expression of our sincerest sympathy with them in this threefold loss. The latest news that I have of Willie MacVinish is, that, after a year in the trenches, he was discovered to be a draughtsman, and was sent to Headquarters to make maps of the trenches and district. That was nearly a year ago, but rumour has it that he is still employed on the same or similar work.

A. H. Mee, who has been long in Mesopotamia, wrote on June 6th: "Many thanks for the parcel sent by the Old Quornians. I was fortunate enough to get it in excellent condition—a very uncommon occurrence here, and I am undecided whether to praise those who packed it, or to write to the Postal Officials and congratulate them on such an extraordinary feat. . . . After spending nearly eleven months here, I have come to the conclusion that this is certainly not the place for white men. The conditions are very trying indeed, especially during the summer months. The hottest day I have ever experienced was last August, when the thermometer registered 119° Fahrenheit. The mean temperature this year, up to to-day, is 110°, and it is getting hotter every day.

We had quite a moderate rainy season, but it was quite enough for us, for we were washed out of our dug-outs once or twice, but always managed to see the funny side of things as well as the uncomfortable.

We are not in the fighting line just at present, but are camped alongside that river by whose waters our forefathers [Are we Jews?—Ed.] are supposed to have sat down and wept [Was not Babylon on the Euphrates?—Ed.], and well they might too, if the conditions were as bad as they are now. . . . Anyway I suppose we have just got to stick it until peace is declared.

I have seen the supposed site of the "Garden of Eden," but I cannot say I was at all struck by the beauty

of the place; it looked more like a wilderness than a garden. I have also seen 'Ezra's tomb.'

C. V. Newman wrote to me towards the end of November to inform me that he was about to take a commission. He is now probably an Officer Cadet.

Leslie Payne, after seeing service in Ireland, went to France, where he received a nasty scalp wound—he narrowly escaped death. He has quite recovered, and is in training as an Officer Cadet. A few weeks ago he received a certificate stating that he had been mentioned by his Company and Brigade Commanders for "conspicuous bravery in the field." The following is the official account of his services:— "On the night of the 1st—2nd of June, 1917, he was one of a covering party in front of a new post which was being dug near Villers Plouich. He was sent back with a message which he delivered. On his way back with a further message to the covering party, he was wounded by rifle fire in his head. He tried to proceed, but being unable to do so, he insisted on passing his message on to a non-commissioned officer for transmission to the covering party before reporting himself a casualty." We heartily congratulate him both on his fidelity to duty, and on its recognition by his superior officers, and we hope to congratulate him again by and by on the possession of some token of valour which may be displayed more publicly than a cardboard certificate. The School perhaps is more jealous of the honour than Leslie himself, for he was always of a modest and retiring nature. We are all proud of him.

W. E. Saunders, who is now a Lance Sergeant in the A.O.C., has recently returned from German East Africa, having been invalided home with dysentery and malaria. He is still in hospital, but hopes to reach the convalescent stage very soon.

Horace Sleath, who has recently obtained a commission in the R.G.A., is married. His brother Cyril, who was wounded on October 1st, 1915, and again on September 25th, 1916, has been discharged.

C. V. Smith, whose experiences "With a Water Column" are given on pages 32 to 36, wrote on Feb. 13th: "I may say at once that the Magazine has proved very interesting, and most refreshing has it been to read over the adventures of the Old Boys. Especially have I been glad to see the space given to Captain Proudfoot, who, as you

doubtless know, was my own familiar friend. Although latterly we could meet but twice or thrice a year, we were so constantly together in boyhood that a link was formed between us that could not be broken. I think we could 'get closer' to one another than is common to people not related. You have expressed very accurately his character as a boy, but I can assure you that, as a man, he was no longer a wandering star, but a steady fellow of vast intelligence and experience, and of tremendous personality. You are right in saying that he preserved his regard for the old School, for I may tell you that at least half our conversations of late years have been about that old place.

Sorry I cannot say very much about myself, but you may know that I am 'on water,' and find this a most interesting business. The groundwork of a certain subject dealt with by a man named Brittain has proved of great use to me, and also indirectly, I most sincerely hope, to no small body of troops out here."

C.V.'s elder brother, William, has been inspecting various works where respirators are made, and is now in charge of a gas mask factory. He was married about a year ago, his wife being a Graduate in Arts of London University, and formerly Senior Mistress at a Secondary School and P.T. Centre. He has recently been elected a Fellow of the Chemical Society, and in his spare time does some research work at the Borough Polytechnic.

Noel Smith is a Second Lieutenant and Cypher Officer on the Staff at Dar-es-Salaam, British East Africa.

Bernard Storer, who has joined the Honourable Artillery Company, relinquished his corporal's stripes and the early prospect of a commission, to volunteer, as a private, for service in Italy. When I last heard of him he was in Mantua, on his way to the front line.

W. E. Wainwright, who is now a Sergeant, wrote on February 16th: "By the time this reaches you, we shall be over the way tasting the real thing. Our chance has come at last, though I think you will agree that we have had to wait long enough.

My parents have just forwarded the January copy of the "Quornian." It came by the last post yesterday, and I was so interested that I broke all camp rules by burning candles until after one o'clock this morning, in order to read it through. What old scenes were recalled as I glanced

down the list of Old Boys with the colours! Maybe I'll have some similar experiences to relate ere long.

Now for a little personal news. Can you picture the boy whom you knew some seven or eight years ago as a 'Benedict'? I entered the lists in July, 1915, and further, I became the proud father of a fine boy last October. I trust he'll live to make the acquaintance of the Old School—he shows promise anyway. My wife belongs to Cardiff, and her brother was my closet College chum.—I needn't say more, need I?"

On May 23rd he wrote: "We have been in the 'Push' since it began in March, and are no doubt lucky to be here now. Casualties have been numerous, but so far I've managed to dodge everything Fritz has sent over for our benefit. His barbed wire is our worst obstacle, and it would open the eyes of the folks at home if they could only see some of it. Fritz is at his best when behind some wire, with a machine gun in front of him; but at close quarters we have him beaten. . . . The country hereabouts is very pretty, and, but for the ruined villages all round us, we might imagine we were in England. Thank goodness we are not playing 'home matches.'"

Again on July 19th, he says: "Owing to a slight indisposition I have been in dock for repairs. Can't say what was wrong exactly, but the M.O. kept me on milk for so long that I'm rather weak even now. Still the fortnight in hospital was heavenly after the line. A chum of mine told me of Leslie Payne's mishap, though whether serious or not he could not say. Can you supply the details? Two close friends have become landowners, alas!, while two more have won the M.M. So far I have managed to strike the happy medium, though several times it has been a case of touch and go. Sorry to say that George Lester has gone under. It was very hard lines, as he was due for ten days' leave at the time.

Did you receive the photo I sent some time ago? [I did. Many thanks!—Ed.] And what do you think of my son and heir? One kind lady expressed the pious wish that he would be a better boy than his father. I'm wondering what she meant, for surely I was a model of good behaviour. [Oh!—er—yes, certainly,—sometimes.—Ed.]

I have since heard rumours that Wainwright is wounded, but have been unable to discover if this is true. I sincerely hope not, but time will show.

Archie Webster has been badly wounded in the right leg. After a long and trying time in hospital, he has now recovered. The limb fortunately was saved, but he has a stiff knee, and one leg is somewhat shorter than the other. He has long been expecting his discharge, and is tired of idling away his time in Dover, when he might be doing work of national importance at his old desk at the Bank. Why, one asks, are so many men, unfit for further military service, allowed to waste their time, and eat their hearts out, at enormous cost to the country, when their services are urgently needed elsewhere? If there is any likelihood of their being wanted again for any sort of military service, could they not be released provisionally for civilian work, and called up again if wanted? Truly, we in England mismanage things sadly. How long shall we be content to "muddle through"?

Archie's brother, Willie, who has recently joined the Norfolks, is on his way to India.

C. K. White, who got his Commission in the spring, and has since done brilliant service in France—on one occasion he was the only officer of his Company to come safely through, after holding up German counter-attacks for four days in succession—came home on leave in December, looking well and strong, in spite of his nerve shaking experiences. The following extracts from his letters may be of interest to his old school friends:—

July 11th, 1917. "When I joined the battalion they were in rest, but now we are up the line, and my present abode is a good-sized dug-out in the trenches. We managed to have a fair amount of recreation whilst in rest, and I turned out in a Soccer match for the battalion. The result was a draw of one goal each. It was certainly very exhausting work, as the day was a particularly sultry one. . . . I sleep in a particularly deep dug-out, which was recently inhabited by old Fritz. There are plenty of traces of his recent evacuation, which was evidently done in double time, and all around there are signs of the destructive genius for which the Boches are particularly noted."

August 12th. "I spent a fortnight or so on a trench mortar course at an army school. The work, of course, was most interesting, and the instruction received will be of inestimable value in the future. I found my people in the line again on returning from the school, and the three or four

days of my sojourn there were quite exciting enough. Another period of rest followed, and I was glad to remove the mud and slush from my person, you can no doubt imagine. Whilst out in rest, I had a little cricket, and one evening, I and a fellow-sub contributed items at a staff concert. The fellow-sub in question was formerly a member of the 'Follies,' so he was greatly in request. We call him the 'little man.' His name is certainly a bit weird—Griffenhoofe. Another of his pet names is 'Dragon-hocks,' the invention of the C.O."

Tom Williams was home on leave early in September. "I went with hounds," he writes, "for the first morning's cubbing, and saw the first cub of the season broken up. It was very pleasing to hear the sound of the horn and the music of hounds in covert once more. Altogether I had a very fine time, for which I was very grateful."

* * *

Lucy Facer has gone to France with the W.A.A.C. She is a First-class Shorthand-writer and Typist, and ranks as a Forewoman. This, I believe, corresponds roughly to the army rank of Corporal, entitles her to wear two stripes, and puts her in command of her hut. She looks very smart in her uniform, and, when she came home on leave shortly before Christmas, seemed to be in splendid health and the highest of spirits.

E. W. H.

"SHELL SHOCK. BEFORE AND AFTER."

Dear Mr. Hensman,

I think it is quite time that you and all at School had further news of my doings in France, and in my heart of hearts (Some people call it a conscience!) I feel I am somewhat to blame for not writing before now. Still, one is not always responsible for one's goings and comings (even shortcomings) out here, and in a way I am not wholly to blame. I did begin my second official communiqué on Sunday evening, December 17th, but unfortunately I was not able to finish it, as events, a description of which will follow, went entirely against it. Perhaps this description had better come first, and then I shall feel assured not only of your forgiveness, but also of a certain amount of sympathy. It happened thus.

Noon of the 18th—a Monday—found me struggling up a communication trench from our support line to the firing line—a merry and thrilling enough journey, I can assure you. A benevolent power—that-is had provided me and all with what are officially known as “Gum boots: thigh,” so at least I was certain of dry feet at the end of the journey. Mud—mud—mud everywhere; slosh in places; water in others, not limpid or crystal or anything like that, but yellow and thick; trenches (?) not too good: worse can and do exist, but not much. Friend Fritz was in a playful mood, and, to use a Tommy's phrase, we were getting it in the neck. My platoon in the supports was in safety and under such cover as they could find, whilst I was manfully struggling knee deep in the mixture I have before described, in order to report to Company H.Q. “Relief complete—all satisfactory, etc,” when * * * Ye Gods! Hercules, Jove, Mars and all ye ancient deities. . . [This eases my mind, and these are *not* the words I used at the time.] something hit me on the chest with a terrific force—doubled me up and sent me spinning, whilst I was deafened by a terrific explosion. I looked up and saw half the trench blown to bits, wires broken, and a mingled heap of earth and débris where before had been mud and water only. A familiar bluish grey smoke was rising in the trench. I knew at once what had happened, and at once—moving as though in a trance, for I was very badly shaken—I did a very ungallant thing; “Tell it not in Gath.” I . . . became . . . a . . . mere . . . man and . . . ran . . . for whizz bangs have a nasty habit of repeating the dose without altering the range! Then came chaos. I remember going back to the supports (anything to be away from that accursed spot!) to see if my men were all right, collapsing—further shells—a Corporal's “Keep you head down, sir,”—a rush up to H.Q. to report all right—kind hands laying me down on a wire bed—and forgetfulness amidst a blurr of voices “Cheer up, old chap! You'll soon be right! etc,”—dreams—and then a feeling of intense exhaustion. Then a more rational feeling and an ability to ask questions; afterwards a difficult journey “down,” and answer questions; afterwards a difficult journey “down,” and meeting my own men; kind enquiries (Bless 'em!) “What have they done to you, sir? Never mind, we'll take it out of 'em for you! Mind you come back and soon, too,” and other little things which now make me proud that I and my good lads have learned to trust and understand one another, aye!

almost *love* one another,—and then the dressing station, where an injection soothed my nerves and made me feel still more rational; further on to the Field Hospital in an ambulance . . . questions, answers, shoutings—a maze of wanderings on a stretcher . . . then, oh joy! a warm room—bed—hot tea—sleep, refreshing sleep.

The next day I felt better—decidedly better—but very shaken and stiff. My head ached, and I was quivering all over. The M.O. in charge ordered a sedative for me, and examined me for “bits.” I was now able to think more clearly, and I knew I had had an almost miraculous escape. Not a single bit of shrapnel had touched me, and all the “wounds” I had was a bruised, somewhat discoloured chest, where the concussion took place. How I missed being blown to pieces, or at least riddled with the bits that flew round me, I cannot say. I *ought* to have been killed, or at least so badly wounded as to cause a notification in the casualty list: “Died of wounds, 2/Lt. Lidster, P., Sherwood Foresters”—and more or less complimentary obituary notices in the local press, reviewing my past career year by year and bit by bit. Still, I am thankful that that doubtful pleasure will have to wait (let us hope for many years).

After two or three days I was taken to interview the A.D.M.S.—a very terrible personage [Assist. Director of Medical Service], a full Colonel—blue tabs—three rows of ribbons, but very nice [pardon the word!]. He said, after a thorough investigation, “Shell shock,” and told me that I must have a good rest. [By the way, the C.O. of the Field Hospital is Lt.-Col. West, who knows *our* country well, and often visits Woodhouse Eaves]. The A.D.M.S. insisted that I should go away, right away, from the noise of war; and although I told him I was all right where I was, he insisted “No! you are entitled to the best that the nation can give you.” “Ahem! Ahem!”—I nearly said “Bow, wow!” but you cannot exactly do that with such a deity, and certainly you cannot argue. As a result, I was carted off the very next day to this hospital, where I am now.

So you see now why I couldn't finish that letter.

* * *

Later. I propose now to imagine I am re-writing and finishing that most ill-fated letter. You will have no doubt gathered by now that I am well advanced on the way to recovery, or I should not have amassed enough “morale”

to attempt to chronicle my further experiences out here for your edification, and for that of the children at School, for I feel almost sure that they will be interested in these doings of mine. Dorothy Wykes once asked me to tell her of my "adventures," and I feel that the best way is to record them from time to time in one big letter to you, so that no one will be disappointed. The language of the army is so unique that I am afraid, coming under its spell as one does out here, my letters will not be modelled on the style used by our classical writers and so admirably inculcated at Quorn, but will be influenced in no small way by the thousand and one originalities of army talk, blended and formed into—shall we say—"Lidsterese."

So much by way of a Preface.

The difficulty is to decide where exactly to begin. In my first letter to you I believe I recounted my historic landing and my journey "up the line," finishing off with my first impressions of war. Things are apt to become so familiar by constant experience of them that one doesn't seem to have any further *impressions*, strictly speaking. A subaltern has unique opportunities of seeing life (and incidentally death) out here, and to him the aspect of war is entirely different from that of higher commanders—even of Captains. There are times of dull, dreary monotony, and times of thrilling excitement. Let me explain.

I suppose your ambitions have never soared to the height of wishing yourself a flatfish or a pancake. Yet, oh, how often have I wished I could, by the agency of a magic ring or an Aladdin's lamp, be swiftly—no! quicker than that—changed into some being similar to these, or at least one whose "back-to-front" dimensions could be estimated only in ten-millionths of a millimetre. That is when mother Earth is something more than a mere name, but something to revere and respect, and to hug—ah! so close. Cause: Only a *Véry* light; only a vigilant Boche sentry; only an experienced Machine Gunner; only Rat-tat-tat; only the noise as of humming bees, or rather droning beetles and hissing serpents combined; only one's own quickness to save oneself; only death just avoided. That's a thrill in capital letters and an extra big T, with rolling "R's," too. Again—the other side. Hours and hours of weary trench duty—visiting sentry groups, floundering through mud and water, brooding over imaginary wrongs which one must have perpetrated to have to undergo this form of mental and physical

torture; trying to hum a music-hall song to restore waning or sometimes lost "morale;" the sentries' everlasting "Halt, who *are* yer?" Answer "Robins," or "Robin Hood," according to temper. "Anything to report?" "Number X Sentry Post all correct, sir!" "Heard anything?" "Yes, sir (if lucky)—thought I eard somebody wiring near the Alleman's line—quarter right from 'ere." "Um! where?" Interest grows. "Pass the word down to the Lewis Gun to keep a sharp look-out." "Anything else?" "No, sir." "How do you feel?" "A bit cold, sir. Wish that 'ere blinkin' rufn ud look sharp." [ad infinitum.] Then on to the next post, stumbling over sleepers' legs . . . "Who the blinkin' blank is that?" "Sorry, my lad!" "It's orl right, sir, didn't know it wus *you*." . . . No variation, no excitement, but stay! . . . Pop! . . . "What's that?" . . . Rifle Grenade . . . A whistling through the air. "Keep your heads low, boys." . . . Bang ! ! ! "Short!" Everybody laughs. More grenades . . . more laughing . . . then peace again. Three hours of that—then relief . . . hot coffee served by a sleepy orderly in Company H.Q. . . . then bed and rats and chats . . . but sleep, deep and noisy.

* * *

You're on mighty thin ice, out here, all the time—mighty thin ice. I remember once (I'm getting quite an old soldier with my yarns,) three times within three minutes realising that.

Our Company H.Q. was a long way behind the line, as Company H.Q.'s go, almost in a village, a most sumptuous place which looked as if it had been a converted cellar, not particularly shell proof. It *might* have stopped a whizz bang, but certainly not a 4-2, but that has nothing to do with the story. There were only two of us as officers to the Company that afternoon, and of course Mr. Boche took it into his head to do a bit of mud slinging. By luck (!) this always happens when one is short handed. Trench mortars—commonly known as *Toc Emmas*—were coming over almost in salvos. An old soldier would probably have said (perhaps justifiably) that the air was black with them. There they were—light, medium, and heavy (minenwerfers), and a few shells. I was off duty, but with a bit of a show on like that, I didn't want to miss the fun, so, putting on my tin hat, I sallied forth. The way led through an orchard—probably of what had once been a farm, of which the only

relics were our H.Q. and an archway. I was near the archway when Bang ! I was lifted right off my feet, and gently (say not so !) deposited in a shell hole, where some hyphenated idiot had placed some broken rum jars. I crawled out, somewhat shaken, but in a way amused [not if I could have caught the depositor of the rum jars, though]. I was going under that archway, when the whole thing collapsed and half an old barn besides, and, believe me, not a single brick hit me, though two yards to my left was a pile of them big enough almost to bury an elephant. "This is getting a bit hot," I thought, so I sat down on the pile to think things out, and lit a cigarette just to show my contempt for shells, trench mortars, bricks, and things generally. A group of men—five in all—emerged from behind a wall, carrying bombs, in great glee, for they had had some splendid fun dodging bits on their way up. They were all five splendid fellows, who are simply magnificent on patrol work. Once . . . but that yarn can wait. I got up, and we stood there in the middle of the road recounting our experiences, when a "Minnie" burst not far off, and a fair sized chunk of shrapnel came along, hit one fellow's tin hat, glanced off, grazed one chap's neck and another's arm, and MISSED me, whilst it made another fellow jump like a springbok. All this took less than three minutes. The Boches did some damage that afternoon, but they got it in the neck a few hours afterwards, and I felt no little joy, and very uncharitably wished that a Hun subaltern could be knocked about like poor me, only the third time . . . plugged. Such is what people call retaliation.

Perhaps, now that I seem to have begun a letter to you, I had better go back and record in more or less chronological order the varying fortunes of the battalion and incidentally of myself. Soon after writing my first letter to you I had the misfortune to be laid up with a touch of dysentery, at which time I received your answer to my letter. My illness put me off replying to it at once, and right up till now I have dallied and put off and put off replying to your most welcome letter—but more of this, anon. Then followed two more spells in the trenches, uneventful enough as ordinary spells go, although once I had the honour of being sniped at with whizz bangs for being enthusiastic enough to watch a bombardment with field glasses over the parapet in daytime ! !

After these two tours of duty, we spent about a week resting, during which time Col. Toller went home on leave. This circumstance will serve to fix the time in your mind, as no doubt you will remember his visit home. Then, one dirty wet night, we set off on a march to our first stopping place, as we had heard that we were to have a month's rest, right away behind the line. I shall never forget that first march. Loaded, with full pack, drenched by the rain and numbed by the cold, we struggled on, soaked to the skin; and it was two or three o'clock in the morning before we reached our destination, thoroughly tired out. Our boots were full of water, and we were dripping with rain. Added to this, there was the marching by night to avoid observation, with all its uncertainties. Thankful we were when we threw ourselves down on our beds, struggled into our valises, and slept. The next day we busied ourselves in drying our clothes, and resumed our march the day after. This was done in daylight, and was quite a good march, but was spoiled by the awful billets we had. Certainly we did not "click" over this, as we all slept in a dirty loft on straw, and under this loft were hutches and hutches of tame rabbits. Mirabile dictu we slept, in spite of questionable odours and rats and mice. Two days later our march was resumed, and this was *the* march par excellence. You can imagine that after the first 10 miles one's pack becomes less and less an ornament, and more and more a burden, as the miles drag by. Active service kit is by no means a negligible quantity, and one and all, except the mounted officers, were dead beat when the end was reached. I must say that, on the way, we passed through some of the finest scenery I have ever seen, but somehow one has little eye for that sort of thing when a pack, etc., is all the time straining the sinews of the back, and when one's legs are weary and the end is a long way off.

A day's rest, and then the fun began ! Drill, drill, drill ! ! ! The same old daily routine as in Blighty, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. Let us draw a veil over some things that were said. One whole week I returned to civilisation to attend a course in sniping, during which time I amassed large quantities of knowledge, which now stands me in good stead in the trenches. Incidentally, I had my photo taken there. The training we had did me a world of good, and we were rather sorry that one fine day we had news to pack

up. During the period of "rest" I had several opportunities of studying French life, and well I shall remember teaching a bright little lad about thirteen years old the elements of English. His little sister reminded me so much of my own little sister that, when she lisped out a timid request for a " Souvenir," I handed over my only remaining collar badge. One had disappeared in the trenches.

The march back was easier than the outward march, as we were fitter, but fate again led us to the " Maison des lapins," as I nicknamed it. The old dame was away when we arrived, but nothing daunted, I opened the window with a bayonet, and we installed ourselves in her mansion as of yore. Garrulous neighbours invaded the house, and loud and bitter things were said. Again my knowledge of the language came in handy. [This I say very grimly; the old girl won't forget my tirade in a hurry either]. When the dear lady arrived, contrary to all my expectations,—no! I didn't say hopes, for I was quite anticipating a scene,—she was all smiles, and verily she was so lavish with her expressions of joy that I had to flee, for I was, I firmly believe, in great danger of being publicly kissed. [By the way, she is seventy-two—in case this causes gossip and comment. *Verb. sap.*] The other officers refused to brave the terrors of the loft again; but I risked it, and am still alive to tell the tale.

Two days we stayed there, and then marched on to our original first stopping place, where we stayed for a week. By the way, during that week I attended a football match, where unexpectedly I came across Harry Facer. He looked well, and I was able to have a good chat with him.

Then came a day when revolvers were fished out, cleaned, and preparations made for another smack at the Boches. We left the place, not with bands playing and flags waving, amid cheers, but quietly, every man discussing with his fellow the probable state and health of the new trenches we were going to take over.

The day was not a good one at all, and there was plenty of rain. Our Company was destined to move right up to a village close behind the lines, and we were more or less tired when we arrived there. We were pretty miserable and wet, and I remember waiting till eleven o'clock for tea. Cellars for bedrooms were the order of the day; and, though I was tired out, I couldn't fancy a sleep down there, for we had actually had real beds during our rest. Therefore I

resolved to stay up all night, and while away the time by a few rat hunts. Sport was plentiful, though I didn't effect a kill. I did manage to snatch a few minutes on an old table, and morning found me in my usual occupation in moments of leisure—swotting . . . Ye Gods! . . . HEBREW.

Later on we " took over " the trenches, and beauties they are—where they *do* exist. You cannot imagine them even in the moments of wildest fancy, nor can I do justice to them by attempting a description of them. My lads *said* things—that's all—but it was quite enough, and a Tommy's descriptions are most graphic I can assure you. Please spare me the agony of a description—I should perhaps be profane. Who knows?

There we are—or there I *was*—but soon I am going back to my boys . . . and hope to . . . carry on.

* * *

" What do I think? " Well! there isn't much time to think, but first of all let me tell you what I think of the Tommy. To begin with, if I had my way, every civilian should uncover his head to him, the finest fellow who has ever lived or died. He is magnificent, and though he grumbles (it is his only privilege), he has no end of grit, and his motto as shown by his deeds is " Stick it, boys. " People at home do not know, and can *never* know what Tommy endures, and so cheerfully too. He takes a bit of understanding, and is a born critic, yet as faithful to his " pals " as can be (I nearly said " as a dog," but perhaps that can hardly be called a euphemism). Sentiment plays very little part in his life, yet I shall never forget the night before we went back to the trenches, and the looks on my lads' faces as I and they sang songs of home together. I had gone to bid them good-night as I always do, for they are like children to me, and we talked and sang in an old barn. One had a mandoline, and I can never forget their song, and all that accompanied it, " There's a long, long trail a winding," —and I knew their brave hearts were far across the sea with those to whom in fancy they were singing, and longing for the time to come, waiting patiently :

" Till the day when I'll be going down
That long, long trail with you."

There was silence as the notes, rough unmusical notes, yet full of feeling, died away; a silence that could be felt, and then . . . a long sigh.

Yes! the British Tommy is very human, and it is just because he *is* human that he is so splendid. It is a privilege and an honour to lead him.

* * *

Now, if I am not wearying you with my long screed, I will try to give you some idea of what the bald sentence in an official communiqué means, "Our patrols were active all along the line and found" These are my own experiences, and they are typical of the ceaseless work that goes on night by night in No-man's land. This work seems to be my forte, and I take a professional interest in No-man's land. Often the job, I must confess, is to keep me out of it, and I have even been known to slip out quite unarmed (like an idiot, I must confess) just to have a look round. Some people say I am a bit mad, but I don't care, I enjoy it. Sometimes it's exciting; sometimes not.

Scene: Coy. H.Q. . . a fairly comfortable dug-out (in fact, the best there is). "I say, Liddy!" . . . "Yes, sir,"—the Captain is speaking. "I want you to do a patrol to-night and try and 'mawm' something in if you can. I'll leave all arrangements with you. Understand?" . . . "Pleasure, sir; I'll be off now to get my men."

Personally, when I go out on patrol I like to have with me men whose capabilities and reliability I know, and generally when selecting men I choose those who find enjoyment in such stunts. Not every man is fitted for such work, and although all must take their share, I prefer a preponderance of well seasoned, stick-at-nothing fellows who serve to stiffen the newer and possibly nervous members of the patrol. I generally sing out "Who feels a bit shaky?" If anybody does, I leave him, for such men are more of a danger than anything else. All marks of identity are removed; collar badges, shoulder titles, identity discs; letters are left behind, so that, if misfortune overtakes us, the enemy cannot identify us. "Ready, boys?" "Yes, sir." "Come on then . . . now then, elephant, not *quite* so much row." It is a funny thing, but it seems as if every old tin in No-man's land is carefully kicked by every fellow when out. We get through our own wire, spread out like a fan, and I and an N.C.O. go out to search out the land a bit further. "All clear!" Then carefully we patrol. That's all . . . but wait a minute, things are not *always* so nice.

One patrol I had—I believe it was my second—was thrilling enough in all conscience. I took it into my head to have a look at one of the Boches' advanced saps, and the night was very light, almost like day. You people bless moonlight nights; we . . . er . . . well, we *don't*. I was doing splendidly, when I heard just a click. I had a good idea what it was, and flopped. Then some fun began. We had no doubt been spotted. The Boche started shouting, and we had three machine guns let loose on us at once—close enough to part one's hair almost. Then he started shouting in good English, "Hello! hello! You can't get in. Come on!" Of course to try to make us answer, and so give our position away. I and a Corporal got up to squint round, and four guns started—one from our line by mistake. O-oh! it was the quickest dive I've ever done. The Corporal and I crawled back to send the men back, while we waited to cover the withdrawal, and after another hour we got safely back. No one hit. Phew! It *was* merry!

Afterwards, I visited the gun from our line which had let loose on us, and found the Corporal in high glee at having "killed" two Allemands at least. I roguishly played with him for a bit, and then confessed *I* was one of those Boches. [N.B.—Boches is pronounced in Armyese: Bosh—es]. By a mistake, he had not been warned of our presence. I resolved then to warn everybody personally before going out in future.

In contrast to this, one night I was out for six hours in pouring driving rain in *one* place, waiting and watching. No luck. 'Nuff said. I feel my spirits damped at once to think even of that wretched night. These two patrols were not successful ones, to say the least, but *I have* had luck, and *have* got information on others. My last was the best, but I am afraid I ought not to write about it.

Of course there is a seamy side to war; but . . . well! it's rotten enough if you brood over it, but if a fellow *looks* for fun he generally gets it, and little pleasantries serve to keep up a chap's morale. Even ordinary routine demands its toll of lives, but . . . *dulce et, etc.* Personally, I would not have missed it for worlds, and besides in my own tinpot way enjoying myself, I feel all the better for it. There is more good in the world than I credited, and the old caste barriers are broken down. Even "incompatibility of temperament" may become a meaningless phrase. Men and

boys; rich and poor; men of high degree and men of low estate; intellectual and simple; privileged and denied; educated and uneducated; good and bad; all are being welded into one . . . BROTHER OF MINE. Now is a time to see visions and dream dreams of a newer order of things—where the old shibboleths have vanished; the old conventions are done away with; and the fetters, by which society (so called) bound us to observe its artificial laws, are snapped asunder. It is a great uplifting of souls—the souls of nations—and it will not be in vain. My words may be obscure; the expression of my thoughts not good; but the feeling is there and must remain.

I am no philosopher, nor am I desirous of being a social reformer, but I know my men and they know me. Worth and integrity; sweetness of soul and sympathy is all that we hold dear now. The Angel of Death brings life as well as death. You people at home, look to it that you be ready for the homecoming of a different nation, a cleaner and better race, a race with a SOUL.

Perhaps I have let myself go, but no doubt it is as well. You want to know these things, and as they occur to me, so am I bound to tell you. Every seriously minded man is even now brooding over after-the-war problems.

With all good wishes and kindest regards,
I am, very sincerely yours,
PERCY LIDSTER.

“WITH A WATER COLUMN.”

June 27th, 1916. “I came here this morning on the engines to join up with the rest of the column. I know now why it is called a ‘column.’ The procession consists of one officers’ car, three depoisoners, five sterilizers, five workshop cars, and over a hundred tank water carts for distributing. I think they will stretch over two or three miles of road.”

* * *

June 30th. “We left on Tuesday morning with three depoisoners and five sterilizers, and joined the rest of the column. . . . You will understand that the moving of some 100 vehicles along the road is somewhat difficult. The depoisoners, which are very heavy, made much disturbance, and the one I was on was often half a mile behind, and of course kept the rest of the column back. At

every stop I had to get into the lab. to see that no bottles were jumping about or drawers coming open, and so on. Everything in the lab. is either clamped to the wall or wedged tight with wads of paper. At one point the doors of a locker were burst open by the rattling of the contents, and the high road was littered with a trail of cans of bleaching powder and sodium hydroxide, until the cries of the mob caused us to pull up and transfer them to the floor of the lab. . . . The machines were embarked this morning; but we may stop here a day or two, though I hope not, as there is nothing doing at all.”

* * *

France, Nov. 5th. “For bodily comfort I am not at all badly off. I sleep on the floor of my lab., the dimensions of which are about 6ft. by 2ft. 6in. Here I am warm and dry, and above all private. Warmth is obtained by using an ancient onion sack, a waterproof sheet, three blankets, a great-coat, and a mackintosh; I also have nine sources of flame (bunsens, lamps, and the like), and ten gallons of paraffin and methylated spirits to go at. Water is kept out fairly well, there being but one leak in the roof, under which a tin is fastened, which yields about a pint after a rainy night. I can tell you that the place is very comfortable to sit in of an evening, with a good light on, the blinds drawn, and the cheerful bunsen whittling away.

Wood is frequently in here, or I am in his lab., and sometimes we have small readings out of the few books we have between us. The sergeant carpenter has put in for me a small bookcase, and I am looking to have it filled in the near future. . . . The Company gets Sunday afternoon holiday, but it is seldom I myself can get any time off, for there is nearly always something doing. I usually contrive, however, to wash my clothes one Sunday, and my carcase on another.”

* * *

Dec. 27th. “At seven o’clock on Christmas Day, dinner was served in the sergeant’s mess. Each member was given some present supposed to be topically funny. Mine was what is officially termed a ‘set of doings,’ to wit, a bottle with a stone attached, this being a copy in miniature of the vast vessel with sinker that I carry when out sounding and sampling wells. I retired from the fray about ten o’clock, but I was there long enough to see several funny

things. I heard the men singing long after I was in bed, and was awakened about one o'clock by the workshop staff outside making a noise about the 'Herald Angels,' and refusing to go away until I had shaken hands all round. And so ended Christmas.

Boxing Day was a beautiful clear day, with a blue sky, very pleasant indeed except for the mud underfoot. There was much aerial activity, and at one time I counted sixty planes in the sky at once; but I saw never an enemy machine, although I heard a battery some three miles away shelling one. To-day has been bright, and Fritz has been going the pace a bit; and I can hear his shells bursting now."

* * *

Jan. 1st, 1917. "Some of our men stayed up last night to see the New Year in, and made merry over it, so I am told. As for me, I had a nice bath in a bucket, put on a clean set of clothes, and retired fairly early. . . . The stationary lab. is now in full blast. Wood and I have done all the fitting, and it has been quite an experience, we being at various times carpenters, tinsmiths, glass blowers, chemists and electricians. What the chief captain will say about it, when he returns, is quite another matter,—maybe it will be another case of Mr. Handel and the singers."

* * *

Jan. 8th. "Wood left suddenly last night to take up a commission in the artillery. For this event I am both sorry and glad. Sorry to lose so fine a colleague and friend—he is worthy to rank with Proudfoot as a friend, but glad, because he will probably be more in his element in the artillery. He is an old Westminster boy; he took an honours' degree in mathematics at Durham, and afterwards an M.Sc. He was three years at the Polytechnic at Zurich, and knew Willstätter, Lunge and Treadwell. He was an officer in the Swiss artillery, volunteered for service in the Balkan Wars, and fought with the Serbian artillery. He can speak German extremely well, and knows enough French, Italian and Russian to get along. He has travelled a bit too—Constantinople, Moscow, Buda, Venice, Copenhagen, Jamaica and so on. You will understand that I shall miss him, for we have been together for nearly a year. We slept together from July to October—once or twice under the sky. We were in a bed when Buck and Penman arrived, these two gentlemen taking possession of a portion of the

floor. . . . The four of us (we thought ourselves a formidable quartette) used to sing loudly certain ancient songs to the howl of the violin—such things as 'Her Bright Smile,' 'Scenes that are Brightest,' 'Hail, Smiling Morn,' and one memorable evening—it was my birthday—Buck and I performed the 'Larboard Watch,' the former singing a fair baritone, to the great delight of our neighbours, and our landlord and landlady. I might say that we had inside us a bottle or two of sound old wine that had long rested unsunned in the basement of the 'Continental,' and were unearthed by the dear old madame on the old dragoon's remarking that it was 'le jour natal du sergent C.V.' Our hosts were kind folks, and I believe they thought a deal of the lodgers, for we used to chop the sticks, and the like of that."

"It is cold to-day, and the wind is astonishingly strong; the old caravan rolls as if in a heavy sea, and the twigs of the ancient moss-grown elm tree are lashing against the window; but inside, the bunsen hums merrily, and the incubator lamp (used for keeping the microbes alive) diffuses a grateful warmth."

* * *

April 3rd. "I have been moved out again with a small detachment to attend to the wells in this particular area. The enemy has left the water in a particularly efficient state of uselessness. Some wells are poisoned, and he has used nearly all the rest as latrines for a day or two before he departed. However, there are some very good engineers round about, and they are rapidly getting things into order.

Some days ago I passed through a tract of country which had seen some savage fighting months and months ago. For miles and miles the place is a howling wilderness, no green thing can be seen as far as the eye can reach, and the ground is chewed up in an indescribable state. The shell holes are not merely here and there; they touch one another, and run into one another over square miles of country. Here and there is a village, which may only be recognised by a litter of bricks and wood, smashed up into almost impalpable powder; and the only signs of life are the jagged stumps of trees, and flocks of starlings and other birds of evil omen."

* * *

April 8th. "I quite hold with what you say about munition workers, whose excessive pay is a most damnable scandal. Unskilled street corner proppers and pub crawlers can get pounds and pounds; and poor infantrymen here

suffer untold hardships, and are in imminent danger most of the time, all for a shilling a day, which becomes sixpence, if they chance to be married.

Vegetables here are not too plentiful. The army has issued no potatoes for a very long time; but, until recently, we managed to buy from the French population. There is, however, still an issue of onions and turnips; and to-day we have had a nice mess of carrots and parsnips, but I had rather they had been purple sprouts, for I think this is about their time, if the frost has not done them in. I have done rather well in parcels lately,—first yours, of which the contents are now beginning to be exhausted (the boot laces are most acceptable), then one from the Quornians, not yet opened, so that the contents shall not be littered about the premises."

THE LONDON SCOTTISH IN ACTION.

Thursday, December 6th, 1917.

I feel I must just snatch this small chance, and write to you, though I am just now having an awful struggle to get into a position to catch the light of my candle, which has been gloriously fixed; but since we get bombs the window has to be screened. . . . It was my great good fortune to get about 30 letters while in the line. Some I had to hold over a day, and they nearly burned a hole in my pocket, I was so keen to read them, but I could not; and, even when I did, they were hurriedly rushed through, while I sat on the firestep between the horrid strafes of the Huns. . . .

It was on Thursday, Nov. 22nd, early in the morning, that we moved up to hold the Hindenberg line. We had to move over an open valley, and got shelled, several falling; and at 5.20 I had one of the luckiest escapes ever possible, I think; a whizz-bang burst close by, and several were hurt. I felt a sledge-like blow on the right shoulder, that swung me round, and I knew I was hit, and looked, expecting to find red, but did not, and hurriedly passed on, thinking that only a piece of dirt had hit me; but later I learned differently. My shoulder stiffened, but that did not hinder me much.

We finally reached the Hindenberg line, and straightway began the offensive we were ordered up for. We bombed all that day, and, though at times we were pushed back, we gained ground. I saw many gruesome sights, and our own particular bombing party very early lost half

its numbers. More were called up, and we still pressed on, I being second bayonet man. . . . We had gone on well, and were resting, or rather waiting, when all at once from an unseen place a shot came, and as I was just turning to take up the bomb bag, the bullet caught the back part of my steel helmet, and passed through it to burst out in the front, making an ugly hole that one could pass an egg through; I did not know that just then, but felt a big blow on my head, clapped my hands to it, and got back, feeling all of a swim and dizzy. Fellows who saw me made way, thinking I was badly wounded; however, I was not, but I was passed on to the aid station, and there it was found that my head was just grazed, only drawing a spot or so of blood. The doctor told me to go down, as I was suffering from shock, and it was then that I looked at my headpiece, and realised how near again I had been to being "called home," as we scouts usually put it. It was then that the doctor saw that my gas respirator was pierced, and all the things inside damaged. He examined the track of the missile, and found that it passed through my pocket, through all my photos, several letters and leather cases, smashing my fountain pen, and cutting through quite a thick steel mirror, my leather jerkin and my shirts, etc., finally being so slowed down that it just grazed me under the arm pit; my shoulder was black and blue, with a tremendous bruise, and wedged there, by my right shoulder straps, was a piece of shell shrapnel, quite four inches long—an ugly bit truly. That was what had hit me early in the morning. That ended my fighting for that day. I don't mind confessing I was terribly unnerved, and could not control my limbs. . . . The books, photos and letters, etc., I am sending home to be kept as reminders.

I learned later that during the night we handed over that part of the line to another company, and when I joined my company about dinner-time—still rather nervy, though convinced that all would be well, we started again, and after about an hour we were very strongly counter-attacked. We were practically trapped, and Fritz turned on us his guns, bombed us, and plied his machine guns mercilessly. Of that scene I can tell little; but no awful picture of slaughter and of tight corners held by a few can be worse than the one we passed through. Finally, we had twice to go over the top, and through Fritz's wire, where many fell. Awful was the time, and how ever we got back to the main trench I

know not, for one saw men fall on all sides; yet some of us did get back, and that counter-attack was held up eventually, and D and A companies earned praise. I may not tell you how few got back, but only one young officer came through safe and unhurt. That night, thank goodness, we were relieved, and passed back to the old British line, and later on to the B.H.Q., where we rested a little in a dug-out.

On Wednesday night we again had to go up to that Hindenberg line, for those following us had lost much of what we had taken, and were hard pressed; but it was said we were simply going up for twenty-four hours, or at most forty-eight. However, the two companies who had suffered the brunt were kept in the quieter part of the line, and not on the offensive quarter; still each day was pretty bad, for we were heavily shelled, and worst of all, since Fritz had retaken his pumps, water was scarce; one day the ration per man was simply a drink in the morning; and for two days none had his fill of water, whilst the biscuits and bully, and all that, rather tended to make one thirsty. Another day we got our bottles three-quarters full, and thought we were lucky. Thursday and Friday passed, each day taking its toll of men, and still no relief. None could sleep; but, when not on the firestep, one sat in the trench, with the waterproof cape round one, and, being so wearied, fitfully dozed to be awakened with a start by the crash of a shell near by, and then dozed again, feeling, oh! so worn and tired out. During those days, the tin of lemon drops you sent proved a great boon to myself and many others, for by them we kept our mouths moistened. We had no warm food for over a week, except one day while near B.H.Q., and only one cup of hot tea. Saturday came, and soon after breakfast a heavy bombardment of our line commenced and increased to a tornado. I am told by those with experience that it was one of the hottest they ever knew. Fritz put over every conceivable explosive he had, and the air shrieked with shells. It so happened that, just before it began, my hour to take sentry duty came, and I sat, with a periscope on the end of my bayonet, keeping watch. Shells burst all around; the trench, we could see, was being blown in; and we were continually covered with dropping earth and shrapnel; so heavy did the fire get that I could see nothing but explosions and smoke in that little mirror. The Colonel was near by, rifle in hand; all the others were crouching down but poor me, and it was the hardest task to keep that

glass up and watch it; still I felt, though all was black, that we would keep all right and win through. We knew that an end would come to the fire, and we were waiting, bombs all ready. It came at last, and was alarming, for the regiment on our right had been clean driven back, and was falling back on our line. At last the work commenced, and then began a whole day's fighting; and though the Huns outnumbered us by many—for he meant to wipe us out of his trench, we beat him back, and took the larger part, if not all, of the trench lost by the other regiment. It proved later that we saved the sectors of our line on our right and left from a very precarious plight, and turned a tremendous counter-attack into a failure, getting mentioned four times and earning general praise from all sides,—but, oh! at what a cost!

The fight was lulled about 3-30, for Fritz was beaten back, and gave in; but the next hours were anxious ones, for we knew not if all was finished. The lull lasted about an hour, during which time the Hun planes had hovered continually over our heads, and then just as darkness came on, Fritz gave us a parting shot, and he heavily bombarded our line again, directed by the planes. As we moved along, the shells followed us, and matters again looked hopeless.

The dark hours following were anxious, and we were ever on the firestep, wondering if a raid might not be made during the night, and hoping that relief would come; for all were dead beat, not a man had washed or shaved for ten days, and we had only once had warm food. However, at midnight the long looked-for relief came, and we got out and marched, or dragged ourselves, some miles away back to the huts, and into bed about 7-30 next morning, to sleep until dinner-time, and then get a shave and wash.

Since then we've moved each day, marching all but one lot, so have not had much rest. We move possibly again to-morrow, and are now in another sector, and it is to be hoped that before long we may have two or three weeks away from it all, for it is now three or four months that, on and off, we have been in the line all the while.

I am feeling pretty fair, though tired, but I am truly thankful that we did so well. Inchy and Moeuvres will ever be remembered, and I don't suppose I shall ever forget the 23rd and 24th, nor the 28th, 29th and 30th of November; nor the sugar factory.