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HAROLD CHAPIN

SOLDIER AND DRAMATIST

BEING THE LETTERS OF

HAROLD CHAPIN

AMERICAN CITIZEN WHO DIED FOR ENGLAND AT LOOS ON SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1915. WITH TWO PORTRAITS

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"I go to prove my soul.
I see my way as birds their trackless way,
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stiffling snow,
In some time—His good time—I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good time!"

ROBERT BROWNING

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THE RECORD OF A LIFE

BY SIDNEY DARK

HAROLD CHAPIN was born in Brooklyn, U.S.A., on February 15th, 1886. He was killed at the Battle of Loos, on September the 26th, 1915.

His family is of old New England stock, descended from Huguenot refugees, and there are family legends of an Indian princess who married one of his ancestors. With his characteristic love of the picturesque, Harold always insisted on the reality of his Indian ancestress.

His mother was a Unitarian, and it was in this faith that he was reared. In the autumn of 1888, Mrs. Chapin brought her baby son to Europe. They stayed for a little while in Paris, and, before he was three years of age, they came to London. It was in England that Harold Chapin lived the rest of his life.

His mother is an actress, and in August, 1893, when Harold was seven years old, she was engaged

to play Volumnia in "Coriolanus" during the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon. The Festival was postponed that year from April to August owing to Sir Frank Benson's illness. Harold went to Stratford with his mother. Mr. Benson was attracted by the small boy and asked Mrs. Chapin to let him play young Marcus. His first appearance, therefore, on any stage was in the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, in this part.

His first essay in playwriting was made when he was only a few months older. His main interest at that time was nigger minstrelsy and this first play called "False Colours" was designed for the Moore and Burgess Minstrels.

Harold Chapin made various appearances on the stage during his childhood, but his mother would not allow his schooling to be interfered with, and his work on the stage was limited to special holiday weeks. He was sent, when he was nine, to the North London Collegiate School and afterwards to the Norwich Grammar School. He disliked boarding school intensely, and he afterwards always denounced the custom of sending boys away from home to be educated. He finished his education (1901 and 1902) at University College School, two very happy years always remembered with satisfaction, and one

of the many plans he made for his own small son was that he should be sent to this same school.

Harold Chapin, as a boy, was quick and intelligent, but always far less interested in the work appointed for him than in his own desultory reading and his own many adventures. He loved wandering about the country, filled with an insatiable and detailed curiosity. He was a tiring companion when he was quite little, for he had to stop every other minute to examine a new stone, to prod down a hole to discover where it led, to pick an unfamiliar flower, to gaze at a spider or a toad. In London he would explore mean streets and little-known alleys, observing and remembering. One of his boyish characteristics was a deep and gentle love of animals. This remained with him to the end and is reflected in the humorous letters to his dog, Emma, written from the front, and included in this book.

In the autumn of 1902, Harold Chapin went on the stage in earnest, playing Billy in a "fit up" tour of "Sherlock Holmes." A tour with "The Red Lamp" followed. In 1903, he spent some time with a real Crummles' Company in which he played many and various parts from Hastings in "Jane Shore" to the father in "Maria Martin" or "The Murder in the Red Barn." This relative

should really have been Maria's mother but, women running short, the sex was changed to suit the exigencies of the company. Chapin thoroughly enjoyed this rather uncomfortable experience. The queer people with their queer characteristics and queerer patois appealed to his keen sense of humour and to his delight in every living thing from a bumble bee to a bad actor, and this engagement undoubtedly gave him the idea of his first long play "The Marriage of Columbine." The tour was short and unproductive and ended in a wire asking for money to get back to civilization.

A pause in town followed while he studied singing. His voice was baritone, well modulated and full of expression, but he never made any professional use of it. Music, however, was always to him a means of rest and the Queen's Hall often helped him through weary rehearsals. He wrote a good deal of poetry in these beginning years, and in 1905 he tried his hand at the book of a comic opera which he called "Kings in Ireland."

At Christmas, 1905, he was in the Drury Lane pantomime, understudying and playing the comic policeman in the Harlequinade, the bustle and fun of which delighted him immensely. He never lost his love for the more simple and ingenuous forms of theatrical entertainment and one of his

many unfulfilled ambitions was to write a revue and play in it, himself.

During 1906 and 1907 he acted in "The Prodigal Son" at Drury Lane, "A Pantomime Rehearsal" on tour, "The Bondman" at the Adelphi, and "Her Love Against the World," "The Midnight Wedding," and "The Christian" at the Lyceum. He became assistant stage manager when this last play was moved to the Shaftesbury.

In 1908, he played Balthazar in "Romeo and Juliet" at the Lyceum, and later in the year he joined Mr. Frohman's management at the Duke of York's. Here he was first associated with Mr. Granville Barker. In 1909, he played in "What Every Woman Knows" and "Strife," and stage managed the special matinees of "Press Cuttings" at the Court.

With all this hard work he never for a moment forgot his ambition to write plays. That was to be his real work. He always carried in his pocket a little notebook in which he would write down lines and situations as they occurred to him. He continued his voyages of discovery, often in the middle of the night and after a long day's work at the theatre.

In 1910 he was engaged for the Repertory Season at the Duke of York's, playing many parts, among them Callow in "Prunella." Early

this year his first one-act play, "Augustus in Search of a Father," was produced at the Court by the Play Actors, the author himself appearing as Augustus. In March, his "Marriage of Columbine" was played by the same society. His mother has a charming recollection of this important evening.

"He was such an excited boy that night. He sat back in his box, concealed from the audience watching eagerly and anxiously, and when the genuine enthusiasm at the close of the performance told him that his play was a success he put his head on my shoulder and whispered: 'Do they like it. Do you really think they like it?'"

On June 4th, 1910, he married Calypso Valetta. He and his wife had met as members of the same company. The Frohman Repertory Season lasted until the end of July and then he and his wife went to Bernaval for their first real honeymoon. He came back to the Duke of York's to play in "A Bolt from the Blue," which had only a short run, and then, after a month or so of touring in a sketch, he joined the Glasgow Repertory Theatre as one of the producers. His wife went to Glasgow with him and played with the company. During 1911, his one-act plays "Muddle Annie" and "The Autocrat of the Coffee Stall" were produced in Glasgow, and

"Augustus in Search of a Father" and "The Marriage of Columbine" were revived. He came back to London in the summer of 1911, stage managed "The Girl Who Couldn't Lie" at the Criterion and acted in a special performance of Strindberg's "The Father." In September he went back to Glasgow for a second season during which "The Dumb and the Blind" (first called "God and Mrs. Henderson") was produced. In December, 1911, his son was born, and when the child was less than a month old, Harold Chapin and his wife came back to town. Before leaving Glasgow he wrote to Mr. Granville Barker asking if he could give him an engagement. Mr. Barker replied that he was then producing a musical comedy and inquired if Chapin could sing. He promptly wired back "Yes, trained baritone voice." He did not, however, appear in the musical comedy, Mr. Barker engaging him as stage manager at the Kingsway, where "Fanny's First Play" was then being performed.

The constant strain of work led at this time to a rather serious breakdown, but he recovered in time to attend the rehearsals of his brilliant comedy, "Art and Opportunity," which was produced in the autumn of 1912 at the Prince of Wales's Theatre by Miss Marie Tempest. This production made him known to a wider

public and he was recognized by all the most considerable critics as one of the two most promising of the younger men writing for the British theatre. While "Art and Opportunity" was running at the Prince of Wales's, he became stage director of the Savoy during Mr. Barker's series of Shakespearian revivals, an engagement which was to him an unqualified delight. About the same time his four-act play "Elaine," written while he was in Glasgow, was produced by Miss Horniman at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, and at Christmas his "Wonderful Grandmamma; or, The Wand of Youth" was played at the same theatre.

In 1913 and the first half of 1914 his "Dumb and the Blind" was acted for several months at the Prince of Wales's first as part of a triple bill and then as a front piece, "It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor" and "Every Man for His Own" were produced, and "Dropping the Baby" was played as a first piece at the Playhouse.

Early in 1913, he acted at the Vaudeville in Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's "Robina in Search of a Husband," and he understudied during Messrs. Mackinnel and Whelen's season at this theatre. He played David Quixano in Mr. Israel Zangwill's "The Melting Pot" when it was produced by the Play Actors. When the play was afterwards

taken to the Comedy he was the stage manager and he played the leading part towards the conclusion of the run. He afterwards produced and played in Mr. Zangwill's "Plaster Saints." By this time his great ability as a producer was widely recognized and he received may offers for this kind of work.

War was declared on August the 4th 1914, and at once all Harold Chapin's interests and thoughts were changed. He could only think of the war and of England's share in it. He could not act. "It seemed so silly," he said. He could not write. He could only watch for war news and attend classes in first aid. Finally, on September 2nd, he enlisted in the R.A.M.C. From the moment he joined, as is evident from his early letters, he threw all his enthusiasm, his strength, and his power of concentration into the new task. The artist and the dreamer became the enthusiastic soldier, enduring the unaccustomed hardships with a cheery good nature which made him immensely popular with his comrades. One of his mother's old friends wrote her a letter in which she said how noble it was of her son "to fight for king and country." Harold laughed when he was shown the letter. "I'm fighting for no king," he said, "and the best of this king is that he knows we are not fighting for him."

Harold Chapin's character is vividly revealed in his letters—his acute power of observation, his humour, his courage, his wide democratic sympathies, and his intense affection. He died at the beginning of his life and when the man in him was still in the making.

He was my friend, and when one's friend dies a hero's death the fact fills one with pride and humility. Until the last two years, it was not what we expected of our friends. They were kind and considerate and understanding, but we never suspected them of heroism. We had, indeed, lost faith in ourselves. We had ceased to believe that man was made in the image of God. Now we know better.

Chapin's best and most characteristic work is, unquestionably, to be found in his one-act plays, in most of which he is concerned with the life of the very poor. He never gushes or sentimentalizes. He always writes with critical sympathy. His touch is sure, and his line is clear. A good short play is as rare as a good short story, and nothing better of their kind has been given to the English stage, in our time, than his "The Dumb and the Blind" and his "It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor." It is certain that, if he had lived, his work must have grown in range and power, and his death is a grievous loss for a theatre largely

left to vulgar futilities. The men of acknowledged genius who do write for the theatre are inhuman. Their eyes are blinded by their lentil diet. Harold Chapin was at least a man.

He was fastidious, self-reliant, sure of himself, and eager, above all things, to do the best work of which he was capable. He cared less than nothing for the extra loaves and fishes that come with success, and, as he told me in the last gossip we ever had, his most miserable days were during the run of "Art and Opportunity," when substantial royalties were coming to him every week. He was a splendid friend, because of his gift of understanding. He was ascetic in all his tastes. He was indeed a Puritan, with infinite toleration and with the soul of the artist.

Harold Chapin was killed on Sunday, September 26th, at the battle of Loos. He was only twenty-nine on that Sunday afternoon, but he had lived worthily and he died gloriously.

HOW HAROLD CHAPIN DIED.

The following letter from Mr. Richard Capell, one of Harold Chapin's comrades, was the first intimation Mrs. Chapin received of her husband's death. It was, of course, written hurriedly and under trying conditions, but it gives so touching and dramatic an account of Harold Chapin's last days, that it is felt that it must be included in this book exactly as it was received.

October 3rd, 1915.

MY DEAR MRS. CHAPIN,

I beg you to accept my heartfelt condolences. I would not so much as hint at the word consolation to you after this unutterably cruel blow,—even to us, his chance friends of less than a year, it seems too cruel to be realisable,—were it not that I can give you some account, at first hand, of the splendid work of your husband on those days, September 25th and 26th. It must surely be, eventually, a consolation to you to think that he died no mean, casual death, but that he was shot down (on the afternoon of Sunday a week ago) when actually on an errand of help, and after giving himself up for hour after hour to heavy and perilous toil for the wounded.

I have been at some pains to get for you some details of that fatal afternoon, but I cannot—the reason will be obvious—now tell you quite all there is. The essential is that on Sunday morning an appeal came to our station for stretcher-bearers to assist a battalion, seven of whose bearers were out of action. Your husband and two other men set out for the trenches in question, which were to the south-west of Loos. The journey, itself, had its perils. Over the distance of two miles or thereabouts, the Germans, who were rallying after their defeat of the day before, could enfilade our ground. One day I will explain the position with precision. The three of them eventually reached the series of trenches at a moment when the Germans were counter-attacking, and were told by an officer that stretcher-work was impossible at such a moment. It was suicide to show one's head above the parapet. This was, of course, one of the old German trenches, and the enemy fire came both from front and right flank. Chapin consequently told the two others to wait for him while he reported to the medical officer who had appealed in the morning, his intention being to return to collect the wounded after dark, as we did during the week as a matter of routine. The two never saw him again.

Our line that afternoon wavered for a moment, before the counter-attack. There was a short period of confusion, and some of our men were caught in the open by German rifle and machine-gun fire. You may possibly one day get an exact account from an actual eye-witness, but from what I can piece together, your husband went over the parapet to fetch in some wounded man. He was certainly shot in the foot. It appears that he persisted and was then killed outright by a shot through the head.

Our work was so exacting at that moment, that hours passed before Chapin's absence was noticed at our station, and it was not till the following morning that we felt anxious.

I pass over a series of extravagant adventures that befell me as I made my way, then, to your husband's destination of the day before, with the idea of getting first-hand information. I found myself on the scene when the English were making a further attack. It was impossible, in daylight, to go into the open, but I found from a medical officer that a lance-corporal of the R.A.M.C. had, the night before, been seen dead over the parapet. The English attack, that afternoon, improved the position. The next morning, we had a run out there your husband had been buried in the night near

where he fell. I went down on Wednesday to the trenches, saw the officer who had been in charge of the burial party, and eventually got the papers, watch, etc., which were found on his body. These you will have received by now, I suppose. There can be no harm in telling you that he lies with six other London Territorials, within a few hundred yards of Loos cemetery.

If I have the pleasure of seeing you again, when this ghastly business is over, I will tell you something of Chapin's fine work on the Saturday, collecting wounded on the wire before the first captured German trench. For many hours I was out there with him ;—heart-breaking conditions, twenty appeals for help where one could only heed one ; rain for hour after hour, and no little annoyance from cross-fire. On one journey, three of us (your husband was one) came in for a tempest of fire. Two of us lay low with the laden stretcher on the grass, while your husband volunteered to go ahead into the village, using a communication trench to bring back the "wheels," by which we get stretchers along at a good pace over roads. Eventually the tempest ended, and the whole day ended without casualties for us. We went to bed at midnight for two hours. Before

daybreak I joined a party that was going to Loos, and so began the fatal Sunday.

If, dear Mrs. Chapin, you succeed in getting more detailed information of your husband's death it will be from some one or another in the 17th Battalion London Regiment.

I feel that I am intruding on your grief. Excuse me, and believe me, with profound sympathy,

Yours very sincerely,

RICHARD CAPELL.

HAROLD CHAPIN, DRAMATIST

By William Archer

The following appreciation written after the Chapin Memorial Performance was published in the "New York Nation" of January 20th, 1916. It is reproduced here by the gracious permission of the Editor and of Mr. Archer.

"The name of Harold Chapin is one of which America may well be proud; for, though English bred, he was born in America, of American parents. The occasion to which I refer was a presentation of four of his one-act plays, given in honour of his memory. For he is dead: he fell in battle before Loos; and with the single exception of Rupert Brooke, no English-speaking man of more unquestionable genius has been lost to the world in this world-frenzy. Chapin was more fortunate than Brooke, for he died in active and devoted service.

Can you wonder at the emotion with which I, who had watched Chapin and believed in him

from the outset of his career, saw the four little plays which remain perhaps the best witness to the promise so sadly unfulfilled ?

The outset of his career as a dramatist, I ought to have said. His career as an actor began when he was a child ; for he came of a theatrical stock. As an actor, however, he made no great mark. Like Granville Barker, he was much more interested in producing plays—and in writing them. A queer semi-fantastic comedy, "The Marriage of Columbine," brought him into notice some five years ago. A good play it was not, yet it was full of unmistakable talent and originality. Several of its lines were of that subtle quality which takes an appreciable time to get home to the apprehension of the audience, so that one can actually watch their effect kindling from row to row, as it were, through the house. But it was not like the play in "Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie" in which "il-y-avait un beau vers." It had vitality throughout, and was never commonplace, either in its merits or its defects. A year or two later Chapin got his one chance of a regular production at a West End theatre. "Art and Opportunity," a three-act play written for Miss Marie Tempest, did not show him at his best. It was brimful of cleverness ; but in adapting the heroine's character to Miss Tempest's vivacious,

showy talent, Chapin sacrificed some of his sincerity. He created for her a new type of adventuress who, from a sort of sporting instinct, makes a system of playing with her cards upon the table. Her half-real, half-affected candour is so successful that a hostile critic says of her: "Why, Henry, she's as transparent as a jellyfish;" to which Henry replies: "Do you know why a jelly-fish is transparent? So as not to be seen too clearly." Not only wit, but real insight, went to the making of these lines.

His one-act plays, however, show his talent at its best, and were rightly chosen for the memorial performance. The first, entitled "It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor," is a low-life sketch of extraordinary poignancy. Ted Herberts has been sent to prison for assaulting the police. During his absence his child has died, and the curtain rises upon the funeral party of neighbours, returned from the cemetery. In clumsy and grotesque ways, they show their sympathy with the bereaved mother; but it is evident that in reality the funeral is an occasion of pleasurable excitement to them. Then the husband, released from prison before his time, bursts in upon the party. He has read the report of the inquest and has seen that the child practically died of starvation. To the consternation of the mourners,

who are revelling in the consciousness of their own goodness of heart, he turns upon them and asks what the sympathy is worth which can "wake" a dead child, but cannot make the trifling sacrifices that would have kept it alive. They allege various excuses; it is evident that they have been thoughtless rather than actually callous; and at last the father's bitterness of spirit is swamped in a burst of natural human grief. Though there is something of the French *comédie rosse* in the play, its humour is not in the least cruel. It leaves no bad taste behind it, but simply a poignant sense of the hard conditions of life for those on the margin of subsistence, and of the prevailing shiftlessness of the very poor.

Simpler and more delicate is the second little play, "The Dumb and the Blind." The avocations of Joe Henderson, bargeman, have been such as to permit of his spending only two nights a week in his domestic circle. But now he returns, accompanied by his pal, Bill, to announce to his wife, Liz, that he has been promoted to a post that will give him an additional ten shillings a week and enable him to come home every night. In an opening scene between Liz and her sharp daughter, Emmy, we have gained the impression that Mr. Henderson's household is more agreeable without his bodily presence; and this

impression is confirmed when we find him treating his wife, not with actual brutality, but with captious and blustering harshness. At last he sends her out for the indispensable jug of beer, and sits gossiping with his crony. Impatient of her delay, he goes to the door and looks out, when it is evident that he sees something—we know not what—that somehow impresses him. He calls "Liz!" and she comes in rather guiltily, with the jug still empty. He asks Bill to fetch the beer, and meanwhile questions his wife. "Wot was you a-doin' of?" "Puttin' on me 'at." "No, you wasn't. . . . I see you kneelin' wiv your head on the bed." With great reluctance she confesses that she was saying her prayers. "You don't 'ave to say yer prayers before fetching a drop of beer, do you?" No; but it just came over her, like, that she wanted to. Why? Because she felt grateful like—she wanted to sort o' thank Gawd. The domestic tyrant can scarcely believe his ears. He questions her closely to make sure that this is not merely a mechanical habit of hers, and gradually yields to the strange conviction that she is positively glad to have him at home for good. The realization induces in him a mood of such solemnity that when Bill returns with the beer Joe declines his share of it—a phenomenon which leaves Bill,

in his turn dumfounded. This rough summary does great injustice to a veritable masterpiece in its way—a thing Dickens would have delighted in. There is not a single false note in the little play: it is as restrained as it is touching. We feel that the dumb has spoken and the blind has seen; and we hope, without too much confidence, that a new era is dawning on the Henderson household.

The third play, "The Philosopher of Butterbiggens," was acted for the first time on any stage. It is in the Barrie vein, and yet is no mere echo of Barrie. Its delightful humour would lose too much in narration, so I shall not attempt it, but will only say that it is as good in its lighter way as "The Dumb and the Blind," and that the audience was charmed with it. A more commonplace comedietta, "Innocent and Annabel," brought the programme to a close. It was very amusing, but not markedly individual.

The general impression left by the performance was deep and memorable. It was no mere respectful solemnity: the audience vividly enjoyed every word of it. Something was due to the excellent acting; for many of our best artists had come forward to do honour to their lost comrade. But what one realizes most keenly in retrospect is the abounding vitality of Chapin's

talent. There was not a moment when one did not feel one's self in touch with a living spirit, bounteously endowed with thought, observation, humour, craftsmanship. It filled one with a sort of dumb rage to think that such rare promise had been extinguished, on the threshold of fulfilment, by the brute hazard of the battlefield. It was a youth in his twenties who had done all this fine work—what might we not have expected from the ripened man? In Professor Gildersleeve's recently reprinted "Creed of the Old South" I find a line of Schiller exactly apt to the occasion:

> Ja, der Krieg verschlingt die Besten;

though one would be sorry to continue the quotation, and say:

> Denn Patroklus liegt begraben,
> Und Thersites kommt zurück.

This would be a gross injustice to thousands of men who are none the less brave for being fortunate. But, at any rate, Schiller gives no countenance to the notion that war subserves the survival of the fittest. If one could believe that the champions of that criminal fallacy would be exterminated, there would be some consolation even for a loss like that of Harold Chapin. But most of them, alas! keep snugly aloof from the firing-line.

WAR LETTERS OF A DRAMATIST

Cherry & Co., St. Albans

LANCE-CORPORAL CHAPIN, R.A.M.C.

LETTERS FROM THE TRAINING CAMP

To his Wife.

St. Albans, Nov. 12th.

The parcel arrived quite safe, dearest girl. It is really impossible to write a letter—we are hard at it all day and sleeping eight in a room, not a bit of furniture. I have to be up at 5 to-morrow morning to light fire in Field Kitchen—out doors—hope it isn't raining.

Dubbin excellent, ditto puttees. Thanks for tobacco, don't let any more be sent till I ask for it this will last a bit.

Thank Heaven for the dressing gown. I have been sleeping in everything I've got and shivering and to-day my great coat is wet so I cannot sleep in it, but the dressing gown will be more than a substitute.

Day's Hat Factory,
Lattimore Road,
St. Albans.
Nov. 16th, 1914.

It is frantically difficult to write. I have scarcely time to eat and none to keep clean.

The cookhouse work is terribly heavy 4 men under a Sergeant (who also looks after the Officers and cannot give us much of his time) have to cook for 240 and that under every difficulty you can imagine.

We have only eleven "dixies" (large iron kettles) every one of which is necessary for each meal and no soda or other means of cleansing them is issued to us. Our full equipment besides the dixies is a set of butcher's tools, a couple of ovens (requiring independent fires over which ordinary kettles can be boiled), a pick-axe, a kettle and an iron girder, found here and invaluable.

Our fuel consists of loppings and logs brought in daily—one cart load per day—which we have to saw into lengths with a borrowed hand-saw and chop up with the butcher's chopper. Of course our meat is supplied in half oxen and whole sheep and sides of bacon which we have to reduce to joints and stewing pieces.

Our expert cook (under the Sergeant) is an eccentric lean individual, very foul-mouthed and good natured. He looks very seedy but is in fact as strong as a horse. He seems to live on one meal a day consisting chiefly of biscuits and pastry from the Y.M.C.A., partaken of at about 11.30 when the dinners are all on. For the rest

of the day, he supports life on tea strong enough to blow up a battleship and sweet enough to satisfy a performing bear.

Must stop. More to-morrow love

Day's Hat Factory,
St. Albans.
Nov. 19th, 1914.

"I'm beginning to find out when my easy seconds come along, so shall try to write a coherent letter to-day and to-morrow and post it to-morrow night. At first it looked as if from 5 a.m. till 10.15 p.m. not a moment could be spared from cleaning for duty, duty, eating, and sleeping but as one steadies down odd moments can be found. For instance while the dixies boil in the afternoon,

The toughest part of this job is the getting up, morning after morning, at five o'clock and racing off to the cook's yard and cursing damp wood into a fire frequently under a steady before-daybreak drizzle. We certainly see some wonderful sunrise effects we cooks, and the effect of a set of chimes here that plays something quaint (I can't quite make out what) every morning at six is very beautiful, but it's weary work, and the fear that the trench may refuse to light or cave in, thereby depriving two hundred hungry men of their breakfasts on their return

from their morning constitutional (a two mile march before breakfast), is haunting.

I am writing with people talking all round me so—on a broken box—my seat being the hub of a wheel—rest of wheel and cart smashed up somewhere.

Willson stood a dozen of us a dinner yesterday evening: first meal with a tablecloth since I came down here.

I look like being permanently attached to the cookhouse and I shan't mind if I am, the work is feverishly hard for nearly eight hours a day and fairly hard for another five, but it is interesting and unquestionably useful and the cook and his mates are exempt from "Guard" and several other minor worries.

We have to do all our cooking in the factory yard used by the transport men for their carts and waggons. There are two lean-to shelters in it—just roofs with supports under which we try to work if it rains extra hard, but they are a poor shelter and the trench fire is of course in the open.

This is absolutely Active Service here. "War Station" on the orders, and save that we aren't under fire, or likely to be, in every respect similar to Active work at the Front.

Send me no more tobacco unless I ask for it.

Some of these boys have had half hundred weights sent them and can't get through them.

Days' Hat Factory,
St. Albans.
Nov. 23rd.

Dearest,

We are still here—about 500 of us out of 18,000, as far as I can gather, only 12 R.A.M.C. 6th F.A. out of 800 any way. Whether we are to follow the others later or whether they will all be marching back in a few hours remains to be seen. I fancy the latter. Any way we are preparing a late meal for them (our own Field Ambulance not the whole division of course).

I am freezing (writing out of doors of course) will move over to the stove—(moved)—but it's very smoky now I'm here. It's windy to-day and the smoke is deadly.

It was a great hour this morning getting breakfast with the waggons being loaded all over the yard. They've never chosen quite that hour before. I had to push a horse out of the way every time I wanted a rasher of bacon to fry.

It was drizzling and very dark too, but it has since turned out a very fair sort of day. On the whole we really can't complain of the weather for second half of November. I wish Xmas was past, though, and the days were lengthening.

People have laughed at the number of references to the weather in "Eye Witness's" account of progress at the Front but the weather is a very important matter to us I can tell you and we watch every change in it with the greatest concern.

Pause from 4 p.m. Sunday till Noon Monday.

The troops came back suddenly and we were plunged in the throes of dishing out stew and soup and spuds and this letter got mislaid in the process. Nobody knows what the game was yesterday. The 6th Field only got about 5 miles at the tail of the whole division then waited a couple of hours and returned. They had been in full travelling rig with blankets, waterproof sheeting, 2 days' rations etc. but here we all are again though the "ready to leave at an hour's notice" has not been rescinded.

Oh lummy it is cold. The warm half of the yard is full of thick smoke. You saw it at it's quietest on a Saturday afternoon after dinner. I wish you could see it on an average morning before 3 p.m.

Heaps of love to you both and everybody. Explain to my boy that I must be away from him for a while. Willson and I went to the Abbey last night and there was a dear little choir boy

just like Vally with such a sweet childish little voice. I nearly howled.

God bless you sweetheart—keep smiling. Love.

St. Albans, Nov. 29th, 1914.

We are getting if possible busier and busier. A Brigade Order arriving last night fairly late involved getting breakfast for all troops at 7.30 instead of 7.45 and 8 (two batches) which meant up before 5 and out in the rain (it was pouring) by 5.30 all the wood sopping: the fire trench half full of water and the carts and waggons being loaded and got out all over the shop.

We are being sorted into jobs. I fancy I shall stay on cooking. This is good because it is as useful a job as is going and one that demands conscientious hard work still it does not involve going into the actual firing line—a thing I have no ambition to do. Stray shell fire and epidemics are all I want to face thank you, let those who like the firing line have all the bullets they want.

Talking of epidemics we are suffering from an epidemic of minor misfortunes. Willson the healthy has got a sort of boil on his leg which I dress for him nightly. Lion and Fisher have got bad feet—very bad feet. Roff (you don't know him but he is of the decumvirate) started flu

but thought better of it—Galton the Scot has started acute pains in his inside—on the site of an old operation. Many others have bad feet or festering fingers and I have got an inflamed eye —a sort of pimple under the lid which exudes matter occasionally—also I have sliced my thumb beside the nail. Eye and thumb both mending though. Willson dresses the latter nightly: curious how people pal up under these conditions I don't believe he and I have been fifty yards apart since we came down here except on last Saturday when you came down.

The Bag is a thing of such beauty that it was very wise of you to mark it for me. So much "lifting" goes on.

I think I'll try to phone you to-night—it's so long since I got a word with you and my blessing.

Two days later. Sunday.

I resume. I was so glad to catch you on the 'phone night before last. I had had an awful fatiguing, and depressing day and was reduced to an acute state of blues which your voice effectively dispelled. Yesterday again was a soaker. We were hard at it all day cooking not only for ourselves (214) but a batch of A.S.C. and St. John's Ambulance men who are quartered

upon us. I was wet to the skin by 8 a.m. and remained so till after tea was served and the "dixies" returned at about six o'clock. I don't feel much the worse for it to-day though.

Love—they are waiting for me to strain 84 pints of tea.

To his little Son.

Same date.

Vally darling do send your Doody a letter. I haven't a moment or I would write you long ones. I get up in the morning in a hurry and start cooking and by the time I have finished it is bedtime again.

You are to come and see me again next Sunday unless I come down to see you in the nice new house.

I hope you are well and good and all that sort of thing and I do hope my sweetheart you think a lot about your old Doody who loves you most awfully even if he has to go away from you when he doesn't want to.

Be very good to Dear Mummy and tell her I love her, and give her a big hug for me and please please write to me and send me a big lock of your hair—not a short one but one right off near your head, see?

Your DOODY.

To his Wife.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 6th, 1914.

I am most awfully sorry. It's a shame you should be worried. I should have answered your poor dear letter sooner. I tried to but I didn't know what to say. We have had two pouring wet days and I have been wet to the skin day and night—but still quite healthy—and awfully worried about you. As a matter of fact I suppose I should never have joined but stayed at home and worked but it's too late now, I've done it—I ought to have thought more of what it would mean to you to be left as I have left you.

God bless you my dear one.

To his Wife.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 6th, 1914.

DEAREST,

Please thank Lal very much for the paper. It is more a present to the corps than to me: we are the most perfect Communists imaginable—we call it "borrowing" of course—in all minor matters such as paper, matches, etc. Two-thirds of it has gone already and that won't last long—don't bother to send me any more, though. We can get all we want of the Y.M.C.A. paper

at any time and though of course *I* like using good paper I don't see the idea of supplying the whole army.

I very much regret to say that we shall probably not get away this side of Christmas. It's rotten because Xmas at the front would be an endurable necessity but Xmas here only a few miles from Home would be deadly. Unless things change very much we should not be able to get leave either, that is not more than 10 per cent. of us as we are supposed to be in a state of "hours' notice" preparedness to depart for anywhere. As I told you over the 'phone French's despatch supplies the explanation of our activities for the past month. He appears to have not *feared*, but at any rate realized the possibility that the Germans might break across the Yser in which case the 2nd London T. Division and all other available reinforcements would have been bustled across to defend Calais, or Calais being taken we should have been hustled to the South and East coasts to defend England. The fact that *no extra* reinforcements were sent across shows how certainly the enemy was thrown back and how surely we are going to beat him in our own time. The favourite principle of Joffre never to use his reserves until driven to do so by an undeniable emergency is a very wise one.

We are having filthy weather, raining and very windy. I am writing in the shelter of a derelict Am. cart wearing the jersey you sent me, a new cardigan just issued by the Authorities, and Mater's Cardigan.

St. Albans, Dec. 8th, 1914.

My Sweetheart,

Thanks most awfully for your very sweet letter. I never thought you were reproaching me for joining—what I was not so sure of was whether I ought to reproach myself.

You talk of Fate not helping—I wish you could see some of the poor devils down here, we are really among the lucky ones.

I have just had a new pair of boots issued to me by an affectionate Quartermaster because my old ones burst. New ones are I hope going to last better. You remember what mighty looking things the old ones were—they are splitting all across the sole and the seams are gaping. I have also had a share of a gift of woollen goods—two pairs sox, two cholera belts, and a stocking cap also they have issued me a new cardigan so they are doing their best for us.

When I think of Germans landing in England I wish I were not in a non-combatant corps—my taste runs in the direction of Maxim Guns

then—but then only. The rest of the time I am quite content to "let others shoot."

For one month now I have been up every morning *before* 5.30 and out of the house before 6. I have seen the Sun rise over the red roofs——

Must finish.

Don't send me any damned press notices I don't want 'em. Love to Joan and a hug to my precious—so glad he is having Cod Liver Ile Emulsion.

St. Albans, Dec. 10th, 1914.

Hope to get a pass. If I do shall be home about 3.30 or 4. May be disappointed at the absolute last moment—the passes are not issued till 2 p.m. Saturday and until then there is the possibility of their being rescinded. So be prepared for disappointment.

Don't I beg of you have beef, mutton, or bacon for any meal and if we are going to Talbot Road communicate this edict to your Mother.

So glad you like the picture—so do I.

God bless you all and love to ye.

St. Albans, Dec. 16th, 1914.

Dearest,

Thanks very much for the rock cakes, they were a great success.

Thanks also for the washed things.

All's well with me—one day very like another you know except for deviations from the ideal in weather. We have had two beautiful days yesterday and to-day, the Sun rising through clouds and pouring rain but getting the better of them about eight or nine o'clock.

I have made friends with Day's engineer who now allows me to keep my spare clothes (overcoat woollens and overalls) in his engine room over night. I thus come down at 5.30 or 5.45 get pretty wet by breakfast, retire to the Engine Room after Breakfast and emerge in dry overcoat jersey and overalls leaving my home-going overcoat and jersey to be dried by evening. The effect on my rheumatism—which had become rather bad, is most beneficial.

Love to my boy and his Mummy.

To his Son.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 21st, 1914.

MY DARLING,

This is your birthday! The day I'm writing on I mean, of course you won't get the letter till to-morrow so what you will have to say is "yesterday *was* my Birthday and Doody wrote on the evening of my Birthday."

I'm not sending you any present for your Birthday because I can't afford to send two presents in one week. I am sending you a present for Xmas instead.

I am coming home to see you again soon and we'll have an awfully good time together. We might go to the Zoo together if I can get Sunday tickets.

Good night my little boy—I'm very tired and I've got to shave and have a good wash before I go to bed on the floor next to your friend Ex Corkoral Willson on one side of me and with Galton and Fisher (you have met Fisher but not Galton—he is a Scotchman and likes whiskey hot before going to sleep)—with Galton and Fisher kicking me on the other side.

God bless you my dearest little man. Please *please* be very good to dear Mummy and your newest Nanny and please *please* don't ever spit. I should hate to hear that you had been spitting when I come back.

Your DODDY.

To his Mother-in-Law.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 22nd.

Thanks very much for the chairs; they really are a most sensible idea—there are so few things which we can enjoy—something to sit on in the

evening other than the floor or a sugar box is a treat.

I hear that straw mattresses are to be issued to us soon, personally I am quite used to sleeping on the boards and except that I roll out of my blankets occasionally and have to wake up and re-roll myself I sleep quite well now.

Everything points to our remaining here several weeks longer. Our C. Section was brought back from the East Coast last night, less 16 men left behind in Hospital, so we—the Sixth Field Ambulance—are all in one place again. C. Section have left their cook behind in hospital. Willson and I made the tea and warmed them up stew and looked after them for two weary hours after our usual time to get away. Our usual day is a twelve hour one, so we were a little too tired. Last night or rather this morning we slept till five minutes to six instead of our usual five o'clock. Consequence: breakfast late for 250 men—and one soldier kept waiting for his breakfast is bad enough.

Have you ever tasted a "cobbler's goose?" I'll cook you one when I come back.

Love to you.

To his Wife.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 24th, 1914.

Thanks for your two letters of last night and this morning. I do hope you will have a happy Christmas. I am sending my blessed a cheap present but you nothing but my love.

We are all over work—our balance of C. arrived on Tuesday and added their appetites to our burden. Christmas too means unlimited labour for the Cooks.

Sweetheart—if you want to send me the best Christmas imaginable it would be a promise of three long letters a week with news at length. You don't know what an intense pleasure it is to hear all about you and my blossom and all that you do. From Sunday till Wednesday night I had not one letter and I can't tell you how depressed I got—of course I know posts were slow and you must have written quite soon after getting home from seeing me in *your* estimate of things. I'm not so silly as to blame you for not realizing the almost unrealizable pleasure that we under these conditions take in news from home.

God bless and keep you my sweet.

St. Albans, Dec. 26th, 1914.

Dearest,

We have had a terrific Xmas . . . tremendous work and plenty of fun. Went to Midnight Service on Xmas Eve (special leave being granted from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. to those wanting to go, and of course I was after anything going). I know you will forgive me for not writing more often. We have really been up to our necks in work—and an allarum warned us as likely to occur on Boxing Day . . . we were all packed up and ready—and indeed one battalion was entrained and another paraded for entrainment before the "warning" was withdrawn to *us* of the 6th Field Ambulance. Perhaps you won't understand this: it means that the fighting section of the brigade—the battalions—(which of course move off ahead of us) were not only warned but ordered—in other words we were *all* ordered but *our* order was countermanded before taking effect. Hard luck on the Battalions wasn't it? The 21st had to march 12½ miles and back for nothing, having been roused at 4 in the morning to begin with. That is the advantage of belonging to a unit that travels by "train no. 57" as we do, instead of one of the first units to go out.

I'm going to turn in. God bless you and my

baby—do write soon and at length. I know posts are responsible for it but I haven't had a letter since the one containing the photos—for which many thanks—now four days ago and I am longing for one.

Bless you! Bless you!

St. Albans, Dec. 29th, 1914.

You shouldn't have bought me a Kodak dear. You are quite right in thinking I wanted one, but I am really much more anxious that you should have if not enough then at least all that comes in.

It's very nice about "When the Lights are Low"—I only hope something comes of it—or of "Dumb and the Blind" or "Art and Op." or something.

I am not complaining about letters dear one—I am only reminding you how much I value yours.

We (some eight of us) have been turned out of our Billet and put into a garret about half a mile further from the Headquarters. We (Willson and I) were fetched to move our things at 3.30 to-day and in less than 20 minutes had everything packed and in a cart bound for the new Billet. Twenty more minutes and we were on our way back to the Kitchen Yard to make the tea down. We have a great evening ahead of us separating

our kits which naturally were crowded into each other's bags most promiscuous-like. The removal of Lion's million quilts was a great joy to all concerned and Willet's leaps to and fro as he rescued his beloved belt from muddy boots and other bad company were almost painful in their frequency.

We had a heavy snow storm in the night and found the trench full of snow this morning. Breakfast was late, but not very. Love.

To his Mother-in-Law.

ST. ALBANS, Dec. 30th.

Thanks very much for the Blankets—the result of their distribution around the room last night was that we overslept ourselves and Wilson and I woke at 5.45 instead of 5 as usual. Breakfast was in consequence late and the Orderly Officer for the day—an infant of about 19 fresh from the O.T.C.—whose duty it is to see that everything in the nature of meals is as it should be—tried to make himself objectionable and was easily suppressed by his underlings—most of whom are old enough and wise enough to be his Father.

I am putting in for leave either this week end or next but with the best intention in the world they can't grant us passes freely as long as we constitute, as we do now, the first line of defence.

When I say "we" I mean the Third Army of which the Second London Division (Territorial) is a part. The 2nd London Division consists of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Brigades. *We* the 6th Field Ambulance are attached to the 6th Brigade.

We have been shifted from the room you saw to the attics of an empty house some ten minutes further from Head Quarters. It is a gloomy hole—lit by one oil lamp, very damp and draughty. The wall by my head is wet to the touch, and the ceiling below our floor shows large damp spots. The fireplace is a little old-fashioned abomination which smokes when it is fine and spits steam when it rains. Of course we have waterproof sheets to sleep on and Linden's blankets being added to our store we now have 3 apiece instead of the 2 issued by the Quartermaster. I am remarkably well and gaining in weight daily, only complaint an inclination to rheumaticy pains in my feet and shins, and stiff knees when I start out in the morning.

God bless you all.

P.S. You don't pray for the War to cease alone. There are heaps of married men here—or engaged ones who, like me, would greet the declaration of Peace to-morrow morning as—well words don't express it. But we're *not* anxious for anything but a definite Peace with us on top.

St. Albans, Jan. 1st, 1915.

We leave here next Thursday for Hatfield under present arrangements. I am not sorry as any change from present Cook-house must be an improvement unless they expect us to cook at the bottom of the sea or on the edge of a glacier. All our C. Section (my section) are back from Braintree now and very nice fellows most of them are and extremely friendly and well disposed.

I have put in for a week end pass as soon as possible. I am not entitled to one till Sunday after next but there's no harm in asking in good time. If I do by some fluke get one this week end I shall arrive same time as before but *don't* expect me. I shall have no means of letting you know. Passes are issued at the stroke of 2 and date from 2. Until issued it is no use counting upon them.

Weather abominable. Sleet and snow changing at Sunrise to rain. Xmas day and yesterday were fine the greater part of the day. All other days filthy.

Love to all, my little boy *and* his Mummy.

St. Albans, Jan. 4th, 1915.

I am in the Wars. Willson is in Hospital with a sore throat and a temperature and our A.S.C.

fifth hand in the Cookhouse has been demanded for various parades these last two days, consequently my usual heavy share of work in the Cook's shop has increased by 2 fifths—indeed by far more as those left with me are not such good workers as Willson and Pongo 3. (We call all the A.S.C. assistants in the cook's yard Pongo and give them numbers to distinguish between them. The reason is this. Any new helper in the cookhouse used to be automatically addressed by Jack as " Georgie " until such a time as his name revealed itself but the first A.S.C. helper happened to be really named George—or Georgie—so Willson and I decided to call " Pongo " all future A.S.C. men George being too likely to come out right. I hope you understand? You play Patience.

I have just come back from taking Willson up his holdall etc. He looks very nice in a little white bed, attired in a spotless white nighty over which he wears a red flannel bed jacket—as do all the other patients. The Hospital is awfully jolly and comfy. He is in an eight bed ward with chrysanthemums and lilies in vases all over the place against a plain green backing. It is a large private house converted for the occasion I believe.

Love to my *blesseds* (plural).

St. Albans, Jan. 8th, 1915.

Sweetheart, Willson is back in the Cookhouse. He has had a perfectly gorgeous three days in Hospital and I am most envious.

The C. Section Commander Major Bird is a great sport and we are taking to him very kindly. He is an old Naval Surgeon which is some recommendation isn't it? ——, though still a pest (I use the word carefully—he is a pest, like an extra Summer-full of wasps) is an efficient hustler and things have moved some since his return.

We have not departed for Hatfield. Something is afoot—I dunno what: possibly a sudden departure for Egypt or France or Germany or possibly an invasion of our own shores—or a review by the general officers commanding the Division.

Love to you all. Please send the camera by post.

St. Albans, Jan. 11th, 1915.

Dearest,

Sorry I never posted you a word yesterday. I had a most appalling hump and on re-reading my letter I found it breathed such an air of dejection that I tore it up. I had had a rotten day—not tiring, just depressing. Two of the Cookhouse staff away on passes reduced us to four, one of those off for the afternoon and another (Corporal Shaw, ex-messenger-clerk to Jesse

Smith's) called off at 20 minutes notice to a fresh job (water duty) nine miles away left us after the dixies were cleaned a very small band of fire-watchers in the rain. Only Willson and myself. Willson went below (to the Y.M.C.A.) to write letters just leaving me in the falling rain and the fading light from 3.30 to 4.30 alone. I chopped a little wood, made myself a cup of cocoa in a dirty mug, made the fires up again, chopped some more wood, made the fires up again and all the time the rain drizzled and rattled on the roof of the little damp shelter and the light grew less and less and I waxed humpier and umpier till when Willson relieved me and I went below to write *my* letters I felt awful.

Things go on much as usual. We are to come out of the Cookhouse for a little exercise in a few days. We can do with some good marches—and we shan't know ourselves getting up at six instead of five and finishing work at three or four o'clock every day. Of course we shall return to the kitchen but the principle of an occasional week of ordinary duties is a good one.

I can't make head or tail of my pay, last week it was 3/- the week before that 4/- the five weeks before that 10/6 each week and the week before those 2/6. You will let me know at once if your sep allowance isn't right won't you?

I wrote my son a snorter as you requested me. It really wasn't easy I do love him so and I could just see him looking pleased at getting a letter from Doody and then disappointed at its contents. Kiss him for me.

Love.

To his Son.

ST. ALBANS, Jan. 11th, 1915.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Mummy writes to me that you have been throwing the fire irons at her and spitting again. I am so sorry to hear this, because it's not the sort of thing a nice little boy would do if he stopped to think and remembered that his Doody was away from home and *he*—the nice little boy—was the only man in the house.

Of course I know that you *are* a very nice little boy so I suppose you forgot just that once, but please do remember in future that spitting and throwing things is *wrong* and if you do it often you will not be a nice little boy any more. Please write to me and promise to *try* not to do it again and if you do it again in spite of trying not to please write and tell me yourself so that I can know whether my little boy at home is really a nice little boy still, or whether he is slowly getting nasty and spitty and bad tempered.

Here's a picture for you of me and some of my friends here. Please give my love to Emma and Firstie and write me a nice letter soon.

Your loving
DOODY.

To his Wife.

ST. ALBANS, Jan. 12th, 1915.

Sweetheart, the camera arrived quite uninjured. Thanks. The sleeves are a success beyond my wildest dreams—how very well you have finished them. I have tightened the hand end of each by tying a knot in the elastic and they now fit perfectly, one end tight about the wrist, the other over the tunic entirely protecting my coat sleeves shirt sleeves and cardigan sleeves from damp and grease.

I love your description of Vallie reading in bed. Your last two or three letters have been most cheering—not at all depressing as you feared. The depressing earlier ones of course had to be written, too. I don't want you to only write when you are cheerful. Be a philosopher and make up your mind to stick it and keep smiling. It pays really.

I think the chief reason for my hump is not hard to find. This Corps has been here five months now waiting and waiting and grumbling more and

more the longer it had to wait till now it is in a very serious state of general hump—and to be among a lot of people who are half of them nursing grievances is rather depressing when one has quite enough to be humpy about without listening to others' imaginary grievances. I am convinced that the moment we move off we shall be right as can be but at present the collective view seems to be that Kitchener is a fraud, that our C.O. (Commanding Officer) is an incompetent weakling in the hands of our S.M.—a malignant villain of the worst type bent on arresting everybody, our officers utterly worthless as soldiers and positively dangerous as doctors, our N.C.O.'s given over to favouritism, open to bribery, tyrannical etc. and our unfortunate Quartermaster and all that with him bide, are making huge fortunes by depriving the men of their fair allowance of mustard.

My own view is that the C.O. is a courteous, rather faddy, gentleman suffering from the same inaction that oppresses the men; the S.M. an over-worked but intensely human man with the bump of authority a little over-developed by Military life, the Officers good doctors but as soldiers various, the N.C.O.'s remarkably fine—especially the sergeants. There is one earnest exception but he is ludicrous rather than disagreeable so long as you keep your eye on him

and give him no chances. He is magnified by the dissatisfied into an ogre whom several dozen are going to injure seriously as soon as we get into action. I don't quite know how. I suggested that they were going to do him to death with roller bandages but a bloodthirsty youth assures me that there are plenty of other weapons to be found on the battlefield so I expect to see him blown from a derelict 75 gun or German 12 incher.

Lots of love.

To his Son.

St. Albans, Jan. 13th, 1915.

My dearest Little Boy, how are you? I'm quite well—only just a little lonely sometimes when I want to see my Vally and his Mummy. I want you please to come down on Sunday and bring your Mummy with you. You will have to bring some money though because *I* shan't have enough to buy you both lunch and tea and I suppose you'll want them, won't you?

I still get up hours before you do in the morning, only *now* that the middle of Winter is past, the mornings are getting lighter and by the time we have breakfast ready it is quite light! It's much nicer because *now* we can see what we have cooked before giving it to the other soldiers to eat, and if by chance we have put the bacon into

the tea and fried the sugar, well, we can change them over in time to avoid trouble.

Will you please tell mummy that Doody *may* be off to France almost any time now and never to be surprised to hear that I'm off. Nobody, nobody, nobody knows anything about when we are going or where we are going, and nobody, nobody, nobody knows where anybody else is going or when, but somebody else goes every now and then and they go to all sorts of surprising places. You remember Berneval? Well some of them have gone there—or to a place just like it, and some of them have gone to the sea-side like Margaret's Bay where hundreds of soldiers are watching for ships from Germany, and hundreds of other soldiers are digging trenches—long holes in the ground to hide in when the Germans come so's to be able to jump out at them when they don't expect it—and sometimes the soldiers who are watching for the ships from Germany are so busy watching that they forget to get out of the way of the others who are digging trenches, and the others, who are digging trenches, are so busy digging that they don't notice those who are watching for the ships from Germany, and they dig the trenches right under the soldiers who are watching, and the soldiers stop watching suddenly, and fall into the trenches on top of the

ones who are digging and they all get horribly mixed up with the picks and the buckets and the shovels and *then* soldiers like your Doody have to come along—soldiers with red crosses on their sleeves you know—and they have to sort out the broken shovels and the wounded soldiers who used to be looking out for ships from Germany and the other soldiers who used to be digging. They have to sort them all out and patch them up and carry them about on stretchers like this until they

are well enough to go on digging trenches to hide in or watching for ships from Germany.

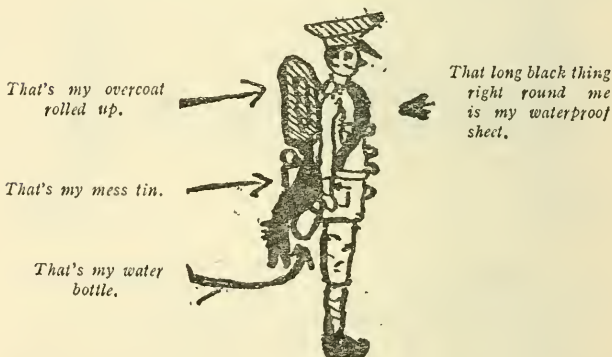
Heaps of love to your Mummy and your newest Nanny—you might distribute a few kisses wherever you think they will be appreciated among your Aunties and Gram and all the rest of the ladies at home but to every man you meet I want you to say WHERE IS YOUR UNIFORM?—unless of course he's got one on.

St. Albans, Jan. 14th, 1915.

Dearest little Boy.

I've only time to write you a very short letter to-night. We are going to have a very long day to-morrow starting long before you will be awake—and reading this. We shall have to get up not much after the middle of the night and your own particular Doody does not like shaving in the dark.

This is the way I shall look at 6 o'clock. My



Haversack is on the other side of me where you can't see it in this picture.

You know it takes an awful lot of work to make yourself look like that. Your overcoat has to be rolled up in that squashed rolly-poly shape for

one thing. Of course I can't do that alone. The Scot, Galton and the man called Lion will, I hope, help me to fold mine and kneel on it while I strap it up tight and then I shall have to help them to fold theirs and kneel on theirs while they strap them up tight, and then we shall all have to help each other put the rolled up coats on to each other's shoulders and hook 'em round under each other's armpits on to each other's belts, and then the waterproof sheets have to be wuv in and out over and under everything.

The funny thing is we really look quite nice when we've finished with each other and then—

Oh then!

Then the C.O. stands us all up in line like this

and the band plays and he walks all along the line and looks at us and says under his breath "Oh my! Oh my! What lovely bright buttons, what be-youtiful white belts." Of course you can't hear him saying this, but if he finds any one whose buttons are *not* bright—then you can hear him alright and he sounds so upset about it that everybody wants to cry—especially the man who'se got the unpolished buttons. And then we march miles and miles and get thoroughly muddy

and at last the Major says "eyes right," and we all turn our eyes to the right and there's a nice little General and we all march past him, with our band playing like billyoh! and then he goes home and writes to our C.O. and says we are the most bestest men he ever saw and the C.O. tells us about the letter and, we say (under *our* breath this time) "Yes, I don't think, papa."

And that's an inspection.

Love to your dear Mummy and your sweet little turn up nose, bless it.

Your DOODY.

To his Wife.

Calypso dear—I've wasted all my spare time writing this tosh to Vallie. It's not interesting to a grown up I'm afraid. Please I'll write you to-morrow.

Very good luck.

ST. ALBANS, Jan. 15th, 1915.

We've had a great day to-day—reviewed by the General (Sir Ian Hamilton) commanding the 3rd Army, and outshone the 4th and 5th Field Ambulances to our entire satisfaction. We have no official assurance that we outshone them, but we know that if the General had eyes in his head

we must have done so. Our Transport is infinitely better than theirs and I believe we are better marchers—also (possibly the marching is thanks to it) we have the best Band in the Territorial London Division. Our Transport is really very fine. All new this month, too.

Come down later in the week than Monday if you like, but I'd rather you didn't leave it too late. This is a hot bed of rumours of course, but everything points to our going away *some* day.

I do love you so.

St. Albans, Jan. 17th, 1915.

We are full of rumours of departure to Hatfield where the 5th now are. Hatfield is nothing like such a comfortable town for troops as St. Albans is but if we are sent there we may take it as a compliment. You see the three brigades of the 2nd Division are at Hatfield, Watford, and St. Albans but the Divisional H.Q. (Head Quarters) are in St. Albans which is nominally where the whole Division is, Hatfield and Watford being, in a military sense, suburbs. As far as can be gathered we—the 6th—came out rather strong at the Inspection held by Sir Ian Hamilton and the 5th came off rather badly, result being that they are to be brought to St. Albans to be more

nearly under the Official Eye and we, as efficient enough to look after ourselves are sent to Hatfield to take their places.

Scabies has broken out down here. Three cases in the 6th—one in the Cook House. He came around to say farewell before going to London to the isolation Hospital but we drove him off with harsh words and logs of firewood which he considered ridiculous behaviour seeing he had " only got the itch."

I personally have since washed all the clothes I have got and had various baths as have many others in the 6th.

Rumour hath it that we are forming still another reserve.

Love.

HATFIELD, Jan. 20th, 1915.

Fearfully uncomfortable, hungry and tired. Kits lost. Love to you all.

HATFIELD, Jan. 23rd, 1915.

DEAREST,

Quite well—but oh this God forsaken hole! You never saw such a filth spot.

I have quit the Cook House and got a job as Hospital Orderly. Serjeant King who is " Nursing Duties " having asked for me. A great bit of

luck. The Hospital *as* a Hospital is pretty poor (it is the station waiting room, the orderly rooms being the rooms off it) but as a billet it is the only dry place in the town apparently and, until it fills up (we have 3 patients and 8 beds to date), we orderlies sleep in the beds. No sheets of course, but still beds.

You are not hideous—you are sweetly pretty—if the Cinema makes you look hideous that is only another proof what a failure it is.

I love the bits about Vallie in your letters. More please. Hope for leave to-morrow week.

Heaps of love my dear one.

HATFIELD, Jan. 24th, 1915.

I like my new job, though like every other job which the Army can offer I shall be very glad to leave it. In this filthy slum it is certainly a catch. It gives me a chair to sit on and a fire to sit by in my quieter moments, which only those of the other Military gents here who have the money to take a room in a cottage for their evenings can manage. There are about a score of pubs here, and not one fit to go into: uncomfortable, and *rotten* beer. One of them is certainly more comfy than the rest but it so swarms with Serjeants that it is not ideal for mere Privates. Not that the Serjeants are standoffish or official out of hours,

but they are of the "drinks round again" variety of mortals, whom—though admiring—I cannot cope with.

I think if "Art and Opp" *is* done in America and things look up I shall ask you to send me down something every week. More than half—and the nicer "more than half"—of the corps all are getting something a week from outside sources and really the Army food needs reinforcing to the extent of about a bob a day by tea somewhere and a Welsh rarebit or something before turning in. Of course I won't take a penny from home until things *are* better, but I feel pretty confident that they are going to be in a few weeks now.

I am putting in for a pass for next weekend. I may not get it however as the Serjeant Ward Master wants to go up that day and I am becoming rather indispensable in the ward when he's not about. You would be surprised at the courage I am developing. I knocked off in the middle of this letter to *shave* a patient! And did it too without cutting him! I bunged a hot fomentation on a man's eye——

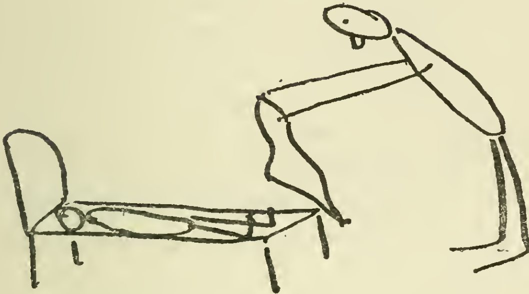
Here's a man come in with temperature 101-2. We've got to get him to bed with a hot drink—there's a perfect epidemic of influenza.

Good night—must make bed for him.

Jan. 27th, 1915.

DUCKSOME BOY,

My latest job is this



and this

God bless you my dear boy: do write to me.

HATFIELD, Jan. 27th, 1915.

We are sitting under most thrilling circumstances with every window covered and all exterior lights extinguished. Zeps are reported in the neighbourhood. Willson and I went for a walk in the pitch dark village this evening, and while I was buying the enclosed hanky for my ducksome, a policeman called on the shopkeeper to make him put out even the last feeble lights he had in his window. It is a definite order "lights out from 5 p.m. till further orders." Added to it of course are idiotic rumours. Bombs on London are the most reasonable report. An *Army* landed from aircraft somewhere on the flatter bits of England. This follows a special personal inspection by the General so it's been an exciting day. I didn't parade for the inspection but the A.D.M.S. bustled over in a car and inspected my Hospital while I was in sole possession, my Sergeant Ward Master and my brother orderly both having been ordered to parade.

I call it my hospital because—no swank—I have done a very large amount of the organising of it. Not the silly "Army Form B seventy-two" organising that drives the Sergeant mad but—well I have organised the food supply which was only prevented from breaking down the day I arrived by the fact that it didn't exist. I took

it upon myself to do a tour of many addresses I had found on a piece of paper pasted to a wardrobe which the 5th Field Ambulance used when here. I guessed that the addresses must be of some sort of benefactor—at least potential. It turned out that they were good ladies who had been in the habit of supplying puddings on fixed days—milky puddings. I called on them—or their cooks and arranged for the supply to be resumed for us—the 6th. I then found a farm and ordered milk and arranged with the cook—my old boss—in his new Cook House to supply beef tea, taking back with me to the Hospital all the gravy from the Sergeants stew with which I fed my starving patients. The milk business has got me into hot water with the Quarter Master who says I should have left him to indent—or whatever the Tomfool process is—for the milk. However in the Corps it is almost a crime *not* to be in hot water with the Quarter Master. He is a most unpopular man.

I don't want to swank really—don't laugh—but the Sergeant Major, whose Orderly room is part of the Hospital, has twice invited me in there to partake of whiskey with him and the second time kept me sitting over the fire chewing reminiscences till past midnight—two hours after "lights out." Sergeant Stadden is greatly

impressed, the S.M. being a most correct man. Of course there is nothing against the S.M. foregathering and drinking in private with the ranks if he likes—if he thinks it wise, that is. A Commissioned Officer should not, a Warrant Officer may if he likes, but, as a rule, the Sergeant Major is the most unapproachable soul in the unit. His position is so difficult: head of the Sergeants Mess, he is, in this case, the most experienced Medical in the Corps. He has had 27 years of it.

I have been called up six times in the last page and a quarter to empty bottles etc. Forgive incoherence. The best of the S.M. unbending so to me is that he is such an interesting old chap—(not so old either 45 to 50 at most). He has seen life and death enough to stock a dozen men's memories and he tells it uncommon well too.

I must get these blighters their supper. Did I tell you we were enjoying an epidemic of flu? Every bed full, I'm back on the floor after two days of beautiful bed-rest.

Oh dear—I must stop. I'd love to write a dozen pages about things—it is all so interesting.

HATFIELD, Jan. 28th, 1915.

DEAREST,

If possible I should like to see something *very* cheerful on Saturday night if (it's only an if provisional) I get my pass.

Rushed to death—love to my dear ones all. Keep an eye on Mater now she's near you.

HATFIELD, Feb. 3rd, 1915.

I've gone back to the ranks with a vengeance—I wanted a few marches and, my hat, I've got 'em! We've done 50 tough miles in 3 days. Rather rough on me to return to the ranks just in time for so much foot slogging isn't it? I hadn't done a good day's march for eleven weeks. You can imagine I was stiff after the first day out—22 miles we did. Another review by the way, the result of which as officially announced was that "General Codrington was very pleased with the marching of the 2nd London Division and especially of the 6th Field Ambulance which unit he considered the best turned out and equiped etc." He omitted to mention me by name but I have pointed out to the authorities that I was there.

I have been transferred to a swell billet—very comfortable.

Must clean up.

Much love.

HATFIELD, Feb. 5th, 1915.

MY DEAREST,

Things are much more comfortable now. Got into a nice billet, 6 of us in two empty rooms

opening off each other—good fireplace and windows. I have also—with 4 others—taken a front room in a cottage, furnished, wherein we can write letters—wash—talk and get our teas in privacy. The danger is that others may find out our "Club" and take to calling. It's a great comfort at present. Also I have found a little baker's shop where I can get a good breakfast for 6d. in the charming company of Mrs. Baker and her daughter, when breakfasting in the Mess becomes unendurable—as it frequently does. The ten shillings has been a Godsend—really one needs a little over and above the net pay if one is to be comfortable. The food supplied is so unappetising and monotonous, besides not always going quite round in an eatable state.

Though I am in the stretcher bearers subdivision—and doing the very difficult "extended order" drill with them—I have been attached to the nursing section for lectures on dispensing medicine etc.—so I look like remaining always with the Tents either as cook (the Sergeant Cook wants me back as soon as I'll come to him) or Nurse.

Hullo 9 o'clock! Must clean up. Love.

The gloves are excellent.

You've heard me speak of Tailor of the Transport? I saw him mounting to drive the water

cart back to the Transport lines this afternoon. I have just heard that the horses bolted with him and threw him—the water cart passing over his leg. He is alright but for a crushed foot. A lucky escape. The Water cart is tremendously heavy—the horses extra high and hefty and it is "ride-driven" from the saddle—which means a long fall right under the wheel.

HATFIELD, Feb. 8th, 1915.

I'm quite willing to write, but I find it increasingly difficult. This life is so monotonous and all privacy so unknown that letter writing is a disappearing art. I think I told you that Lion, Roffe, Capell, Willet and myself have rented a sitting room in a house here wherein we have our tea and make ourselves fairly comfortable but even here there are generally four of us in the evening—sometimes plus a couple of visitors and conversation is generally going on—just at present there is none—but Roffe is mending an allarum clock.

Keep me well posted concerning Vallie won't you? I am not unduly worried about him—you and Joan with your dozen odd certificates between you ought to be a match for his bronchy—but I might worry if I did not hear.

We—the 6th—continue to receive compliments

from the Authorities. Colonel Burt the D.M.S. says our Hospital is clean and Codrington says we march well, and Sir Ian Hamilton has said we were not so dusty—and certain sneering gentlemen in khaki in St. Albans meeting some of us there on Sunday said :—" Hullo here come some of the smart sixth." So we seem to be getting known.

I am at work—a line a day about—on a one act play for the 6th Field Ambulance which would also be useful for the Halls.

Things seem to be going tremendously well, don't they? I expect we shall finish the war up this Autumn easily now. . . . What Germany will have to say to the Kaiser is a question. I suppose you know that we shall probably be on Garrison duty for a couple of months after the War. If we do we shall have a perfectly scrumptious time of it—those of us who are looking after Belgium and France—and if I'm one of them somebody'll have to find the money for you and Vallie to come out and stay with me. If we are in Germany the temper of the people will be a consideration. I doubt if—outside Prussia—they'll give much trouble.

Oh—can you get me any good book on the systems of weighing and measuring in Pharmacy? Doctor Beer can tell you of one for a cert—only

I don't want an elaborate one I have no time to read it. Just a text book of the weights and measures both here and on the Continent etc. Ring Beer up and ask him—give him my very kindest at the same time.

Love to you all.

We are hard at work on the extended order drill most mornings. It is not easy.

To his Son.

HATFIELD, Feb. 8th, 1915.

MY OWN BLOSSOM

I'm writing this from Hatfield. We've just been to church all together marching along, with the Band playing in front, and marching back and now I am back in my billet, all alone: Fisher and Galton and the man called Lion are all away on leave and Corkerel Willson is in the cook house still. He won't come out of it though we all beg him to.

I'm sorry so to hear you have got a cough. I hope it is getting better every minute. Coughs are a nuisance, aren't they? especially when they wake you up in the night. Mummy says in her letter—the one that you wrote some of—that you are being very good and I'm so glad to hear it. Especially when you're not very well

you must be good and kind to poor Mummy who probably worries about you more than she needs to. You see we both want you to be always well and strong, so that you can grow and grow and be such a fine big man one of these days.

Does Mummy tell you how we are getting on with the War? *I* think everything is going awfully well. The Germans have done another very silly thing. They have said they are going to blow up all the ships that try to come to England. This is just as silly as it can be because, for one thing, it's wrong to blow up ships and if they do they'll get into trouble with more people even than they are in trouble with now, and *everybody* will go for them, and for another thing they can't blow up one quarter of the ships they say they will, so they are pretending that they will do things they can't—which makes them look ridiculous and—well it's as if you were to lose your temper and say that you were going to throw Mummy out of the window. You couldn't and it would be wrong if you could. Well the Germans are being told now how silly and wicked they have been and I think they'll be sorry one of these days. We have sunk a lot of the ships they sent to sink ours.

Please give my love to dear Mummy and tell

her I'll write tomorrow, also tell her I'm getting on very comfortably now. I am going to have tea with the people who own the house I'm billeted in—awfully nice people—and this morning I went and had breakfast with a little baker and his wife in the little kitchen back of his little shop. Everybody is very nice to your Doody once he gets the chance to tell them what a nice little boy he's got and what a nice Mummy that little boy's got.

Be very good and give Mummy a special kiss from me.

Your DOODY.

To his Wife.

Don't send anything more except the trousers. I'll take back the Putties and stockings next time I am home on leave. The white trousers I mean. I sleep in them.

Hatfield continues to improve on acquaintance.

Feb. 9th, 1915.

The weather is improving daily—a gorgeous march into Hertford to-day through lovely country. 7 miles there 7 back—an ideal day's "work." Such days are our holidays and we love them.

I have been over to St. Albans again last night for a bath. None in Hatfield—fancy a ten mile walk for a bath and that after the day's work!

Heaps of love to you all. Things seem to be going awfully well don't they?

HATFIELD, Feb. 12th, 1915.

SWEETHEART,

We have had a long, tiring, but very interesting day. We marched off soon after seven and joined on to the Division at the Gate of Gorlambury Park, following it into the Park and taking up our allotted position on the valley side. It was a gorgeous day and the four or five square miles of opposite valley-side, wonderfully visible were dotted over with the troops; artillery, A.S.C. trains, and the 4th and 5th Ambulances. Behind us were several Battalions—each 1000 men in 16 platoons (I believe) and so large was the open space and so clear the day that they looked exactly like toy soldiers set out on a green carpet. We pushed our waggons about a bit, changed positions once or twice and then bearer sections were drawn from amongst us to follow the battalions and I—left behind in a skeleton Tent Section—after watching them trail away, miles of them *literally* (a whole Division is 16

miles long in column of route extended). We Tent Sections sketched out our site—operating, hospital, store tents etc—and then tacking ourselves onto our Transport train which had been performing similar theoretic acts, we marched back to Hatfield arriving here at 5.30. The bearer divisions returned an hour later.

The most curious thing about these operations is their exact similarity to actual warfare in this at least: that the individual unless he be a Staff Officer of high rank, cannot make head or tail of the whole business, and is sorely tempted to regard it as the most colossal muddle, which of course it isn't.

The amount of aimless wandering and waiting demanded of the individual (officer as well as private) is, of course, tremendous and, to the less intelligent, quite incomprehensible. Some men seem to think they are brought out solely to teach them personally *their* work and not as part of a unit which is again part of a division which is being taught *its* work as a whole.

It's not unlike rehearsing a colossal production over a stage extending over Watford, St. Albans and Hatfield (I don't know how many miles of country) with a cast of about 18,000 performers, 2,000 horses, and innumerable props, in the

form of tents waggons and guns and gun carriages.

You should see our horses. I doubt if any regular division can beat us either in heavy draught horses or in Officers mounts. The Yeomanry are wonderfully mounted, and the pack horses of the battalions splendid animals. The remount Officer happens to have been till a few weeks—perhaps a month—ago transport Officer to the 6th Field Ambulance, so of course he consorts considerably with our own Officers and we see a lot of him. He always rides the last word in blood mares and has a batman (Military parlance for a groom-valet) in attendance with another equally perfect. Of course it's swank but it looks jolly well and his side about his knowledge of horses is quite lovable.

I must to bed. Thanks very much for your very nice letter. You shall have a P.C. or letter every blessed day I can manage it. Seriously though have I ever kept you "five or six days without a letter?" Sunday till Thursday is the longest I can remember.

I don't believe in the people who have "candidly admitted" etc. We all grumble—and we shall all be jolly glad when it's over but we are all most capable of cheering up on the least excuse such as a fine day or something interesting to do. It's

the quite unavoidable hanging about—or fatigue duties—in rotten weather that takes the heart out of us.

Love—I must to bed.

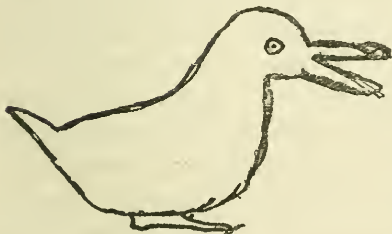
To his Son.

Feb. 14th.

DEAR VALLIE,

I want a farm with

s and



s

and

To his Wife.

HATFIELD, Feb. 17th, 1915.

Lal has thrown the whole 6th into a state of stupefaction by wiring me "Good luck" on my birthday. The wire reached me after many redirections from Orderly Room, Mess, Guard, and I believe the C.O. himself. I do wish people wouldn't do these things. I am popular, consequently the chaff is not ill natured but it is—and will be for some days at least—excessive to such a degree that I am avoiding my usual haunts during my few off moments. The chaff I say, is excessive but not universal. Some of the simpler

souls are now convinced that I am at least a Millionaire. One—a driver of a C.P. van in civil life remembers a publican he knew in his youth who would send telegrams about all sorts of things. " Just like sending a post card ! "

Also—apart from making me look a fool—it frightened me out of my wits.

We have shifted hospital—been on the job all day—from the Station up to the servants quarters over the great stables of Hatfield. Beastly quarters worse even than the Station. No general ward—a double row of cubicles with doors—you can guess how that doubles work. Moreover the genial comfort of a cosy ward—a very pleasant thing where only slight cases are treated—is exchanged for a lot of isolated patients on either side of a corridor. The common room off the corridor wherein the out-of-bed patients and ourselves (the Orderlies) eat and live is also a most cheerless dirty white washed room without a comfortable seat in it. We have seven in-patients tonight—one poisoned foot, one (poor old Driver Green) in a state of collapse after ten teeth having been extracted, one suffering from some nose, throat, and ear affection, one acute diarrhœa and sickness, one undiagnosed rash, one flu, one boil compared with which the biggest boil I have hitherto seen is a pimple. The poor

little chap who supports this colossus nearly faints when it is pressed.

Our out-cases are more interesting. One in particular, a finger which looked a week ago quite unlike a human finger, rapidly regaining its shape seems almost a miracle.

I am alone in charge tonight. The Sergeant is not sleeping in hospital at all this week so they must think me fairly competent. I am now getting bread and milk suppers for the patients.

Love to my duckysome and yourself.

HATFIELD, Feb. 18th, 1915.

Opportunities to write are now greatly diminished: 7.50, and I am just finished for the day—finished more or less, that is. I am still liable to be called—even as I write behold one calleth.

Dixon is a jolly decent sort. He had tea with us here to-day and cursed his, and our, luck in being stuck here in a most beautiful Irish accent. He assures me that it is *no* advantage to be an officer; rather the reverse. Caldicott—a queer, dry, irritable, but very pleasant fellow who was third of the tea party—is convinced that the war is going to last years and years and that we—the 6th—will not be disbanded for years after its all over.

We had an awfully interesting operation yesterday.

Oh help!

HATFIELD, Feb. 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST,

I am so miserable about Monday—and about to-day too—I have been trying to write to you all day and here it is nine o'clock suppers to get for 4 patients and I'm just starting. Hospital work is one long interruption.

We have got a most infernal business ahead of us tomorrow. Up at 5 at the latest, breakfast at 6.30, and march away for the concentration at 6.45. *We* at the Hospital have to leave our Wards etc. in order, and see the relief section in before leaving. Hence the 5 o'clock awakening.

I have been feeling terrible all day. An absolute attack of the horrors came on me in the night—a sort of nightmare that hung about after I was well awake. It was all I could do to prevent myself waking the other Orderly for company. There were devils all round me. Quite seriously I believe that pus and poisoned wounds if thought about—or looked at continuously—breed some sort of horror in the mind. If only wounds—the little wounds we get here—would be what one expects wounds to be instead of festering and

swelling, I should not fear my capacity for dealing with the more terrible ones at the front, but these give me such a curious feeling *after* the day's work is over, that I wonder how I shall feel in six months time. The curious thing is that I can dress the nastiest and discuss the nastiest and think about the nastiest of our little nastinesses without the slightest feeling, but in the night (towards the end of my last spell as Hospital Orderly and again last night) I get the horrors.

I do hope Vallie says "God bless Doody!" at night. I felt last night it might do me a bit of good.

Love.

HATFIELD, Feb. 25th, 1915.

We had a jolly day to-day erecting tents against time and measuring out ground. The encampment looks very pretty when completed.

Oh Hell—more arrivals! Very noisy. Love.

To his Mother.

HATFIELD, Feb. 26th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

Dont apologise for "neglecting me" for a few days when at the end of them you send me two closely written giant pages. This letter of yours

is just the sort of letter I like. If you only write to me once a week a good long newsy letter I shall be a lot better pleased than I should be with seven scrappy ones.

Why " cant " —— type? Lesser brains than his have mastered that difficult art. Typing one's own work is a most valuable last glance over it in print form. People who are superior to the appearance in print of their paragraphs are as hopeless in literature as the people who are superior to mere audibleness on the stage.

My news is —— I have done my second week as Hospital Orderly (We do one in three). A fearful field day covering 30 miles and lasting (without a meal) from 6.45 a.m. till 8.25 p.m. The last four hours in soaking rain through which we (a small detached band of Stretcher Bearers—not the whole 6th) marched the ten miles home at a pace which left the shorter legged several paces in the rear, until a staff-officer overtaking us blew the Lieutenant in charge of us up severely. The Lieutenant in question had been previously thrown from his horse and was covered with mud. We had to march down a road—a bad side lane really—along which all the Artillery of the Division had preceded us. It was a muddy road at best and flooded in places. You can only faintly imagine the foot deep surface of clay we

had to splash through for over a mile. Every footstep flung mud higher than our waists.—Some times higher than our heads. It was a creamy job. The whole day—wet and muddy and tiring, (we were in full marching order all the time) was most fascinating though. It ended by the stretcher bearers, of whom I was one being marched straight into the sergeant's mess and there served with dinner (rabbit stew) and a glass each of the sergeants' beer, the Sergeant Major himself presiding and forcibly preventing any of the over weariest of us from turning from the food and slipping off to his billet and turning in unfed, and the rest of the Sergeants acting as waiters and bar keepers. I believe our little party did as hard a day's work, as has been done in this part of the country, and not one fell out. Of course it was an accident that landed such a task upon us. We should have either gone to the concentration point by train as the Battalion did or returned from St. Albans by train and motor as the rest of the Field Ambulance did, but—true to the conditions of actual warfare—(by chance)—we went out as a *Field Ambulance Stretcher bearers sub division and returned as auxiliary stretcher bearers to a battalion of infantry,* a change of character which may easily occur in a real engagement if the S.B. sub div. follows the

Batt. *reserves* until they become *supports* and still further until they become *first line* and the rest of the Field Amb. being threatened or otherwise compelled to move off, the communications between S. B.s and Tent sub divisions are broken.

You are all wrong about Russia. She knows her game. The conditions in the East are absolutely unsuited to the digging in policy we have followed in the West. Trenching in East Prussia and Northern Poland would cost more men every week from pneumonia, frost-bite and possibly drowning—than even a retreat like this last one. Russia has ample money—more than all the rest of Europe is the general belief. Make up your mind to this : a retreat means nothing unless it is an *entire line* that is withdrawn or unless the retreat leaves one end of the line " in the air " and within striking distance of the enemy. Retirements here or there in a line may *lead* to something but they are in themselves nothing but evasions of blows ; sometimes at a cost in men and guns ; but that cost is generally about equal to the losses inflicted upon the attacker who fails to bring his blow home. Russia is being attacked much more vehemently than the Allies in the West are, and the greater swaying backwards and forwards of her line is

very like the dodging and "footwork" of a clever boxer when his opponent tries to "finish him quickly."

Must wash.

Heaps of love.

To his Wife.

HATFIELD, Feb. 26th, 1915.

DEAREST.

Of all the dismal fates, I have been made Orderly Room Orderly. No more marching! And just while this lovely weather is coming along. I don't mind being Hospital Orderly because the work is intensely interesting, although tiring; and also it is only for one week in three; but Orderly Room work is eternal—chiefly clerical, relieved only by spells of housemaid's work and running errands. It is nervous work too. Lighting the C.O.'s fire and sweeping and dusting his room is alright, but tidying up his papers gives me the shudders. They all look so wildly official and important.

I am typing this on the S.M.'s typewriter—an Oliver, I don't think I am doing so badly with it, do you? I am not going at all slow, and it is the first time I have tried it.

I stand no chance at all of a pass this week end

after my special of last Wednesday, but I shall make out one for next week end. One does these things for oneself in the Orderly Room. Oh, I tell you it's we that's the rogues. I thought the kitchen was the one true abode of cheatery with the Q.M.'s stores as a sort of home from home, but we in the Orderly Room are the great rogues.

My brothers in crime, are Sergeant Treadwell a big-boned six-footer dark moustached (Interruption—" Chap in, op it and get your tea "—I obeyed immediately. One of the humours of Military life is the way you have to jump to your opportunities before they fade, I spent an hour and a half over the tea—to continue)—dark moustached and rather sinister looking, really a practical joker and most easy going, Corporal Sulivan a little fair man who was through the S. African War. He looks about 28 but is really nearer forty-eight. He is our Postman and is a postal clerk in private life. These are the N.C.O.'s Treadwell as Orderly Room Sergeant and Sulivan as Corporal. They both know their business backwards but are bad hands at imparting its intricacies to a new comer, being very inarticulate on technical matters. The S.M. of course spends most of his time in the Orderly Room and the C.O.'s room is adjoining. My fellow Orderlies are Trotman, whom you know, a tall boy, only

nineteen, name of Corby good natured and an excellent clerk, and Chattin also tall and a linguist—German and French like a dozen natives having lived in those parts in his youth.

Good-night—Love to my boy.

HATFIELD, March 1st, 1915.

I do believe there is some sort of a cherub sitting up aloft looking after me. You know how absolutely sick I was at being put into the Orderly Room. I can't exaggerate how I hate the work. Absolutely no exercise—and in this lovely weather being penned up all day.

(Broken off to type "Fieldstate")

Well—the C.O. has just returned suffering from the accumulated energies of five days absence and struck an idea. Each *Section* is to do the departmental work for a week commencing Monday (to-morrow) with A Section, so—unless the horrified Sergeants can dissuade him—I return to the ranks to-morrow after four days of the beastly place. I'm in C.

Monday.

It's happened! A is doing it all. Hospital, Guard Room. Orderly Room. Cook House. Quarter-Master's Stores. Fatigues, for one week. B. starts next week ditto then C. Whether I

shall be bagged for Hospital, Cook House or Orderly Room remains to be seen.

We had a jolly day to-day pitching tents for a couple of hours with a pleasant march out to selected site and back. Weather blowy and a shower or two but on the whole excellent.

I shall be at liberty to rehearse from 10 till 12.30 Thursday. Dentist at 1. Shall not ask for afternoon pass. S.M. away and his substitutes—though good souls—too inclined to refuse any unusual requests in a halting "can't you wait till the S.M. comes back" sort of way. They daren't do anything out of the routine.

I want you and the Treasure to come down this Saturday or Sunday or some day next week.

Love to the Nipper.

HATFIELD, March 2nd, 1915.

How do you like the Dardanelles touch? And Russia's retirement ending in a strategically stronger front for her and a very much worse supplied front for Germany? If I am not *very* much mistaken, NOVEMBER will see the end of it. I am willing to bet on it. The Dardanelles must make a tremendous impression on Greece and the Balkan States and Italy: and that counts for a lot. I am tremendously pleased over the whole situation—including the German blockade

failing to account for even one ship per day on the first ten days.

We had a great day to-day. Each man cooked his own dinner in the field : plenty of time allowed us to do so—a regular picnic.

The Imperial Service Units have been altered in nomenclature by Army Order to 1st Line, so your husband is now in a First Line Unit serving in a First Line Division. The alteration is only in name. We have been really first line all along. but it's pleasant to be called 1st Line troops which has a definite meaning instead of a fancy name like Imperial Service which sounds like Optimists and United Arts and other abominations.

Lights out.

HATFIELD, March 8th, 1915.

We are very busy. Issues of underwear, etc. going on fast. I was on packing stores all afternoon. There is a ten o'clock parade to-night for those who have not yet got various non-essentials. Rumour says that we move off during the week.

God bless you my darlings.

HATFIELD, March 9th, 1915.

Rumours of departure "by the galore" as Jack expresses it. I really think we shall be moving off in the course of this week or at the

latest next. I don't quite know how we shall let our folks know when we are really off. I will try to send a wire, but—for obvious reasons, we may be prevented. We shall probably sail from Avonmouth which means St. Nazare or Havre and some base in Western France. It's a long way round from Avonmouth, but safer than the Channel. Some of the Division are moving off to-day or to-morrow.

I am not going to suggest you and Vallie coming down. It would be a trying business for you. We never know when we shall be wanted to draw stores etc. Some men have had their wives down and been lucky enough to get off. Others have jigged about on parade or tinkered about with stores while their womenfolk stood on street corners and waited for them. I don't want *none* of that, thank you.

No leave now. Poor devils who were to have gone when I returned try to tell me how much they hate me but words are not equal to it.

HATFIELD, March 10th, 1915.

We did a parade in full going away order this morning. It is tremendously heavy. I scale 13 stone 9 pounds in it without my 5 lbs. of iron rations (emergency food) so I shall march weighing fourteen stone! They don't expect more than

15 miles out of us at that, though, as an absolute limit.

Nobody knows where we are going to. Dixon gave us a most impassioned lecture on morals to-day, in which he said France. That seems quite certain anyway.

We spend an awful lot of time waiting for orders it is very tedious. If I were sure of being here to receive you I'd ask you to come down to-morrow but I'm not. Some of the battalion moved off at two hours' notice last night.

Don't worry too much about me when I get out. The Club except for Willson are going tea-total en masse. Also I'm not a kid, I've been inoculated recently—and I'm not afraid of infection in the least.

Heaps of love Dear. Will write again to-morrow unless I've departed.

HATFIELD STILL.

We haven't departed yet, dearest, but we are certainly off in the course of the next week or ten days. New boots, pants, "jumpers" (a sort of undershirt with short sleeves and low neck), body belts, have been issued all round. Also the various minor impedimenta that are usually so hard to get out of the Quarter Master's Stores can be had for the asking. "Puttees?" "Take

some!" "Straps?" "Over there!" But for the fact that we have had to hand over all surplus kits and clothes, the more acquisitive of us would be making museums. Everything spare has been taken from us. We are to go out with what we can carry on our own backs and shoulders and no more. We may wear as much as we like in the way of underwear—one tunic, one pair trousers, one pair puttees, one pair boots, one cap. Then on our back we carry our "pack": great coat folded with socks, spare shirt, spare pants in it. Across our shoulders our blanket and waterproof sheet. On our L. our Haversack containing hold all (razor etc.) towel, soap and rations (5 lbs.) on our R. our waterbottle.

I want at *once* the best photo of you with the eyes showing and one of Vallie with the Teddy Bear, looking at me. You know the picture. Also will you please go—or send Joan—to Gamages for the biggest Haversack they sell? It needn't be an expensive one, just a large strong canvas one. I will pay for it out of kit allowance which I shall draw when we go. Also please send me my money belt.

Please send them *at once* we may be off at an hour's notice any time. That is why I do not suggest that you should come down. It would be too awful if you turned up just after I had gone,

wouldn't it? We had four days together. 75 per cent. of the men haven't had their leave at all. I was told in the Orderly Room to-day that three hours' notice would be about what we should probably get and no time therein to send wires.

Yes it is certainly France—any way at first.

Bless you—heaps of love.

HATFIELD, March 11th, 1915.

We are not off yet—delays in rest of Division suggest we shall not move before next week so will you come down Saturday any time you like? If we do move off I will wire.

I do so want to see you. Fearful hump. Love.

HATFIELD, March 12th, 1915.

I'd love you to give me a wave—I'm so glad you want to. The Devil of it is that we—all Military Units—move off secretly, and unexpectedly. We know we are going and soon but how soon nobody knows—it may be in a couple of hours' time—it may not be until the middle of next week—or the end. The Captain of the A.S.C. unit which was attached to us had his wife staying with him in St. Albans and Mr. Day met her and told her he'd gone one day. She wouldn't believe it but he had. Then a few days later he came back!

You come along and have an afternoon with me

to-morrow (Saturday)—I'd like to see Vallie too if you can bring him and Joan too. They are all invited to the Club to tea. Come as soon after 1 as you please and wire me what train you are coming by and we will discuss how you are to see me off. It may be workable.

Heaps of love.

Oh—dress just as smart as you know how compatible with travelling, and ditto Joan and Vallie. The Club must be paralysed.

March 15th, 1915.

We are sitting 8 in a compartment in our train waiting to get into Southampton. Have been waiting over an hour and the Engine Driver on a train beside us tells us he has to get in and out before we can. The line is very congested. Good thing I didn't try to let you know our route—we haven't followed it a bit—been all round London to get here. Acton nearest point.

We paraded at 3 a.m. this morning breakfasted at once and paraded in going away order at 4. Transport waggons harnessed and us arranged and counted by 5 when we marched to St. Albans where we are :

March 15th, 1915.

We are now penned in a shed—2.20—preparatory to embarking. It is one of those huge

sheds you must know at docks—over 100 yards long by 50 odd broad—not unlike a skating rink. Two thirds of the floor space is covered with men lying at length or reclining on one arm, their coats over them their arms, caps, belts etc by their side. We have just been invited to make ourselves comfy—mustn't leave shed. There is a buffet in one corner I'm going to have some tea. I wish you could see this half acre of worn Khaki in the dusty half light. It's a picture worth a lot and it's so amazing it should be alive and real.

LETTERS FROM FRANCE.

To his Wife.

FRANCE, March 18th, 1915.

Here we are in France—journey not finished yet. We had an ideal crossing—and a most amazing one. I believe every square yard of the Channel has its own British T.B. Destroyer—queer black shapes with rectangular outlines, hard and well drawn against the dark sky or the streams of light from more distant warships. I never saw one in detail with the light upon it—always in silhouette against the light. We steamed with lights out nearly all the way. I slept on deck—not over warm—but I kept getting up to see the latest sight as one or other called me and so kept warm.

We are fed on Bully Beef (ordinary Fray Bentos, you know the brand) and lovely hard biscuits which I adore. Last night I added to my menu a bloater and some bread and marmalade, "duff" and coffee—having scraped an acquaintance with some of the engine room artificers who

invited me to sup in the fo'castle. It was very hot in there but we supped in low neck. Great fun!

Bye bye—Love to my blessed boy—Try to read him as much of my letters as he will understand. I do miss him so and I want him to hear about me all he can so's we shan't be strangers when we meet next. Rubbish I know, but still I'm not quite joking. He's growing so fast.

An unfortunate officer has got to read this and a hundred more letters, so I'll cut it short. Bless you.

FRANCE, March 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST.

We took four days to get here, but here we are at last. "Here" being a little hamlet of farms, estaminets and shops, with the usual Mairie and Church, into every barn and spare room of which we are packed like sardines. It is now Sunday. We have shifted our billet three times in the three days we have been here, each change being for the better until last night we were comfortable enough not to want to change again. The weather to-day is excellent. The first day here—Friday—was a mixture of sunshine, snow and sleet. It is still very cold at nights.

The journey was most amusing. A Field Ambulance is uncommonly like a circus in more

ways than one, and, though the band have packed their instruments, it still retains its resemblance to one. I was on duty with a party in the hold of the ship at the port, sending up the loaded waggons on the cranes on Tuesday. The number of clowns running about and pretending to work was, perhaps excessive but they did it so funnily that it didn't matter.

From the port we came here by train, travelling in cattle trucks which, with plenty of straw laid down, are much more comfortable than ordinary carriages for a long journey—twenty-two and a half hours. Don't try to guess from that where we are because you'll never do it. We wander all over the map.

Between the night on the boat and the night on the train, we had a night at a camp half a dozen miles outside the port. That—Tuesday—night and last night were the only decent nights' sleep I have had since I saw you last Saturday. I feel amazingly fit never the less. Certainly I am a little sleepy this afternoon and we are all going to turn in early but, with the rest, I am feeling as fit as possible. *Quite* fit in fact.

We are rather drastically treated here: forbidden to go into cafés which—as the water is not to be taken unless boiled and the Army tea is quite undrinkable—is rather hard. Still we hope

that the order is only temporary. We went into cafés up to yesterday—and very nice café-au-lait they give—or gave us too. A surprisingly large number of us are teetotallers. My Billet of eight contains six, and the remaining two—of whom I am one are T.T. for the duration of the War.

We had the good fortune for three days to have our tea and sugar issued to us dry which enabled us by obtaining hot water to make our own tea in our mess tins, but that's over now and the stewed dixie tea is all we can get. Au reste the food is excellent when one gets it. We are not yet established here of course. Still even our worst spell—about 40 hours without meat—was quite endurable as we had unlimited biscuits, jam, and cheese, and were able to get good tea and chocolate and cakes at a buffet run for soldiers at the station at the port.

We are much nearer the firing line than I expected we would be in the first few weeks in France, but far enough away for the war still to seem incredibly remote. Some Indian Cavalry whom we saw almost convinced me it was in India.

Sergeant Moss, Fisher and myself with Lieut. Sadler and the R.C. Padre came here in advance of the rest by some hours to secure billets. It was most thrilling, setting out in the dark, seeking our

way to an unknown hamlet by dint of much knocking up of wayside inhabitants.

Friday I spent billeting with Moss in the morning and in the afternoon, Fisher and I were first on duty in a temporary hospital. Saturday I had to draw stores from the A.S.C. a great rumour shop. What you can't hear there isn't worth hearing.

I want now a Walker's Loose Leaf pocket book, size about this sheet of paper, (I think they're called Walker's Loose Leaf Diaries but don't know. The shop in Charing Cross Road next to the Hippodrome sells them), a small French dictionary—a copy of " Well made Dress Coat," some thin writing paper quarto or foolscap size, some thin " foreign " note paper and envelopes (not a great many), and later I shall always be glad of *English matches*, bulls eyes, condensed milk (Ideal), Craven mixture or John Cotton (medium), also my pocket book.

Heaps of love to my Baby and his dear Mummy and everyone.

To his Mother-in-law.

France, March 23rd, 1915.

We are having a most amazing time here : the whole countryside under strictest Martial Law ;

swarming with troops and supply-trains; under hourly expectation of aerial attack in one quarter or another; yet orderly, peaceful and apparently quite unafraid, with *us* lounging in every farm yard and by every shady wall, resting after our not very fatiguing journey here. It is like a pleasant holiday for the greater part of the day. I don't suppose it will last long though.

You might buck everybody you know up to come out and finish this war. It looks like an everlasting to everlasting business out here. The French people about here seem quite resigned to a several years' struggle. It needn't be that, though, if only England will buck up.

Love to you and Lal. I go on Guard to-night, so no sleep for me till the next night. *I* don't mind.

Sunday, April 11th, 1915.

Thanks very much to both of you for the quid. It will be most useful when next we are in a town large enough to support a restaurant. I have put it aside against that happy day.

We were in such a town only last week but under such conditions that we only left our headquarters for an hour in two days. At present we are back in our Monastery, inventing rumours for each other, and swallowing everything we are told

about our next move by the sergeants, who are as great rumour merchants as ourselves.

I am writing in a hurry to catch a 2 p.m. post. Envelopes were only issued at first parade this morning and only "green envelope" correspondence is to pass to-day. Most of the time between first parade and 2 o'clock is not available for letter writing.

Our chief entertainment here is coffee and aeroplanes—frequently under fire now.

Love to you all.

To his Wife.

FRANCE, March 25th, 1915.

DEAREST.

We haven't had much to do since I last wrote to you. I had charge of a job after your own heart the day before yesterday, the cleaning of a stone outhouse and rigging up therein of a boiler wherein to boil the clothes of scaby patients. The outhouse had apparently been occupied by cattle for some years and then—for two winter months—by Indians and, besides heaps of filth in the corners and much loose straw, some relicks of fires and so forth, there was a solid, heavily trodden stratum of filth, some six inches thick which had to be dug out before the brick floor

could be reached. Gods! how it stank! sour, putrid, and Oriental by turns. We got it all out at last, though and the old boiler—which we had found—rigged up. I had 12 men on the job and I took them out and stood them coffee afterwards. They had earned it.

We are allowed into cafés now—at certain hours—11 to 2.30 and 6 to 7.30.

I am just off to meet the post. Hope there is something for me by it. I'll keep this open in case.

Post not in yet. I must finish this or *I* shall miss the outward bound one. We have had our third issue of tobacco to-day, and yesterday—it having rained all day and the men being rather damp—a ration of rum was issued. I had a whack but never again. It was filthy. Half the T.T.'s turned out for some; regarding the *first issue*—as I did—as a rite not to be missed. Their antics afterwards were a study. There's no denying it *warms* you. We were all well frozen waiting for it—but hot coffee is I think a much pleasanter means to that end. I am drinking all the café au lait I can get. They make it beautifully about here. Not with heaps of chicory as at Bernaval.

The cooking is improving greatly, the tea for two days having been really good—but, oh, for

some milk in it ! The night I was corporal of the guard, I had milk from the S.M.'s tin.

To his Mother.

FRANCE, March 27th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

Your post card and letter received. Of course you know it is not always possible to write from here.

We have been in this village a week now, shifting about a lot, but still not absolutely moving away. We have founded a temporary Hospital and moved it again. Fisher and I handled the first case—a pleurisy one.

We are cut off from all news here.—Latest is Tuesday morning's announcement of fall of Przchemysl. We live on rumours. The general impression is not one of a victorious army—or indeed an army at all—but rather of a great industrial district, rather unsuitably housed—a more or less improved industrial district perhaps. The impression also soaking into me is that, unless a miracle occurs, it harbours an industry that will go on forever. The other side of the German lines is spoken of by the peasants as if it were separated by an English channel or a Pyranees rather than by a destructible barrier of men and guns. I am not pessimistic, but I do wish England

would buck up. You see no young men here—*not one.* The women are doing all those things the men in England seem to think can't be done without them; and doing them well. The farms are thriving—the threshing, long delayed, is now being done. Cattle, poultry and rabbits are everywhere in spite of many losses.

Certainly this usually poor and squalid part of France *looks* poorer and squalider than ever, but in the essentials of livestock it is not greatly so. I have seen some—to me—very distressing sights of farm machinery—threshing machines, seed droppers, ploughs etc., left to rust and ruin, but not by the smaller peasants, by the more important folk who departed for safer neighbourhoods when the war broke out.

I was corporal of the guard night before last. The night watches are very strange. The sun sung down by a crowd of our men half a mile away in a barn, warbling music hall ditties; then a slight shower and a crescent moon crossed by many clouds, a curious murmuring, gabbling chant—women with candles, praying to the Madonna at a shrine near by—then long hours of silence broken by the occasional whirr of a motor or motor ambulance—one bearing a case of "Pottermain Poisoning" so the A.S.C. driver told me. Towards dawn faint guns in the

distance—so far off that a loud snore in the guard room drowned them easily even to me standing outside. I've no idea where they were. Forty miles away probably. Still they were real guns and most impressive therefor.

To his Son.

FRANCE, March 30th, 1915.

Hullo Vallie! I'm in France at the war at last. How are you? We are having such a funny time all sleeping on straw on the floor—think of that when you get into your little cribble-cot to-night.

I am sitting writing this on a sack on the ground with my back against Jack's. You remember Jack the cook? In front of me are all the horses in rows and rows tied to pegs driven into the ground. They are tied by the head—the way Modestine used to be—to one peg and by the hind foot to another peg to prevent them turning round and kicking each other. They don't like having their hind foots tied and pull at them and swear with their ears and top lips. You remember how your Modestine used to swear with her ears. They try to kick too, just as she used to do.

There are soldiers all about here all busy shoving the Germans back and *shoving* the Germans back

and SHOVING the Germans back, and sooner or later we shall shove the whole lot of them right back into Germany over the Rhine—which is a big river—bigger than the river at Maidenhead—RIGHT back into Germany and off their feet, and then we shall sit on their heads severely until they have had enough, and then the war will be over, and we shall just have to tidy up and come home and I shall come home to you my Darling and the Blessed Mummy and the nice flat at St. John's Wood, and oh, I do hope it will be soon because I want to see you and Mummy most awfully.

Good bye my precious, please give my love to Gram and tell her I wish I could have some English Turkey. And please Vallie send everybody you can out here to help shove, because the sooner the Germans are shoved over and the more of us there are to sit on their heads, the sooner I shall see you all again.

Your Doody.

To his Wife.

France, March 30th, 1915.

Dearest

Sorry not to have written yesterday. We made a move which occupied all day; my

beautiful boiler house left behind for the next comer. We are now housed in a small Monastery which is also a farm. The whole 6th is in one building and a devil of a squeeze it is too. All the men are on the top floor under the roof—a regular forest of beams. I had just room to be at length last night and no more. I could touch seven men without changing my position. We had a little straw and just our one blanket apiece and it was too cold to sleep except in snatches. I found some water in my mess tin hanging by my head frozen this morning.

The weather is curious, freezing every night and cold winds but out of the wind and in the sun it is now (noon) quite warm.

We hope—that is C Section hopes—to push on soon leaving A as Hospital Section at this, our base. I don't know if we have any ground for this hope. It would be very nice. I am sure we should be more comfortable cut up into sections under our own section officers.

It's only ten past twelve and I am starving for my dinner. We had an inane religious service in the open this morning at 8.40. For some obscure reason we were sent forth to it without our greatcoats and standing at ease we nearly froze in the cutting wind. All the infantry present were greatcoated. I suppose it was a

slip on someone's part. It's a bad principle that makes two hundred uncomfortable for one man's error.

Oh! I'm hungry. You can send me some cake or chocolate as soon and as often as you like, if I am going to feel like this long. I can smell the stew cooking and I fancy there are onions and carrots in it. Hope I get a LARGE helping.

Heaps of love to you. The rest is for my ducksome.

FRANCE, April 1st, 1915.

I started a letter yesterday—before the arrival of the long letter and the parcel and, being interrupted to help unload a cart waggon (let's be accurate) I put it in my pocket. It was greatly injured at the treatment. I enclose a copy because I want to rub it in as written and because the original is almost unreadable.

Here beginneth :—

" DEAREST.

I am sitting by the gate watching for the supply waggon which will also bring the letters. I do hope you have written to me—— "

Copy ceases. It's getting too affecting. Really dear, though, I do wish you would write to me every other day at least and arrange with Mater

to write on the intervening days. A letter makes the most amazing difference to my state of mind. When I get no letter I am a downtrodden worm put upon by my superiors and hated by my inferiors. When I get a nice long letter I'm *it.*

I'm writing lightly but it's curiously true. The psychology of a Lance Corporal on Active Service is a wonderful thing.

Things are going on very well now. They even issue us matches and the papers are given out quite regularly.

Concerning grumbles—I am bound to do a certain amount. We are awfully subject to fits of depression all of us—and to anyone with a hump many of the minor ills of active service are very galling because of their resemblance to unnecessary impositions—Jack calls it their unstandupagainstableness. When you have a hump, an officer, who loses his way and has to ask it of passers by, becomes an incompetent idiot who will probably lead you straight into the German lines the first time you go out. When you feel cheerful—that is to say when letters have been arriving freely—it is merely a link between men and officers to find that the latter are fallable. Someone *else* with a hump is reproved for lack of charitableness, if he says anything such as you yourself were saying yesterday.

It's an up and down business, but oh! the Hump of yesterday! I believe I even hated Willet.

The Bishop of London paid us a visit on Monday and gave a very good address. I like the old chap. It was a curious service—several battalions sent such men as could come—the R.F.A. and Engineers were there and some others. We formed a square—in the centre was a transport waggon the far side of the square was *our* band. We led off with a few words from the Bishop. London sent us its love (Bless it). Then a hymn. Then a Liturgy from the Russian slightly adapted —excellent and went very well indeed.

"Master, Lord God, Father Almighty and Adorable, meet it is and right to bless Thee, to glorify Thee, and to offer Thee with a contrite heart these our humble supplications."

Good beginning, isn't it? And then:—

"And for those also, O Lord, the humble beasts, who with us bear the burden and heat of the day and whose guileless lives are offered for the wellbeing of their countries, we supplicate Thy great tenderness of heart for Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast, and great is Thy loving kindness, O Master, Saviour of the World."

Isn't that nice? After that a sermon of sorts—another hymn, "God speed you all" said his Grace and we went back to work.

I have found—in an outhouse we were cleaning to serve as a store—under a foot of stale straw a little blue gray box that looked familiar—and on it in gold letters was Taylor, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow! The shop where you bought me my amethyst set!

The parcel arrived quite safely. Nothing in the letter was superfluous, the Dictionary is perfect—

And I love you very much.

To his Mother.

April 2nd, 1915.

Dearest Mater

We have now settled down (to settle down on active service only means that the necessary arrangements for a stay are made). We "settled down" last week in —— and cleared out a few days later. We have now settled down in a Monastery in a village in a mining-cum-arable sort of country. It is very like some parts of Durham in appearance. We have given the old place the first scrub for—I should say—several centuries and have turned it into a hospital, barracks, stables, with officers, men, and patients all under one roof—rather a crush.

Aeroplanes are every day—almost every hour—

occurrences, and bombs are dropped here and there about the country in general in charming profusion. They seem to do amazingly slight damage—especially to the military (either men or works). The civil population suffer slightly but apparently no more than does the London public from traffic and fires.

We can hear the guns nightly,—when the troops keep quiet. They cheer me up enormously. —dispel the feeling that there's no progress being made. "Surely a noise that can be heard all those miles away must do some good" ses I. I want to get the damned war over and get home to certain people—our mutual acquaintances—and to work. I'm sick of being *out of it* at home without being really *in it* out here. Still I suppose we are some use.—We must be or they wouldn't pay us and feed us—feed us very well too as army food goes. It gets monotonous at the best. My chief objection is the Thé-à-la-chloride-of-lime. I am longing for a good cup of tea again. The chloride of lime in ours comes from the water-carts. In theory it sterilizes the water and then settles, leaving no perceptible flavour. In practice, it may sterilize the water all right, but it resolutely declines to altogether settle. Sufficient remaining in solution to flavour tea very strongly. The water drunk cold is quite inoffensive. Our

water cart men may find out a few wrinkles soon which they are not yet up to. At present they are erring on the side of hygiene,—which is quite satisfactory in this land of cess-pools, latrines and mud, now rapidly dessicating and drying into very fine and—I am sure—very buggy dust. I prefer buggy to germinous, don't you? Dixon —who is delightfully Irish—simplified the whole micro-organic world into " the bugs get in through the cut and etc."—and it has stuck. He—Dixon —is now a very energetic Quartermaster. *Some* Quartermaster, I tells yer. If any other unit can be robbed to feed the 6th Field Ambulance I'll back him to rob it. And if any other unit is out to rob us—as of course they are—in this highly adaptable army—he'll scotch 'em if any one can. Of course war hath her victories and the other side —the other unit—must come off best sometimes.

(Aeroplane over head.)

The funny thing is we never mention or think of the gentlemen the other side of the firing line. Supplying them with shells per rapid transit; watching them, shifting them here and being shifted by them there; is just our industry, our occupation. Our *enemies* are the fellows in the next barrack room who pinch our straw, the 5th Field Ambulance who dare to consider themselves our equals. The sergeants' mess is our

mortal foe three days a week and our sworn ally the other three (I am assuming a *dies non* occasionally). We make war upon certain cliques—(Anglicé *Clicks*) and against certain cafés where they wont give more than 50 centimes for a 6*d*. bit.

That's us. We're a rum lot.

Must finish

Love.

To his Wife.

Good Friday.

I am very proud of the fact that I have managed to write five letters in the last seven days. Conditions are rather against letter writing at the best out here. Any way you won't get one now for three or four days, as we are off on a journey somewhere, leaving here tomorrow morning so don't worry if you don't hear from me for the best part of a week.

Journeys—*our* journeys—are always by round about routes to keep the main roads clear for the movements of motors etc and the main rails clear for the hasty movement of troops. We—(moving up more or less at our own time to depôts) have to keep out of the way. It must be one of the most responsible tasks in modern war; keeping

roads and rails free from obstruction. The whole 2nd London Division looks huge as you see it scattered over the countryside: one battalion in this village, another in that, artillery here, engineers there, but it is only one of some thousands (if the French official report is true, which of course it is) other such units all quartered in the northern half of France. Imagine all of them left to go their own way to their next position. Imagine their huge supply trains and convoys of sick and wounded, each taking the road it thought best! I've seen the supply train for one Brigade (1/3rd of a Division) get off its course for ten minutes and the muddle that ensued and I'm *impressed.* Goethe saw the German and Exiled-Noble Army in a muddle and his description is very striking—*it is of an army equal to about two divisions, modern, without motors or heavy guns.*

I can't keep your letters and I feel there's something in one I have left unanswered. Always repeat unanswered questions—will you Dear?

The coinage hereabouts is amazing, not only British and French and Belgian with occasionally Swiss and Italian but also Indian quarter annas called "sous Indiens," English two shilling pieces called "pièces de quarante-huit sous." Halfpence are just "sous." When we get into Germany I

wonder if we shall drag the curious currency with us and mix it in turn with the pfennigs and marks. It's quite likely.

I feel very hopeful about getting things over soon now.

Post

A lovely long letter from you. Thank you Darling. You've no idea how it cheers me. My Blessed Vallie—I'm so glad he is being good.

The parcel—fortunately—did not arrive with the letter. That saves me the trouble of carrying three tins of milk etc. on the journey tomorrow. I suppose it will greet me on arrival at our destination. Mater's friend sent me a whole pound of John Cotton! I shall be equipped with that and Lal's for a couple of months at least. I smoke more on some jobs than others. Cleaning out ancient stables is most expensive in tobacco.

The 6th Field Ambulance is the Ambulance of the 6th Brigade. Our Battalions are the 20th to 24th. I don't know if the censor will pass this. Still as you ask I will answer and leave it to him.

I simply must stop.

Heaps of love to you and all and to my Vallie—Bless him.

FRANCE, April 10th, 1915.

DEAREST,

Absolutely my first opportunity to write since we left here (a draft of 20 of us) five days ago. We returned here—the Monastery—last night and I found your parcel (thanks very much) your long letter (thanks even more—I loved it) another from Mater and one from Mr. Chamberlain (of the tobacco) waiting for me.

I have had an amazing Easter: attached to a regular Field Ambulance (one of the old ones), half the time at the Main Station (which is also a French Hospital), the other half at the advance dressing station, only a few hundred yards behind the trenches. I have been in our first line trenches and seen German dead lying out between our barbed wire and theirs: poor heaps of wet clothes and mud. They had been there some time in a place equally inaccessible to either side.

The advanced dressing station was run by men who have been out here since the beginning; reinforced by drafts of ex-R.A.M.C. men from the Reserve. I was taken for a personally conducted tour of the dug-outs and trenches by a ginger moustached old sergeant with a D.C.M. who maintains in a strong Aberdonian accent that shrapnel is *absolutely* harmless. I have since

seen three men newly struck by shrapnel and I disagree with him. On the other hand I have watched shrapnel bursting for a whole afternoon over the com-trenches and fields, across which reliefs were passing to and from the trenches—and going up later with stretchers I have heard *No Casualties*, and I can't help saying that shrapnel must be a very expensive way to take life. A shell burst in the back of the house wherein the advanced Dressing Station is, a few days before we arrived there. It smashed into the kitchen and exploded forward into the front room—the Officers' Mess. The kitchen happened to be empty and the officers were, by chance attending to a case in another room at the time. That sort of thing happens every day.

Of course I saw and experienced nothing very hot in the way of either rifle or shell fire—just the trench warfare of everyday of the month. We should have been in the commodious cellar and "funk holes" of the station if the shelling had developed into a serious bombardment. The men all slept in the cellar. We (five) elected to sleep above ground in a room next to the sergeants. Somehow their proximity made us feel that the danger wasn't so very great. The room was in the front of the house—the side remote from the German lines.

Shell fire is spectacular. Rifle fire is curious—*eerie*. The Germans "fire by the map," so our boys say. Their bullets have regular highways and byeways with a particularly pitted wall or a house corner converting most of them into blind alleys at last. I have stood with experienced old sergeants and men in the shelter of a wall and watched bullet after bullet hit the *same brick* in another wall a few yards away.

Firing by the map makes it equally possible to dodge by the map. The captain in charge took our lieutenant and myself across country as exposed as Widbrook Common, with bullets twinging like plucked telegraph wires across it. He seemed quite unconcerned and—between ducks—we emulated his manner. He picked a zig zag course avoiding the road altogether (a course I have since seen others pick across the same country) until—just where the fire seemed a shade too hot—he entered the communicating trench.

I have seen the Village of ——. I wish I could give you the name. I expected to find it a row of ruins flanking deserted lanes and roads.

I could not always distinguish roads from kitchens; estaminets from farm yards; interiors from exteriors. Not only was grass growing in the streets but in the paved floors of the houses, and where

walls have been thrown down, their materials have been used to build other walls—barricades—across roads—rooms—yards and gardens—in one case across the railway, which occurred most surprisingly in what I thought was a large farm kitchen or outhouse, appearing under one such new battered-to-old-seeming wall and disappearing under another. Not only all this, but trenches and barbed wire entanglements which one associates unconsciously with exterior aspects, traverse street and roofless room and yard alike, joining cellar with cellar, until the whole village beyond the church is both maze and ruin.

The Church is the most amazing sight of all. Nothing remains of it but the high east end wall, the rest being sheared off at the window sills. This one huge pyramidal wall still stands clear white, supporting a super-life-size Crucifix. The village is absolutely deserted. Neither natives nor our men attempt to live there. One or two cellars are used as dugouts. The firing line runs a few yards outside it, and stray bullets tick little bits off it all day, while occasionally—as an observation post is suspected in this or that remaining wall—the Germans drop a few shells. My impression is that further bombardment can only simplify it. The present village with its constant imitations of a house turned inside out

and exhibitions of railways and flowerbeds apparently on the wrong sides of the front doors is the last word.

I really must stop. Heaps of love.

FRANCE, April 15th, 1915.

DEAREST.

The parcel arrived quite safe. The Walker's is exactly what I want—both for use *and show*. The Ideal is ideal. For goodness sake, keep me supplied with milk above everything. It makes the indifferent army tea quite palatable, and is moreover easily converted into fried bread or an early cup or an after dinner cup of really good cook's tea. A man with a tin of milk can go where he pleases and enjoy the best of everything. Men, to whom a tip of cash would be an insult (there are more than you think of such out here), can be bought body and soul for four drops from the can. The Germans with their characteristic lack of insight have not realized this. For Heaven's sake keep it dark!

This should be a letter to Mater but I am not quite sure where she is. You will let her see it as soon as possible, won't you dear? The poor Censor has groaned and the Lord has heard him and we are now limited to *one* letter a day. I am glad. I used to lie awake pitying the poor man

who had to wade through all our effusions. Some of the fellows used to write half a dozen in a day—at the expense of uncleaned boots, unwashed teeth, in fact all the important private duties of a soldier on A.S. undone. You've no idea the time these things take under the conditions we have to do them under. The poor pumps of this neighbourhood are quite inadequate to our requirements and we wash, coram populo, in the neighbouring brooks.

You ask what is the most striking feature of the country under war. It is easy to answer: its peacefulness. Where I am sitting now is not twenty miles from the firing line. A more peaceful Sunday morning scene can hardly be imagined. I am on a wall between a garden and a farmyard. The garden, it is true, is a bit gone to pieces and our incinerator and rubbish pit sear it slightly—but we had these things in peaceful England; and they do not suggest the proximity of war. Flowers are growing this spring like every other, both in the garden and in the fields away to my left. Larks and other birds are singing. That is what you've got to remember if you want to visualize the front as it is. One takes for granted trenches, horse lines, ruined villages, great and small guns, khaki and grey dead, barbed wire, smoke and noise along the

black wriggley line that the " Daily Mail " and Co. trace across their maps to show where our front is. You must convince yourself that there are skylarks above the sand dunes near Ostend, just as there used to be, pigeons in ruined Louvain, early butterflies in the air among the bullets, crows and rooks around Ypres, and Rheims, daisies growing among the Jack Johnson holes at Neuve Chapelle, violets in the ruins of Givenchy, primroses at La Bassée and so on. Nature carries on business as usual. I am just beginning to realise it on the little I've seen, and what is true here must be true all along the line.

I had a nasty spell last Monday, stood by at a long (hour and a half) operation on the skull and brain—trephining it is called. I nearly fainted twice but pulled myself together and went back as soon as I had got a breath of fresh air and a drink of water outside the room. The blood did not affect me at all. The infernal snoring and groaning of the poor devil under the anæsthetic seemed to hypnotise me. Moreover the room was very hot and I was holding a bowl of Methylated spirit—the smell from which is no help to a faint-feeling man.

It was touch and go with the man. A piece of shell and some fragments of hat had penetrated the skull. After the operation hope was expressed that he would be only paralysed. The

next morning he was reading "Punch"! I felt better than I've felt for years when I saw him holding the paper in both hands.

The surgeons and doctors here are first class and, outside rush times when the cases come in in dozens, a man stands as good a chance here as he would in England. It's the minor cases in their earlier stages that don't stand so good a chance of quick recovery. Boils, sore throats, tonsilitis and co. do not receive the careful treatment we gave them at Hatfield.

I have only heard of two cases of cerebro spinal, none of typhoid. Disease seems to be well in hand. It is early to crow, though. The men everywhere make a hobby of getting clean even if they cannot keep so.

Your second parcel! Oh yum yum, Warren's Chocolate is it, why did I never taste it before? The cake too! I wish postage were lower, I'd ask for more.

Love to both your houses.

To his Son.

FRANCE, April 17th, 1915.

DEAREST LITTLE BOY.

How are you? *Did* you get my last letter? Mummy *wont* answer about it. She tells me that

you are behaving beautifully. I am so glad to hear it. I've got your photo in the pretty frame with Mummy's tucked in behind you and every morning I say " Good morning Vallie " to it and every night I say " Good night." You look so jolly you quite cheer me up—but oh! I do so want to see you your real self, my baby.

When the War's over and I come home, Vallie, we'll have such a time. We'll get up early and get the breakfast all on our own and go for walks, and I'll take you to the theatre. I hope there'll be some fairies like the gold ones—do you remember?

The weather is getting hotter here. It hasn't rained today. Last night your Doody went for such a funny ride on an army waggon to a town a few miles away to fetch two motor bikes. It was very dark and all the people had gone to bed. Nobody was out except just us and our horses and a big railway that never goes to sleep but keeps on chu-chuing all night with supplies and troops, and sometimes a hospital train, taking away wounded from the front, where our men are biffing into the Germans and hoping—like me—to get it all over and get home to their little boys.

DOODY.

To his Wife.

FRANCE, April 19th, 1915.

Don't you worry about bullets, dear. *My* visits to the danger zone look like being few and far between and only at such moments as the danger is at a minimum. We don't take part in charges and countercharges in the R.A.M.C. and it is in these real operations that the casualties occur.

Oh my dear, I do wish you could have heard and seen the first evening I spent in the (more or less) sergeants' mess at that Advanced Dressing Station! There were only two sergeants in it, but the old nobility of the little party had acquired the habit of taking their evening tot of rum with them round a stove in the "dispensary"; one of the uninjured front rooms of the house, uninjured only comparatively you understand. There were no windows of course, and the ceiling had fallen in places on the occasion when a shell had smashed up the kitchen and officers' mess—both kitchen staff and officers being, by the merest chance, out at the time. There was also an improvised chimney through the wall, the actual chimney being out of action. In spite of this improvisation, the smoke from the stove, which they fed very generously with wood from a deserted timber

yard near by, slowly filled the room and limited each sitting of the little parliament to about an hour and a half, by the end of which time, the strongest having given in, the weaker vessels accompanied him to the front door to watch the star shells light up the country opposite, and recover from their partial asphyxia.

I sat out two of these sittings. The elder of the sergeants lolled at ease in a comfortable chair one leg either side of the stove (the stoves hereabouts stick well out into the room). He was suffering from a carbuncle on his neck and wore a white bandage like a stock round his throat, gray shirt open at neck ; usual khaki rather dirty ; ragged red moustache and hair and a weather beaten face surrounded by an Aberdeen accent. That is my everlasting impression of him. A queer, clean, well bred little man whose lack of moustache made him look almost cherubically boyish, leaned most of the time over the back of his chair and punctuated his remarks, when they waxed a shade too preposterous, by offers to re-dress his neck or apply a hot fomentation.

He was a curiously acute young man, this last, very blasé. Everyone liked him and he seemed to like everybody—(I believe in these old parties that have been together since the first months one should say that the men love each other. You

at home still associate love with demonstrativeness, though goodness knows why, and would think I mean they go on like Brutus and Co. whereas I really mean they feel towards each other as members of a family feel towards each other). Help! What a digression. They all seemed to like the blasé young man, leave it at that. I will continue this description in my next.

To his Mother-in-law.

April 20th, 1915.

If you want to hear from me occasionally you've got to write to me and keep up your end of the correspondence. I can't tell you what treasures letters are out here. They cheer one for a whole day of depressing work—and this is depressing work, you know, quite apart from being carried on under all the depressing circumstances of discomfort, homesickness, and exile—to say nothing of monotony of food which *I* feel more than I ought to. Our food is quite good, but oh it is unpalatable and monotonous!

I am rather unlucky this week doing two guards in the week. That means two nights up without corresponding days in, as compensation. I am also pack store keeper—a beastly job which I hate. Present state of book shows several shirts

lost and many pairs of pants risen from nowhere to daunt me. It doesn't look military, does it? F ncy worrying about shirts with guns ever booming a few miles away, and hostile aeroplanes spying out our drying ground every fine evening. Still it's done—even under fire, unless you happen to get hit and then all responsibility ceases. This is again curious.

To his Mother.

April 22nd, 1915.

MY DEAREST MATER,

I'm sorry not to have written to you for so many days, but I haven't known where to find you. You would have had a letter had I known.

Our section has taken over duties this week. Two of the four Corporals have celebrated the occasion by "going cooty," otherwise declaring possession of one or more lice and being quarantined in the scaby ward. I started the week as corporal in charge of latrines and general fatigues—a job I like as I can in it make myself mildly objectionable on the subjects of cleanliness and sanitation. After two hours of it however I was made pack store keeper, vice Corporal Walker gone cooty. One hour later the Corporal of the guard went ditto, and I am now combining pack

stores and guard. It's going to be a beastly tie I can tell you.

Pack store keeper is supposed to take charge of all effects of patients admitted to hospital, and to see to the washing of whatever needs washing among those effects. I wish he had power to decide what needs burning.

Most of our patients are quite unambitious in their ailments : the usual boils, scabies, bad heels, etc., being nearly half their number. Somehow though, these minor ills seem to make men—usually clean—careless of the interior of their knapsacks and haversacks and the accumulation of old socks, bits of bread, letters, buttons and fragments of tinned beef at the bottoms thereof are very distressing.

Good news is very sparingly dealt out, isn't it? I suppose we shall sooner or later get through the Dardanelles, sweep the Bosches from Belgium, recapture " —— " (our own particular hobby hereabouts is the recapture of " —— "), and I suppose one of these days the steady weakening of Germany will make her a little too weak to hold off the rest of the world. I wish it would hurry up though. I have no hope of seeing any of you this summer—unless I come home before the war is over—a contingency which, curiously enough would not please me—unless it were only

for a few days leave. Of course *that* I *would* like most awfully. Oh, for a few days every other month !

Must conclude this letter. It has been written in spells of half a dozen lines at a time between jobs.

God bless you all. My love to Dennis—can he talk any yet ?—wait a minute.

Wow ! I was called by an enthusiastic washerman to view the dead lice on a patient's shirt after boiling ! Like Queen Victoria " We are not amused." Lice, my dear, lice, not fleas or bugs. Ugh !

By the way, Crawfords do an awfully good box of biscuits for sending to the front. It is—I regret to say—called " The Hero Box," but other people like its contents. Such a box every now and then would go very well. The biscuits are just the rich and fancy sort we long for.

To his Wife.

FRANCE, April 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST,

Things very peaceful these last few days. Weather charming. We've got the Band out and I shall cease writing abruptly at 3 to go and hear a few " chunes," with which we are going to rejoice

the villagers. Bombardments in the distance the last few nights, aeroplanes in plenty—mostly our own I regret to say. A German being warmly received is a very exciting sight from the point of view of those safe on terra firma—exciting but hard to follow. The intruder is so easily mistaken for those French and British 'planes which go up to give chase, and the clouds of shrapnel shell smoke in the air drift so quickly down the wind together (though some still evenings they hang for a bit) that twenty watchers can generally evolve a totally different story of the fight.

We are running a couple of wards and a scaby ward but this only keeps one section busy at a time, the other two filling in the tedious "standing by" time with marches and drills—physical and stretcher—and occasional lectures which are more like pow-wows, everybody putting in their say. Gay and I gave one afternoon's entertainment, he describing the nursing he had seen at —— when he was there and I the pleasant little operation that kept me so happy for a couple of hours.

Send me *nothing* but food, tobacco and light literature—not too much of the two latter. Thank your Mother very much for the cuttings. I can't find them at the moment, but Wright's coal tar soap *one* cake at a time would be most

acceptable, also a little Fel's naptha. Be careful to send me no Stores of things such as boxes of soap etc. Every blessed thing we possess has to be carried with us on our own backs. Some of the fellows get supplies of *sugar* sent them—a mere waste of postage—others six pairs of sox! If they are wise they give them away. Food can always be eaten if not by me personally by a small party convened by me, each member of which will assuredly invite me to his party when his box arrives—see?

The Band!

Bless you all!

April 24th, 1915.

My Darling,

I am having a very lively time combining Corp. of Guard with pack store keeper. Have not slept or attempted to sleep since yesterday morning—five o'clock. I rather enjoy a night on Guard. There are two ways to look at it (i) a night's sleep spoiled and (ii) an adventure. I feel I've said this before—have I?

Weather is improving rapidly: days very fine and warm—nights cold and frosty. Washing is very cold work. Think of me stripped to the middle dabbling in a soapy brook before six a.m. and shaving in the shelter of a sort of young railway arch (it does not support a railway and

is merely an architectural feature of our beloved home from—*very far from*—home). We turn in from sheer lack of light before eight and are most of us ready and glad to nip up at reveillé—5.30. I know I am often awake long before that, and—once awake—a stone floor, even when strewn with straws which show which way the wind blows, does not encourage late lying.

I wonder, dear, if you can get me some fizzy drink to mix with water—some sort of fruit salts—packed in a tin for transit. Bottles weigh so much in themselves. They had something of the sort at the advance dressing station which was very pleasant and—I should say—beneficial now that summer is acumen in.

Must finish—earlier post or something.

Love.

To his Son.

April 26th, 1915.

Tell Vallie: My dear little boy I want to come home just as much as you want me to, but I can't for a long time yet, not till all the Germans have had their heads sat on, and all the Turks have had their heads sat on and one or two Austrians have had their heads sat on—and that will certainly take the whole lovely summer and a

bit over—but I *think* I shall see you again about the time when you have to light up before tea.

Send me heaps of messages my sweet.

Your Doody.

To his Wife.

I suppose you will spend your holidays at Maidenhead, dear. It makes me so sad to miss a summer with you but it's got to be. I have real hopes of getting home in November. If Italy *does* come into it that will hurry things up enormously but I'm sure we can win without her. You know how enormously I believe in the winning spirit—well it's out here in big chunks, not only in our boys but in the French. The German humour seems to be one of gas mingled with amazement. They cannot understand us ;—our chaplains going into the Trenches ; our advance dressing stations carrying on week after week under fire—all the things that we take so matter-of-factly seem to puzzle those Germans who are flung by circumstances from their régime into ours. Above all I believe our N.C.O.'s shock them. I heard at first hand of a German something-more-than-mere-man who said that the way our N.C.O.'s fraternised with the men was

swinish! My informant—a Corporal R.A.M.C.—had heard him say it. He merely quoted the Bosch without much appreciation of the excellence of the humour, and I am convinced he was not inventing it.

I have been faring extremely well lately, Roffe's people and Willet's people having so to speak got the range and started an ordered bombardment. Meat paste and cakes and biscuits and tinned fruits arrive by every post for some member of my "*click*" (you know what a "click" is, don't you?) and my "dominant personality" (*Capell*) being particularly assertive about tea time I come in for several shares. We are all very generous with our hampers—casting bread upon the waters we call it.

One thing I lack is good tobacco. I have decided that I do not care for the army issue. I live in the hope of some more John Cotton from Mr. Chamberlain soon—I gather from his letter I shall get it—also I look forward to the Rasp and Crown from you—

By the way, next time you go to 72 fish out my clay pipe in case you can find it, and shove it in the next ensuing parcel. This is not important.

Letters, Letters, Letters,—thems what are.

Love

April 30th, 1915.

MY DARLING,

Curious situations abound. Behold me sitting in Lieut. Dickenson's chair by Lieut. Dickenson's fire in the midst of Lieut. Dickenson's deserted patience (a game unknown to me: five rows and aces out) Lieut. D. having gone forth to the Regimental Aid Post on our L. Front to see a man afflicted suddenly with peritonitis. We are a party forming an Advance Dressing Station here at ——. We have just sent our first case (Sergeant shot through chin, tongue and neck—quite conscious—hit at three, remained in trench till seven, left us 8.15—in Hospital by now) into —— together with a request for two pounds of soda for the Bat. M.O. on our R. Front. (Thus our Motor Ambulances fetch and carry). I am waiting up to take the soda when it arrives up to the M.O. at his aid post behind the trenches. Why soda in the middle of the night? *Gas*, my dear. Les Bosches are now throwing chunks of gas at us. Nasty smelly trick, isn't it? We are replying in our nice clean British way with soda—at least so I thought at first, but the truth is that partially asphyxiated Tommies thrive on Sodium *Bi*—not the washing variety. I am going to rouse out Fisher (now sleeping peacefully

in the billet in spite of a battery) to walk up with me when the stuff arrives. Lieut. Dickenson won't let me go alone. It is a lovely night—high moon almost full and a low mist over the firing line through which star shells (otherwise rockets) twinkle up occasionally. The battery near here " bings " out a shell every ten minutes or so. It is a noisy brute but some naval guns over a mile away are quite deafening even at that distance. The expression " tearing the atmosphere " really applies to the scream of their shells as they pass overhead. They do sound like tearing silk heard through a stethoscope. The prettiest sound of the night is a machine-gun a mile or so to our right firing short tap-tap tap tap taps like an over grown woodpecker. Understand that these sounds are only occasional only the scattered rifle fire being anything like continuous, and that so scattered that it is a mere background. Bing ! from the near battery —five minutes elapse—tap tap tap tap, another four or five—tap tap tap again—a slight increase in the rifle fire—*Bahang Wheeeee !* from the naval gun—ten minutes perfect calm but for rifles very faint and intermittent, tap tap tap—tap tap tap. This time from further off : the woodpecker's mate. Sh Sh Sh—Sh—Sh a German shell coming to *look for* our Battery.

Sh Sh Sh! Whap! Missed it by about half a mile—five or six minutes peace. Bing from ours. Bing again after a minute and two more bings rapid. Peace once more, the rifles a trifle fainter, one crack a trifle louder. Tap tap tap tap tap——

That's half an hour not taken down of course but typified. I am looking forward to the walk.

Monday.

I was interrupted in the above by message that more patients were coming down. We had to meet them. I got to sleep about one and was up again at 5.30 In fact I find I have only had six and a half hours of sleep (only four and a half without boots on) since 5.30 a.m. the day before yesterday. I am going to have a nap this afternoon though. Last night's walk up and back was delightful and quite safe. The Aid Posts are, of course, not in really dangerous positions. Only danger was from sentries. They get hypnotised by the rattle of the rifle fire and being awakened drop their bayonets smartly to the approaching stomach and say very fiercely but surprisingly quietly "'Alt!" I always obey. "Who are you?" I generally forget, which rouses suspicion. I then remember but stammer over it. The stammer produces a sympathy in the sentry who says apologetically and bashfully

"p—p—pas Sflam-bublance——" Then with full consciousness of the ridiculousness of the remark "All's—well." That being said he calls after me in his natural voice suddenly rediscovered—"What's the time, chum?" I am sorry for sentries. They get so fearfully smitten with self-consciousness.

I really feel I am some use at last. I am N.C.O. in charge of party (seventeen including officer and the padre). Lieut. D. is a treat to work with. I have no one to share—or double—my responsibilities under him and he treats me as an intelligent human being not an escaped lunatic with criminal tendencies: the way certain superior N.C.O.'s seem to think their juniors should be treated. This is like being back with Barker again.

Wednesday.

This letter written in jiblets. Thanks for your long one—a treat. Have lost Mater's address. Looking forward to tobacco. Army issue uncertain up here—we depend upon our Quartermaster at —— whither the Sixth moved the day after I left with my party. They are rigging up a hospital there and must be having a hell of a time scrubbing floors.

Aeroplane fight outside—excuse me.

(Returned).

I really hate to miss them especially in a good light — most exciting — no result — as usual — shrapnel wasted.

Bless you all—buck up tobacco. I am now smoking one of Lieut. Dickenson's cigars.

May 3rd.

DARLING,

Still at the Advanced Dressing Station, expect to be relieved on Sunday, the plan being to relieve the personel of Advanced Dressing Stations in toto every week or even oftener. Since I came here the 6th London Field Ambulance have moved into —— and started work with a vengeance, ambulance orderlies coming out daily —the motor cyclist going and returning, and occasional officers and chaplains coming out to pay us a visit, all bring stories of how we are turning the Ecole Maternelle into a hospital by dint of scrubbing brush and more scrubbing brush.

We, here, have done a fair amount of cleaning up too; the regulars having left this place in a state no Territorial Officer could tolerate.

I am joking of course, but oh we *are* military, we Territorials! We *are* thorough! The regulars are more than friendly in their attitude towards us, but they sometimes smile.

There is a gentle soul talking to me continuously all the time I am writing this—I must postpone.

Next day.

This is a week of sensations but I really think last night will be unbeaten at the end of the war. It was by moonlight—almost full—that adds something, don't you think? I had taken three men in answer to a message incoherently delivered by a man on horseback, accompanied by two cyclists—

"Man gone mad down at —— They've got 'im in a little room—by the railway station."

We found him not raving but apparently asleep, wrapped in blankets quiet as death. A stretcher was brought out of the motor and about a dozen spare stretcher slings I had thought to bring—fortunately—and we debated a moment in the moonlight. What a curious group we must have been on the deserted station platform, standing round him! Then one of his chums touched him. You must imagine more than I can describe in this chatter. He raved and bit and beat out with fists and feet snarling like a dog—*really like* a dog—we got him on to a stretcher, and I lashed him on as gently as I could but very firmly. Once bending across him I touched his face with

my sleeve, he had it in his teeth in a minute—and in the midst of it men passed going up to the trenches singing. They passed along the road not fifty yards away while a dozen of us held him down by arms and legs and hair, and muffled him in blankets and packed him off with two of our men and two of his chums to our snug little brand new hospital at ——. Aschcroft and I then set out to walk back to our station.

It was this walk in the moonlight with the star shells on the horizon and the rattling line towards which we were walking (the station lies away from the firing line from here) that provided *the* sensation. I was naturally impressed. Ashcroft is a good obvious fellow. He prattled wonderingly of " Wot would make a chap go off like that." He supposed he had been " too daring like " and it had " *told* on him." " These Engineers go mad very easy— " etc. Can't you hear him—an old liner steward—a bit of a gardener—a silk hat maker last job—age about forty? The sort of man you meet fifty of in an hour.

We had to pass the wooded garden of the Chateau de ——. In the wood are about two score graves, half of our men and half of Indians—Khdir's and Ali's—beautifully tended graves shining in bead wreaths and pine crosses. Over them in the moonlight a nightingale was singing

loud and sweet. Its first notes were so close and so low that I was startled.

Eh bien, I can't express it. I feel as if for a week past a great super-human artist had been painting for me, in all the colours and sounds and feelings and scents of creation, a picture of himself. He is Reality one moment, Mystery the next.

Have I mentioned the spy we saw in uniform, being marched away under armed guard—swaggering but unable to swagger in a straight line. I shouldn't be surprised to hear he was no spy and got off—but he swaggered and he was frightened. That was what I saw.

I went up to the ——th H.Q. this afternoon and saw two men buried. Their chums were so particular to dig them a *level* grave and a *rectangular* grave and *parallel* graves, and to note who was in this grave, who in that, that my mind, jumping to questions as always, was aching with why's which I wouldn't have asked for the world —almost as if the answer—you take me—would disgrace me for not knowing it already—brand me as lacking some decency the grave diggers had.

Oh Lord the mystery of men's feelings.

May 6th, 1915.

I want you to send me *at once* Bell's Standard Elocution (Mrs. Carpenter has a copy which I

will return if she will lend it). I also want "The Revenge" and Henry's speeches—the one about England and the one beginning "Upon the King" and the Charioteer's speech from Euripides (Gilbert Murray's translation). Oh Lord, what *is* the play? I suppose I must do without it. Send the others *at once* though. This is really important.

I am back at our Main Dressing Station (you would call it a Hospital but we are modest) in the pretty little town of —— six miles behind the line.

To his Mother.

May 7th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER,

I feel very wicked: not having written to you for well over a week—but you make allowances, don't you?

Returned from the advanced dressing station (and jolly sorry to leave it) yesterday—Tuesday, and am now at our main dressing station in ▬▬▬ (my own blacking not the censor's). I object to using dashes, they interfere with the punctuation; so I describe this charming little French —very French—Cathedral city, six miles behind the firing line as ▬▬▬

I was amazed when I got here to see what a workman-like place the old 6th had made of these blocks of school buildings. Tents and cooking

trenches in the three playgrounds, medical wards, surgical wards, orderly room, operating theatre and "dressing room." I am on duty in this "dressing room," and operating theatre (the staffs are interchangeable necessarily) from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with two hours off daily.

Patients arrive at all hours; generally in twos and threes—frequently in fives and sixes (the last invariably at meal times). They are carried into the dressing room where boots etc. are removed (this saves the operating theatre from dirt), and then transported to the operating theatre where their wounds are inspected and dressed and where every man receives an injection of anti-tetanus anti-toxin. Septic wounds never go into the theatre at all but are dressed in the dressing room. Nasty things they are. We evacuate our cases pretty fast. The medical wards are quite independent of our surgical. B section looks after them—they get a lot of work. We have a so-called infectious ward but the more infectious cases, like measles, diphtheria, etc., go to a special hospital by special "yellow" ambulances. I fancy our "infectious" ward contains nothing more dangerous than scaby cases. It didn't a day or so ago anyway.

My only complaint against present existence is the length of time between reveillé and break-

fast—nominally 5.30 to 8 (that's bad enough) but *actually* 5 until you can get it. Parade for duties is now 6 a.m. and to be shaved and cleaned up for the day before six demands a five o'clock arising from the one blanket and great coat on the floor we call bed. Then, though breakfast is nominally eight, a certain number of ward orderlies etc. have to wait until 8.30 every morning. Of course we take this waiting in turns.

My chief work to-day has been unbooting wounded heroes and giving them beef tea. Though this afternoon I donned the white gown of a grand inquisitor, sublimated my hands and assisted with a couple of dressings; shrapnel (beastly stuff) wounds all over the place.

This letter extends over a day and a half with *at least* a score of interruptions. This is not an exaggeration, there is a man reading the *Telegraph* to me—*only* to me—even now; he doesn't mind my going on writing, so I suppose I mustn't mind his reading. Oh, for an hour's absolute privacy in the twenty-four!

May 8th, 1915.

DEAREST,

You are wrong—you cannot guess from my mention of gas where I am.

We are tremendously busy. Have turned a

very convenient old block of school buildings into bright clean wards and operating and dressing rooms. A dressing room is to all intents and purposes a minor operating room. The more it resembles the best operating theatre in London the better. All ours here are amazingly light and lofty and we have cleaned and whitened them, floors walls and ceilings, till I, for one, am really proud of us. We have as yet experienced no "rush" such as must accompany any big attack, our brigade being on one of those sections of front that cost a life or two a day and supply a couple of dozen real casualties in the twenty-four hours at the outside. Of course we have sick as well. Health generally excellent in the division, it seems. No enteric, typhoid or dip. as far as I know. Favourite diseases boils, scabies, impetigo (nasty thing impetigo but quite a trifle if taken seriously enough). I think our feeding makes for health in the main—though I am convinced that if a man ate his *full* ration every day for a week, he would perish miserably. Half pound of jam per diem! Heaven knows how much meat! Do you wonder I asked for a fizzy drink? By the way it is just what I wanted.

I find I have dissertated. Half way up the page before last I should have said that we are looking after two brigades, in fact we have had

the pleasure of being the first of the 3 Field Ambulances in the division to do active work, one of the others standing in reserve with their brigade and another—poor devils—having settled down to look after the divisional washing. We trembled for a week under the fear that that might be our fate.

I really am awfully bucked with our place here. Three blocks of buildings each a quadrangle around a gravel playground shaded by trees just breaking into green. Rooms very lofty with windows (enormous windows) on two sides. Concussion of big guns combined with Fisher's efforts as a window cleaner have supplied fresh air, as well as light per these windows. The No 1 dressing room in the surgical has lost every pane of glass bar two. (Fisher *not* responsible.) In the playgrounds we have erected tents (you should have seen me wrestling with a new and unshrunken bell tent—to the great amusement of the Sergeant Major—in the fading light last night. The unholy thing seemed to have about a dozen flaps too many.

We, ourselves, are packed into rooms in the 3rd block ; six feet by two feet of floor per man is about our allowance but there is heaps of room in the 1st and 2nd block where are the wards and if ever a rush comes we shall not be unprepared.

After their experiences at the beginning of the war that has been the one cry of the Medical Corps. Be ready for a rush! The Regular Field Ambulances in this town tell highly coloured tales of the hundreds of cases a day some of them were faced with. "Evacuate! Evacuate!"—that of course is the cry. Get your cases on across France to the bases—or across the Channel and be ready for the next. As soon as a man can be moved, out he goes.

I was "at it" from 6 a.m. till 3.45 yesterday and from 5.15 till 9.30 in the morning in the operating theatre (doing very little but still "at it"). In the afternoon moving down to the medical, which we took over, exchanging departments with B Section. This is supposed to make for general efficiency—very likely it does but it also makes a lot of work. In the evening we and B. were both so horrified at the state the other had left their wards in, that we turned to and scrubbed the whole place out. C. Section thought of it first. So I think we scored.

As a matter of fact B. are a jolly good section (and so are we) but we think we are a shade better (and so do they).

In fine I am convinced we are as good as any regular Amb. in France, barring experience. Our very mixedness and number of different

employments in civil life making for efficiency in the multifarious jobs of a Field Ambulance. Plumber, carpenter, clerk, navvy, cook, groom, motor driver—just as useful as nurse or doctor.

Love.

To his Wife.

May 12th, 1915.

DEAREST,

I can't write more than a few lines now. Have had a "rush"—our little operating tent alone had fifty cases, at least, through in a night and a day. Most of them shrapnel. Many serious. But Oh, my Dear the pluck of them! and the amazing cleanness of their bodies under the muddy khaki and sweat and blood drenched vests and shirts. Few were of our Division—, most regulars. Hard ruddy little Scots. A bloodstained kilt, my dear, is a sight to make a painter gasp—such colouring! and in the white acetyline light of our tent!

I'm dead tired—can't stick to the subject, will postpone letter till to-morrow.

The rush has slowed up. It was wonderful while it lasted. The roar of the guns in the morning warned us what was coming. Nearly all our men were sent up to the bearer stations (advance dressing station) I was kept here to work in the

operating tent. I was awfully disappointed at first but the view we got of the attack from our operating table was worth staying here for. We had some of the cases under chloroform. I'll try to tell you all about it one day—I can't now.

I feel tremendously fit. Started a bad headache half way through the rush—we had a lull at about sun-down and cleaned up ready for the next convoy—then I had a splitting headache but I curled up for a nap on the floor at eleven among the empty anti-toxin bottles and was roused an hour later, feeling as fresh as a daisy. Worked through from then (about midnight) till ten last night when I retired into my corner of C. Section billet, failed to get to sleep there owing to some returned bearers trying to tell me what they had seen, and came forth again to the erratic bell tent I put up some days ago. There I slept well until six this morning. As I said before I am feeling tremendously fit.

Love to all.

May 17th, 1915.

Have been on night duty these last few nights. We have cleared out all our wounded from C. section block and B. is receiving the stray night casualties, until the next rush, so night duty at

present entails keeping awake without excitement or work—a dismal business. Last night though the Germans put a dozen shells or so across right into the town here, peppering our Quartermaster's bed with the second. He had left it on hearing the first. Later, shells injured a few unfortunate civilians: women and children of course. I believe one woman is dead. Our patients in the medical ward slept through it. We have about a score in our medical ward and the scaby tent, but they supply no entertainment to the night duty man.

Fisher and most of my chums are up at the advanced dressing station at present (we take it in turns up there), and I am thrown upon the older members of the 6th very decent chaps indeed. I like most of them. I'm not sure I'm not glad to have got away from the Chelsea set for a bit (though we expressed great sorrow at being separated), if only to improve the acquaintance of some of these fellows. They are curious, hardened, sinners some of them in the matter of being in to the exact and stated second—taking leave (this when in England) when not granted it, etc.—things *we*, who joined since the war, would no more think of doing than of assaulting the Sergeant Major (the unthinkablest think I can think of), yet withall they are ever so

much more competent than we are and the Powers who punish them for their peccadilloes don't mix up peccability with incompetence.

From all this don't deduce that I am meditating a few minor sins of my own. I am merely giving expression to a humiliating sense that there are in the 6th many men much better than I am at everything, except conforming to regulations, who have been passed over for the stripe that I have obtained, chiefly by cleaning my buttons, shaving before parade and generally clicking my heels about the place, while they stood akimbo instead of at attention, and occasionally indulged a natural propensity to break irksome regulations.

To his Mother.

May 21st, 1915.

DEAREST MATER,

Don't write as if I neglected to write to you! I think I do wonders. If you only knew the difficulties in the way of letter writing in this outlandish place. Do you realize that except in the three-quarter hour off that we have between "off duty" seven and being in billets by eight we never see chairs or tables—and then only if we get first to the crowded cafés or estaminets can we sit on or at them. We billet as a rule about forty in a room or attic the size and style

of your attic over Hazlemere!—plus a strong floor. At present we are in a schoolroom which is mercifully cool. Attics get so appallingly hot and stuffy. We sleep on a waterproof sheet on the floor (more often than not out here—even in attics—the floor being a tiled or stone one) and have one blanket each for covering. This we eke out with our own clothes.

We are having very hot days now and a lot of glaring sun which gives me a bit of a headache most afternoons. I am thinking of affecting smoked glasses. I wonder if they would be condemned as unmilitary. There are no heights to which the inane vanity of the army cannot rise. Fancy these idiotic moustaches that we all have to grow "to make us look soldierly." Did you ever hear such rot? There is something of the old Wellington, who stuck up for the white (and tight) neck cloths because they gave the men such a fresh colour, in the British army of to-day. I fancy it will suffer some in this war though.

I have seen a lot more of this town. It is—as I have said—nearer the front than "——" and south thereof, and well within range of the enemy (the front of our hospital shows traces of recent peppering by the fragments of burst shell), and yet the streets are full of people and the coal

mines and works all hard at it. That is the strangest thing about these folk. Even up to a mile behind the trenches, peasants live on, keeping a little bit of their garden going and not even complaining as they lose this or that shed, horse, or crop, by a shell. In some cases they even live on in one end of a house after the other end has been wrecked almost over their heads. Only right up in such towns as, you know where, and the two similar in a line south of it (which I visited at Easter) does one tell that everything has been driven out. These towns really are deserted and have been so for months, but now that we are pushing beyond them steadily I expect the more peasant-like of the inhabitants will be trickling back, before it is anything like safe to do so.

I am on a rotten dull routinal job now. My duty is to collect the men for evacuation to other Field Ambs. or back to clearing hospitals into little parties, to see that their "tallies" are readable (which they never are), that they have their kits, etc., and then I have to *watch* them for fear they may get lost before the convoy of motor ambulances can gather them up and take them to wherever they're bound for. My dear mother, they do take some watching. Serious cases of course are no trouble. They stay put

on their stretchers, but we have scores of minor cases: dental cases, cases for the convalescent companies, deafs, eyes, boils and skin diseases, and they all stray alike. The deafs in particular. They drift away, find a retired corner and fall asleep. Enter the convoy, loaded—one short. Private McGuiness! (not a fake name) no answer. *Private McGuiness,* as loud as I can shout. No answer. PRIVATE McGUINESS! in chorus by Lieut. Dixon half a dozen orderlies and self. Result three patients suffering from shock in a back ward have fainting fits and the cook misses the meat he is chopping and brings his finger along for treatment in the operating theatre. Dinner is late, the convoy goes without McGuiness who wakes four hours later and asks where he can have a wash.

Bye-bye. Cheer up. I shall be home in a year or two, if all goes well.

Love.

May 23rd, 1915.

I am up at the advance dressing station again: at the moment of writing I am up further at a point we call "Welsh Chapel" (every place about here has its English name). It is about a mile up from our advance dressing station and is used as a sort of Guard Room and Quartermaster's

Stores for the trenches which are out at the back I have been up to my eyes in work (at the main dressing station in "——") since Sunday morning when the British and French attack began (or rather when its fruits in wounded began to reach us. The actual attack began on Saturday night). Nominally I have been on night duty in the operating tent, but naturally with wounded and wounded and wounded flowing in neither night nor day duty means anything. I had had eight hours sleep in three days, when heavy fighting out here developed and the message came down for more bearers, so out I came with a dozen others by horse ambulance (time two a.m.) and going on on foot just as day was breaking, found a Regimental M.O. in a room in a gutted house with some half dozen wounded and two or three dead on the floor about him. His own regimental stretcher bearers were carrying and carrying the long mile down to a spot where an ambulance could meet them, in comparative safety. I gave a hand with my party of six and between us we carried down two: you have no idea of the physical fatigue entailed in carrying a twelve stone blessé a thousand odd yards across muddy fields. Oh this cruel mud! Back in "——" we hate it (the poor fellows come in absolutely clayed up), but out here, it is infernal.

It clings and sucks at your boots; weighs you down; chills you and, drying in upper garments, makes them chafe. The dead lie in it in queer flat—*jacent*—attitudes. They nearly always look flung down rather than fallen, their feet turned sideways lie flatter than a living man's could, and the thighs splayed out lower the contours of the back. An unrelieved level of liquid mud seems to be the end of war.

I have digressed from the history of to-day. We carried two poor devils down and I got our advance dressing station M.O. to allow me to take a horse ambulance up—right up to Welsh Chapel for others—whom we did not wait long for. It was a sporting gallop up the torn road. I don't know when the last four wheeled vehicle had been so far up but the Germans are falling back steadily now and unless a shelling of the road occurred we were quite safe.

Oh the din I am writing this in dear! There ought to be thousands of wounded on both sides if noise counted for anything, but here I have been for over an hour without a call. We are supposed to be relieving the regimental stretcher bearers until noon so that they can get some rest. They have been carrying for about two days with only cat naps between jobs.

Later. Same place.

Just off back to the advance dressing station. The guns are still making an unearthly din. I have counted eleven German dud shells. Tseau—ooo—oo—you wait for the bang and nothing happens—loud cheers.

Next day.
Advance Dressing Station.

We went on carrying during the afternoon and evening of yesterday and late—

—come to work it out this is not "next day" but day after next—

We finished that first day here carrying down from a point on our L. called the Keep a point very like Welsh Chapel which is on our right. Most of our men stuck it till 4 a.m. but I and my party, who had had the morning spell, knocked off before dawn and went back to the Adv. where we climbed into a loft and *dropped*. We slept just as we were—I didn't even take my mac cape off—dead beat until I was roused by the floor under me throwing me gently into the air, a matter of three inches and receiving me again in a way that revealed my hip and elbow protuberances with rousing painfulness. Our biggest siege guns about 500 yards away had opened. Every shot flung us all up like pins on a banjo.

We scrambled down and took refuge on the paved floor below and after five minutes of that left the falling—gently falling—ceiling overhead for the open where I for one slept on till seven in spite of the unholy din. It was most like a nightmare of trombones—a strepitant blare of metalic noise. Still—in the open—so weary were we that we slept through it after a fashion. It is much worse when one is under a ceiling and between shaking walls.

During the day things quietened down—I went into " —— " (same old " —— ") as orderly with horse ambulance and returned with motor and the fun started again at sundown as the weather improved (it had been dull all day interfering with our advance).

What a night and morning——

Interrupted and resumed.

" —— "

I cannot remember the order of that night—carrying down from the keep—intense weariness, accompanied by sickness. I brought up everything I hadn't had for supper and chucked bearing for a bit I remember.

Two trips into " —— " with wounded—a lead and opium pill for little Mary—and an adventure which I cannot describe for the life of me. The

quite middle of it was spent crawling about among the beastly dead in a newly captured German trench with a very *non* material minded Roman Catholic chaplain who— Oh—'Tsno use. I can't do justice to it or him. I only remember that I felt a great affection for that trench when once we were in it and tried to crack a joke to that effect and the R.C. wanted it explained. Oh Lor. Oh lummy! I also remarked that it faced the wrong way—meaning of course for *us* with the Germans over there—but he pointed out that it hadn't been built to protect from that direction—

Do you understand all this?

Anyway I'm back in "——" now and after a few hours' rest by order of the S.M.—an order I carried out very indifferently owing to a company (250 men) visiting our billet during it and chalking out places in the adjoining—but not partitioned off—part of our top floor. I am on for the night as pack store keeper. I shall not pack store keep, though as now—at midnight comes an order we are to evacuate this lovely hospital we have made! Shells have certainly fallen very close (the nearest in the guard room fifty yards away) and that is the reason given. It's hard luck though when we've spent a month perfecting it and getting it as clean as a new pin.

Friday.

We have moved across " —— " to another school and spent the day getting tents up rooms scrubbed, etc. etc. etc. Patients began to arrive at 9 a.m. and all was ready for them. I am building an incinerator.

Later.

One of our naughty wicked transport men has been " crimed " for cheeking a sergeant and I am put in charge of him. We didn't happen to have a corporal of the guard—or a guard—when he was sentenced so one has had to be appointed and I'm it. Rotten job. Strong inclination to give my prisoner a cigarette, which of course I mustn't do.

Sunday morning.

I was corporal of the guard for the night, but my work was hospital rather than regimental. At about midnight we had to turn out of the guard tent to make room for a dying man who was becoming delirious and could not be kept in the ward. He tried to get up half a dozen times during the night and early morning and we guards supplemented the orderly (nurse you understand) in his efforts to keep the poor fellow quiet—not a difficult job, he was quite sweet and reasonable—

only unable to understand why he couldn't get up and get some tea going. Between these spells he sang softly over and over again "Artie White," "Artie White" in an ascending tritone

over and over again. He is singing it now as I write outside his tent in the sunshine.

Our guns are roaring like the sea in the distance. We are advancing, but oh! the price! The Germans are shelling "——" at long range occasionally——

Hullo—here's a new horror! We are to leave *here* now! 48 hours work wasted. It is one of the anomalies of modern war that an advancing front imperils its rear by inducing the retreating enemy to concentrate long range guns thereon and we are to fall back while our advance dressing station very likely presses forward.

Now for a night of work again loading waggons.

I haven't had my boots off for eight hours in the last seven days. I haven't had *one* unbroken night's sleep in that time. Many naps totalling I should say four hours per twenty four have been my portion but I have just had some lovely stew made from McConachies' Army Ration of

meat and vegetables and a cup of tea and I feel as fit as a fiddle.

God bless you darlings.

The whole front just now is one Hell of mud and weariness, such as I never conceived possible, and heroic medical officers sorting the dead from the living and struggling, struggling, struggling, against chaos.

There isn't a regimental medical officer upon this sector who doesn't deserve to live in comfort at the country's expense for the rest of his life (V.C.'s be damned).

To his Wife.

Sunday 27th.
Adv. Dressing Station.

I am up here again—came up last night. Yesterday was a day of wearisome waggon loading. At eight when I was just about beat and turning in the S.M. bagged me to come up here as waggon orderly with the horse ambulance. It's about a three hour job as a rule; (up, collect cases, and return) and a job I love as the horse amb. is "ride driven" from the saddle and the orderly occupies the high front seat (like an old-fashioned char-a-banc or horse bus) and gets a fine view of the country. On a fine evening it is particularly enjoyable when the reliefs are moving up and the

amunition columns are going and returning, and the roads near and distant (you can see a long way over this flat country) are all dotted out with men and horses and motors : a job I love, but I did not welcome it yesterday evening, after a spell of thirty-six hours in my boots especially as on the ambulance in the evening usually means on the ambulance—up and down—all night ; generally by one's own suggestion : it seems such a pity to turn out some one to take one's place in the middle of the night, when one is wide awake.

On the way up here though a horse cast a shoe (the artillery have farriers right up here), the wounded were all pressed away in the other ambulances and—the supply from the trenches ran out ! *We* were told to wait and, turning in on the stretchers of the ambulance with ample blankets, slept till eight this morning with only one interruption : when a thunderstorm burst overhead. *That* was an exciting five minutes as we had tethered the horses to the wheels and they and the rain rocked the old bus like a ship at sea. There was cannonading (out and in) all night, our own batteries being particularly strident and the Germans dropping their black puddings about the place with pleasant little "pomboms" (the first syllable very short please), but we slept through it right into the morning.

A poor refugee dog from " —— " that is tied to a barrel outside our station didn't though. I heard his wails through my dreams and dreamt of Emma.

Monday.
Back in " —— "
Also back in premises of our first Hospital here.

This *is* a lark, Dearest ! I am in command of an army of two. We are the representatives of the 6th and in lawful possession of our old schools that we evacuated last Friday, when those scraps of bombardment came over. The 6th hasn't left our hospital No. 2 over on the safety side of the town yet, though A and C sections have packed their waggons and every other Field Amb. in " —— " has cleared out and moved back to " —— " and now—far from developing—the bombardment looks like petering out and we are longing to get back into these really exceptionally suitable premises so—with the written authority of the (bow low !) the *D.* A. D.M.S. here am I a " Lance Corporal and two men " (vide order) " in possession " just like a bailiff. Mayhew and Galton the Scot are my " men " and they've both just received enormous parcels. We draw rations from the Q.M. each day per one man sent as messenger. I fancy we are going to *live* some.

Tuesday.

We does! We had lunch in the middle of the day (omelettes and coffee sent in. Hang Expense!) and improvised a four course dinner in the evening: Soup (soup squares), sardines, steaks (our ration *cooked properly*) tinned apricots followed by café-au-lait (tinned like condensed milk—*bon*) and accompanied by a bottle of vin rouge (sixpence and a halfpenny on the bottle).

This looks like pic-nicing—and it is—but I for one really needed a rest and a good feed up. I have done my share of the last fortnight's rush and a Lance Corporal's share is generally a biggish one. Three days and three nights at the Adv. working like a galley slave, two nights as Corp. of the Guard *with* extras (by the way my delirious charge died while I was writing my last to you. I helped to lay him out—I wanted to; curious isn't it?) four nights as night orderly in the wards (during two of which I slept, the wards being nearly empty) and the rest of the time either working in the operating tent, as pack store keeper, or loading waggons, unloading them again and reloading them encore ad lib. da capo ad naus. Also I am awfully glad to get away from the blood and bandages and carbolic and perchloride. I was *really happy* during the two rushes and nothing

knocked me out—though we saw enough in all conscience—but these last few days I have been sickening of blood and wounds. This rest from it will set me up.

I have sent over to the H.Q. for my things. If we stay here a few days in peace I shall get to work on the "Dress Coat" again. One of two things may happen. The bombardment of the town may cease altogether in which case the 6th will come back here, or it may grow worse in which case we shall be recalled and the 6th will move to "——" altogether.

Later.

We are rather crushed to-day, Darling. Casualties—our first. Two killed, one injured (slightly), one suffering from shock. All C. Section men, but not great friends of mine—though I liked them. Mayhew—who knew the two dead very intimately—is fearfully down: seems to think he should have been with them. Curious how people feel, isn't it? I feel most for their mothers. Chick—the younger of the two—was only nineteen and such a child; though very tall. They were all smashed by a shell. I wish to God England would come into this war and get it over! I told you I thought November. It won't be November twelvemonth unless England

drops attacking Kitchener, attacking the *Daily Mail,* attacking defenceless Germans in London, striking and all the rest of it and devotes all its attention to attacking the German Army out here. If you at home could only see and hear the enormous concentration of force necessary to take a mile of German trench; the terrific resistance we have to put up to hold it; the price we have to pay over every little failure—a price paid with no purchase to show for it—if you could only see and realize these things there'd be some hope of you all bucking in and supplying the little extra force—the little added support in resistance—that we need to end this murderous, back and forth business. Every man not engaged in supplying food and warmth and order—bare necessities—to those at home should be directly engaged in supplying strength toward the ending of the war. If he isn't doing so he is contributing by neglect to that killing and maiming of our men out here, *which he might be preventing.* I am not exaggerating an iota. This is mere truth which cannot be gainsaid. There can be only one reason for not serving: selfishness. And selfishness at this time is not the commonsense quality it is in ordinary times, since no man is now looking after himself or could look after himself entirely. He is part of the crowd which those of its

complement who are serving are looking after, and he can no more look after himself than any one of the men out here can look after himself, but each can help to look after the crowd and be looked after in return. The Devil of it is that so many have slipped into the crowd and are being looked after in return for nothing. That is the weakness.

I am not shouting for men only to enlist. Enlist if possible—but at least to register at Labour Exchanges as willing to do such work as may be needed—and to learn to do it : to do the rottenest sort of work if necessary so long as it's useful. There should be a glut of labour on the market now instead of a shortage.

Wednesday.

Still here—" resting." It's getting a bit dull. Your letter just arrived. So sorry you were so long without hearing from me. I do my best. You understand surely how we are sometimes rushed—sometimes posts cut off—sometimes officers too busy to censor all letters, I expect.

To his Mother-in-law.

May 28th, 1915, Empty Hospital.

DEAR GRAM.

Thanks very much for your letter. It is now nearly three weeks since it reached me but

you will, I am sure, forgive tardiness in replying: those three weeks have been so very full of work.

Of course I have no objection to your teaching Vallie a prayer. Why should I have? Only please teach him one thing: that his prayer may not be answered and that if it isn't, he must not think that God is cruel or unmindful. "Thy will be done" is the safety valve in all prayer and a believer in God must surely think—if they do not say—those words as a part of every prayer. In the case of a child I think they should be said.

I would be grateful if you would not muddle his little brain with trinitarian dogma. I have nothing against the trinity idea except that it is puzzling and quite unnecessary. It's alright for an artist or a mystic—it can have a symbolic meaning which is most grateful but I think it should not be taught. One can be a lover of God without going into the matters of the definition of Christ; and all such difficulties. If Vallie grows up a poet or a mystic, he will fight into those problems for himself. I would rather he had the chance to do so unguided. If he is going to grow up an engineer or a farmer, he will be no poorer for never having been troubled with them.

If I don't come home you may—I mean: *Please will you*—teach him the Sermon on the Mount

and " The Lord is my Shepherd " etc., but I have always looked forward to teaching him these myself and still hope to do so—this coming winter too.

I do hope you are not being too greatly distressed by these confounded newspapers. To read some of them you might think that in the middle of an important action, the gunners suddenly put their hand in their pockets and found they had run out of shells and —— " there falls a sudden silence in the rear." This war is quite horrible enough—I dare say to your imagination it is quite as ghastly as it is to our eyes and ears and noses—quite horrible enough without the papers harrowing the feelings of you poor dears at home by suggesting that this or that could have been prevented. It is the most appalling thought possible, isn't it? It's all very well for them to be wise after this or that mistake, but I do not believe that any combination of human minds could have foreseen more than has been foreseen by the authorities. I met a sniper the other day who had had to desist owing to something going wrong with his loophole. " If I'd only had a bit of forked stick " he kept on saying " I could have done in a hundred of 'em." I suppose it *might* be called lack of foresight that he had not supplied himself with a bit of forked stick before going in—still——.

Au revoir (soon I hope—though with no ground). We—our Ambulance—has turned out such a success that we get more than our own Brigade's work to do. We have had to lend the ——s a hand when they mislaid their Field Amb., and though originally we were under orders to send on very serious cases demanding operation to No — and officers to No — we have lately been doing all the work that came in ourselves "Officers," "Very Serious's," "Moribunds," "Sitting," "Medical" "Allymangs" "Scabies," "Shocks," every kind of case except infectious: measles and the like—very little about—they go to a special hosp. by special motors never used for anything else.

To his Wife.

May 29th.

I *should* like some more tobacco.

You need never worry at not hearing from me Dear, you would be immediately informed if the slightest accident happened to me. Also I am *not* one of the careless ones, and take no chances.

I am longing to see my little boy in his sailor suit.

Bless him and you.

To his Mother.

1st June, 1915.

DEAREST MATER,

Things have quieted down now—only aeroplanes and anti-aircraft guns with occasional, very occasional, five minutes of shelling disturb the town. After the inferno which raged " out there " for the last two weeks the result of which you have seen by the papers, (it looks little enough but has cost both sides the most enormous efforts and really signifies much), the comparative calm is almost uncanny. Men of this or that battalion are wandering aimlessly about the streets, getting arrears of food into them, and losing slowly the strained and distrait manner that their experiences have engendered. Our Territorial Batts. have done wonders. Every one is marvelling at them. The general has told them that they will in future be called " veteran fighters." From what I've seen I really believe that the Londoners are equal, man for man, to any soldiers in Europe, in everything *except* subordination. There are such stories going as it would do you good to hear.—Example : of little so and so—kid of *nineteen* (*he* says : not more than *seventeen* really)—nipper " so high "—marching in a Prussian Guardsman with whiskers like old

Tirpitz—down—oh, down to (indication of beard reaching to abdomen) fetching him out of a dug out—(gesture suggesting pulling a surly dog out of a barrel) and jabbing him along—(illustration first of the nipper with rifle and bayonet, then of the Prussian who was about six feet two I understand, waddling along, head down and hands up). There's no getting away from it we are a success. Fighters, medicals, and all. But oh, my dear, the men who have been buried out here! Such splendid chaps. Why do the best ones all get done in? I met a —th man a friend, after their charge—two days after it—I had been hearing of this man and that one gone of those I had known best in the batt. and I believe I shook hands with him for five minutes—which surprised nobody. The little ginger headed chap whose hand gave me so much trouble at Hatfield was first to go in the charge of that batt. A bomb finished him. Other old patients and friends went—or came back here with greater or lesser wounds. One with his breath whistling in and out of a hole between his shoulders—I saw him out delirious and comfortable with plenty of morphia in him. I can stick anything but depressed fracture of the skull. A man died in one of the wards here of that,—Galton watching him. He had the ward to himself (they make such a noise) and a mouse

came out and ran back and forth under the stretcher he was tied to. Galton called me to watch; he was quite fascinated. These things almost *please* one by their very perfection of eeriness and horror. Do you understand? They are like the works of some gigantic supernatural artist in the grotesque and horrible. I shall never fear the picturesque in stage grouping again. Never have I seen such perfect grouping as when, after a shell had fallen round the corner from here a fortnight ago, three of us rushed round and the light of an electric torch lit up a little interior ten feet square, with one man sitting against the far wall, another lying across his feet and a dog prone in the foreground, all dead and covered evenly with the dust of powdered plaster and masonry brought down by the explosion! They might have been grouped so for forty years—not a particle of dust hung in the air, the white light showed them, pale whitey brown, like a terra-cotta group. That they were dead seemed right and proper—but that they had ever been alive—beyond all credence. The fact that I had seen them "mount guard" was in another department of experience altogether and never occurred to me till some days after.

Of all the curious things of war the most curious is the way my old problems of perception,

experience, and apprehension; their relation to reality—the way those problems are being *lit up*. We have some really brilliant men among our officers. One in particular who—not deeming himself a surgeon (pure swank—he was going to perform a trephinning without turning a hair—but such swank is most *sympathique*, isn't it?) generally acts as anæsthetist, is often most illuminating with a word here or there just when one is wondering—as one can in the middle of holding down a half-anæsthized and very energetic Scot or Guardsman—just what *feeling* is and what *consciousness*; how there can be degrees down from our normal to zero and if there can be degrees up as well—you follow?—to some zenith of apprehensiveness to existence. Of course the normal capacity for perception fluctuates a little. Has it any limits up as it obviously has down?—at *un*consciousness? The devil of it is that an imaginative projection can be so easily mistaken for a conception the result of higher sensitiveness—perceptiveness. So many of the mystics seem to me to have been merely people gifted with imaginations. The Brontë sister perhaps—what was her name?—and Wordsworth and A.E. and Evelyn Underhill genuine exceptions, the rest—most of them—imaginative. "Thrysus bearers," casting their imaginings in the form of active experience.

We are still—three of us—alone in the old hospital. Since things have quieted down, men off duty have taken to dropping in for a laugh! We are the star joke of the town. It is a ridiculous situation, isn't it?—I never thought when I joined that I should ever put in a week as caretaker. If Messieurs les Bosches would only either get the range and dent these buildings slightly or give up trying altogether so that the ambulance would either give up the idea of returning or come back and done with it. I want some exercise.

By the way, let me assure you of one thing. I am taking the greatest care of myself—no collecting souvenirs under fire for me. I am not particularly nervous—in fact I have not yet been badly frightened, but I have been struck cautious—if you know what I mean—every time I have been anywhere where caution was necessary. I do not even share the rather popular (with the infants) desire for a slight wound "just enough to get you a fortnight at home." I want to stick the war out usefully and unostentatiously—but, oh, I hope it'll end this year. It will—or not—just according to the energy concentrated by you people at home on the one job of piling up shells, guns, clothes, food, men, bombs, motors, horses, and delivering them to the right spot at the right moment. Oh,—and you can devote some energy

too to inventing a gas ten times as beastly as the German product and a means of projecting it four times as far.

Au revoir.

3rd June, 1915.

DEAREST MATER,

I knew you'd hear summat of that Zep. raid. Yes, there isn't much "ping" to a bomb explosion, is there? Unless it's quite close to you and then it seems to hit you gently all over at once with a wad of cotton wool and you are surprised afterwards to find your ears singing: at least that's how *shells* sound. For real tremendous percussive, metalic bangs give me our naval guns. My first experience:— It was at "I," the ruined townlet we went to first (about five miles south of that we know so well which—though quite thoroughly ruined—has not suffered as "I," has). We were introduced to German shrapnel, falling about four to six hundred yards away, as soon as we arrived, and remarked how little noise the actual explosion made—the scream of the shell beforehand being really much more poignant and nerve ratling—(the German gun that despatched them being, you understand, anything about 5000 to 10,000 yards off and practically inaudible above the general rumble).

Perhaps twenty had screamed up and pom *bomped* themselves each into a growing puff of smoke when CRASH! Sousa, thirty thousand extra trombones each with a cannon cracker inside, thunder, echoes and lightning. We all *shrugged* (this is exactly what we did) till our shoulder widths were reduced by about fifty per cent. and our necks were submerged to the ears and our elbows grated against our ribs. Then, when we were expanded again, the Sergt. of Regulars, who was acting as our guide told us it was only one of our nine-point-two's a matter of half a mile away! Phew!

The last time I went up to the line (a week ago now) we had, Lord knows how many, of all sizes from mountain guns and 18 pounders, up to the 9–2s all at it constantly and villainously and really half of us came back with a mild stammer or twitch in the middle of every other word. You understand that our dressing station (advanced) and the regimental aid posts are much nearer to the big guns than the trenches are. They rarely place a battery within a thousand yards of the trenches and some are three times that distance behind them. The zone is enormous. Take this town which is inhabited and also full of troops. It is about five miles *west* of "2." Two or three miles *east* of which the new trenches

now lie. Nobody here seems to know exactly where we have pushed to on the general front. Only the "Umpth" know that they took so many lines. The "Oothies" that they took all there were and had to lie on their tummies in the open (while the Germans did the same 500 yards off) and dig themselves in under fire. And some other Batts. that they only took one line because some other unprintable *barstards* didn't support them or got in their way or something disgraceful and cowardly and unmatey. (It's a treat to hear these Batts. curse each other. I believe many a trench has been held because to give it up would expose the holding battalion to recriminations from their brothers in support or on the L. or R. who would certainly come up and retake it "just for the sake of laughing at us," said one Corporal to me of the co. which had retaken the trench his co. had at last retired from.)

Well—this town is, as I say, from five to seven miles behind the firing line, yet shells fall here daily. The road all the way up to the trenches is under fire here and there (and you never quite know *where* when you set out) at nearly any given moment. "2" (from which our last advance was pushed up) with the line two miles away is supplying more casualties than it and with the trenches passing its back door—more, I daresay,

than the trenches themselves just now. It is the name spot for that neighbourhood but really it is nothing more now. Nothing to do there but duck and run. Nothing to eat but bully and biscuit. I have only been *east* of it a few times but I felt safer out in the open there than in the remains of the town. Not that I felt what you might call *safe* even there.

To his Son.

June 3rd, 1915.

MY DEAR SWEET LITTLE MAN.

Thank you ever so much for the picture and the thingumy you put into the parcel for me. I was very *very* glad to get them. Mummy tells me you wanted to send Cocky Olly Bird but she thought better not. I'm rather sorry because I'd have liked Cock Olly Bird to come out here very much indeed. Next time Mummy's sending a parcel you ask her to find room for him. You can give him a kiss to bring out to me.

How is the office getting on? If the office boys all leave to go to the front why don't you engage an office-girl? Of course they can't play cricket so well as office boys and very few of them can whistle properly, but you can't have everything in war time.

I'm told I'm to have a photo of you in your new sailor suit. I hope it will be just exactly like you. I want to see what my Vallie looks like after all these months—nearly three my darling—since I saw him last. But oh, my dear little man, it's going to be a lot more than three months more before I see you again! These Germans *won't* be pushed! We shove and we shove and they only go such a very little way back after we've been shoving for weeks. Still they always do go a little way. And many littles make a lot in the end—when it comes.

Will you please dictate a letter to Mummy for me. Mummy will tell you how it's done: you say "Dear Doody" and she writes it down and then you go on as if you were talking to me and she writes all that down, and then when you've said all you can (*lots*) you kiss the end of the letter and mark the spot with a cross.

Bless you my boy

Your
Loving
Doody
His kiss X.

To his Wife.

June 4th, 1915.

Well my dear, we've been married five years to-day; and what's your opinion of married life? Fairly stirring it's been; hasn't it? *You* ill twice, *me* ill once, *Vallie* ill once (you see I am not counting mumpses). *Us* burnt out once; Shaftesbury Avenue, Glasgow (assorted), Victoria Square, St. John's Wood—plenty of variety in our settings—and now you grubbing along on short rations and me—what the devil am I doing? At the moment I am Caretaker-Commandant (rank my own invention) of the Ecoles M—— feeding well, sleeping well and getting absolutely no exercise or excitement. Parts of the buildings are at present occupied by a company of the ——'s out of the trenches for a few days rest. They are a tough lot of old regulars, most of them west country or Welsh, who have been out here since October; high spirited and rowdy but (like all the British out here) models of behaviour where women are concerned (by which I do not mean saints) and adored to the verge of being turned into hobnailed Juggernauts by all the children they come across. Our men also make a great impression here by their genuine affection for dogs. The poor beasts are abominably treated by the lower classes and ignored by the

upper of this town and district. As a matter of fact they are rather beastly to their children, too ; and as for horses——

Curiously enough the favourite accusation against them at home—that of "doing the troops down"—is *not* true. Certain things are villainously expensive :—razor blades ; tobacco ; brushes, and other manufactured trifles, but the people themselves—especially in the villages—will frequently refuse all payment for coffee, bread and butter or even—though less frequently—eggs. I never go up to the A.D.S. now without calling on the one peasant family still living in that stirring neighbourhood and taking coffee (au lait) and galette (quite different to Galette Bernevalaise) with them for which they religiously refuse all payment. I tried to tip the family brat a half franc the last time up. It was rescued and returned to me with insult. These people have been all but ruined : their larger fields all shell holes ; half their out buildings and windows demolished by the reverberations of our artillery and carelessness of troops billeted therein (chiefly the former I am glad to say) and the railways and canals they depend upon torn up or full of strange craft and running into the enemy lines. They are far from hopeless, though. The enemy will have to pay, they say.

I made a foolish mistake early in this letter :—" no excitement." I had a little yesterday—nothing much but a little. Coming back from my daily visit to H.Q. whizz bang whizz bang whizz bang—bang—the fourth so close on the heels of the third that the whizz was lost (that's when I take a dislike to them : no fair warning) and a square about as far ahead of Mayhew and myself as from 85 Talbot Road to the letter box was neatly dented in each corner. We retired round a house (the range was along the road) until the " bombardment " seemed over, then hurried up. First sight ; a tall sergeant taking down his trousers *coram populo* to inspect the damage to his posterior aspect—*not* great. We advised him where our hospital (and a drink) were waiting for such as he, and proceeded with the usual job of locating the old woman and stopping the bleeding until an ambulance arrived (Mayhew went for it at once).

She was in the back room of the house before which the shell had fallen, her feet on a chair and her poor loose old stockings dripping nice bright arterial blood on to the stone floor. An unusual complication, *son mari* was sitting on the stairs (which were in the room) his eyes rolled up—curious pale grey eyes—suffering from our old friend " shock " and also bleeding like a stuck pig.

A gas pipe had been severed and the neighbourhood was discussing "le gaz"; of course missing the obvious reason for the smell that pervaded it. A regular, an officer and myself got ourselves nice and bloody and dabbed the old lady and son mari (whom she kept discussing) with water: he came unshocked suddenly and took to weeping, then Mayhew and the ambulance returned and we bandy-chaired them out to stretchers and slid them in and cursed the assembling crowd and went home to tea.

Nice story isn't it? With variations any day's story of this pleasant sunny and prosperous little city. Sometimes the old woman is killed outright; sometimes she has a leg blown off and dies on the way to, or after reaching, hospital; sometimes she is accompanied thither by a smashed child or two—more rarely by a man—more rarely still by a soldier. Occasionally she mingles her pint or two of blood with the more generous supply tapped from a horse. *Very* occasionally you find her searching herself rapidly and reporting with natural surprise—in view of the fact that she certainly *is* an old woman—that she hasn't been touched. Sometimes this that or the other is her share but always she has one. She is the old woman of the day to be added to the list of all the old women of last week and the week before.

The joke of it all is that old women have no Military significance.

Love to you all.

Don't be horrified at me—I must sarcast a little when I feel that way.

June 9th, 1915.

DEAREST

We are back in the fold having left our caretaker's job (with the usual military suddenness) yesterday afternoon. It wasn't bad fun for the first few days but deadly for the greater part of the time. Sorry to hear you have had flu. Curiously; I was verging on a touch a few days ago, usual headache backache etc. but no, temperature so I didn't report sick.

There are the usual crops of rumours here about our next move.

Tuesday.

And now here I am in "——" a few miles from the last place. We have all moved hereabouts and after going to sleep in various corners I have reported sick. Sprung a temperature of 100·3 and am now learning to appreciate a Field Amb. from a new point of view. It's nothing serious just summer flu or something—about half a dozen of us are down with it. *Please* don't worry one bit.

Wednesday.

Temperature dropped to 100·2 so you see I am doing well. Forgive short letter, not easy to write lying on a stretcher.

June 11th, 1915.

I am "up" to-day. Still feeling pretty groggy but temperature falling steadily (99 this morning). The head and back aches are both much more endurable. Lieut. Dixon is for sending me back to a "Convalescent Company" for a bit but I'm dead against the idea. I'm so afraid of getting cut off from the 6th and going drifting about France attached to some amiable party of laundresses or bath attendants.

To his Mother.

June 14th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

I am out of hospital at last: "discharged" in the official parlance. And now to sort out the last ten days and report what's been happening.

We, (Mayhew, Galton and Self) were recalled from our caretaking job on Saturday. We arrived at headquarters and new hospital in time to take part in a perfect orgy of packing during which a headache and general feeling of let-me-lie-down-somewhere that I had been enjoying for

some days, nearly knocked me out. However, I stuck it and carried on until Monday when I went with the advance party which accompanied the waggons on the move. It was only a five mile march here but it quite knocked me out. After an ineffectual attempt to lend a hand with the unpacking I " went sick " and, showing a sudden temperature of 101, was put into one of the newly improvised wards. That was the beginning of my travels. We gave up that building the next morning and I was juggled into an ambulance and brought here (about three minutes run distant). Once here I was carried up stairs and brought down again and moved into *that* room and brought back again. Altogether I have experienced six moves in a five days' illness.

This is a middle sized mining town. Rather prosperous—but nearer to the front line than we have yet had a *main* dressing station. A. and C. sections are working it together while B. is working another station further south as far as I can gather, but I am not sure.

A lot of the boys are down with " flu " (we call it " flu "). In more ways it is like a mild heat stroke. The sudden spell of hot weather was very trying, and we get no regular exercise) and several of them have been evacuated. They

wanted to evacuate me, but I was *not* favourable to the idea.

Bye Bye.

To his Son.

June 14th, 1915.

Vallie, my blessed, thank you ever so much for your nice letter. I was very glad to get the C. O. Bird with the kiss on his beak and I am taking the greatest possible care of him but I warn you I find him very difficult, and if I do come back without him, please understand that he will be quite as much to blame as I shall.

To begin with he arrived just as I was packed up to leave "——" and come here and I had to squeeze him into my haversack on top of Nanty Lal's tobacco and the asparagus. I buttoned him in but he popped his head out of the corner of the haversack and watched everything that was going on till some one said he was the Eye Witness—and then on the March I lost him! I was awfully upset—but he turned up a couple of miles further on sitting on one of the waggons. I had been on the waggon tying on some loose boxes and the faithful creature must have seen me there, and when he got loose found his way to the place where he had last seen me.

He lived under my tunic and trousers—that is

to say under my pillow while I was ill and he must have had a very dull time because I was no sort of company :—couldn't smoke or eat or talk or do anything friendly. Now he looks after my pack when I'm out on duty and has breakfast and supper with me.

We have all had big parcels from the Red Cross Society with a shirt, a pair of socks, and brush and comb, sponge, razor and chocolate. The chocolate is from Queen Alexandra. I dunno who sent the rest exactly.

Oh Vallie—I do hope you will still like being sung to sleep when I come back and not be too big a boy to be carried sometimes. You were such a dear when I went away, just right—try to keep as nice till I come back and pray that it may be soon.

Love to you dear from your Doody.

To his Wife.

June 15th, 1915.

My Darling

Another day and no letter—I am awfully distressed. I keep picturing all sorts of horrors. I never did trust Brighton as a place for a young grass widow. Do write and tell me Vallie is alright and you are still as usual etc. I don't

like your going to seaside towns at all—and now not hearing from you for all these days. Oh for goodness sake write! I am so miserable. You have lengthened the intervals between letters steadily two letters in seven days while I was at the caretaking job, two in nine now. It'll be two in ten if you don't write to-morrow. Do you think I shouldn't have joined?

I am returned to hospital—my rash is the only trouble now but it is persistent. I am to be isolated until it makes up it's mind what to be. *I* know what it is. Too much meat not enough vegs, and no exercise, beside rough flannel shirts and perspiration.

June 18th, 1915.

We are jogging on here, forty or fifty, cases a day: perhaps a dozen wounded the rest the usual assorted. After the rushes we have so successfully weathered, it is rather dull and monotonous. The men are getting fearfully impatient (as always during a lull) and talk of the summer slipping away, and the likelihood of another winter in the trenches, etc. The less intelligent majority persist in measuring our progress by the distance advanced, and cannot see that war and Geographical aggrandisement are not quite the same thing. It is quite possible that we shall slog at a

line for months, and then find one day that the war's over and the hard fight across Belgium and Germany "off." It's up to the enemy. They could impose that couple of hundred mile advance upon us if they chose or they can impose this system of holding us up at all costs upon themselves. Were I the German General Staff I should fall back to a line Antwerp-Liege and Rhine right along to Bâle, while yet I could safely do so only holding Antwerp and that slice of conquered country but they seem to prefer to hold on, though I am convinced their present line is more difficult to hold and they may be so weakened on it that no other first class stand will ever be possible to them. In the same way this enormous offensive in Galicia may cost them the Carpathians before Christmas. It looks to me as if political considerations influenced the German General Staff far more than is good for it. Every General up to now who has allowed politics to impose upon strategy has gone under. Napoleon III is the classic example but there are many others.

Isn't this Italian progress tremendously cheering? Of course they have not yet met a first class resistance but to advance through such country *even unopposed* would be a test of mobility in which to show up well would be a feather in

any Country's cap and they have been by no means unopposed.

When am I to have that photo of Vallie? It's getting on for two weeks since it was mentioned. You haven't by any chance sent it off, have you? You do not number your letters so I am often worried by fear that one has gone astray. I have only had two from you written since you went to Brighton ten days ago.

Bye bye. Love to my brat.

To his Mother.

June 19th, 1915.

DEAREST,

Apropos of the "long time away," a curious thing: I made the discovery yesterday that unless I can leave a nice well finished off war behind me I don't want to come home. This in spite of the fact that I am regularly and miserably homesick for at least half an hour every morning, and two hours every evening and heartily fed up with the war every waking hour in between. Never-the-less when yesterday to the rumour that certain parts of our division which have been rather badly knocked about were going home, was added the rumour that the rest of the Div. was going too, to continue as a Home Service

Batt, I found myself absolutely horrified at the idea. To go home now and mess about at Hatfield and St. Albans! Or to go home even to Vallie and his Mummy is not what I want yet. I want from the bottom of my heart to see it out. Of course the sooner "out" the better, and I'd give my teeth for a week's leave, but I don't want to be away from the work—even my insignificant share of it—permanently or for long.

I am hurrying to catch post.

Love and thanks again.

To his Wife.

June 20th, 1915.

MY DARLING

We are still here; in the mining town. It improves on acquaintance; many decent cafés and the usual small farms where omelettes, café au lait, pommes-frits and other luxuries can be obtained. I am living beyond my pay having developed a great distaste for army food since my spell of illness. I still have a little reserve though, and probably another spell at the A.D.S soon will give me a chance to economise.

Mayer's dainties and the asparagus were *most* successful. By the way, never send me anything in the form of Bovril or Oxo. Our fellows are loaded up with it and we don't want it—we get too much meat as it is. Oh! for vegetables!

Say: you may be reached by idle rumours that the 2nd London Div. may or will come home sooner or later. Don't take any notice. These rumours get about without perceptible foundation and are only unsettling. It is most unlikely that we shall get further back than a base for a little rest and moreover it is more than likely that if the Div. moves back we—the 6th—will be attached to some other brigade and the 4th and 5th look after the Div. in its retirement. No other Territorial Field Amb. stands as high with the Powers as we do, and we are at full strength and in no great need of a rest yet.

Bless you.

June 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST,

I am sorry I was a pig in my letter. It wasn't premeditated. Of course without actually experiencing it you cannot realise the misery of home sickness one can feel out here. It's want of you, want of Vallie, want of all my friends, want of my books and work, all rolled into one and aggravated by intense discomfort and constant annoyance and the haunting uncertainty as to when it will end. I *think* in November, but in bad moments I can find ample reason for thinking not perhaps till November twelve month or perhaps—for me—never. Grrrr!

Don't be alarmed—I am only excusing my grumpyness by telling you my worst humps which I assure you always afflict me on days when I have had no letter.

Tobacco is ruinously expensive here. Franc an ounce for ordinary Navy Cut! If you will send me a quarter pound of either John Cotton medium or coarse cut Craven or some good mild to medium flake such as Dunhills stock once a fortnight I shall be most grateful. I expect I shall be having an economic time at the advanced dressing station again soon. I'm sure I hope so. It's much more fun up there. We have a new Adv. now, a gorgeous place in a chateau only partly ruined, with fruit ripening in the garden and even vegetables. At present I am living beyond my pay every day but reserves are not yet used up. Don't you think I have done pretty well since I have been out here? Your Mother has sent me a quid. I have managed on that and my pay for—now—fourteen weeks and I still have something in hand. I shouldn't crow before I'm out of the—town—though: the constant temptation of omelettes *de* deux œufs et "frits" (otherwise fried potatoes) and fancy pastries may ruin me yet. I always thought it should be "*à* deux œufs" by the way. By the way I should like that clay pipe in its case when you go

to the flat next, try to get it for me there's a dear.

I am chock full of ideas for plays of all shapes and sizes, and the old habit of lying awake and getting quite excited over the working out of a plot is coming back to me. I haven't done it since we left Shaftesbury Avenue—not since "Elaine" was on the stocks. If only this war will end before I am quite abruti (is that how you spell it), I believe I shall come home to work. One thing I am getting thinner and I'm sure I work best thin. You mustn't overfeed me when I come home. I don't long to be over fed—but oh I do long for *nice* food and well served food—pillaff, rairogli, macaroni dishes, vol-au-vents, sweet-breads, *your* omelettes, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberry fool, ices, sole Dieppoise, salmon, turbot, kippers (Oh for a kipper !) soups. Also I'd love an oyster or two—or twenty. I've told you we can get excellent wine here at sixpence a litre haven't I ? Very light wine of course, but none the worse for that. We are no longer offered that confounded rum issue, and I'm glad of it. It always meant a noisy night.

Have I warned you against rumours—Yes I believe I have. Beware of them, especially rumours of peace. We don't want peace till they're beaten, do we ?

By the way—I wonder if your mother would like to send us a decent cricket bat, a *good* second hand one for pref, but a good one. We have two home made ones in the unit wherewith the patients and ourselves disport themselves from after tea till dark. I'm sure we'd be awfully grateful for one. Put it to her will you?

Bye bye. Heaps of love my Sweetheart—don't worry if I'm nasty. I do get such humps and I do so love every word you write. God bless you.

To his Son.

Vallie you villain what's this I hear about your visit to Brighton? Swanking in the Hotel about having cut the Kaiser into little bits and put him down the dust shoot. *Swank* Sir, you never did *nothink* of the sort. He's still bossing Germany and giving us no end of trouble. You must have cut up somebody else by mistake. You really should look before you chop.

Bye bye, my darling little man. I love you most muchly much. How do you like me?

Your

DOODY.

Please answer by dictation. I'd like a letter a week from you.

To his Mother.

June 25th, 1915.

Dearest Mater

No, please don't send me any money. Things are quite cheap here. In fact I have lunched out every day for the last fortnight, and had the usual evening coffee and biscuits also on very little more than my pay of one and five-pence a day, and I have a reserve of funds in my pay book. By the way I haven't tasted meat for nearly a fortnight. (I lunch on an omelette de trois œufs and chip potatoes daily) and only twice in the last four weeks. This is not a fad. I simply don't like the look of it. If ever it appeals to me again I shall return to it—or if I go up to the adv. I shall have to I suppose.

The rumour, I beg your pardon, official thing-ummy you report is, I hope, quite unfounded. Don't listen to peace talk yet,—discourage it if you can. Nothing makes us madder out here. Remember we are on the wrong side of the top to talk of peace. It's a worse idea than the war! A patch-up with those bloody gentry over there. Do you realise that I can see one of them now? a little speck in the heart of a "Taube" with a row of little puffs of soft cloud miraculously appearing with pin-prick like twinkles rather than

flashes about him; the shrapnel fired by our anti-aircraft guns; busy "keeping him off." I can hear them in the distance too, (or it may be some distant part of our line at work) and at any moment a couple of rough crosses may be carried past the gate I am sitting on, carried by children and followed by a temporary hearse, a burying party of long bayonets and loose trousers and the usual following of children. No peace until we are on top please.

Love.

To his Wife.

June 25th, 1915.

DEAREST

I am so sorry. I see by your letter I have given you quite an exaggerated idea of my rash. I was never put into an isolation *hospital* at all. I was only put out to sleep in a tent until it had made up its mind whether it would be German measles or scabies or what. I carried on my duties just as usual (not during the high temperature, influenza *first* spell, of course—I mean during the second spell in "hospital") except that I was excused 6 o'clock in the morning parade and had a daily bath in its place after which I rubbed myself with sulphur ointment.

The rash has now neither developed any recognisable peculiarities nor altogether departed. Anyhow I have been discharged from "hospital." I think I must make up my mind to a continuation of it through the hot weather. Army shirts are very rough and army blankets rougher. Also we do not get enough *regular* exercise (either a spell of hard labour or a spell of confinement within a space of a hundred odd yards by ditto) I think the latter starts the rash and the former irritates and increases it. I'm not by several dozen the only man in the 6th who itches o'nights. Of course there are fleas, bugs and lice to do their share, but none of us are actually lousy though most have caught a few on their clothes or bodies. I for one have—nasty white bodied, slow crawling creatures—ugh! I found mine on a body belt issued to me from store—I burnt it forthwith. My tummy was badly bitten though. Beasts!

Do you know I am coming to regard our habitance of Vic Square as the black months of my life—I mean since we were married. I never felt mentally alert there: no initiative. I believe if the war had come along while we were there I should never have joined—Oh apropos—and in reply to your letter. I am very glad I did join. It's only the thought of poor dear you

stuck in a poky little flat without enough money and that great tiring blessing on your hands makes me wonder if I did right.

My letters are not so newsy as they were are they? Old news over again is the order of the day. One "hospital" is very much like another (of course we don't run a hospital at all really. This like the places back in Bethune is just a main dressing station). We keep scaby cases a few days and any minor illnesses like my little go of flu—or whatever it was—also for a few days and a few only (they wanted to evacuate me) all wounded or cases likely to last over a couple of days we evacuate per daily convoy to the clearing hospital, whence they go on to the stationary or general hospitals at the bases or even to England. We have no beds or nurses (latter not allowed into the shell zone at all). Personally I think our orderlies are just as good as nurses. They were splendid to me as far as lay in their power. I didn't want anything but water and sleep. They couldn't get me any water the first night. We had just arrived here you understand and had only a little in the water bottles which was quickly used up. The water cart (I believe) went astray and local water is condemned until it has passed through the cart which is really an enormous tank and filter. They went to great trouble to

boil water for me though and by morning it was cold and drinkable.

Don't worry about the Russian reverse, dearest. It's costing Germany more than it has been worth to them yet and even if they regain Lemberg unless they also disorganise the Russian army they will be no better off than they were a month ago on the strategic view of the situation and rather worse on the economic. Of course if they can put the Russian army out of action—but it's a mighty big if—we shall have a bad time all round for some time to come—and I shan't get home *this* year but *even then* we shall beat them in the end and beat them to a frazzle.

God bless you my dearest—keep your pecker up and make every one you can stop subscribing to charities and buy war loans.

I love you very much more now than I used to and I wasn't joking about grass widows—but I didn't mean anything silly.

June 27th, 1915.

DEAREST

I *am* so sorry about the use of that word "isolation." Use has robbed it of all sinister meaning to us. We "isolate" anything suspicious—scabies, pediculie (otherwise lice) any old thing. I suppose if I had said I was to be

evacuated you wouldn't have thought much of it whereas it would have meant I was much worse.

Things are still very monotonous. I got a run over to B. Section station the other night. The Jack Johnson's had found a neighbouring billet and a short but heavy rush was the result. Fearing it would prove worse than it did—(the J. J.s can't have known the damage they were doing as they dropped only a few shells and then rang off. Some said the French 75's "found" *them*—I never heard). The M.O. there sent a car over to us with a request for a couple of extra N.C.O.'s and Imms and myself were dispatched —not altogether to our joy. 1.30 a.m. is an unenthusiastic time to be routed out. Arriving at B. Section station we got the surprise of our lives. It's in a little, now rather battered, mining village and it looks a palace at first sight. One lofty well proportioned room; at the far end a dark curtained stage; with rows of beds—*beds* my dear!—and the diffused lighting coming from hidden ledges and reflecting on the arched ceiling. It turns out that the mining village is a *model* mining village and the "station" is the theatre built for the miners in happier times (in most excellent taste; about the size and proportions of Prince's ground floor room otherwise reminiscent of the Little Theatre) and the beds

are accounted for by the fact that the French are running one of their amazing hospitals—under fire there. We are sharing it with them. You can imagine our surprise, can't you? expecting the usual outhouse or barn with straw on the floor and a couple of candles; an M.O. and his orderlies stepping over one patient to reach the next; a musty damp straw cum drying blood smell; blankets instead of doors and windows; a smoky wood fire outside on which a dixie of tea, or perhaps Oxo, stews — expecting this and finding a lofty, exquisitely lit, pleasant hospital palace.

I am rapidly regaining old form. Sleep well again and good appetite. We have had some very welcome rain but the Sun puts in a good many hours a day and flies are increasing. We do everything possible to keep them down. It is a punishable offence to leave food about or throw it away except on to the incinerator, and we use heaps of lime and disinfectant fluid. The health of the troops is really marvellous—but the bad months are to come. I shall be glad to see August over. Wherever we advance the enemy leave us a filthy mess. I suppose we don't give them time to tidy up before clearing out. Moreover they always shell any trenches they evacuate so fiercely that we can't do much more than get the wounded

out. There are several No Man's Lands about behind our lines but almost unapproachable. One at "——" we call Smelly Farm will be a plague centre if it isn't cleared up soon. I believe we have done something in the burying and lime strewing line there since I personally smelt it last. You can bet on one thing: the authorities are awake and doing all they can, and—what is even more important—the men appreciate the importance of all the precautions possible. This is what counts. However fine the authorities and however energetic they cannot watch all the men all the time. I am disposed to hope that the Germans (who seem to be much less clean *habitually* in spite of all their discipline and experts) will suffer some in the hot weather.

Don't hope to see me home on leave for some time yet, dearest. There are Divisions who have been out here for six months who should get ordinary leave before us. The only leave going, *special* leave, only granted on the plea of urgent private business. Sergeant Burrows has got three days: his mother has just died. The S.M. has the same on some business reason. So you see without a good business or domestic reason I cannot get leave. In the ordinary course of events I shan't get any for months, see?

Heaps of love.

P.S. I have been the recipient of many complaints about the way the press is booming ——'s tardy joining of the A.S.C. Strangers in the Battalions only knowing me by sight have sought me out to explain to me that it's "things like that" that give the stage a bad name. As long as he didn't join nobody worried about him (except a few silly white feather distributors) now he makes it look as if he were the only "pro" who ever joined the army. It's too bad. There are hosts of us out here (I met Millar Anderson—now a Sergeant in the London Irish the other day) and this one pup joining the A.S.C. half way through the war (I bet he never sees a shell burst and doesn't want to) discredits the whole trade.

To his Mother.

June 27th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

I'll tell you what you can send me: a list of the vols. in the Home University Library; a list of the vols. in that series of one shilling or one shilling and sixpenny Handbooks published by the Oxford or Cambridge University Press; a copy of Bohn's (*reissue at one shilling of their library!*) "Plotinus" published by Bell who have

bought Bohn out; a copy of Rev. Collin's "Plautus and Terence" published by Blackwood at one shilling (reissue), and any Joseph Conrad novel at one shilling except "Typhoon." That'll cost you three shillings in toto.

Love.

To his Wife.

June 29th, 1915.

We are jogging along under the impression that we are having a slack time but on going over our figures for the last month the "slack"ness proves to be only by comparison with our tremendously busy spells in May, when we handled our two hundred wounded cases a day in C. section alone. I myself helped with the "dressing" of over 150 in 43 hours in our operating tent, and 400 in the week, after which I went up to the Adv. for three days. In those ten days I had my boots off four times, my trousers three, which may impress you till I mention that a whole platoon of the —th didn't get their boots off for eight days and slept in their *full marching order* six nights! Some men of that Platoon had to mount guard after those eight days and march the next day five miles. The next day they marched up again and delivered the great ragtime charge of the

"—th" which took three lines of trenches, and the description of which will still reduce any trained regular to a state of imbecility through laughing. I didn't see the charge, but I went over the ground and I heard the "story" from over forty participants while it was still very fresh and so were they. They are an amazing lot of cockneys—ex newsboys and such and—well I'll tell you about it one of these days. Part of the joke was that we didn't want three lines of trenches just there only one and the officials had a devil of a time getting the men to retire to the first line taken (the only one tenable), and when they got there they found it full of their supports who had come up and who in turn didn't want to go back etc. etc. ad lib. There really is a lot of genuine humour in war. I swear I've heard more real mirthful, unjarring laughter in the last six months than in the previous six years. I am developing a theory that men who face death have a right to face it how they please, so long as their attitude is genuine, and the happy go lucky, laughing philosopher attitude of our men (between fits of "I want to go home" depression) is absolutely true and neither assumed nor callous. To laugh while laying out a dead is perfectly natural if anything funny happens and jars on no one *present*. To force a solemn face

and funeral mien is fake and does jar on most susceptibilities.

No more paper.

Love.

July 1st, 1915.

DEAREST.

What a bat! It has knocked all the ambulance speechless and I am suspected of being a county player in disguise. Who in the world chose it? Of course the *make* is a good one, but it is such an exceptionally good specimen. Mayhew who has played 2nd County Cricket says he has never lifted a better and our other one or two experts are equally impressed.

I *like* the photo of "ours" but it has made me unhappy to see how my baby is changing. I shall have to make the acquaintance of a comparative stranger I'm afraid, when I come marching home.—"Marching" looks quite an odd word. I haven't had a mile march—or walk—in the last fortnight.

Things are still pretty monotonous. Still on "evacuations" to which I have now added the "grubbing" of our section. I dishes out their beastly dinners—which is not good for my already feeble appetite, and draw their daily bread and jam and cheese from the Q.M. Stores.

We have had just a glimmer of excitement to-day: a score or so shells on a slag-heap a few hundred yards away. Very few of them exploded, whereat a great reawakening of the—" German ammunition running out" story is now in process.

It's very difficult to write—continual interrup—Love to you all.

To his Mother-in-Law.

July 3rd, 1915.

Thank you ever so much for the bat. I don't know how you managed to get hold of such a magnificent one. Of course you went to a good place and paid a good price but some people could do all that and still get an indifferent quality wood. This has aroused such enthusiasm here that you'd think I exaggerated if I told you—but I don't. Mayhew who is a judge says it is the best he has ever played with.

There is a joke about it which must wait till I see you as it involves official secrets—of a sort, and might touch the censor hereof nearly.

We are having a very monotonous time: each day like the last or the next. The variation in number of sick or wounded per diem is very slight

and always well within our capacity. We had a tiny rush the other day, which however did not last. An occasional dental parade will occupy an afternoon but as a rule our day's work begins at 6 a.m. and ends before 2 p.m. In the afternoon we leave just enough to keep the place going and adjourn to a field a couple of hundred yards away for cricket among ourselves or football with the Indians (who won't attempt cricket). Occasionally a convoy interrupts our game about 4.30 and again after tea we are kept mildly busy till—perhaps—9 p.m. It's a dull monotonous life. We are all longing to get up to the advanced station again. We are nearly three and a half miles behind the firing line here, and have only drawn fire—to any extent—once since we've been here—a month now. We are losing a few men (losing only meaning that they are no longer with us) with eye trouble and other minor troubles due I think mainly to nerve strains. The Staff Sergeant of B. section came back from the advanced station a walking skeleton. I hadn't seen him for a fortnight and he quite horrified me. I never saw a man lose flesh so. Curious the difference in temperaments, the sergeant in charge of the Adv. I spent Easter at had been there—in the most exposed "Adv" I ever saw—for over three months and he looked as healthy as any

man I ever saw. Men who can't stand the strain either get jobs in the divisional laundries, bakeries, etc. or get further back still to Boulogne or other bases where they are employed somehow. Sometimes they turn out very useful there. It is not considered the slightest disgrace to be sent back with this or that ailment, unfitting one for the hard life up here, but still leaving one quite capable of useful work on the lines of communication.

This is not to prepare you for any departure from the front on my part. I am quite fit again and haven't got any nerves to get upset.

I hope you are giving up all subscribing to charities and buying War Loan instead. I'm sick of these charities. Most of them are all wrong: their beastly tobacco funds that send us out absolutely unsmokable tobacco and the society that presents us with *hair brushes!* (Consider: what are we to do with hair brushes and how are we to carry them?) and weird shaped shirts, and tubes of pain-killer. They are all wrong. They aim—feebly at making war endurable. The War Loan is to end it. Subscribe to that and nothing else. It's the only thing that'll be any use.

Love.

To his Dog.

July 6th, 1915.

MY DEAR EMMA

Do you realise that I haven't written to you *once* in four months away? Do you? If you don't, I am hurt, if you do and *don't mind realising it* I am still more hurt. Taken either way you are a heartless little dog and you don't deserve a letter.

There is only one hope for you. You may be too proud to enquire with suitable asperity, why I have not written. I leave it to you, *are* you proud?

If so what of? Your ears?—I beg your pardon; I forgot Firstie. Of course you've a right to be proud after all, but I don't see your point. Why should your natural pride in Firstie be too great for you to complain of my remissness. You are illogical Emma, as well as heartless. I don't see what you're getting at.

If you see that son of mine, you might give him my love and tell him to get his hair cut. If it hasn't been cut since the photo it must be too long by now—unless it grows backwards: in which case he must have a knot tied in each hair close to his blessed little scalp to prevent it growing in too far and coming out of his chin as whiskers.

Will you see to this? I don't want to come back and find my little boy sprouting a beard: he's too young for such things.

Please give my love to Mrs. Chapin with this, letter *enclo.* It's a silly sort of letter—a great mistake I know—but—entre nous—(that's French) I'm a silly sort of person and subject to quite idiotic moods when I start thinking about all my darlings at home in England.

Bless you all.

To his Wife.

MY DEAR ONE.

Your description of Vallie's greeting is lovely. I've read it twenty times. I love it—but it hurts me too. Don't think I grudge you one pearl's-worth of his love but—it throws my situation into a cruelly clear light. I've only seen him—he's only seen *me* that's the point—ten days in the last eight months of his short life. I shall come back in a few months' time to a—well almost a stranger, a sweet little stranger of course but he's bound to be shy with me—even though—as I know you are doing—you talk about me to him very often and do your best to—well—keep my memory green. He's been looking to you for everything and only hearing about me as

a fairy story—Oh *don't* think, *please* don't think I'm being jealous. I can be sorry for myself without being the least little bit grudging to you. I really am more glad than I can express, that you have got his love—and appreciate it—to make up —it's such simple plain sailing work being loved by a baby—to make up for the unkindness and exaction that I have mixed up with *my* love for you, until I've made rather a trying business of it for you, you poor dear. I wonder if I shall do any better after —— I'm afraid I shan't you know, I shall make a good start and—I've got a rotten disposition, that's what's the matter. I'm full of good :—ideals, courage, kindness etc. but *I* who am full of them am—well I've got a rotten disposition. And you know it—don't you ?

The last need not be answered. I know you know it just as well as I know it myself. I hope you realize my good contents though and how distressing it is for me—unashamedly conscious of them—to be equally conscious what a poor show I make of them—what a rotten ensemble they and I make together.

To go back over this letter and gather some lose ends. Do you understand that what I really mean is not that Vallie will seem strange to me, but that I shall be a stranger to him. He's been growing out of me for these last most

impressionable months, just when he was acquiring a vocabulary and an enquiring mind for simpler metaphysics otherwise religion. Just the months I wanted to guide him through. Oh, my dear, be careful of his vocabulary and his religion. Don't let him use one word for more than one idea and don't let him think that to pray for a thing gives him a right to expect it from God by return of post. Teach him one simple thing—an obviously true one—that if God is Omnipotent, all seeing, all knowing, and good, all prayer should be concluded with "Thy will be done." Omission of this may end in a very rebellious frame of mind after some devout—and ungranted—prayer. All prayers are not granted. Teach him that if anything.

What a letter!

God bless you my Darling.

July 7th, 1915.

It is boiling hot to-day. It has been getting steadily warmer for a couple of weeks but these last two days have been much hotter and to-day is tropical. Imagine what we suffer in the same heavy khaki and flannel shirts we were wearing at Christmas, puttees and heavy boots. You know how ill I endure hot weather. I feel—well; *rabid*. How I shall endure three months of hot weather (July Aug and Sept.) God knows.

I hate it like poison: makes me feel so slack. It's got to be stuck though like many—presumably—worse things.

By the way, did I ever thank you adequately for the spaghetti. I simply loved it: had it the night it arrived. I can't remember whether I expressed myself about it or not. I have a habit of composing letters to you in the night, when I cannot sleep, or when I am shaving or cleaning my boots or searching my shirt for "pediculi" or doing suchlike mind-free things. I think this to you or that to you—just as eight, seven, six, years ago I used to think conversations with you.

The devil of it is I sometimes think a letter and remember it but not whether I ever wrote it or not.

Compris?

Love.

July 10th, 1915.

DEAREST MINE

I am so sorry not to be with you at such a time. I know how much of it will fall on you and what a gloomy, long winded, affair the funeral is bound to be. I cannot find any feeling in myself about *him*; we have all known so long it was coming and I have seen so many die out here that a death is not so looming a thing now as

it used to be. You, though I do feel most awfully for. I can see you looking pinched and tired and pale and sticking the long useless service because it's got to be stuck, and the long ride there and the long ride back in the stuffy funeral carriage—I have a hope you may come back some other way—will all add their weight of depression—*where depression is needless.* What's the use of an orgy of heart-heaviness to anyone.

Now about leave. I have asked and had audience of the C.O. who was most kind, but there's no hurrying matters, understand that. My application to the C.O. was backed by Lieut. Dixon and has now gone on to the Divisional Medical Bosses backed by the C.O. but at present only one medical at a time can be spared from the division and (as this is not a death-bed-side matter) I must wait my turn for (probably) a month or six weeks at least, by which time (let's be hopeful) the Germans will perhaps have started their big attack or *we* shall have started ours or an epidemic will have broken out or something unforeseen will have occurred and all leave will be stopped.

Bless you all and Emma.

To his Son.

July 10th, 1915.

MY BLESSED MANLET.

I rather like your photo in the sailor suit but I love the one with Mummy and Joan that the Special Constable took outside the flat.

By the way old man; do you wear a black silk handkerchief with your sailor suit? Because you ought to, you know. Ever since Nelson was killed on his ship at Trafalgar, sailors have worn a black silk handkerchief under the sailor collar with the ends tied into a sailor knot in front in memory of him—and he's worth remembering. Get Mummy or Granny or someone to stand you a plain black hanky, big enough to go round, and fold it from corner to corner and wear it as I've told you.

Have you heard that the Kaiser (who you did *not* tear up and put into the dust shoot for all your boasting) has said that he's going to end this war by October—that's in three months' time, less than a hundred days. Of course he means he's going to win it in that time. He's wrong, poor man, but it's nice to hear him talk that way, because, when people talk that way, they generally do something silly, and when he does

something silly, we'll catch him such a wallop that you'll hear it at home in England.

Love from your

DOODY.

To his Mother.

July 12th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

Thanks so much for the books. It's such a treat to get good reading again. We are swamped with old magazines of the inferior type but can get little else.

I'm rather a lone coon these days. All my more intimate pals are either at other stations, sick and down at the base, or gone to commissions, and two are dead. I'm on excellent terms with the whole unit but—well, a little lonesome never-the-less. I miss Fisher (gone to a commission) more than most. We had subjects in common.

Write often.

Love.

To his Wife.

July 14th, 1915.

MY DEAR ONE

It looks as if my leave would either be refused or be a long time coming. Please, *please* don't be too disappointed. I hate to think of you

being distressed. I have had a very plain hint and circumstances suggest that all leave may be stopped for our unit—nothing serious, don't worry. Oh and *please* don't don't be too disappointed. I'm sick enough without thinking about you feeling miserable over on your side. After all you have got Vallie to cheer you up.

Anyway the old war can't last for ever—or even for long at this rate. The news is good isn't it? Africa, Russia, France and the Dardanelles, all moves towards an end. I stick to the November to Xmas idea.

To his Son.

July 14th, 1915.

VALLIE MY POPPET

What time do you have breakfast in the morning? Please tell me. I have mine at about ten minutes past eight. At eight o'clock I start dishing out the tea (with one hand) and the bacon (with the other) to my section. This takes me about ten minutes—there are about thirty of them. (I *am* quick, aren't I)? Then at ten past eight I fry myself a piece of bread in the bacon fat and that's my breakfast. A big piece of fried bread and a mug of tea. Sometimes I have a little piece of bacon, but not often, because I don't like bacon the way we cook it here, and

cold into the bargain, and of course after serving out all the rest my piece is cold.

Do you ever have fried bread? Try it. It's awfully nice and very good for you, not too thin and only just crisp *not hard*. Try it and write me how you like it.

Oh my boy I do want to see you again.

To his Wife.

July 19th, 1915.

Flies are our present terror. Seriously; it is impossible to sleep after day break without covering the face, they swarm so. We keep them down wonderfully *in* the hospital but everywhere else (Oh, my dear, the estaminets!) they darken the air.

Yes, send me a couple of light shirts. Of course you cannot understand that under the conditions out here one wears whatever shirt comes along when one has the good fortune to get a bath. There is no private property. The shirt I wore last week may be worn by an engineer, a rifleman, or (possibly) Capell next. There is no poss. of getting one's things back. You simply hand in a shirt and a pair of sox and get a pair of sox and a shirt in return from store. Still send a couple. I may be able to keep them a few weeks and if

only *two* it'll be worth it. When one stays in one place, one can accumulate a little but it all has to be abandoned at a move. You know we can only take what we can carry in our haversacks and rolled in our great coats. Those kit bags were given up when we left Hatfield.

I don't wear underwear. It only gets dirty. The less one wears the better.

Above was interrupted yesterday for a move. Cannot give details in green envelope. I'm afraid it won't go till to-morrow now, but will hurry it off. First moment I have had to spare since left off yesterday.

To his Mother.

July 19th, 1915.

MY DEAREST MATER,

We are up among the guns again but some distance behind the trenches. We are sharing with the French local medical authorities. A hospital *with beds!* A good proportion of the blessés are civilians and a very bad proportion of these are children. Two on a stretcher, my dear, that scarcely weigh enough to notice between them, mites of five or six.

This is where you curse the Germans, unless you have imagination enough to remember that

we probably maim our share of little ones among those that are unfortunate enough to inhabit the danger zone behind the enemy trenches. If you are to have war with ten, twelve, twenty mile range guns and civies and their families *will* take their chance and live in the danger zone—you can finish the syllogism for yourself.

Write often.

Love.

To his Wife.

July 21st, 1915.

"They" are shelling something—I dunno what—and hitting a slag-heap at a mine head a couple of hundred yards away. The shells pass nearly over this house and make the place hum. Nobody seems to mind (I'm sure *I* don't so long as they pass along) I presume "they" are after some batteries near here. They are a long way out if they are.

It's awfully hot again and the flies are terrible. Love.

July 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST

I am quite incapable of doing justice to this morning's entertainment. "They" have been shelling the most thickly—and poorly—

populated part of this little mining town. Some of us went up into it getting the wounded out. Houses, men, women, and children blown to pieces by huge high explosives—and more shells coming over every few minutes, all within a couple of hundred yards of the hospital. I want to tell you all I see—all that happens to me out here, but I must fail to convey it—and I don't want you *quite* to share my feelings. Amazing, ironic contrasts abounded: within five minutes of each other came in a self-possessed young woman of about ten to have the remains of her arm cut off—perfectly calm—walked in—never cried or showed the least excitement—*and* a man of fifty on a stretcher with a mangled leg who roared out in an enormous mad voice for his "Maman" over and over again till he was anæsthetised. Could any creation of the imagination equal this? Or this scene in a squalid kitchen:—a huge woman dead on her face across the threshold, a little child also dead at her feet, the legs of her men folk (husband and son?) straggling across the foot way outside (I am keeping back all the hundreds of horrible details, hard though it may be to believe it) and her remaining daughter a child of about twelve—leaping back and forth over the bodies struggling to get a chain from the neck of the body. "Souvenir!" I tried to get

her away—she was half mad—but was assailed fiercely by neighbours on her behalf, who seemed to regard her desire for a memento of her mother under the circumstances, most natural and commendable. While I was being suppressed another shell came over and we went to earth in a heap, the hundred yards away crash bringing down plaster and crockery on to our heads and the flying pieces of "case" buzzing past the windows like enormous bees or small aeroplanes. When they had settled the child returned to the chain—armed now with a carving knife—and I left her to it.

Next Day.

From the tragic to the ridiculous: a shell has just blown in the wall of our cook house (no one hurt) and blown out our dinner. Half rations in consequence. Half rations are all I can eat so don't pity me.

Love.

July 25th, 1915.

MY DEAREST

Of course if you've gone so far as seeking a house in Devonshire, go by all means. I didn't understand from your letter that it was anything more than a suggestion which I didn't like because it would curtail my time with you if I

got leave during the time you were there. The other reason wasn't a reason at all—just a vague feeling of regret for one more might-have-been lost to me. You can't understand of course. It's ridiculous of me to expect any sane person to —pitiful, idiotic, feelings of lost, lost, lost—not at all constant but recurring. There are plenty of places left for us to go to for our honeymoon. We had talked of Devonshire for the other, that's all, and I'm a sentimental fool. It suggested somehow to me a fresh start from an old dream for us.

Oh, *Slops!* I'm in love so forgive them.

P.S. Later on reading your letter again.

If Shaw wanted giggling he'd ask for it. If he says " worriedly etc. " he means it. Play on the lines and don't go outside them. The Manchester Dramatists need this help from actors just as the Glasgow ones used to. They scarcely draw their characters at all. How many different girls could you see in the situation of—say—the " Younger Generation " ? Is there any reason *in the lines* why Fanny in " Hindle Wakes " shouldn't be a cheerful little fair girl or an ill tempered tall dark one—any sort of self-supporting modern mill girl ? Shaw doesn't need building upon. The less you go outside him the better.

Be adequate to his lines—that is what's wanted. Of course you must appreciate the lines.

July 29th, 1915.

My Dearest

You've got to open some sort of a home for me if I get leave. I can't tell you how I long to sit in a room again—a room with a door that will shut out people. Most of the " horrors of war " are entertainments just a shade—or a lot—too exciting or painful to appreciate till they are over ; but the absolute lack of privacy for hours, days, weeks, months, accumulating and piling one on another is a source of real misery, far exceeding the physical discomforts of sleeping under an overcoat on a waterproof sheet on a stone floor or going without an occasional meal or night's sleep.

Comic : I was roused in the night (being on twenty-four hours' duty at the dressing station)—or rather at 2 a.m. just as I was getting off to sleep, after having fetched in a dozen odd minor blessés, by a tall gentle voiced orderly shaking me gently and saying : " Corporal—there's a man here's been and yawned and he can't get his mouth shut ! "

It was quite true. The poor fellow had dislocated his jaw yawning. How blasé ! Fancy a company of engineers (he was an engineer)

roused out at 2 a.m to go up and do their *really* dangerous work in front of the trenches and one of them yawns so much that he dislocates his jaw! I took him round to Major Dawson who came down calmly, wrestled gently but firmly with the unhappy man for about half a minute, restored his jaw to the normal and returned to bed. The man walked back to the station with me. Ses he with deep feeling, "Nobody will ever know what that minute was like." Exact words I assure you.

Dearest your letter arrived just this second. I am so sorry I told you about the shelling—but I hate to suppress anything when I write to you. Of course there's a little danger to every one out here but how very little to me or any one person! No amount of activity can make me occupy more than about two and a half cubic yards of space. A really heavy bombardment doesn't hit everywhere at once—or a thousandth part of everywhere and we stand a very slight chance of getting anything like a heavy bombardment here. Why, hundreds of civilians are still living here! Estaminets are open, mines working.

There is something rather curious in your being frightened over this last little entertainment, when you weren't over the really hot time we had at the end of May. It is that in the May caboosh

I never felt the least tremor of fear and the other day I was for the first time quite panicky. I am inclined to think that the May calmness was a mixture of fatigue and lack of "reality" in the show. I came up from "——" already tired out and plunged into the fag end of a long and hot engagement. The very number of dead and wounded and pieces, the vividness of the flashes, the volume of sound were too great to derive self-applicable knowledge from—only a general—and rather—no I'll be honest—*very* enjoyable sensation of animation and alertness and excitement. It was so enormous and ear-splitting that the mystery behind life and death and light and darkness and noise seemed more realisable for expressing itself thus tremendously, and the medium of its expression took a more palpably secondary place to it as mere mediums and not ultimate realities.

The dozen shells the other day were, au contraire, separate distinct, each one explained itself clearly to the lesser domestic side of the mind and foretold what the next one might do.

Don't worry about me. I am well—sensible—in a safe employment (consider if I were in the infantry!) The chances in favour of my coming back a good deal fitter than I came out are enormous.

Love.

July 30th, 1915.

SWEETHEART

Do you say anything to Vallie about the chance of my coming home for a couple of days only? If I do get leave I don't want the blessed boy to think if he sees me that I am home for good. It's difficult, isn't it? Of course you mustn't raise his hopes of seeing me at all. Oo-er! *Very* difficult.

Things are very quiet here so don't be frightened about me—not that I was altogether sorry to get your upset letter. It's gratifying, you know, to feel that someone cares as much as that, though it sounds selfish to say so. Anyway you've no grounds for worry just now. The war seems to be "Off" for the time being as far as we here are concerned.

Love to my brat and his Mummy—I quite believe he is a duck.

July 31st, 1915.

SWEETHEART

Yes, news in general is quite healthy isn't it—but remember no news can be bad as long as the Russian *army* is not disorganised and the Allies go on with their job. It may be made a slightly longer job by this or that German coup or a slightly shorter job by this or that German

blunder but it will be done—" Naught can make us rue if the Allies to themselves do prove but true." Steadfastness in the authorities and fortitude in the peoples are all that are wanted—and they seem to be forthcoming.

Will you please call on Alfred Dunhill of Duke Street St. James (or get Lal to do it) and pay for the repair of a pipe I sent him to do a couple of days ago. Do this soon, there's a dear.

I am glad to gather that I do right in giving you the worst as well as the best of my news. I suppose you will take it as good that we now expect to go back for a rest shortly. I'm blest if I do. " Rests " out here are beastly things with drills and kit inspections and revising equipments to make every day a misery. I can honestly say that the terrors of kit inspection beat those of any bombardment I have yet seen, and I would rather empty three hundred bed-pans than do half an hour's stretcher drill " by numbers." However these things must be endured. We've had a ripping time here, that's something.

Some assorted sick just come in — excuse me. — No I'd better close — getting near post time.

Love.

To his Son.

Same Date.

VALLY.

Hullo little boy, how are you? I'm fine. We're fighting flies just now more than Germans; there are millions and millions and millions of them. If you open a pot of jam they knock you down and take it away from you before you can say "Smiffins" and they wake you up in the morning by running up and down your nose—Oh they're horrid but we kill millions of them every day. We squirt stuff over them and burn their homes and hide our food (so they starve a bit) and catch them in traps. Oh my, they are a nuisance. They are great friends of the Germans these flies, and help them all they can. When the Germans shoot a shell at us and the pieces cut a man's face or hand the flies get on to the place and make it dirty so that it takes a long time to get better. Beasts!

Heaps of love my dear man.

Your DOODY.

To his Wife.

Aug. 2nd, 1915.

SWEETHEART

I am very worried about my leave—it looks more and more like falling through. We

are still " here " and while we remain here I have no hope of leave.

Don't worry about Warsaw or anything, just keep smiling—live as economically as you can—and make up your mind that after the War we shall be able to make up for the lean years with a vengeance—*and* a clear conscience.

We are fearfully busy to-day—not with blessés—tent mucking etc. and above all fly slaying and I only had four hours' sleep last night so au revoir, Dearest, I'm going to turn in at eight and it is already half-past seven. I must wash and make down my " bed "—a waterproof sheet, overcoat, tunic, and waterproof cape, very comfy when you are tired as I am I assure you. I have had two nights *in a bed* lately and quite a number in blankets.

Bless you both.

To his Son.

Aug. 4th, 1915.

DARLING LITTLE BOY

I heard all about you and those carpets—I hope you helped them to find Gram a nice one.

Are you getting very tired of waiting for me to come home ? I suppose you are used to me being away by this time though, aren't you ? You

will have to get used to me when I come back more likely.

When I come back for good—which won't be for a *long* time yet—I'm going to start your ed-u-ca-tion young man! Ed-u-ca-tion! I hope you know what it means because I don't and if I start your education and we neither of us know what it means we shan't get on very well, shall we? We should have to make a start by finding out. You might ask Gram and Mummy and Auntie Lal what Ed-u-ca-tion means and let me know each of their answers if you've time. In the meantime be a good little boy and keep your eyes open and always put your feet down flat, chew your food well and breathe through your nose.

Bye Bye—I may perhaps come home for a few days *before* the end of the war. Won't it be nice if I do?—but I'm not sure and it will be only for a very few days just to see you and be off again.

Your DOODY.

To his Wife.

Calypso dear—I wonder if Vally asks as many questions as ever? If he does be a dear and try hard not to choke him off. Children must ask

questions—of course it's trying when one is tired or thinking of other things to explain why cats have tails etc. but do your best. Don't just say "I don't know" and leave it at that. Say "I don't know—we'd better ask—so and so"—In short keep his mind enquiring even the most foolish things rather than taking anything for granted.

Later.

I am now back at the main dressing station so you needn't worry about me so much for a bit. They *have* shelled us as far as this it is true, but such shelling is not a daily or even a weekly occurrence.

We came back rather suddenly: at twenty-five to eleven came a cyclist round to the billet when I was having a wash: "Parade full marching order eleven"—I just got my coat rolled and my haversack and water bottle on and bolted to the parade and off we marched here.

Tuesday.

And *now* we're right back under canvas full fifteen miles behind the line enjoying—or about to enjoy—perhaps—a month's rest. I am in charge of one of the bell tents (temporarily named "Hope Cottage") and fourteen inmates thereof

—rather a crowd. Our tents are pitched in a tiny field, bounded on two sides by ditches and on the third by an eight foot stream and dotted with enormously tall poplars—a few more and it would be a wood. There are some willows by the water many chickens here and——

I must knock off to catch post.

Wednesday.

It poured all night but our tent kept the actual rain out, though of course a certain dampness prevailed. We shall dig drainage to-day and then it won't rain any more.

The Sergeant Major has told me that unless something happens my leave request will go up to the A.D.M.S. again next week so there is hope of my getting it during that (next) week. Please let me know at *once* if you fix a date out of London next week. It would be awful if you did and I had to be in London half the time, wouldn't it?

We seem to be in for a fairly rational sort of rest after all. Some of the boys deny the possibility of such a thing and things certainly began badly but I am of a hopeful disposition and—well, the weather is better for *one* thing and the Sergeant Major instead of putting the "police" under arrest for allowing a woman into the camp selling fried potatoes, informed her, through me, that

she could come every day at breakfast and dinner times!

Later.

We have just had our third parade to-day and have been dismissed but told not to go away—"be ready to fall in again." Oh for a nice shell swept billet where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest!

Love.

To his Son.

Cockyolly Bird to his little Master.

Oh Cookery Coo I *am* having a time! He stuffs me into haversacks and *drags* me out again and leaves me head downwards all night. The Germans have blown the mess tin I used to live in when he wasn't using it into a *norful* shape, so he's left it behind where the bangs are and, my, what a journey I've had!

Back there he used to sit me on his kit every morning when he went on duty to look after it for him, and he used to open that case with a picture of you in it so's I could have you for company. But one day he found me crying over the photo—I got homesick you see—so he took me out with him the next day to the hospital and showed me to two little French boys that were

there—Oh horrid little boys I assure you Vallie! They wanted to keep me as a souvenir! They ask for everything they see and get quite rude and say "English no bon" if they don't get it. They were begging for "souvenir cigarettes" all the way here but they don't get any from *our* division *now*, nasty little cadgers!

I've got a fearful lot to do—this is a rest camp, you see—so good-bye. I may come home to see you in a week or two just for a few days—if he comes he's promised to bring me.

Well
doodledoo
Your old pet
COCKY OLLY BIRD.

[NOTE.—*Harold Chapin was home on leave from August 8th to August* 15.]

To his Wife.

Aug. 23rd, 1915.

SWEETHEART

I'm back here—found the 6th still in the same quarters—and I'm thoroughly unsettled. I'm homesick and Vallysick and Yousick. It's like the first fortnight back at Boarding School or the first week with a strange company. Why the

devil have I had so much of this mild, lonely, unhappiness in my life? I seem to be always being lumped off on my own away from the people *and places* I care about.

I found your letter written week before last on my arrival here—it cheered me up after a gloomy journey with almost comically woebegone companions. They sang the most beautiful songs in the train all about how much better it would be to "stay at home"

> "About the streets to roam
> and live on the earnings of a lady typist"

instead of going to War and having various specified parts of one's corporal being removed by the agency of high explosives.

Later.

This letter started the day before yesterday was interrupted to do some quite useless incinerator building which kept me busy all yesterday and this morning. This is still a "rest camp." It is characteristic of military life that the three months of full duty which we have just come through and which even in orders has been referred to as a hard time, was really a period of well blended work, and rest tempered by common sense and the sense of usefulness, whereas the period of "rest" which follows—and which was

held out to us as a sort of reward for accomplishment—is really a pleasant little hell upon earth with no organised labour to speak of, but innumerable useless fatigues, the whole rendered doubly maddening by a lack of nous and exuberance, of illnature hard to credit in the same people who carried on the full duty period. It's all very illuminating—if only one could get the light of it out of one's eyes.

We are still infernally uncomfortable. Thirteen in a tent on wet ground (it rains every day still. Boots etc. unless well wrapped up are always wet by morning—inside and out.

H.P.D. talked a lot about getting me a Commission, but he only mentioned A.S.C. as immediate. I wish you'd ask him about the possibility of *Artillery*. I'm not sure but I think that would tempt me. It's fascinating work: either field or garrison guns.

Love.

Aug. 26th, 1915.

DEAREST

I have just received your letter in which you say you are beginning to feel "jumpy," really you mustn't write like that when I fail to write: I do my very level best and when I cannot get a letter off to you it worries me quite enough as it is.

The other day (for instance) I was going to write to you first chance. I started a letter before breakfast even. After breakfast I was packed off on a job (a mere lark really—trip with the tug-of-war team) which spun itself out till six p.m. and the post when we got back had gone. That sort of thing is always happening. Please make up your mind (i) that I write every day I get the chance (ii) that you'd know very quickly if anything amiss happened to me.

Things are very peaceful here. We have taken to road sweeping as a new hobby. The inhabitants do absolutely nothing to keep the village clean.

Next Day.

And *now* we are on to a new job—cleaning harness and generally "squaring up" the transport lines. We have styled ourselves "drivers' batmen" which is a very sarcastic description if you could but understand it—perhaps you do. Batman is an Indian term, isn't it? We are rather hot at inventing new names or ranks for ourselves. How about "Clerk to the Incinerator" "Chief-latrine-Artificer"? "First Lord of the Scaby Tent" (otherwise "Scaby-King"—which is the ordinary designation of the man in charge of "scaby-cases" and not a joke at all).

As a matter of fact helping the transport is

rather a lark—hard work but still a lark. There are many who grumble and talk the usual nonsense about not having joined to do this that or the other thing but judged independently of their effect upon one's personal dignity (imaginary effect), most of the jobs one gets out here can be done in about half the time allotted to do them in and can be done smoking and talking and are consequently anything but irksome. Give me jobs any day rather than parades and inspections and guards.

Let me have an answer to my query about Artillery as soon as you can manage it.

Sergeant Tully (my best friend among the sergeants with whom I used to go for an evening stroll three or four times a week) has gone back (*back* doesn't necessarily mean to England) with kidney trouble: he's had it before, I fancy the damp here did him no good. I shall miss him, he was a good old chap and a gentleman *although* his calling was that of a railway signalman in private life. I never heard him express an ungenerous or indelicate thought.

We still sleep twelve in a tent and much of our time is spent in "cooting" our shirts and underwear.

We are beginning to give up all hope of ever hearing a gun fired again. All we ever see here

are the aeroplanes setting off and returning—we are quite a dozen miles from the front line. The good news from Riga bucked us all up enormously —though unfortunately it reached us in very exaggerated form :—ten battleships and four transports and we were rather let down when the next morning brought it down to one Battleship and nine minor craft with four barges or barques." Still at its lowest it was very good news and out of a grey sky.

To-day's news of the attack on Zeebrugge is heartening too, though—of course—not important in itself. I still see no reason to despair of getting back this winter. Big wars end swiftly and unexpectedly and the Balkans look like coming in against Turkey at last which will quite certainly end *that* drain upon our resources.

Love and bless you.

To his Son.

Same Date.

MY BLESSED BOY

How are you and how do you like Devonshire? I hear you've got a bathing suit. How useful! Do you ever bathe in it?

There are two brown calves who walk about our camp who are very anxious to be remembered

to Cockyolly Bird—they were great friends of his, and several of the chickens who hang about for crumbs while we're having breakfast send their kind regards to him—they are all rather jealous of him though. He used to tell them the most awful whackers about his flat in London and his houseboat on the river and this and that and the other thing. They didn't know how much to believe, but—as one old hen said in my hearing : "even if it's all pretence he must have *seen* a flat in London to pretend so well—and that's more than *we've* ever done." He's impressed them fearfully.

Love to you my darling—be *very* good to your nice mummy. She's a jolly sight too good for you and that's my advice to *you*. Try to be good enough to deserve such a good mummy,

and oblige

Your obedient

DOODY.

To his Wife .

Aug. 27th, 1915.

SWEETHEART

I am extremely well. Things in the 6th are improving. Milk in the tea now regular, plenty of vegetables in the stew which is now

quite palatable—though monotonous. Also we have found and developed several shops here which cook us quite decent meals. Pork chops and omelettes with well cooked potatoes and also chips and coffee may be bought at the camp gate in the mornings—and *also* hot rolls.

Rumour hath it that we are to do "Divisional Sick" for a spell, which will keep us out of the line the 4th and 5th taking their turn there. If the war is going to run into the bad weather, I hope we stick to the divisional sick which means a permanent abode—probably in a sizable townlet. The other possible jobs for a Field Ambulance in this sort of permanent trench warfare are divisional washing and baths and convalescent company. They are not deemed such honourable occupations as dressing stations but we have won our spurs already and would like to rest on our laurels until "the advance" comes along. I have just had a most excellent pair of boots issued to me—as they happen to be brown will you send me in the next parcel either a tin of kiwi (you know the red shade I like) or of a stuff called somebody's "Toney Red" also I should like some handkerchiefs—only one or two in each parcel, though—at intervals.

Love Sweetheart.

To his Mother.

Aug. 30th, 1915.

MOST DEAREST MATER

Your second letter just received. Consider: for *this* letter to catch to-morrow's outgoing post from the division I must put it in our post bag before six p.m. to-night. Ere I write the next word—" Corporal Chapin "—I reply " Sir " and am given some job probably a light one—very likely more of a joy-ride than anything else (we are having an easy time still) but never-the-less one that prevents this letter being finished before six p.m. perhaps that joy-ride of a job lands me back in camp at about dusk—Six o'clock post bag gone to mess: to-day's post missed. This involves the fact that—as we are only allowed to post one letter a day—Calypso, to whom I should write to-morrow will have to be postponed another day. Perhaps that day we shall be moving: no posting letters, even if opportunity to write them, for a couple of days. Where are we then? Thursday, and a letter posted Thursday leaves us Friday crosses Saturday (if the Channel is clear) and probably reaches her in Devonshire on Monday. There's a very natural week's delay in writing, easily to be lengthened by—say—moving to an advanced dressing station the day

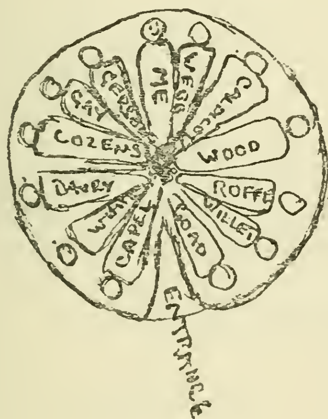
after moving in general (a fairly common lot) ; the channel boats not running for a night or two or some other contretemps.

You people in Blighty have no idea (I'm not surprised) what the mere moving, feeding, housing etc. of troops involves. Remember we do everything for ourselves. You are so used to having innumerable things done for you in civil life that you forget they are done :—the removal and destruction of refuse and the obtaining of water are examples. Another point : no civil contingency ever demands the sudden quartering of twenty to thirty thousand men in this or that locality with absolutely no reference to its suitability or capacity for housing them, and at a day or two's notice. I am more and more impressed with the enormous capacity displayed by those authorities who are responsible for the roads. You can't just say to the Umpty umpth Division " you will relieve the Ooty ooth Division on Tuesday." You have got to arrange for a dozen thousands of infantry with artillery, ambulances and A.S.C. to come up a certain set of roads while another dozen thousands come down another certain set ;—that they are not in " Sommevere " at the same time as it wouldn't hold 'em—and also that " Sommevere " is not left empty or even half empty—for the Germans

to walk into; that certain parts thereof are under observation (balloons generally) and can only be evacuated at night and that certain roads thereto are under fire.

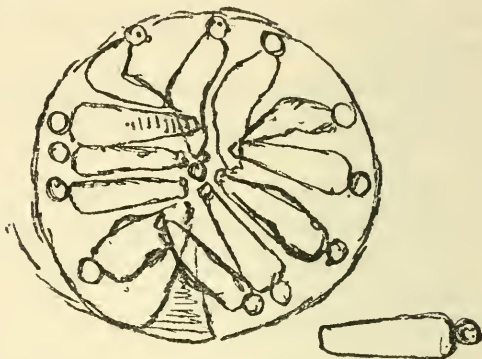
Do you see what an enormous thing the new administration of war means apart from the fighting?

It's coming on to rain. I hope we are not in for a wet night. We are still under canvas. Thirteen to a tent, *my* little lot. Room enough for our *heads* but our feet feel the pinch.



The theory is feet to the pole. The above (scale) diagram shows how we retire to rest about

8.30 p.m. with beautiful fidelity to the theory. The next



shows how we not infrequently find ourselves at about 2 a.m. when we are slowly aroused by a feeling of cold caused (i) by having left our waterproof sheets and rolled more or less on to the cold ground and (ii) by the exile having revengefully taken our top layer of tunics, greatcoats and capes out with him to make a bivvy (bivouac) with.

It *is* raining I must go inside.

Love.

To his Wife.

Sept. 1st, 1915.

DEAREST

Thanks very much for your latest just received. This letter may be broken off at any

moment and I shall post it at once. We are waiting for the whistle to toot, fall in, and start packing our waggons for a move—quite an unimportant one as far as we know, not up to the line. I shan't be sorry to leave this part of France—it is decidedly damp—night mists and unlimited dew in addition to getting all the rain of the neighbourhood and I am rather rheumaticky again. Not acutely by any means. Just stiff joints and hard lumps in the muscles in the mornings.

Don't encourage Vallie to talk about God, there's a dear. It really troubles me very much to think that he's having his little mind, even slightly, swayed by. . . .

Later.

I can't remember how I meant to finish above My meaning is :—tell him all the fairy tales or nonsense stories you please but about God and religious subjects only tell him what you yourself unfeignedly believe to be true : if nothing, tell him nothing. I want him—as I did—to find a definite religious or philosophical *attitude* (which means more, really, than a credo) towards what he sees—what he thinks he should do—what he fails to understand—*for himself.* One cannot learn an attitude or acquire it from others it is at

best a pose. One must make it for oneself, and by giving a child an idea that the cosmos is a sort of toy shop run by a tyrant (tyrants could be benevolent—don't misunderstand the term) with a curious hobby—the rewarding of certain acts and the punishment of others and the forgiveness of certain of the latter acts as a reward for "repentance" coupled with a belief in the tyrant's existence—to teach a child this is to give it an altogether unreal cosmos to face and adapt his attitude to and build to.

Fairy tales are quite different. They are confessed imaginings; not told as authoritatives—at least by intelligent people.

Ring off.

Love.

Sept. 4th, 1915.

DEAREST

Yours just received (dated Monday). We left —— in the rain and marched here in rain and pitched our tents in the rain. Yesterday the rain let up a bit in the afternoon but it began again in the night and has rained all day (4 p.m. now). Tents flooded and sopping. I am on guard to-day. The guard tent is half an inch deep in mud inside and surrounded by a quagmire of yellow clay. We are encamped in a brick-field!

Love.

Sept. 7th, 1915.

SWEETHEART

The parcel has just arrived. Willet, Roffe, and I are now digesting the raspberries and cream ; thanks very much for them and the other things.

It is a fine afternoon but threatening rain clouds are about. It rains about two thirds of the time here—and is very cold at night but we manage to keep pretty cheerful. We are encamped in a brickfield. Bricks, I may remind you are made of clay. The tents on the upper slope—as yet unexcavated—are fairly dry and the water drains off pretty well from around them but it drains down into the dugout part, where the guard tent is and where the cooks cook, and having got there cannot soak away or run away : clay being *non* porous and there being no lower level for it to run to ; so it just sits on the ground and is wet and gets puddled into a yellow liquid of the consistency of house-paint, with which we are most of us splashed to the eyes and which is just too thick to drain into the gullies and soak-pits we dig for its convenience.

We are fairly high up here and can see a goodish stretch of the surrounding country. The captive " Observation " balloon over " —— " (in whose

unsafe shadow we made our first main dressing station in that town) is just visible five or six miles away to the northward. It's curious: ever since we came up from the base now nearly six months ago we have been within long eyeshot of that sunlit sausage. The country has varied enormously in our half dozen different abodes around it and the *feeling* of them has varied even more:—The crashing excitements of "——" the desultory bullet dodging at "——" (the only place where we've had any real experience of rifle "sniping") the rustic peace of our last valley and —— which I shall always think of as a place wherein the civil population leave their arms and legs lying about the doorsteps with the flies buzzing over them.

The sun is coming on wonderfully. It is quite hot. I shall fetch out my blanket and kit to air and dry. It's astonishing. Six weeks ago I was complaining of the heat and not without reason. Talk about the English climate! This is infinitely worse and more variable—also more wetter.

Loud cries—Willet very pale and excited grappling with an enormous "coot" (otherwise louse). He makes a point of looking supremely surprised whenever he catches one on himself as if he were immune.

Sept. 8th, 1915.

DEAREST

We did a sudden move on Sunday just after I had closed my letter to you. 4.15 peace —myself asleep against side of tent undisturbed by rumour of an early departure for the following morning (we get so many rumours) 5.15 we were parading in full marching order 7.15 we were *here* unloading our waggons in double quick time in the glorious certainty of being let out into the town if we unpacked in time to get out before the estaminets closed. We succeeded and returned about 8.30 to sleep on the stone floors of a school room cheered by " a few."

We have been in this town before. It was here that I was ill three months ago. We are about a mile from our old premises though. Struck rather lucky: a very adaptable school building—no stairs, stone floors, all rooms with doors at both ends and also opening into each other—make ripping wards. We have spent two busy days scrubbing, cleaning windows, crawling over glass roofs, digging, painting, whitewashing and generally making the place a show hospital. Scarcely any patients yet to disturb our efforts—or for our efforts to disturb.

We are under canvas in the playing field adjoining the play ground.

I do like to be at work again. Altogether I feel much cheerier. I hope to goodness I have no more " rest camp " for the period of the war. The weather is fine ; that too is a heartening factor.

You'd love this part of our work, dearest, I can just picture you with a hundred odd men at your disposal attacking an unsanitary, dirty building and turning it into *some* hospital. Money no object and labour unlimited—nothing too much trouble to undertake and every job started within two minutes of its necessity being realized.

Post off—must finish.

Heaps of love to my dears.

To his Mother.

Sept. 13th, 1915.

DEAREST MATER

Thanks for your letter. I am very glad to see that you reached Belfast alright.

. . . I must make the effort to remember that she is the baby who used to be " lootin' forward to that " in a deep contralto voice : and who looked so sweet in her little Dutch caps and who was ill on the other side of a disinfected sheet on the top floor of the " click house." . . .

Don't you dare to think this sloppy. With a baby of my own whom I haven't seen familiarly

for nearly a year and with very fresh recollections of men who have died near me—their little collections of letters and photos—their weakening, wearying oft, talks about their home people, their chums out here, and how they got their wounds—their gentle deliria in which it all came out again this time more freely—sometimes in the first and second person instead of narratively in the first and third—sometimes even in a strange medley of narrative and dialogue, objective and subjective, sometimes sung to tuneless chants, sometimes to popular melodies. Remember that I know—not apprehensively nor vividly but just as a matter of fact—that I may be providing just such a pathetic entertainment for some other listener one of these days, and don't dare to call me sloppy in wanting to have you all at home on the firm basis of affection.

Weather's gorgeous again. Nights chilly and early morning fresh, but the sunny parts of the day piping hot.

Love.

To his Wife.

Sept. 13th, 1915.

Dearest

We are very busy here, making the place ship shape. I am corporal of guard to-day: opportunity to write letters, otherwise a beastly

bore and a tie. Corporal of guard does not stand on sentry post, you know, but has to be always within call of the sentries and goes hourly rounds. I feel rather weary to-day. I met in the town last night three howitzer battery friends whom I had not met since the great days in May. They had just been paid and *I* had just been paid and the result was twenty-five among the five of us plus cigars. I stuck to Malagar (do you know the drink? A second rate white port I should describe it as but *served small*) and came through well though my bed was not made as precisely as usual. I believe I could have slept on a bag of tent-pegs. Still I feel weary to-day.

Later.

Your letter just arrived. Thanks so very much for its length, but how dare you "must stop" when you want to go on and I want you to. It's beyond all understanding or belief how a letter bucks me up—and a long letter—Oh my dearest I'd like sixteen pages per diem.

The weather is very decent again. Lucky for me to-night. We haven't got a tent for guards. Such sleep as I shall get will be in a bivouac made of three waterproof sheets tied to a fence—this I shall share with the changing pair of sentries "off" duty. Rather cosy. Of course the guard must not undress or even remove boots——

Above interrupted by a horse breaking loose—easily caught again. The horses do an awful lot to keep us entertained: adventurous brutes, they have become—you should see the "horse lines" in a real mess.

Just think of it!—six months we've been in this beastly neighbourhood and in another month we shall be "in the winter" as we say in the army. Not that winter weather is to be turned on by the A.S.C. on the first of October but the authorities, wisely foreseeing that winter comes along then abouts, have chosen that month as the one in which Winter shall be considered to begin so we shall soon be getting an extra half hour in "bed" in the morning and one or two other Winter Campaign concessions.

There's no blinking it—British troops do bring prosperity wherever they come in France. I suppose the average man spends his franc a day on eggs, butter, drinks and extra delicacies. What a contrast to the poor French fellows who never seem to have a pair of sous to rub together! War's a rough enough business even on the British commissariat and pay but——

Next Day.

Off Guard. I was burdened with a prisoner the latter half of my guard. Like most of the

minor criminals of the army whose examination by the C.O. or their company officer I have witnessed I disliked him more for his defence than his crime. Were I a C.O. I should say: "Two days pay stopped for the offence and twenty-eight days field punishment for the *de*fence.

Sept. 17th, 1915.

DEAREST

We had a jolly day up at the line yesterday when a party of us went up to work at a new aid post in course of construction. We did an amazing amount of work slaving like navvies with pick and shovel at a communication trench linking the aid post with the works. I understand that the Engineer officer in charge of the job has complimented the C.O. on the working parties he sends up. Certainly *we* do work well when there's anything to do. It's the idiotic "made" work we don't put our hearts into.

The weather is splendid. There was a little rain in the night before last (I happened to be on guard) but that was the only rain we have had since we came here Sunday before last. It's rather nice revisiting a town we have been in before: we know the shops and the estaminets and the people. Every night when nothing

prevents it I go and have café au lait in the garden of the farm down near our old quarters. Madame there gives us " beaucoup du lait " in large bowls —about three-quarters of a pint I should think—piping hot and just nicely flavoured with a big dash of coffee.

It is a month since I was home on leave—six months since we left England. How many more, I wonder. Fine, dry, weather, my dear, will make a difference. Armies the size of ours are fearfully weather bound. Many a man who " went west " in the May attacks would be alive now if his boots hadn't been so caked with mud.

Love to you dear. I want to get the war over and get home to you and the Duck and Emma.

To his Son.

Sept. 18th, 1915.

My Son-bird, how are you ? I'm quite well but a little stiff in the joints. We've been doing a lot of digging : making a *trench* to carry wounded people up and down, and we've walked miles and miles back from the place where we did the digging and we are tired.

We are not very near the Germans *here,* but we can hear them banging away in the distance sometimes, and last night all the sky was lit up in their direction by a big fire—houses burning.

Yesterday—too—while we were up digging near to them some Germans climbed up a tower behind their lines, and we had to bob down into the holes we were digging to prevent them seeing us and then *our* cannons banged at *them* and they came down from the tower in a hurry.

I do hope you are a good little boy. It's so much nicer to have a good little boy at home than to have a regular little pickle. Please write and tell me if you are a good little boy—I shall be so pleased to hear it.

Love from your Doody.

To his Wife.

Sept. 24th, 1915.

SWEETHEART MINE

This is my ideal of happiness : (under war conditions) to arrive back, after a hard day's navvying among the nice big bangs (I really do like the noise of guns—unhealthy taste, eh ?) to come back to camp and tea healthily tired, to come back by the *first* batch of cars thereby ensuring a wash unhurried and evading the wait by the roadside at " —— " *and* to find a letter from you waiting for me. I am sure you think my effusions over your letters mere civil romance but they are not. I cannot exaggerate the pleasure I feel when I wade into a letter from you.

I am so very glad that you are to have the blessed with you again. I hate to think of you and him apart. It makes me feel altogether too "scattered" (compris ?) to have a son here, a wife there, a mother somewhere else, a sister elsewhere. Keep him with you all you can and talk to him about me a *lot*. I do so want to come home to you both.

We are launching forth in many directions: beds (for patients of course) and a young drug store under a roof of its own; no longer housed with the Quarter Master's store. At present *I* and some score of others are going up to the line daily doing the most glorious navvying: knocking cellars into each other and whitewashing the whole into operating rooms and waiting rooms, and bearers' billets; digging special R.A.M.C. stretcher trenches to connect them (A) with the general communicating trenches and (B) with each other and filling billions of sandbags to protect the entrances to these cellar-stations. I love the work, three days I slaved at a part of the trench where it traverses a mine-yard and came back a Frank Tinney at night. Yesterday I was housebreaking with hammer and chisel or pick connecting up cellars by holes knocked in walls and making bolting holes to get in and out through. Also we go investigating the rows and

rows of empty houses (the line where we work passes almost through a mining townlet now deserted) bagging chairs, mirrors—there are many quite good ones unbroken in the midst of the chaos of bent girders scattered walls, roofs, pavements even.

Everybody seems very high spirited out here and grumbling is a thing of the past. I suspect that the weather is reason. Day after day is glorious—though night after night is *cold.*

As the weather grows colder my appetite increases, *cake* most acceptable.

Posting this the morning after writing it. Was called away to interview M. Le Directeur des Mines apropos d'une affaire forte dificile, *je vous dis.*

Love to the dear—I wish I were going to see you both again soon. Wanted !—

[*The above was the last letter ever received from Harold Chapin. The following unfinished letter was found in his pocket-book after his death. It was written some days before the preceding letter.*]

To his Mother.

Dearest Mater

I dunno if I did or did not write to you the day after that letter to Calypso. We've had

a good few days lately when 6 o'clock parade (6 o'clock a.m. you understand) and dusk were linked up by a day's work and march so that no letters were written, and I dare swear the censor was correspondingly rejoiced.

Our days spent trench digging (special communication trenches we dig, pour chercher les blessées not for wicked men with arms or what would the Geneva convention say?), our days spent trench digging are a great source of enjoyment—curious, because they involve a bolted breakfast—a seven o'clock start, an hour's jog in a hard, springless, G.S. waggon, a halting, single-file march of a couple of miles and a day of back breaking work at pick and shovel followed sometimes by march and G.S. waggon back, sometimes by a long march and *no* G.S. waggon. The secret of their charm is the feeling of doing something actual compared with the messing about cleaning waggons for inspection and everlastingly tidying up camp to get it dirty again. Those trenches may never be used but if ever it is necessary to bring in wounded from the fire trenches to the aid posts under anything of a bombardment they will mean endless lives saved. It's a pleasant thought. I haven't seen the Lloyd George speech you mention.—I didn't know he'd written anything lately. Do you know—coeval

with his rise in popularity I am getting a bit sick of him. He strikes me as being all enthusiasm and no judgment—no sense of fitness. On the tide and with the tide of universal approval is not the best place for a Welshman. I prefer the "brave man struggling with adversity" to this popular idol playing with his admirers, being rude to them just to show how well he can apologise etc., etc.

Books—yes, I want a pocket Browning mit everything in it! Is such a thing to be had, I wonder? Of course I've got sizable pockets. Still it's a tall order.

Anyway I want "Paracelsus" and "Men and Women" particularly. I am on guard and writing letters for the next two or three days (I may only send off one a day). Our supply of corporals is not quite adequate to the demands made upon it and this will be my fourth night on guard in a fortnight.—Rather fatiguing work, involving a night of cat naps fully dressed and booted and a final rise at a little after 4 a.m. to call the cooks and "duties," hoist the flag and remove the lamps and finally (at 5 a.m.) to call the camp in general.

Later

(Sunday in fact)

Oh, my dear, I wish you could see your golden haired laddie sitting by the roadside waiting for a waggon,—time 5 p.m.

I have been for two days digging through the slag heap of a mine! A mine! Our trench happens to go that way I am as black as a coal heaver.

APPENDIX A.

HAROLD CHAPIN'S PLAYS.

" Augustus in Search of a Father "	One Act.
" The Marriage of Columbine " ..	Four Acts.
" Muddle Annie "	One Act.
" The Autocrat of the Coffee Stall "	One Act
" Innocent and Annabel "	One Act.
" The Dumb and the Blind " ..	One Act.
" The Threshold "	One Act.
" Elaine "	Three Acts.
" Art & Opportunity "	Three Acts.
" Wonderful Grandmama "	Two parts.
" The New Morality "	Three Acts.
" It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor "	One Act.
" Every Man for His Own " ..	One Act.
" Dropping the Baby "	One Act.
" The Philosopher of Butterbiggins "	One Act.
" The Well Made Dress Coat." ..	Four Acts.

APPENDIX B.

QUEEN'S THEATRE

Licensed by the Lord Chamberlain to Mr. ALFRED BUTT
25, Marlborough Place, London)

Kindly lent by Mr. FREDERICK WHELEN

THE HAROLD CHAPIN

Memorial Performance

To Build a Y.M.C.A. Hut at the Front

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14th, at 6 o'clock.

COMMITTEE:

Chairman, Sir Herbert Tree.

Henry Ainley. Sidney Dark. J. T. Grein.
William Archer. P. Michael Faraday. Ernest Mayer.
Frederick Whelen.

Hon. Manager, G. Dickson-Kenwin.
Hon. Secretary, Miss Ruth Parrott.

PROGRAMME

Four One-Act Plays by HAROLD CHAPIN

"It's the Poor that 'elps the Poor"

Mrs. Harris ..	BLANCHE STANLEY
Mr. Harris	STANLEY TURNBULL
Mr. Charles King ..	PERCIVAL CLARKE
Mrs. Pipe	AGNES THOMAS
Emily Pipe.. ..	KATHLEEN RUSSELL
Willy Pipe	JACK RENSHAW
Mr. Pickard ..	BEN FIELD
Mrs. Manley ..	SYDNEY FAIRBROTHER
Keity	IDA CAMERON
Alfred Wright ..	BEN WEBSTER
Walter Wright ..	A. HARDING STEERMAN
Mrs. Herberts ..	CALYPSO VALETTA
Ted	GERALD du MAURIER

Produced by W. G. FAY

Stage Manager - W. T. LOVELL

"The Dumb and the Blind"

Joe	HENRY AINLEY
Liz	ELSIE DAWSON
Bill	NORMAN PAGE
Emmy	IRENE ROSS

Produced by SIDNEY VALENTINE

Stage Manager - J. STEWART DAWSON

"The Philosopher of Butterbiggins"

For the First Time on any Stage

David .. .. .. CAMPBELL GULLAN
Lizzie .. .. .. HILDA TREVELYAN
John Bell .. .. ALLAN JEAYES

Produced by H. K. AYLIFF

Stage Manager - CHARLES RUSS

Interval of Fifteen Minutes.

"Innocent and Annabel"

Achille Innocent .. STANLEY LOGAN
Mrs. Achille .. MARY JERROLD
Annabel .. .. ALICE CHAPIN
Servant .. .. MAY EDWARD SAKER

Produced by EILLE NORWOOD

Stage Manager - OSWALD MARSHALL

All the Artistes appear by kind permission of their respective Managers.

Hon. Manager .. G. Dickson-Kenwin
(By permission of Mr. J. T. Grein)

Hon. General Stage Manager .. J. Stewart Dawson
(By permission of Messrs. Vedrenne & Eadie)

Hon. Stage Manager (for Queen's Theatre) .. .. Charles Russ
(By permission of Mr. Frederick Whelen)

Hon. Musical Director Napoleon Lambelet

[NOTE.—As a result of this performance, a "Harold Chapin" Y.M.C.A. Hut has been erected in France in the advanced British Lines.]

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