BOOK 6 - September - December 1916.

3-9-16: At last Ivo has been able to come up to Grantham to visit me, he has been down in an Australian Hospital at Weymouth for some time. I cabled home for money for both of us and as soon as it arrives I intended going to London and on to Weymouth. For months I have been intending to go for a run through Scotland but as Ivo is going home and it seemed as if he would not be able to run up here I thought it best to let Scotland go to the wall, only now he is here my original plans can be carried out. He arrived about midday and early in the afternoon I asked my Flight Sergt. to let me off so that we could have a look round. About 3.30 we went into town and after a bit of a walk round went into Catlin's cafe for a good square meal. There was not much to do, Ivo has a heavy cold and did not feel at all inclined to visit the Theatre or Picture Houses, so after tea we went round to Mrs. Lincoln's orchard in the hopes of finding her there and having some fruit, I had spent the previous evening at her home and she was anxious to meet Ivo. We were unlucky as no one was at the garden, only as we were coming away another lady spoke to us. I explained our presence by saying I was a friend of Mrs. Lincoln only that lady was not to be found. She immediately took us into her own allotment and called two of her small sons to gather apples, plums, and pears for us. This lady like all the rest of English women was the essence of kindness, but my word she could talk, her tongue went forty to the dozen whilst our jaws kept going on her fruit. After our pockets were stuffed and we could eat no more she took us for a tour of inspection, showing us some very ancient ruins and giving me, what was more interesting, the history of the place dating back many hundreds of years. We stayed quite an hour and after promising to come back in a few days to have tea with her and take some photos Ivo and I managed to get away. It was still very early but we walked slowly back to the aerodrome over the fields. All of the boys in my hut had lots of blankets so instead of Ivo going back to town to sleep I gave him my bed whilst I made up another bed for myself. Next morning I spent most of my time on the aerodrome with him, showing the different machines and explaining their respective qualifications. About 11.30 Ivo went off to Grantham to catch the 12.24 train to Newcastle.

That afternoon my money arrived from London and as our Major was paying it to me I took the opportunity of telling him my brother was in England on his way home to Australia and I would like some leave to go for a run round with him. He immediately granted it so I have arranged to start six days leave on Saturday 8th September.

7-9-16: My leave was to commence at midnight on the 7th. I got the Orderly Room to make out my Pass and Warrant early in the afternoon and caught the 4.25 train to Newcastle, the weather was the best possible and after a very comfortable run arrived in Newcastle at 8p.m. Ivo and Kitty with Will Dobson met me at the station and just as we got on the Gosforth tram Miss G. Pye joined us, that evening we stayed at home as everyone was there, Will and his wife are staying in Newcastle so with four extra people at 36 Balmoral Terrace, the house was fairly full. Early Saturday morning Ivo and I went into town to have my usual cup of coffee with Jock Kenmir and I renewed my acquaintanceship with his friends. I always enjoy my morning with them as they are very fine fellows and we have a good old yarn.

Jock, Ivo and I poked round the city for an hour or so. I had a yarn to Mary over the phone and also gave Ted Kelsey a ring at Jarrow, and then we two went back to Gosforth for dinner, early in the afternoon the four of us Kitty, Lily, and we two went for a run down by Electric train to the beach where we spent a good afternoon, arriving home soon after dark. Early Sunday morning we turned out for Will to take our photos as he had to catch an early train to Ovangham where his home is and where he is the Church Organist. So far I have not seen the photos but believe they are good, especially one he took of Ivo and me by ourselves. After breakfast the two girls and myself walked into town to Church, Ivo was feeling his leg troubling him a bit so stayed at home. When we arrived home for dinner we found Olga and her future sister-in-law there. Winnie and Olga are well suited to each other, both very bright lively girls. Needless to say our dinner was a long one as all tongues wanted to go at once. After dinner Ivo and I were booked for Lemmington with instructions to get out early. We did not get away till well after three and so Miss G. Pye came along with us to get us out of trouble. We got out at 4.30p.m. and so by the time we had tea it was too late to come into town to Church so we coaxed Mary to come back to Gosforth with us and spend the evening. Olga and Winnie were still there and the whole crowd got round the piano, Mrs. Mc-
Culloch

heard I was up for a few days and so ran round to shake hands as her home is very close, later on I walked round with her to see Mr. McCulloch and then Mrs. McCulloch Jnr. came back with me to meet Ivo. Our next move was to take all the visitors back to the city, we saw Mary on to her tram for Lemington, took Olga and Winnie to their place and then missed our last tram back to Gosforth. Four very weary people arrived home some time after 11p.m.

Monday morning after breakfast the two of us went off as usual to keep our 10 o'clock appointment with Jock and at 11.30 he saw the two of us off on the Northern Express to Edinburgh. The weather was still beautiful and we arrived at Waverley Station just on 2p.m. I had a certain hotel picked out but upon going there found it full, only the owner sent us round to the County Hotel in the next street. He really by doing this was the cause of a very funny incident. The County Hotel seemed to be very comfortable so we booked a double room and then went for a walk along Princes Street looking for a meal. Our time was very limited so we began to look round and as huge motor loads were going to the Forth Bridge we hopped in one and went too. It was a fine run of about ten miles through some nice scenery and very fine roads. Queensferry is just at the bridge, a very dirty and miserable looking place, made me think of some streets I had seen in Cairo, but the bridge made up for everything. I have seen pictures of it numerous times but no picture can ever do it credit. It is one of the seven wonders of the world and the whole thing holds one spell bound. The Pyramids in Egypt had no great fascination for me, Malta Harbour and the great wheat Vaults of Valetta were interesting. Armstrong's Foundry and the big ship building yards on the Tyne--all well worth visiting, huge cities in England that I had passed over in the air, and other big works. All had attractions of their own, but this Bridge, four hundred and twenty feet from the water to the main floor of the bridge and over a mile long with its huge spans and iron work positively took my breath away, we walked to one end of it and were told we could climb up and walk across if we wished, I for one was not anxious as I had one experience of climbing the Pyramids and wanted no more, Ivo did not want to abuse his bad leg. We walked back to Queensferry and whilst Ivo talked to a returned soldier about France I gazed on one of the greatest engineering works this world has ever seen. A huge express train crossing over looks like a child's toy train, not because it was so high in the air but on account of the hugeness of the bridge. We caught our motor and returned to the city in time for a good tea at the hotel. And now I must add something that I omitted to say the day I came to Newcastle.

At Darlington on my way up I was walking along the platform when I noticed a Light Horseman with the 4th colours up (I was dressed as an 8th Light Horseman with the old blue and gold.) I just had time to speak to him when the train began to move, so on the way up I walked along the train to his carriage. Imagine my surprise when he turned out to be a cousin of the Tramor's of Rutherglen. Beattie by name from Wangaratta, he was on his way to Edinburgh for a holiday and we yarned all the way to Newcastle. I arranged to meet him there on the following Monday afternoon. Just as we got off our motor on the way home from the Forth Bridge we ran into him, so after tea as Ivo was tired and went up to his room I strolled out to meet him. I was out till about eleven o'clock and when I got back to the hotel found it locked up and had to ring up the night porter. It was long after hours for refreshment but asked the old chap for a drink, so he sent me to a private sitting room to wait till he could smuggle one to me. Whilst sitting there a Scottish Officer and civilian friend came in. No doubt you know by this what a poor opinion I have of the average Tommy Officer. Had I done the right thing I would have jumped up and saluted him. When he gave me a pleasant "good evening" I sat where I was and returned a very surly "good night", upon which the Officer gave his friend a very knowing look the meaning of which I found out later. It seems they had just finished an argument, the Officer said that Australians were a quick tempered and surly crowd of men, the friend who was a Solicitor had been sticking up for our folk and my action had backed up the Officer. The civilian then asked me would I have a drink with them and I very shortly replied that my drink was already ordered. The Officer burst out laughing (of course at this time I was not aware of the argument) he laughed in such a way that I could not take offence and upon being pressed a second time I agreed to drink at their expense. We got into conversation and I told them I was holidaying and on my way to

BOOK 6.

Inverness two hundred miles north, they were surprised as Edinburgh was so full of interest and I gave my reason for wanting to see Inverness. I drew a very graphic picture of 3,000 Light Horsemen facing 17,000 Turks out on the burning desert with the sun at 130 degrees in the shade, and our men mad for a drop of water, how a party of us were practically cut off from the main body and how an Inverness Battery of Artillery saved our lives by their good shooting. I told them that ever since then I had made up my mind to visit that city.

Just at this time the Officer asked to be excused for a few minutes as he wanted to write a letter, but was very, very anxious I should not go to bed until he came back so I spent a very pleasant 15 minutes talk=ing to his friend until he returned. When he came back he had a letter in his hand and told me that he had three cousins in Inverness who would be only too pleased to show me round, they had a nice home, a motor car and motor cycle. He had just written a letter to one of them and the letter he had in his hand was an indroduction for me to take with me. I immed-iately said that although I appreciated his kindness I would not dream of causing his girl cousins the inconvenience of carting me around, only it was no use my talking. He absolutely made me promise that I would call and see them. I did not want to promise since although my ticket was made out for Inverness my real intention was that whilst travelling through the Highlands if I came to some spot I wanted to photograph I would get off the train and stay there, anyhow I said that if I was in Inverness I would visit these cousins of his.

Next morning I got up nice and early to have breakfast with the Solicitor, the Officer had left earlier to join his Regiment at Stirling, and as I had arranged with Beattie and a New Zealander to pay a visit to the Castle. Ivo did not come along on account of his leg, it was be-coming worse and he intended returning to Newcastle by the 2p.m. train. I met the two chaps at 9a.m. and we went on a tour of inspection. Like Nottingham Castle it is built on a huge mass of rock in the heart of the city, 300 feet above the surrounding valley and 445 feet above sea level, the Castle is the most striking feature in the landscape, from the dun-geons to the flag pole it is one mass of history, we arranged to spend an hour there instead we spent three.

As you climb the hill and enter the castle gates from the east you come into the Esplanade which is used now as a huge parade ground for the troops quartered in the castle. It was one time used as a place of public execution. Leaving the Esplanade the visitor winding round and up the rock comes out on Mons Meg Battery and there you have Edinburgh away down, a sheer drop of 300 feet at your feet. They call it the finest view in Scotland. There were two cameras in our party and after a lot of waiting round and sheltering each other some snaps were taken, we worked round to the right and took some more from a sheltered position and as the last one was being taken an old lady came round the corner and in-formed us of our wrong doing. We took one of her and she said she thought too much of Australians to get us locked up. "Old Mother" as I called her had charge of the keys to the dungeon where condemned people were put the night before they were executed. It was an awful place cut out of the rock with a small barred window looking down on the city. The old lady told us lots of interesting things about different ones who were executed, especially amongst the Reformers, and she would tap one of us on the arm and say "Aye laddie ye are bairns after me own heart, ye are fighting for the same cause as these men died for many hundreds of years sin." She proved a great guide only could not come all the way with us as the prison was her section of the Castle.

From there we poked round and eventually reached what is known as the Queen's Room, between the crown room and Parliament Hall. Queen Mary's Bed Chamber was a surprise to us, a working man on one pound per week could provide a room for his wife more comfortably than Queen Mary's prison, not more than 12 feet square and one small window with a direct drop down of nearly 400 feet to the old town (not the present modern streets that you see from Mons Meg Battery.) From this window the Queen is supposed to have lowered her infant son in a basket to her Roman Catholic friends so as to have him educated in her own faith. When I went to school I used to think James a cowardly King, just as well he had no choice in going over in the basket. I would never want to face it myself.

The Crown Room was closed so we missed seeing the contents of that room. "The Regalia proper" consists of three articles, Crown, Sceptre

BOOK 6.

and Sword of State. Our last place of interest was Parliament Hall, and I spent over an hour there examining the wonderful collection of Scottish weapons and armour arranged on the walls and all around the Hall. At the east end is a restored fire place and a fire continually burning. The only reason for this as far as I can see is to keep the air dry and thus prevent the knives, daggers, swords, pistols, guns, spears and hundreds of other weapons from rusting. there must be some thousands of them bright and shining. (That is only my own idea otherwise I can give no reason for the fire.) In front of the fire is the gun carriage that carried the remains of the late Queen Victoria through the streets of London to Windsor Castle. The windows of the Hall are marvels of Stained Glass each one in memory of some great man. I looked for Robert Bruce, and a few others we learnt about in some of Scott's books.

As I said before I spent an hour here, it held more interest for me than all the rest of the castle. Soon after this we left the place and went down into the city where Ivo joined us and went round to the Soldier's Home for a very fine dinner.

In the afternoon we went for a walk along Princes Street, I think one of the best streets in all England, fine business places on one side, the other side taken up with lovely gardens and then away in a very deep cutting the main Railway Line, so far down out of sight that one never dreams a line is near unless you are right on the edge and then the whole thing overlooked by this mass of rock on which the Castle is built. Right from the moment I stepped off the train at Waverly Station into Princes Street the city took my fancy. It is small compared with many I have seen in lots of other parts of the world, but I liked it best, the folk living there are so homely and anxious to give one a good time. It is wonderful the numbers of our Colonial soldiers that prefer it to London and other English cities. I was enjoying myself so much I did not want to go on to Inverness only after my friend did what he had done I felt it was only courtesy on my part to go on with it. About 2p.m. Ivo left us and caught his train down south whilst Beattie and I moved on to Carlton Hill, known as "Scotland's Pride and Poverty". This hill holds a wonderfully commanding position just at the end of Princes Street, the Scottish people turned it into very nice gardens and commenced to erect monuments of all the great men, before they got half through with it money ran short and there it stands half completed, a modern ruin. Completed it would have been one of the Show places of the British Isles but money was not forth coming. From the top of the hill you get a fine view of another portion of the city, also one of Holyrood Castle just at the foot of the hill on the Southern side. We asked an elderly gentleman some questions and he must have followed us as a quarter of an hour later he joined us and began to talk to us both. His tale was one you can hear all over England, had an only child, a young man, was making a great name for himself at his profession and was killed at the retreat from Mons, just our age he said and on leaving he shook hands and wished us the very best of luck in France. We moved on down into the city to buy a few cards and things then having an hour to spare went for a roam round some of the suburbs but nothing of interest happened. There were dozens of places to visit only time was scarce and I have a long journey in front of me that night, so did not want to go too hard. After tea I met a young lady whom I was acquainted with and she took me out round Holyrood Castle and the surrounding country. It was just getting dark as we returned to the city in good time for me to catch the 9.30p.m. train to Inverness. That city is 200 miles north and it seemed madness to go such a distance for one day but when I started from Grantham taking my ticket out from that station my intention was to go direct to Edinburgh, instead I stopped at Newcastle and the folk there are too good to me I never want to go any further, therefore I had no more time than one day for Inverness. One thing I wanted to see were the mountains as I went north, going up it was impossible as we travelled at night but coming back it was almost all daylight.

As you read this you must think I am mad to write down all these details, probably if I come back home safely not half a dozen folk will ever see it, but there is another reason. I am writing it in France, we have not long been over and have just completed eight happy months in England. We are now right away from any towns of any sort, a few villages in the district, just a collection of smashed up houses. We work all day and ( usually well into the night, if we don't work there is only one other thing, bed. It is cold, wet and miserable and I have adopted this method

BOOK 6.

of filling in time, it cannot last forever but I still have nearly twelve months of my life to write up so what with that and my letters it will keep me going for some time to come, and then we will look round for fresh amusements as this place is sure to get on our nerves when the snow comes. Some of the reinforcements that came from Australia a few months ago are feeling the cold very much already. But I am wandering in my account and must go back to Scotland.

My train left Princes Street Station at 9.30p.m., got a comfortable carriage with only three of us and it was needed too. The trains north of Edinburgh are very much slower and more stops than in England, until we reached Perth at midnight we three in my carriage yarned, we parted company then. They changed for Aberdeen whilst I changed for Inverness. For the rest of my trip I had a seat on my own so lay down and slept, woke up at 6a.m. as the train was running into my station.

My first worry was a wash and brush up, the hotel outside the station provided that and being so early I lay down for an hour. After breakfast I wandered round the town for an hour, there was nothing much to see, the canal was pretty and also just across the bridge the Castle made a fine picture. All the time I was debating in my mind whether to call on these people or not, upon enquiring I found they lived on the outskirts of the residential part in a very fine house. At last I hired a hansom and drove out. The folk were expecting me and for about four hours we flew round the country, the day was fine and a brother accompanied us on his motor bike. One of the girls drove the car, we got back to the house at about 2p.m. so I left then on the understanding that I would come back to tea and the young folk would invite some of their friends round for the evening. Inverness was the address I had left at Grantham for them to wire for me if I was wanted. After dinner I called round at the Telegraph Office and word was there for me to return. It only gave me a few minutes to run round to the hotel and catch the 3.30pm. train to the South. Luckily in the street I ran across the brother so sent a message round to say I was recalled, just as well I was called back for had I stayed there a day I would have wanted to stay a week. The people were so nice and the car gave me such a chance to see a very pretty part of Scotland. Coming on the return journey I saw all the country and a couple of hours stay at Perth the ancient capital. Two hours was sufficient it is the slowest city I have struck so far. My friend whom I had wired to met me at Waverley Station at 9.30p.m. On this return trip we came across the Forth Bridge just about 9p.m. I would like to explain what it was like but cannot find words. I thought eight months before that as we were entering Marseilles Harbour that it was a wonderful sight with all the search-lights but the Forth Bridge out-classed it in every way. Our largest Naval Base is there and the Bridge would also be a grand prize for the Germans to blow up, it was brighter than day away out at sea and away up the river miles and miles of one huge blaze of search-lights from land and water.

I intended going to Newcastle that night, there were three trains, 9.40p.m., 10p.m., and midnight, but as Miss Mochrie said they were expecting me for supper at her place, I decided to catch the midnight train. Unluckily I missed it by about two minutes therefore hunted up a bed at one of the hotels, and had a comfortable sleep, catching a southward train at 10a.m. the next morning. One thing about Edinburgh I have missed speaking of and that is the tram system. They have the old underground cable the same as Melbourne when I came away from Australia, and about half as slow again.

After being in so many cities foreign and English these trams seemed to belong to the Ark but somehow from my point of view they seemed to suit Edinburgh. I think perhaps that was part of this city that appealed to me. Princes Street was busy enough as far as crowds were concerned but there was no rush like other cities, everyone were hospitable to the backbone and easy going. Miss Mochrie I speak of was a friend I became acquainted with, a lady chemist, met her people and wanted only one thing, that I as an Australian soldier should see as much as possible and enjoy my stay in their city, nothing was too much trouble. Now I have left England probably we will never meet again but always I will have a warm spot in my heart for the people of Edinburgh. Australian and New Zealand soldiers go up there in thousands and all seem to have the same opinion as myself.

Thursday 13th September saw me on my way to Newcastle and the last of Scotland for me for many a long day to come I'm afraid. Got to Newcastle at 1 o'clock and slipped over to the "Chronicle" Office to tell Jock I

would be going on to Grantham that night. Went out to Gosforth for dinner and spent the rest of the afternoon packing away a lot of things I had brought up with me from the Aerodrome and wanted to leave there, it was understood that I would be going to France very soon only we had had so many false alarms that I really thought another chance would come for me to run up and say a final good-bye. We spent the evening at home only going for a walk through the Dene after tea. After supper Kitty, Lily and Miss Pye came in as usual to see me off by the 10.45p.m. train.

I am never tired of quoting instances of kindnesses shown by the civilians to the Colonial Troops. I was sitting next to a lady who insisted on my sharing the hot tea in her Thermos, after she had sat at the window seat for about three hours she made me take it so that I could have a bit of a sleep and before I left the train gave me her home address in London asking that if ever I was in that city to come and visit her, also I like to make this account as amusing as possible by quoting any little joke that comes along. In the same carriage there was a young married man in civilian clothes and his wife with a bonzer little boy about eighteen months or two years old. This man and myself got yarning and he soon had me comparing our Australian life with English life and conditions. I am a keen colonial when comparing the two countries but I also tell them the good points in their country for in one sense I love England though I would not live there for anything. From that he got me onto English soldiers and Officers. It would hardly do to put on paper some of the things that have happened at times between our men and Tommy Officers, lest said soonest mended, only at times there was no love lost between them, still with it all I have met some thorough gentlemen amongst them, Captain Senior, Lieut. Jeffery, Lieut. Hackett, our Scottish friend and several more. All the same I told this civilian my opinion without mincing matters. He was very interested and more than once remarked, "My word you are bitter against our men but you are fair, when you meet a gentleman you are just as keen in sounding his praises." Again later on he said, "I like your style you don't allow your judgment to be prejudicial." I am afraid at times I said some hard things for some of us have received some very hard knocks to our feelings from Tommy Officers. Anyhow I was in England and make it a policy not to pick out the faults of Englishmen when talking to their brother countrymen so switched off onto another subject. Before I left the train this man told me he was an English Officer in civies (mufti - civilian clothes.) He told me that he was sorry to acknowledge that my opinion was only too true of a certain portion of the English Officers of to-day. I did not feel ashamed of what I had said, nor did I apologise for he told me I had been fair. My train fan into Grantham station at 4.15a.m. and I was in bed by 5.30, did not turn out to early morning parade so managed to secure about 2½ hours sleep before I commenced my day's work.

I arrived back in camp to take part in one of the saddest functions it has ever been my bad luck to be at. Australian soldiers as a rule are not given to worshipping their Officers, if he is a good man (and that does not mean to be easy with his men) they will respect him and of course as a soldier we must obey an Officer whether we respect him or not only we don't look on a man with a star on his shoulder the same way as a Tommy does, to most of them a star seems to turn the man into a little God. My experience of the average Australian is that he is very fair and recognises a leader if that leader shows himself capable. Further back in my works I have mentioned Captain Muir, an East Melbourne boy, our best Pilot and perhaps one of the cleverest and ablest pilots in England. Our men absolutely swore by "little Muir," he was daring to the last degree but unlike our other very clever pilot Captain Gilfoyle, he never seemed to be foolhardy, he would do things in the air to show that he could do them but would not court disaster by continually doing them.

The first words that greeted me upon awaking were the words, "I suppose you know little Muir is dead." I soon woke up to ask particulars. The day before he had gone up in one of our De H.5 machines to test it, they say he gave a wonderful performance in the air and flew on his back for quite a long time when he regained his proper position he must have strained one of the struts of the machine and immediately upon gaining his proper position this strut appears to have snapped for Muir crashed to the ground, when the onlookers went to the smash the man was unrecognisable, every bone in his body must have been broken. Work on the Aerodrome ceased for the day. Friday 14 September (my first day back from leave) we gave Captain Muir a Military Funeral. His ~~boy~~ body was borne

BOOK 6.

on a gun carriage covered with a Union Jack and his belt on top, there was a firing party of 72 Australian Maching Gunners, a splendid Australian Military Band, quite 100 Officers from the surrounding camps and the three Squadrons of Flying Corps at Harlaxtom, 44th, 54th and 68th Australian Flying Corp. We marched about a mile to Harlaxton Church where a short service was held and then some of his brother Officers carried the Coffin out to the grave where the burial service was gone through. The grave from top to bottom was lined with flowers, you could not see an inch of bare earth and the saddest part of the whole performance was to see every Officer and man walk slowly past the open grave, stop, look down, then salute and move away making room for the next man. We formed up outside the Church yard and marched back to camp, no more work was done for that day. Harlaxton is a very pretty little old English village, he is buried in an extremely pretty and peaceful spot. I have a photo of the grave, one mass of wreaths but I suppose his friends will come and take the Coffin back to Australia.

Sunday 16th September, at last it has come time for us to go away. Half the Squadron moved out this morning with the Motor Transport, going by road to Southampton. I was not with this lot though my two friends McKenzie and Chappel went, I was detailed to stay behind for a few days. The motors made a fine sight, about forty vehicles altogether and perfect weather. I won't give an account of their run across England only want to say that after a three day run they arrived on the South Coast after a very successful trip, no serious accidents happened and from what the boys tell me it proved a very fine trip and much enjoyed by everyone. Had I been detailed to go with this lot I would have had to leave England without saying good-bye to any of my friends. On Sunday afternoon I caught the 2.35 train to Nottingham to bid farewell to that city and my friends there, stayed all night and came home by the 7.30 train in the morning. From then till Thursday night was taken up with preparations during the day to leave, and in Grantham at night calling at different homes for the last time, my last evening I spent in camp. It was almost as bad as two years ago when we left Victoria, my home was not here but many homes had been open to me, and though my friends were not in numbers, those that I had made proved themselves good friends, making me feel that I had known them all for years instead of months.

Reveille was blown at 5a.m. and the boys were soon on the move, we only had to pack our knaps as all our surplus clothing and anything else we wanted to take over to France had been stowed away by us on to the motors a week ago. We had a great advantage over other units as regards surplus kit, no one was told we could put them in the lorries but then again no one was told they could not do so. That is quite sufficient for a soldier, my own stuff went over to France as two boxes of tools, locked and the keys in my own possession. By 6.30a.m. we had handed in our spare blankets, mattress, bed boards and trestles, cleaned up our huts and had breakfast without any rush, 7.15 was soon reached when it was time for us to move away. They had taken several photos of our boys for the Colonel, he himself had come over from Spittlegate to bid us all good-bye, we nearly fainted when he shook hands with every man and wished us luck. No doubt when you read this you will say I am uncharitable or prejudiced, at the risk of that I can candidly say no man in England was more glad to be rid of the 68th Squadron than this same Colonel, he hated us, there was no other course for him, in small things he had been the victor but when it came to a big issue we had won the day every time. On one occasion he had reason to punish some of our men for misbehaviour of some sort, he said then that the next Australian who came before him would get 28 days detention. It was not a fair thing for a man in his position to say, the next man may not have been guilty of the crime he was charged with and in any case the punishment of 28 days detention was out of all proportion to 90% of crimes committed. He was an English Colonel in charge of Australians and that explains the whole situation. The last words said to me by half a dozen Tommies was, "We are sorry you fellows are leaving us, since you came we have been granted many small advantages we never had before and when you go we will lose them again." It simply meant they could not give them to one lot without the others, we fought to get things and the whole aerodrome got them. As an illustration take the bed boards and trestles. When we arrived in that place only Sergts. were allowed use them, the men slept on the floor. The day our Squadron arrived in camp some of us found a stack of them, they were soon transferred into our huts. A few days after Every Tommy was issued with a set, and the same things applied in

numerous cases. Of course we did not get all our own way, many times we slipped and consequently got a rebuff, therefore we appreciated any advantage we did get. One thing where we always lost was the saluting. The Colonel got a lot of his own back on that score. He punished severely for not saluting but our boys showed that they could take punishment cheerfully. It cost more that half our men anything from one pound to £2-10/- for not saluting Officers but it was all part of the game and noone lost any sleep by worrying. So when the Colonel shook hands and wished us luck you can imagine the smile our boys had on their faces as they returned the hand shake. There was no three cheers given by them.

All of us dreaded the march to the station that morning with the packs on our backs, we were very soft after 8 months of easy living and also a great number had sore heads from the night before. There was a great sigh of satisfaction as we marched down to the transport yard and saw half a dozen Leyland lorries waiting to run us to the station. From now on this trip was managed perfectly.. No rushing and then long waits, no confusion but just easy going and great praise is due to our Adjutant as he was in charge all the way over, our Major flew over with a number of our pilots, only about six Officers came with us. We arrived at Grantham station about ¼ to eight and that allowed quarter of an hour for those who had friends to see them off to have a yarn. We left a 8a.m. sharp, our carriages were not by any means crowded, four on each side so we settled down to a comfortable trip south. It was a perfect day, sun shining gloriously, the country at its best, green and fresh, so vastly different to when we came along the same line 8 months before, then most of us were on our last legs, hungry, frozen and had not had a wash for many days, snow and ice everywhere and very few clothes on, we must all have thought of that trip this morning, now we were well clothed, had spent a glorious 8 months in England, made many very fine friends and now were moving on to France under perfect conditions. No wonder everyone was in good spirits. Our train ran express to Peterborough where our C.O. had arranged for a cup of hot tea for every man, there was no need to move out on to the platform, boys brought it along to each carriage. For the rest of the journey to London I was perfectly satisfied to sit at my window and watch the towns and country as we rushed along. English scenery is totally different to Scotland. The latter is in many ways very much like ordinary Australian travelling but in England, though it is very pretty, is more of a civilized beauty but none the less attractive on that account. I think it was about 9.45a.m. when our train pulled up at King's Cross Station. Here again was good order and we simply sorted out our things, formed up and marched out on to the pavement where motor lorries were waiting to run us across London to Waterloo Station, the motors were open so everyone could see what there was to see and it was quite a nice little run from the one station to the other. We were marched on to our platform at Waterloo and after taking up our positions in the train were allowed half an hour on the platform to get something to eat. There was lots of tea, bread and butter, ham sandwiches, buns apples and pears for everyone and nothing to pay, ladies have movable stalls and are to be found day and night serving up food for soldiers and sailors on the move. The women of England are doing wonders, sometimes they must be ready to drop with fatigue and yet they always have the smile and cup of steaming hot tea ready. When once you get away from the big cities there will always be found a Soldier's Rest Home, open all day and night, where one can get tea, coffee, cocoa, buns, pies, cakes, cigarettes etc. for a few pence. There is also the Y.M.C.A. but you already know the work they are doing.

We left Waterloo Station at midday on our run through the south of England down to Southampton, it was just a repetition of our morning trip, nice and sunny and one continual run of beautiful fields. I am not too sure now how long it took us to run down to Southampton. I think it was somewhere about 2p.m. as the train ran on to the wharf. There are always large numbers of troops here, so we marched along to a certain part of the wharf where we put off all our gear and could walk round anywhere so long as we did not go off the wharf. Anyone who has seen Southampton will know that means we could walk for miles. About 4.30p.m. the other half of our Squadron which left Harlaxton six days before us on the motors, rejoined us and of course they were full of the fine run they had across England on the lorries. I had a magazine with me so spent most of the afternoon lying amongst our gear reading as I had already seen all there was to see eight months before. The extreme cold compelled us to keep moving then, but now it was nice and warm.

BOOK 6.

About 6p.m. we boarded our boat "Margurite". We soon got rid of our packs down below and then formed a small party of mates up on deck to have a meal of bully and biscuits. The boat moved out at dark, 7p.m. and for an hour I stayed up enjoying the lights as we passed along the coast. Later on I went down below to see if I could find a few feet of room on the floor to sleep. We are used to it now and don't take any notice but it would be a sight once seen never forgotten if only you folk could step direct from your comfortable bedroom to one of these channel boats that cross over every night, every man simply dumps his pack on the floor and lays down with it as a pillow. It is one glorious mix up of heads, feet and bodies everywhere. From the entrance, to my pack was not more than 15 feet, it took me ten minutes to get there, had to worm my foot down for each step and then when I got to my pack every inch was taken up, but always in a case like this no one ever gets angry, they are all comrades and half an hour after, you would have seen me wedged in between a huge Cornishman and a little red headed Irishman who would persist in using my body as a pillow, once I woke up during the night to find my head on the boards and the Cornishman with my pillow (overcoat) under his head, I waited till the boat gave a roll, put up my hand and gave him a hard push and then popped my head where his had been and snored loud enough to put Dad in the shade and he was bad enough at home. The Cornishman woke up and very meekly occupied a small portion of the pillow that my head was not on. Half the men stay on deck all night, the best place of all is in the bottom of a life boat but usually about midnight the sailors turn you out of them and then you are done for the rest of the night. A soldier is always satisfied if he can get asleep, never mind where it is or under what conditions. He does not know what is ahead of him next day and he wants a few hours sleep so as to be prepared for emergencies.

Next morning when I woke up it was to find our boat pulled up at Le Havre wharf, our lot did not rush off at once, as usual we were not asked to move as if we only had five minutes to live, but about an hour after we quietly disembarked and marched away to one of the Rest Camps (No.1 I think it was), it was rather hard work as of course none of us had had breakfast and a three mile march with 80 or 90 pounds on our backs, and an empty stomach, is not the best exercise but no one thought of grumbling as they knew there was absolutely no help for it and in any case there was nothing to grumble at. We reached our camp less than an hour after leaving the boat. Our first act was to secure a wash and after that secure some food from the canteen. At dinner time word was passed round that Mr. Turner our Adjutant was trying to get leave for us from 3.30p.m. to go into the city, so we all stayed in camp, some writing or reading whilst a lot of us were very interested in watching a couple of air ships that were housed just along side our quarters. At tea time we were told that no leave was granted so that we had to stay in camp. It seemed such a pity to waste a whole night in camp with a city like Le Havre so close at hand. For a whole hour we tried every possible way to get out, there was a party of three of us and everywhere we went were met by Military Police and turned back, it was a funny sight, every track you took were parties of our chaps being shooed back by M.P.'s. At last we found that by having Sergt's stripes on, you were not molested so we three were on our way back to the canteen to buy stripes when another chance came our way, a long train of empty trucks was slowly passing through the camp so we hopped into the guardsvan, gave the French guard a few coins and some cigarettes and he covered us over with some filthy bags, unluckily the train stopped with the van just at the main gate where the M.P.'s were in force, the next five minutes were the worst I have spent for some time, we expected to get pulled out any moment but at last the driver began to move again, our next worry was to find out where the train was taking us to, it had gained speed so we could not get off the way we got on, the guard could only jabber French, we gave him miles of English and Arabic but it was no good. After we had done about three or four miles of docks we decided to chance a broken limb and all three made a jump for it, we all got a few bruises but nothing serious happened, not long after we got a tram to the city. I am glad we had those few hours in Le Havre, it is a fine city and we poked round and had a good look at the principal places. At about 9.30 we got into a restaurant and had a beautiful meal, all French dishes but we shut our eyes and chanced it, not much of the food found its way back to the kitchen. After our supper we quietly caught the last tram back to camp and went to bed.

Next morning, Sunday, we did not get up till breakfast time, everybody watched the sign boards to see when we would be leaving. These camps are

BOOK 6.

made up of men going from the front to England and vice versa. It is put up on a board when the different units are to be ready to move off. We were to get a go on at 9p.m. so had all day to loaf round and rest, as far as I know of, no one broke camp for the city, most of us took things very easily, laying about or else writing, my letters I left till our journey was ended. Soon after tea we packed our Kit and then went for a stroll till it was time for us to parade. Just at 9p.m. our Squadron moved out and started our three miles back to the boats. By this time I was beginning to suffer from sore feet, my boots had iron heels and very heavy nails, not only that but they were not too comfortable, and I can assure you I was not sorry when we marched on to our boat, "St. Tudlo". The moment we got on board three of us scouted round and chose a position under some awning and on the open boat, one of our Officers came round an hour after and complimented us on our position, said it was the best on the boat. We had bought a lot of tinned stuff at the canteen in camp so after a good meal we made our beds and soon were sound asleep. Next morning (Monday 24th Sept.) found us still in the same spot when we expected to be nearly 100 miles up the Seine River, our boat had missed the tide and for us it was the best thing ever happened, we could have missed one of the best afternoons of our life. All that morning we hung about on the wharf and for about an hour and a half I had a very nice game of Bridge. the first I had played since the games we had in the moonlight out on Sinai Desert. Just about 1p.m. our boat pushed off from her moorings (NEXT PAGE MISSING IN DIARY.)

DIARY CONTINUES:- impossible to describe the picture that passed before our eyes for three solid hours. I have sat in the picture halls at home and watched these scenes thrown on the screen, wonderfully blended colours of houses, forests, cultivated country and river scenes, I have thought it all very lovely and forgotten it five minutes after I have left the picture theatre. This trip up the Seine River will stand out in my memory for all time as one of the finest afternoons of my life for scenery. As we came to the different towns all the children, women and old men would come down to the bank with flags and anything they could find to wave and cheer us, naturally we responded until we were so hoarse we could not speak, lots of the fine homes were built right on the banks and every window would have arms waving, convent and church bells would ring till our boat was out of sight. In one town some old ladies had all the different nations' flags, one to each person. They showed us in every way how pleased they were to see us coming up the river and it was fine for us to see it all. In England I saw many castles but always being used, mostly in the cities as museums, and in the country they were inhabited and of course rebuilt, but at one part of the river this afternoon I saw away upon some high land an ancient castle in ruins, it was just as I had pictured such a scene in my mind, huge columns or pillars of stone standing out from the ruins. I would have given a good bit to be allowed to get off and explore. I have given a very poor description of the trip but one must go over it themselves to really appreciate the beauty. Just as it was getting dark we reached our journey's end viz. Rouen. Every inch of the trip was done in daylight under the very best of conditions, the sun shining brilliantly all the time and absolutely nothing to mar the view as we sailed or rather steamed along, a soldier may run some risks at times but he also sees some wonderful sights.

I think I mentioned before on the way this trip was being arranged, we were having a very comfortable run, in times gone by it used to be a wait perhaps for hours and then a mad rush only to find in a few hours that another half day has to be spent hanging round. This time things were totally different, I would not profess to knowing who was responsible only we were under the charge of Adjutant Lieut. Turner and things went on evenly and steady. The men all noticed it too, you could see it in their behaviour, we were coming over to (as far as we knew) the place where fun and joy was finished. I quite expected that some of our livlier characters would have a final flutter of mischief and so get into trouble but I never saw the 68th Squadron on such good behaviour. Certainly little things happened but the Officers were very reasonable and the men were the same and did not get over the ropes in any way.

The boat arrived at Rouen wharf just about 7.45p.m. we slowly disembarked and formed up in the yards adjoining, after about a wait of 30 minutes motor transports were procured, and we were run out to a Rest Camp about 3 miles down the river. By the time we had been alloted to our tents and secured something to eat we were ready for a sleep so turned in at once.

BOOK 6.

Tuesday 25th September: No one turned out of bed until breakfast time. We had nothing to do only get our tents cleaned up for the Orderly Officer at 10a.m., so most of us spent the couple of intervening hours having a good wash, shave and making ourselves generally presentable. At 11a.m. we were all paraded and a Medical Inspection for every man, there was nothing much in it, only a matter of form together with a lecture from the Medical man, the same old thing, most of us had heard it a dozen times before, on the boat coming from Australia, in Cairo, out in the desert, three or four times in England and now again here. If the lecturer was a sport he would tell us to sit down and that meant most of the men going off to sleep, the Officer was there to deliver the lecture, he never worried whether the men were asleep or awake, his part was done and every-one was satisfied.

Late in the afternoon a Pay Parade was held, another little concession which had never been granted before when travelling, it was only a 20 franc pay = 14/8 but as usual most of our men were broke so it came in very handy. I had come over with money in my pocket but it was getting very low. No leave was granted into the city that night but no one was prohibited from going. During the afternoon I had been busy making enquiries and found out that it was very hard to get into Rouen, all the entrances into the city were watched by the Military Police, but if once you got past them and did not cause any disturbance in the streets a man was perfectly safe from interference. The three of us who had the trip at Le Havre, quietly moved out of camp immediately after tea and started on our tour of inspection, we kept our eyes open and landed safely in the main part of the city half an hour after. A few of the Squadron were also successful but we found out next morning that most of them had been turned back before they got very far from camp. For two hours we wandered round and saw everything there was to see. Rouen to my mind is not as nice a city as Le Havre, not laid out so well but still two hours inspection is not time enough to form a correct opinion. The wonderful Cathedral was the main thing here, we did not go inside but it is a fine building from the outside. At about 10p.m. we caught our tram and returned to camp well satisfied with our little run. No roll call had been made showing that our Officers did not wish to make things unpleasant.

Wednesday 26: The last day of our trip and a long one too. Reveille at 5a.m., everyone on the move getting our blankets rolled up and packs ready. Our transports were all ready and waiting for us. By eight o'clock we were ready to say good-bye to Rouen, every man had a place on a Tender or a Leyland and the procession moved away north through the residential part of the city. Such a long line of heavy motor traffic meant a very dusty trip for us but everyone realised the great advantage of going through the country in motors instead of being packed in carriages of trains Troop travelling in France is far from comfortable as our Australians have realised since they came to this country. We soon got out in the country, the motors seemed to be running well and our prospects looked good for a decent trip, all the sides of the lorries were rolled back and before starting every man provided himself with a seat of some sort, empty petrol tins, kerosene cases or any handy article, it might sound as if it was going to be a weary hundred miles. Perhaps if the trip had to be done often it would get monotonous but our first run was far from being so. The scenery was very tame, absolutely nothing to remark on for the whole journey, with the exception of the many quaint villages and the few large towns we passed through. But there was one reason that kept us very much alive to our surroundings and helped us to pass the day away if not profitably. For nearly the whole journey up country and both sides of the roads we came along were apple and pear trees, loaded with fruit, of course they have been neglected for years and in some cases are very ancient but at times we came across very fair specimens of fruit, every time the motors would pull up every man would hop out and fill his pockets, as the morning wore on we got tired of eating them, and immediately the soldier has his stomach full his one idea is to hit one of his pals on the head with what is left over. All day long we fought with these apples and they were hard too. The cars would pull up to let the engines cool, every man would immediately gather up all the fruit under the trees and throw it into his particular car and then as we went on our journey there would be some great battles. The Australian is always willing to turn into a youngster at every oppor-tunity offered. There were no orders to keep close together, in fact it was an advantage to keep a few hundred yards apart on account of the dust. Sometimes you would see a car slowly gaining on yours then the driver would

BOOK 6.

make a mad dash to within range, the occupants pour in a volley of apples and then fall back. Sometimes a car away in the rear would be wanted miles ahead in the front and then there would be some good fun for they would have to pass thirty or forty cars. The motor cyclists passing up and down the line had a rough run but usually we took pity on them as they could not protect themselves. This went on all day and kept all the men from tiring of the 100 mile run we were doing. Just at one o'clock we pulled up at our first decent sized town, Neuchatel. We were allowed half an hour to go up to the cafes and buy a meal, no doubt we caused a lot of amusement trying to make the French girls understand what we wanted but in the end everything turned out O.K. The rest of the afternoon was just a repetition of the morning. I have mentioned a little monkey ø the late Capt. Muir brought from Egypt with him, after Muir's death one of our pilots took possession of him and we brought him along with us, at Neuchatel a batman gave the monkey some exercise and we soon had half the town children round us, it probably was the first one they had ever seen and my word when he used to make a dash at a group of the children there would be a yell and a scatter.

Late in the afternoon the front lorries began to put on the pace, less time was being wasted and shorter spells. Just about six o'clock we ran through Amiens and about two miles past the city we had another halt and secured some food. Now it began to get dark and those old lorries rattled over the country roads at a fine pace. At 8p.m. we pulled up at a German prisoner's camp to enquire for the aerodrome which proved to be only a few hundred yards further on. We soon got clear of our motors, very glad to do so. 100 miles in a Leyland was quite sufficient for one day. A few of our mates were already at this aerodrome and had things fixed up for us, also our machines had flown over some days before.

Thursday 27th September: Our first day in the new home. Not very much work doing today, we spent most of it getting settled down. The aerodrome is situated on a farm, portion of the private residence is being used for Officers whilst the farmer and his family occupy the remainder, our Officers have small huts to live in whilst we are quartered in the lofts and barns of the stables of the farm. Captain Bell, the Officer-in-Charge of C Flight, evidently got in early for he seems to have secured the best loft for us. The Squadron whom we relieved left a lot of home made bunks which we soon took possession of and all set about making ourselves very comfortable, or as comfortable as circumstances would permit. One of the greatest advantages of this camp is that we are on our own, right away from any English Squadron. After our experiences in England we all realise what a great advantage this is going to be to us. Once more we feel we are Australians and not under the control of an English Commander, our own Major being in complete charge of the aerodrome.

Perhaps my account of the barn will make you think it an awful place for men from a southern climate to have to spend so severe a winter as the north of France but let me tell you we are very thankful to have it for a home, if I am to stay in France for a winter I will be well pleased to stick to this as far as a home over our heads is concerned. As I said we are in the loft over the stables, easily big enough to do forty men, we are only about thirty all told. The roof does not leak therefore we're safe from the rain and snow when it comes, but this part of the country is very windy and of a night time this wind finds many holes to come through, certainly the room is horribly draughty but after years in the open and roughing it generally we nearly all seem to be immune from draught, in fact it has upset my idea of a draught being dangerous, by the time I am well in bed there is not much of me visible for the wind to get at. One thing that will make the women folk's hair stand on end is the hundreds of rats that take possession when all is still, late at night. At first they came out in regiments and had fine times but after a few nights I am afraid their ranks got somewhat thinned out. Every morning we would see dead rats by the dozens out in the farm yard. It was no unusual thing to be wakened up in the middle of the night by an unearthly yell from one of our mates as a huge rat would drop fair on his face, one chap found a big fellow down under his blankets. Still we soon got used to this kind of vermin and now don't take any notice of them, sometimes we find our boots under another man's bed about twenty yards away. My own bed soon became the essence of comfort as I secured some strong hessian and made a straw ~~mattre~~ mattress, I had five blankets, two I packed in one of the lorries before they came over, two I carried on my back and one very fine one issued just

BOOK 6.

as soon as we arrived here. Since then another one has been issued but so far I have not had occasion to use, it is second hand and very much worn. When our new overcoats were issued just before we came away I was able to hand in another one and still retain my old Light Horse great coat, issued to me back in Seymour over two years ago, it comes away down to my boots and that is as good as any blanket. Our present issue of great coat is always wet more or less so they cannot go on the bed. They are very fine coats, extremely heavy and blanket lined inside but are all very short, hardly down to our knees, made so on account of the snow and mud in the winter, a long coat is worse than useless. The reason why I had two was that when we first landed in England a few coats were obtained and when I went on leave was issued with one as my Light Horse coat was looking dowdy. When our Squadron got properly settled and the Quarter Master, working properly, every time things were issued the old article had to be handed in no matter how ragged it was, therefore when we all had to wear Flying Corp overcoats, I simply handed in my new Tommy coat thus enabling me to keep my Australian issue. Another valuable article I have is a Turkish Water-proof sheet I brought from the battle of Romani in the desert. Our own water-proofs cannot be placed on top of our bed, they are air-tight and the warmth from our bodies is condensed and makes the blankets damp. Medical men say it is a sure method to get rheumatism. The Turks' sheets are different, they are water-tight but not air-tight, one placed on top of the bed is a wonderful improvement, mine is being held in reserve for the colder weather.

As the weeks went on little improvements came along that helped to make life more enjoyable. Our clothes are of the best, over in Egypt it was always a wild scramble for any new issues, sometimes the issue would be 2 shirts, 1 pair of pants and half a dozen pairs of socks to each troop representing from 25-35 men. Undoubtedly out there we were the outcasts of the Army, we needed very little and we got less than we needed. Before we came away from England to France all our clothes were new and good, we arrived here fully equipped and now the very cold weather is coming on, fresh under-clothing is here in the Quarter Master's store which is given out to every man for any article handed in by him. The shirts and under-pants are perfect, the latter especially. Luckily I had three light pairs and so now can exchange them, besides my cardigan jacket, I got a sort of jacket the other day which is half shirt and half jacket, very neat and handy to wear under my tunic. There is no doubt that the clothes issued to us now are the best procurable. Of course no matter how good the clothing is the winter is so severe that we will feel it very much but it will not be for want of good clothes, every man is issued with thick woollen gloves also.

Rather a funny thing happened about a week after we arrived here, We have amongst our motor cyclists two very close mates, they are both short in build, real bantams, and never apart, one is called Opie and the other is Williams, (Red for a nickname to distinguish him from Roy Williams our blacksmith.) The farmer whose property we occupy has two little pigs, pinky white colour and they are always nosing round amongst the garbage from our Mess shed, like the two cyclists they are never apart, where one is the other is sure to be found. Some wag got a pot of black enamel and painted one pig 'Red' on each side and his mate 'Opie', this was done weeks ago and still the painting is on them quite plainly. Needless to say the two cyclists do not appreciate the honour but the rest of the Squadron all can laugh at the joke.

When we first arrived at this place our food was far from good and soon became much worse, numerous complaints were made to our Orderly Officer and when he visited the cook house was told the cooks had not any conveniences to deal with the food. Alterations were made but the food was cooked in a disgraceful manner, until things came to a head. Perhaps you remember further back in this account of the time we "counted out" one of our Officers soon after we came to England, Lieut. James. He is still with us and so the day he was Orderly Officer we asked him to sample our dinner, that was quite sufficient, he made for the cook house and gave our cooks the livliest ten minutes they had gone through for many a day. From that time onwards there was a noticeable improvement. Our stews are very fine and to show how good the porridge of a morning is, I might say that even I eat and enjoy it, a thing I never touched even when living at home or boarding anywhere. Every morning I buy a mug of milk for 1 penny from the farm house and so far I have always had sugar on hand from the home parcels,

BOOK 6.

consequently I make a most enjoyable meal.
When I came over I brought with me a very small methylated spirit lamp, cost the large sum of 1/3d. in Grantham, the home parcels have always got a tin of cocoa and milk and every night just as I am ready for bed I make a fine cup of cocoa, when the home stuff is finished I buy it in the village but now I have even improved on that for with the milk so handy I am making my cocoa of milk instead of water and without blowing my own trumpet I think I can safely say with my little 1/3 stove I make as good a cup of cocoa in five minutes as the best housewife can make at home. In England all this was too much trouble as a chap would come home from Grantham hungry but too tired after the long drag over the fields so would turn in to bed.
In this camp there is nothing attractive to take us to the little village, I never go in unless it is to buy something about once a week, every night after tea I poke round until about seven o'clock, make my cup of cocoa and turn into bed to lay and read until "Lights out", in fact bed is the only warm place. I hate sitting over a fire and as a rule the conversation of those who are at the fire is far from educating. That last sentence may cause a wrong impression, in this Squadron is to be found some of the finest fellows in this army of ours, I can pick out dozens of them who if we met back in Victoria I will be perfectly willing to take home and introduce to my Mother, sister, or, if married, to my wife, but also you will always find a rough element and usually the more refined ones sit back and don't take part in the bulk of the conversation. The 68th Squadron on the whole proved themselves gentlemen back at Grantham and I have had numerous letters since we left regretting the fact that we have gone. But some of them are hard cases, occasionally in this account I may quote some of their jokes and tricks but most of them I think are best left out, the Military life has made our boys take liberties with civilians and their property that they would never dream of taking when living back in Australia and if I put it down here for you folk to read it in your quiet moments at home a wrong idea would come to you of our actions. I have heard of times when civilians gave us a bad name and in some cases it was deserved but my experience everywhere has been that Australian soldiers are sought after very much and a fuss made over them. We are looked upon as men that had no need to come only are here for the love of fighting and excitment. It is known all over the world that every man is a Volunteer. In Le Havre some German prisoners asked us in all seriousness, "What did you chaps want to come into this war for, we were not hurting you so many thousands of mikes away?" Another thing is the fact of our coming away from home so early in the war and keeping on without seeing our own country. The French man goes home to his people every four months, the Tommy at least once a year but our chaps on leave go back to England amongst strangers and then once more to the front. Never any hope of really going home. The character I found we had in England was that we were quick tempered, always ready to use our fists if needed but five minutes afterwards the best of friends with the man you fought, always stick to each other in trouble and all with one common enemy, viz. the Military Police. But no matter where we go we leave friends behind us.
For the last three months of my stay in Harlaxton my work was very easy as I was not at the wireless, at times there would be a rush and then it would slaken off. I was exempt from guard duty and fatigues on account of the class of work I was on but it was understood that when once I arrived over here I would have more to do than most of them. It was just what I wanted since I wanted the time in England and had a good idea of what it would be like here. On our arrival here I did my Flight work and also was most of my time in the Equipment Stores helping them to get things in working order. The Equipment is where all material is drawn from in connection with the building and keeping in repairs of the machines, it is altogether apart from the Quarter Master's Stores. For a few weeks I was extremely busy and feeling well satisfied as I was learning a lot of useful stuff but my Flight Sergt. was not satisfied with my being in the store all day working for another branch of the Squadron, he eventually got me back here in the Flight and now I am doing only the same work as at Harlaxton. Certainly no one interfers with me here, I go and come as I please and am still exempt from guards and fatigues, but I have not had enough to do this last week to keep me warm. It has got on my nerves so I took action yesterday for an alteration which I will put down here later on, what I am after may not come to pass but after a long interview with our C.O. last night I fancy something of interest will come out of it.

BOOK 6.

Just a few words of the work our pilots are doing since they came over, not much is made known but what little I put down here seems to be common property. They soon got to work after arrival and hardly a day passes without they come back from German territory with holes shot through their planes or fuselage. Their duty is to patrol over the lines and they often have some exciting fights with the enemy planes. About ten days after our arrival one flight went out on patrol and returned one man short, the Germans had got him and the last our men saw of him was diving to earth on the wrong side of the line. We heard later on that he landed and was taken prisoner, his name Lieut. Agnew and he was looked on as a good pilot. The next trouble was with Lieut. Morrison but luckily I can give a good account of his mishap since it has been published in the papers and is also on its way home to Australia for publication. The ∅ account I will write down comes direct from Major Watt (our C.O.) who said:- "I visited Lieut. Morrison yesterday 14-10-17 in No. 3 C.C.S. close to Bapaume, and saw also Lieut Col. R.E.F. Shaw, commanding 1/13 London Regiment and Capt Heath of the same Regiment. Lieut. Morrison was doing well, but not allowed to talk, and the following is the narrative I got from the other Officers. About 10a.m. on 13-10-17 they were both at Battalion Headquarters and saw Lieut. Morrison's machine attacked by several enemy aircraft, and Capt Heath went down to the front line trenches where he saw a machine down in 'No Man's Land' about four hundred yards out. He immediately went out alone to try and rescue the pilot. There was cover of a sort for the first two hundred yards and beyond this the ground was protected more or less from rifle by a slight rise. Just after getting over this rise he was shot at, and hit just before he reached the machine where he found Lieut. Morrison lying clear of the machine and in a shell hole, but alive. He then crawled back for assistance. Shortly after Lieut. Col. Shaw sent out two N.C.O.'s under cover of a white flag which the Germans respected, and seeing this he sent out two more men with a stretcher and Lieut. Morrison was brought in. Whilst standing on the parapet directing this party, Lt. Col. Shaw was hit himself by a stray bullet which he says came from some other part of the line. Fortunately neither of these Officers were wounded seriously. At the spot where Lieut. Morrison fell the trenches are approximately one thousand yards apart."

That is the completion of the account given by Major Watt. The enemy aircraft got Lieut. Morrison with their machine guns. He was shot in the knee, arm, and shoulder, also wounded internally, when he crashed to earth his leg got broken as well as being broken with the bullet. The doctors amputated his leg and this morning I heard that they had to operate a second time to take more of his leg off. Everyone seemed to think he was doing well, when this morning word was passed round the aerodrome that Lieut. Morrison died last night at Bapaume hospital.

29-10-17: I might add that as soon as the rescue party were clear of the machine the Germans turned their guns on it and blew it to pieces. About a week ago another of our pilots came home with his jaw cut open where a spent piece of shrapnel had caught him, when he opened his coat on the aerodrome the piece of shrapnel fell on to the ground.

Although a soldier sees a lot of the sad side of life, men he mixes with every day, suddenly are taken from us, killed or seriously wounded, he takes things as a matter of course, in fact it would never do to let it take any effect, the whole thing would very quickly get on one's nerves and send you mad, perhaps we will develop into ordinary human beings when once we get back to civil occupation but out here life is held very cheap and one never knows when his turn will be. A wound is looked upon as a means of leave to England and getting away from all this for the time being is something.

But the soldier can usually make some fun out of every day occurances, in our army we are a mixture of all sorts and conditions of men and not to be able to take a joke is at once a sign to the others to make your life miserable. You must be so thick skinned as not to recognise when a man is in earnest, treat everything as a joke and never take offence. Some or perhaps most of the jokes are coarse but at times one comes across real humor. We have a man in our flight rarely jokes with anyone and does not interfer with others, takes things and especially takes work seriously, consequently is the butt of much sarcasm and rough humor. It was rumoured round a while ago that Packer was to be made a Corporal and so one evening one of his mates made up some poetry at his expense and put it up in the Mess Room. In civil life it may not sound much for you do not live a hum drum life as we do in camp but for us it was good and caused many a laugh,

BOOK 6.

therefore I will put it down here. These little things mean almost as much as our meals to us, it takes our mind off the seriousness of the game we are playing. We expected an outburst of temper from Packer but as I said before, a man quickly learns to control any show of temper for he knows it means his undoing amongst his mates and so Packer outwardly enjoyed the joke with us all.

WHEN PACKER GOT HIS STRIPES.

There has been a great commotion
On the battlefields of France.
For attention and devotion,
Flinders Island gets a chance.
There is movement in the Squadron,
Many rumors have been rife;
But one, the most modern was
When Packer got his stripes.

Far away on Flinders Island
Where the Hoobajens still dwell,
'Tis a spot that he calls "My Land",
To most it is a hell.
There'll be a grand corroboree,
Spears and boomerangs in flights,
Midst niggers old and slobberie,
'Cos Packer got his stripes.

There will be something doing,
In the village of Warloy,
Packer his francs be strewing
In the boozer for the boys,
They will cheer him to the ceiling
And away the glasses swipe;
For we've all a joyful feeling,
Since Packer got his stripes.

We've been battling and striving,
With all our strength and might,
With shells and bombs we're driving
The old Hun out of sight.
The war will soon be over,
Then we'll trot off home and skite,
How we all can live in clover,
Since Packer got his stripes.

As I said before there is great room for improvement but crude as the poetry is it served its purpose, caused fun and a laugh. Unluckily some verses that are composed at times are hardly meant for publication.

October 28th 1917: I want to carry you back nearly 12 months to when I joined the Flying Corp. Out on the desert I used to lay on the sand and watch German Taubes bombing us or our own machines flying overhead and it gradually got a great hold on me. I wanted to try flying, often wondered if I had the nerve for the game, men were wanted and I got transferred which meant the first step. I had no plans, I was simply drifting, a man can be in the Flying Corp as an air mechanic and still never go up in the air unless he wishes so my first step was not a very important one. We came home to England and I began to watch operations whilst doing my own work. I have not so great an opinion of my own capabilities and before we were long at Harlaxton I witnessed some horrible accidents which would make any man stop and think, still I thought all men don't get smashed up whilst learning to fly and as far as I could see the fliers were no different to myself but I waited, there was more for me to see yet. Then Tom Grant came to us as a full blown pilot, back in Victoria we were great friends, worked together for years, and where I had a steady life he had gone very fast and furious. He took me for my first fly which I have already given a description of. It got me enthusiastic and from then on I went up every time I could get a pilot to give me a joy ride.

Just about this time they gave us chaps a chance to enter our names as willing to qualify for pilots, a certain number was required and our Major had the choosing of our men, I did not know what to do, whether to put in my name or wait and carry out my original plan of going to France

BOOK 6.

as I was, and then seeing what an Officer has to face. I decided on waiting much to the disgust of Tom Grant. I know I could do what was being done in England, given the same training but the life is so dangerous I thought that perhaps if once I got to France my longing to become a pilot might cool down and if once I started it would be impossible to turn back so it was wisest to wait a while longer.

Well we arrived over here and for six weeks watched our men at work and my desire was stronger than ever to have a try. On 29th October I wrote out an application and Capt. Bell of C Flight said he would speak to the Major, he very kindly arranged an interview with Major Watt for that evening. The C.O. received me well and spent half an hour asking questions about my position at home, my education and service in the A.I.F. There was only one obstacle against me viz. my age. I knew there was not so much stress placed on the age of Observers and I asked to be recommended for that as I possessed certain qualifications which would be in my favour. The Major dismissed me with the promise that he would make full enquiries and do all he could for me. I believe a good number are going back to England soon to train for Commissions and so now I must wait patiently and see if I am amongst them. To go as an observer I must still learn to fly a machine and personally I prefer the class of work to that done by our Squadron which is a Scout Squadron. I have looked on now for nearly twelve months and have certain arguments in favour of the two seated machines as against our type of De. H.5's or S. E.5's. If I am one of the chosen men well and good, I want to go on with it, if I am not chosen I am satisfied that it is not meant for me to go in for the work and still have the satisfaction of knowing I tried for it. The biggest majority of our chaps are not anxious for the work, are satisfied to leave well alone but all are not built alike. I want to come back to Australia as a Pilot. After my three years of service (so far) I cannot see myself going back to indoor work in the Office after the war and yet I cannot earn my living any other way. Flying in the future has a great life ahead of it both commercially and in our Australian Army. If I could make a success of flying I will probably stay in the Army all my life for there are going to be great openings in Australia for Officers who have served over here and there is no denying that the Air Service is not only the newest but the greatest of all means of locomotion. Of course I may get such a sickener of it that I will be only too glad to return to my stool in the Office. If that turns out the case flying will have served its purpose by thus making me satisfied with my lot in life, so if the chance comes to go back to England and train I will hop right in.

I don't want to put too much fun into this narrative or you will say we are having a picnic, still when a good joke is put up I tell you about it, so when one is made up at my expense it's only fair to put it down. In France a man may not be able to get beer, whisky, brandy or other strong drink at times but he can always get wine, some of it is very poor stuff but the better sort they say is very good. Compared with Australian prices champagne is very cheap and some of our boys or practically all the boys who indulge in drink have mostly champagne. Until I started to learn French it was a very rare thing to see me go down into Warloy, it is a miserable village and unless one goes to a cafe and drinks there is positively nothing to do. I think to some of the boys in this Squadron I am a bit of a mystery. I am good friends with everyone and have my mates but rarely join in with their amusements such as football, soccer and other games. It was the same in England, I had my own ways of filling in time and my own friends in Grantham and Nottingham. We are all good friends but I go my way and they go theirs, one great advantage is that they do not take liberties with me like they do with others. I have been sleeping in a hut of perhaps thirty beds, one man has come home perhaps a bit merry and pulled every man out of bed but has passed me over.

But one night last week they reckon they had a victory, as I was ~~eem~~ coming home from the village I found one of our chaps trying to find his way back home from the village to camp. He had been "looking upon the wine when it was red" and so I tried to help him home. It had been raining for a week and the roads were in an awful state and we both were soon a mass of mud from head to foot. But I stuck to him, sometimes when we fell he would be underneath, then it would be vice versa and all the time some of my mates were coming on in the rear enjoying the fun of seeing someone, as they thought, taking me home drunk. Of course next morning when they saw my uniform it backed up the statement and our poet got to work once more and another poem went the rounds of the Mess Shed:-

BOOK 6.

THE FALL OF KNUCKEY.

It may have been the whisky
It may have been the wine.
But Knuckey came home frisky
And feeling most devine.

Through years that we have known him
He's always kept so straight.
But now we scarce would own him,
Who once was so sedate.

Perhaps it was his comrades,
Who led him to the booze.
Maybe the fear of bomb raids,
When his courage seems to ooze.

Perchance it was the Madames,
If not the Madamoiselles.
Who in the days of Adam,
Opened the gates of Hell.

No doubt it was the Vin Blong,
Malega or Champagne.
That put Knuck. on the road wrong,
And filled his head with pain.

In the annals of our history,
That dates back thro' this war,
To us he's still a mystery
We wonder more and more.

Why a man of his capacity,
Shrewd energy and brains.
An emblem of veracity,
Should fall in Bacchus' chains.

We noticed he was worried,
His mind seemed full of care,
His activity but hurried
The falling of his hair.

So perhaps in desolation,
Not pausing for to think,
In a fit of desperation
Knuckey took to drink

Comrades we are weeping,
For a Soul that's all but lost,
Bacchus' chains are creeping,
The skull bones have been crossed.

So pull yourself together
You only have one chance,
And in this stormy weather
On the battlefields of France.

Look not upon the ruddy wine
That foams within the glass.
Put your faith in things divine,
Oh may it come to pass!!

November 20th. For weeks now there has been a kind of supressed excitement. There was to be a great push made, of course no one knew when it was to come off but rumors were plentiful. We are a Scouting Squadron and lately bomb racks were fitted to our machines and the pilots became proficient in dropping dummy bombs on the aerodrome. Another thing they were practising low flying, a thing that is never allowed, every day our machines would spend hours perhaps one or two hundred feet from the ground and we could all see it was for some purpose. We also knew of troops,

stores, transports, tanks and all other war material including large numbers of cavalry were being rushed under cover of night.

On the roads during the day time not a soul out of the ordinary was to be seen, immediately it was dark I believe all the roads and side tracks were black with motors, wagons and troops, at times it would take a whole night to travel twelve or fifteen miles so thick was the traffic and bad roads. In the day time it was all covered up in a way so well learnt during this war from enemy aircraft. On Sunday night 18th none of us knew when the day was to be, on Monday we decided it was very close and late Monday night we received our orders. It commenced four o'clock Tuesday morning. I am now writing of our own little bit of the line and this push was to be a totally different system to any previous ones. It always has been the custom to clear the way for a charge by hours of A Artillery fire. In this push the Artillery was not to be used. At 4a.m. four hundred tanks went forward, the Huns were completely taken by surprise and when the tanks had done the clearing of entanglements, the Infantry poured out on one huge bayonet charge. At daylight thirteen Squadrons of Flying Men went over with bombs and machine guns to do more havoc, they were to have all the morning to work when the Cavalry came forward exactly at midday. Although not much has come out in the papers so far, according to orders the move was a great success, they got the Huns on the move and our machines with their low flying, bombing and machine guns seems to have struck terfor in their hearts. The move could not be continued as long as was intended, fog and rain came up for days after which hampered everything. Our Infantry advanced five and six miles in some places, capturing villages, guns and men. Cambrai was our goal and we got very close and have not given up hope yet of getting it. The London papers remarked on the good work done by the Flying men in their low flying and ended up by particularly remarking on the Australian Flying Corp, our Corp was the only ones individually spoken of I have kept a few notes of the experiences of some of our pilots during these last three days but it is only a few out of hundreds of exciting incidents. We have an advanced aerodrome further ahead so that some of our machines did not come back for two or three days. A great number of them never came back.

C Flight was detailed for the first patrol, led by Capt. Bell - Flight Commander, with Lieut. McKenzie as Deputy Leader, the next two to rise up were Lieuts. Johnson and Sheppherd and last came Lieuts. Griggs and Robinson, they were to work in pairs. This lot left at 7.5a.m.. B Flight went off at 8a.m. representing Capt. Wilson - Flight Commander, Lieuts. Pratt, Sands, Huxley, Taylor and Ayres. 'A' Flight left at 8.30a.m. with Capt. Phillips - Flight Commander, Lieuts. D.G. Clarke, R.L. Clarke, Holden, Howard and Ward. That represented the 68th Squadron. Out of the 18 machines two days afterwards we only had 6 of our old machines. Got 12 new ones. The best and truest way to give you an idea of the work done is to give a short account of the experiences of some of the Pilots.

CAPTAIN BELL - O.C. of my Flight got a very short run for his money, very early in the morning he hot shot through the chest, the bullet passing right through and into his petrol tank behind. We always make a boast in our Flight that no matter what happened to Capt. Bell he would make a good landing, he was a stretcher case the moment he was taken out of his machine and yet he landed safely and for anyone knowing how difficult it is to land a D.H.5 aeroplane will realise what a spirit this man had. He was taken away to hospital at once as he came down near an English Battery of Artillery, was operated on early in the afternoon and latest reports are that he is doing well. He was the last of our three very good pilots who came from Egypt with us. First Captain Guilfoyle got a horrible smashing up at Harlaxton (England) doing one of his dare devil spinning nose dives. Then came the tragic death of poor Capt. Muir, he and Capt Bell were bosom pals and I will never forget the look on the latter's face at Muir's grave-side. For months Capt. Bell has been a changed man, still always a thorough gentleman, but last week some of us remarked that our Captain was just beginning to get over the loss of his friend. When Muir came from Egypt he brought with him a pet monkey, at Harlaxton camp it was a great pet and after that Officer's death Capt. Bell took possession of him and we brought the monkey on with us to France. We all hope Capt. Bell gets better but don't expect him back with us again as no doubt he will go back to England and get charge of one of these new Squadrons forming up there. C Flight were proud of their Captain both as an Officer and a man. He would come up to our quarters and see if we were comfortable, suggest improvements and get them for us. He was a level headed, cool pilot and knew the game from A to Z.

BOOK 6.

LIEUT. McKENZIE who went on this raid with Capt. Bell got through as far as Cambrai and scattered the artillery round that city with his bombs and machine gun fire, he returned to the advance aerodrome three times for more bombs and came out of the day's work with a whole skin, but minus his machine which was almost shot to pieces but brought him home. After the cavalry went forward at midday a portion of them got lost for the time being. McKenzie went out in his machine to find them, on his return his information was so accurate that the G.O.C. was able to place them immediately. I have heard that he has been mentioned in despatches for the work done that morning.

LIEUT. TAYLOR - this is a man that had a variety of adventures and knowing the man as we do, one cannot help remarking that it was just what we would expect him to do. After he got rid of his bombs he was flying round looking for more trouble when his machine was struck by an "Archie" (anti-aircraft shell) he crashed to earth, his machine a total wreck behind the German lines. Capt. Wilson his Flight Commander, witnessed the smash and was perfectly sure that he would have to return and report Taylor dead, only some time later he saw the man lying on the ground shooting for all he was worth with a rifle. Capt. Wilson came down very low to see if he could rescue Taylor, but got his wind screen shot away and his plane riddled with bullets so had to rise and go for his life. Taylor got out of his uninjured and started for our lines when he came in contact with a party of English Infantry out patrolling. He took charge of them and led them forward to where he had found some Hun smipers whilst in the air. Later on he got disconnected from them and once more started for our lines when he found a poor little Tommy, seventeen years old, wounded in the shoulder and surrounded with dead men, this boy's nerves were completely gone for he was crying for his Mother, goodness only knows what he had gone through since daylight. Taylor only a small man himself put the Tommy on his shoulder and carried him back to safety. After this he found Capt. Bell's machine and tried to fly it but it was no good, he had to leave it and return on foot to our advanced landing ground. It sounds like a story in a magazine and yet is perfectly true. But the day was full of these incidents and the men were just eager for them.

LIEUT. HUXLEY - another very young man and a great favourite with our chaps. He was looking for a suitable place to drop his bombs when he found a German big gun retreating towards Cambrai behind a team of ten horses, his first bomb he planted right in amongst the horses. On his return journey he blew one of the wheels off the gun and coming back a third time he put his machine gun on the men and left twelve or fourteen dead. He went out a second time, the tanks had gone a certain distance and were held up by German Artillery. Huxley found the guns and his machine gun fire and bomb dropping was so deadly effective that he drove the Germans out of their gun pits. The tanks were then once more able to go forward.

LIEUT. HOLDEN - This Officer with his companion, I think it was Lieut. Clarke, were on the look out for a good mark when they discovered a piece of land V shaped in a steep gully and black with the enemy. Holden caused great havoc amongst them with his bombs and then circled round within a radius of 3/4 of a mile, diving down at them and working his gun like mad, he would come within one hundred feet of them then rise up only to dive straight at them again. This gully was so situated as to be safe from our shells but the Germans soon found that there was something more deadly than shells out for a morning's joy ride. No wonder they made back for Cambrai for the lick of their lives.

LIEUT. SANDS - He started the morning's work by dropping his two bombs on some enemy machine gun emplacements, he next found a working party on the roads and soon set them on the run for cover. His next argument was with an ~~an~~ enemy aeroplane and turned his attention to it but the airman took to the clouds at once and as our men's orders were to fly low and assist the Infantry, Sands let the Hun go up on his own. He returned to his low flying and soon spotted a motor car which he quickly settled and as a final gallop he turned his gun on to some German Infantry who thought "discretion was the better part of valor" so took cover. There is a report that some of our men saw some Officers riding on horse-back and came down towards them. They dismounted and took refuge in a house, he circled round the house waiting for them to come out but got impatient and blew the house to pieces with a bomb. But that is the only incident that I have quoted which is not officially vouched for.

Mr. Robinson was the first man to return to this aerodrome, arrived

somewhere about 10.30a.m. per motor car to report and then went straight on to Candos for a new machine so as to return to the attack, his first machine was blown to pieces early in the morning. Our men proved that day who were masters of the air, though we lost a lot of machines it was from land guns, the German airmen were not having any fighting that day.

Our men flew so low (a thing never done before) that the Artillery found it very difficult to adapt themselves to the new order of things. The Hun Artillery was at work all the time, but our planes kept close up to them and flew under the shells. As the Artillery fell back they went forward. At midday rain and fog came up which put a stop to things as far as the air was concerned, what was left of our machines came back to our advanced landing ground and stayed all night. C Flight, out of six machines only had one serviceable at the end of the day but that Flight suffered more heavily than any of the others. There were a lot of English Squadrons operating too but I can only speak for the doings of my own Squadron.

Thursday 22nd. All day Wednesday was wet and foggy, nothing was done as far as the air service was concerned, all of our machines, or rather all that was left of them stayed out at our advanced aerodrome. Thursday came up the same way, the pilots were supposed to bring the planes back to get them overhauled and if they thought the fog was lifting at all, some of them would make the attempt. There was always the danger of getting lost and as has often happened both by the Huns as well as our men, landing on the enemy's aerodrome. Just a few days ago a German landed on an aerodrome about a mile from us and the Tommy Squadron calmly walked out and took possession. One of our Australian pilots saw an aerodrome under him one hazy morning so landed, only he saw the mechanics wheeling out a machine with a huge iron cross on it, when he landed he still kept his propeller running so quietly started his engines again and cleared out.

Well this morning we all amused ourselves firing rockets and "Very's Lights" out of huge pistols, it was as good as any Henley on Yarra, green, white and red lights going up by the dozens, rockets with cloth parachutes attached. At about 11a.m. we heard away in the distance the deep drone of a De H.5 engine and away went the lights into the air again, the machine was right on us and only one hundred feet in the air but we could not see him until he shot over our heads and into the fog again, but he saw our signals and a few minutes afterwards returned and landed safely. It was Lieut. Huxley with the news that Lieut. Pratt was seriously wounded whilst he himself had brought down a Hun that morning. At midday Lieut. Johnston of C Flight arrived with a machine very much in need of repairs and overhauling.

These pilots told us it was a terrible job finding the landing ground, we continued firing flares at intervals all day, they fly very low and find us then to turn they must rise a bit and then we are lost to them, during the day a few more wandered in. The latest news for the day is that the 68th have got 4 Huns to their credit. Lieut. Howard 2, Capt. Phillips and Lieut. Huxley one each. Lieut. D.G. Clarke is missing, he and his brother were two of about twenty of our boys who went for pilots jobs after we arrived in England, the two brothers are never apart and just a few weeks ago the two of them joined our Squadron once more with their Brevy's up. And now one brother has gone west and one cannot help feeling sorry as he sees the other brother walking round on his own. But still we are getting used to our men going out now and not coming back. The General Officer Commanding came to the aerodrome today and was loud in his praises of the work done by the 68th pilots, asked to have a personal interview with the ones who had been most active such as Capt. Phillips, Lieut. Huxley, Howard, Holden and the others.

Friday 23rd. Lieut. Ayres was brought down whilst flying over No Man's Land, he landed his machine and getting out of it commenced to run for our lines but a bullet got him in the back and he fell. He died soon after. This man seemed to have known it was going to be his final fly as when they came to examine his affairs everything had been put in order just lately, a fresh Will made out and letters written. He came to us at Harlaxton as a cadet and got his Brevy just before we came away from England. That same day Lieut. Griggs went out and never came home again. He was last seen by one of our machines with a Hun aeroplane close on his tracks. We have never heard any more of him.

As I have already told you, the policy adopted during this attack was to fly low, our men seem to prefer it only evidently the "Heads" do not approve of it. Orders are issued to discontinue it as it is too costly. Wonderful work can be done in this way as long as our men are game to do it and this last week proved they were game but evidently it is costing us too many men and machines.

BOOK 6.

Our Colonel is supposed to have said it was not war this flying low, it was too deadly on the enemy, turning the machine guns on their Infantry from the air at short range, perhaps he is right but how are we to win the war if the enemy is not destroyed. Still a soldier must not critisize the orders of his Superior Officer.

A general report of the whole of the operations may prove interesting at this point of my narrative, from the London Daily Mail. "General Sir Julian Byng had command, a number of attacks were delivered between St. Quentin and the River Scarpe. Carried out without any previous Artillery preparation and in each case the enemy was surprised. Our troops broke into the enemy's positions to a depth of between four and five miles on a wide front, and captured several thousand prisoners with a number of guns. At the hour of assault on the principal front of attack a large number of tanks moved forward in advance of the Infantry and broke through successive belts of German wire which were of great depth and strength. Following through the gaps made by the tanks, English, Scottish and Irish regiments swept over the enemy's outposts and stormed the first defensive system of the Hindenberg Line on the whole front. Our Infantry and tanks then pressed on in accordance with programme and captured the German second system of defence more than a mile beyond. The latter was known as the Hindenberg support line. In the course of this advance East County Troops took the hamlet of Bonavis and Lateau Wood after stiff fighting.

English Rifle Regiments and Light Infantry captured La Vacquérie and the formidable defences on the spur known as the Welsh Ridge. Other English County troops stormed the village of Ribecourt and fought their way through Coutllet Wood. Highland Territorial Battalions crossed the Grande Ravine and entered Flesquières where fierce fighting took place. West Riding Territorials captured Havrincourt and the German trench systems north of the village, while Ulster Battalions covering the latter's left flank moved northwards up the west bank of the Canal du Nord.

Later in the morning our advance was continued and rapid progress was made at all points. English, Scottish and Welsh Battalions secured the crossings of the canals at Masnières and captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood. The West Riding troops, who had taken Havrincourt, made remarkable progress east of the Canal du Nord, storming the village of Graincourt and Anneux, and with the Ulster troops operating west of the canal, carried the whole of the German line northwards to the Bapaume - Cambrai Road. West Lancashire Territorials broke into the enemy's positions east of Epehy, and Irish troops captured important sections of the Hindenberg Line between Bullecourt and Fontaine-lez-Croisilles. The number of prisoners, guns and material captured cannot yet be estimated. The spell of fine dull weather which favoured our preparations for the attacks broke early yesterday morning. Heavy rain fell during the night and the weather is now stormy. Further reports dated 23-12-17 state that important progress has again been made to-day west of south-west of Cambrai, though rain has fallen continuously. Reinforcements which the enemy has hurrried up to the battlefield to oppose our advance have been driven out of a further series of villages and other fortified positions and many additional prisoners have been taken. The tanks have again given great assistance to the advance. On the right we have made progress in the direction of Crevècoeur-sur-l'Escant. North-east of Masmirès we have captured the enemy's double line of trenches on the east bank of the canal de-l'Escant. Sharp fighting has taken place in this neighborhood and hostile counter-attacks have been driven off. North of Marcoing the village of Noyelle de l'Escant was captured, early in the morning. Here also heavy fighting has taken place and hostile counter-attacks have been successfully repulsed. During the morning Scottish troops, moving north-east from Flesquières, captured the German defensive lines south-west of Cantaing and the village itself, together with 500 prisoners. Later in the day they continued their advance and established themselves in positions more than five miles behind the former German front line.. North of Anneux, West Riding Battalions have been engaged with the enemy south and south-west of ~~Beru~~ Bourlon Wood. Further west the Ulster Regiments crossed the Bapaume-Cambrai road and entered Moenvres. During the day strong hostile counter attacks against our new positions in the neighborhood of Bullecourt have been defeated. The number of prisoners which have passed through our collecting stations exceeds 8,000, including 180 Officers. The number of guns captured has not yet been ascertained. Our aeroplanes attempted to work throughout the day in conjunction with our

BOOK 6.

operations between Saint Quentin and the River Scarpe.

Low clouds and mist and a strong west wind with a drizzle and occasional rain throughout the day made it necessary for our pilots to fly 50 feet from the ground. Even at that height they were at times quickly lost in the mist. Continual attempts were made to maintain contact with our advancing troops but this was rendered almost impossible by the weather conditions. Many bombs were dropped on the enemy's batteries, lorries, aerodromes, transport and railways. Batteries and small groups of Infantry were attacked with machine gun fire. Valuable information was gained despite very difficult conditions. Only five hostile machines were seen all day on the battle front. Eleven of our machines were lost, being due to the mist and the exceptionally low height at which they were compelled to fly."

As you see the papers say eleven machines were lost but during the week of this push we (th 68th) lost a dozen. In saying lost I mean written off our strength as a Squadron. Many of our men would arrive back on the Advanced Landing Ground with their machines in such a state from shrapnel and big shell fire that they immediately would be written off and a new machine put on our strength in its place. To see some of them one would wonder how on earth they managed to get back at all. We had eighteen pilots take part in this big attack. I cannot say exactly how many of them were wounded or missing but can safely put it down at six, out of the remaining twelve six have been presented with the Military Cross, namely Capt. Phillips, Capt. Wilson, Lieuts. Holden, Howard, Huxley and Taylor. (extract 3rd Brigade Royal Flying Corps. Letter 63B/8). (Routine orders 291, 68th Squadron Australian Flying Corps.) 68th Squadron pilots brought down eleven Huns during this week of fighting, mostly divided amongst those Officers, perhaps later on I may give an exact list of each man.

And now for some weeks the fighting has been very severe. Germany has rushed enormous masses of reinforcements on to this front to drive us back from Cambrai, Bourlon Wood is the scene of some terrific fighting, he has regained some of the captured ground but nothing compared with what we took in the first place, it has taken a lot of the pressure from the Italian front and if only Russia had stuck to us we would have done perhaps more than any one attempt has achieved since the war commenced. Joy bells have been rung all over England and from letters I have received from England I see they had a special day of rejoicing. As far as the fighting is concerned I cannot do better than continue quoting the "Daily Mail" a little longer.

"Daily Mail" - December 2nd - "On Friday the clouds were at a height of 2000 feet all day but our aeroplanes were out continuously co-operating with other arms in counter-attacks against the enemy south-west of Cambrai,, Our Artillery machines in addition to registering for our guns, located and reported over 200 hostile batteries. The bombing machines concentrated their efforts on the troops and transport collected in the villages to the rear of the battle, dropping over 200 bombs. The enemy's troops and transport, moving on the roads behind the fighting also offered good targets to our Scout pilots who fired over 15,000 rounds at them from their machine guns. 15 hostile machines were brought down and 3 others driven down out of control. Seven of our machines are missing. On the Cambrai battle front the enemy made no attempt to renew his principal attacks during the night. South-west of Vendhuile local attacks were successfully repulsed by our troops. Hostile Artillery has been more active than usual in the Scarpe Valley. Three raids attempted by the enemy last night south-west of La Bassée were driven off by our fire. We carried out two successful raids in the neighborhood of Warneton, inflicting many casualities on the enemy and securing prisoners on both occasions.

Just before the enemy made his new move yesterday we were striking a little at the extreme north-western point of the battle area between Bourlon Wood and Moeuvres, where we carried through an operation yesterday of a line-straightening character. The fight, which improved our position by 200 yards or so, was a local and modest one. Obviously Bourlon Wood, the most dominating point within the whole of the battle area, ours, we can afford to go slow. After a rare coup like that of Nov. 20th followed by more than a week of breathless fighting, with Tanks, aeroplanes, field and heavy Artillery, Infantry and Cavalry all acting together on a narrow point, there is sure to follow a reaction in the mood of many observers and of combatants too. This is the time when facile criticism begins to play on the operations and to be heard above the guns. My impression of the

BOOK 6.

offensive as a whole, at the moment of writing (from "Daily Mail"), is that it has heartened the believer in the striking power of the British Force in France. For an honest doubter or critic to grasp this A.B.C. fact he has to change in imagination his nationality and his Army, and to locate himself on the other side of Bourlon Wood or in Berlin itself to-day. Let his picture of the British lines at about their strongest natural points utterly burst through, with 100 British guns gone, and 10,000 British soldiers during a few days passed through corps cages. What would then be his feelings as a good German. The truth is the German High Command would have scored in such a case a bigger thing than in any distinct operation they have scored so far. "

DARING GERMAN PLAN TO WIPE OUT CAMBRAI DEFEAT.

"Yesterday will rank as one of the most exciting days of the war on the British front. It saw one of the enemy's most costly failures, and it also saw our Allies, the British, who had to cope with exceptional difficulties, dispose of a threat, which for a time caused considerable anxiety. That the splendid results obtained on Nov. 20th near Cambrai were not lost, was due to the extraordinary coolness of the British and also to the bravery of their soldiers, who, like the French at Verdum, showed that they knew how to hold fast.

A British Officer remarked after the battle on 20th that the Germans would either have to try to recapture the lost positions or make up their minds to a further retreat. This view was perfectly correct. The Germans could not put up tamely with their defeat, not only in view of the moral effect but in consequence of the new conditions due to the British advance. The Germans had lost the Hindenberg Line, in which they expected to be able to spend the winter quietly. It was better, from their point of view, to recapture the lost positions than to make new ones under fire. The British wedge which reached within three ~~mu~~ miles of Cambrai, had distended the German front, and it was most necessary for the enemy to economise his garrisons. The only way was to reduce the salient created by the British. And there was also the question of Cambrai. It was not that they wanted to spare the town the horrors of bombardment, but they were anxious about their communications. Though the Germans still occupied Cambrai since Nov. 20th they no longer were able to utilise it to the full. The whole railway system of which Cambrai is an important centre was under fire from even our Allies' smallest guns. No troops could use the station. What was to be done? Retire? That would have meant abandoning a large town to the British. And what line was there to retire on? The Germans had no such line ready. It was, therefore indispensable at all costs to restore the position as it was before Nove. 20th. General Byng's attack was a surprise and the Germans resolved to try something of the same kind on a colossal scale. Instead of simply reducing the salient, they decided to eradicate it altogether by cutting right across its base. The outcome of this plan was that yesterday morning at an interval of one hour, two powerful attacks were delivered at the two extremities of the base of the salient extending from Mœuvres and Vendhuile. Five divisions were engaged. The battle began in the south at half past seven between Vendhuile and Crèvecœur by a very short but severe bombardment, in which gas shells were used in great profusion. The enemy's Infantry then came into action, but instead of advancing, as might have been expected from east to west, the waves moved from the southward on the Vendhuile-Epehy front at the point where the new line joined the old one.

All information shows that the enemy brought not less than 5 Divisions into action at this point. Against such a mass of enemy a certain amount of wavering showed itself in the British ranks. The troops had not had time to entrench themselves strongly and they retreated but not for long. One after another La Vacquerie, Gonnelieu, and Villiers-Goislain which had been gloriously won on the 20th, fell into the enemies' hands again. At half past 10 Gouzeaucourt which was in our lines before General Byng's attack was invaded by the German tide. And then our tanks came into action again, suddenly about 3p.m. a line of giant sharp-shooters appeared on the horizon. They were the tanks. Once more these engines of warfare were leading the British Infantry into battle. They came on followed by the Guards, a fierce struggle ensued in the ruins of the village ending in favor of the British. After the enemy had been cleared out of this village, the tanks continued their progress eastwards, crossed the old railway, went up the ridge and held the enemy back. When night put an end to the fighting the Germans still held a part of the

BOOK 6.

ground they had regained but they had failed to break through and they were a very long way from joining the other Germans on the North side of the salient, where the fighting had turned out very badly for the enemy. On the front extending from Moeuvres to Bourlon and Fontaine, the enemy had attempted to manoeuvre on lines similar to the attack on the south side. The same methods were followed in the preparation, and the same determination was shown. It is not yet known how many divisions were engaged here but the number must have been considerable. The enemy advanced in such close formation that the gunners according to their own statements did not have to aim. They simply let fly into the middle of the masses and seldom had such a good opportunity to kill Germans. The British here did not yield an inch of ground and the enemy sustained considerable losses. Bearing in mind the object the enemy had in view, and the extraordinary number of troops, not less than eight divisions, risked in this adventure, the bloody and anxious but victorious day of November 20th can be marked with a white stone."

One more extract from the "Daily Mail" dated December 5th and then I am finished with this great push.

"The Germans are keeping up their violent attacks on the Cambrai front with large forces. Sir Douglas Haig is, however, able to report that yesterday concentrations of enemy Infantry near Gouzeaucourt and Moeuvres were broken by our Artillery fire before the attack could develop. It is certain that in his first onslaught on Friday the enemy failed in his main aims. He gained a little ground then again on Monday at one or two points but has paid a tremendous price. Nearly all the gains made by us in the brilliant attack of Nov. 20th have been retained. It is true that the enemy claims in his latest reports to have taken 6,000 prisoners and 100 guns. We shall want fully confirmation before accepting these figures. On previous occasions the Germans have grossly exaggerated their captured. For example in the combat of July 10th on the Belgium coast they took 500 prisoners and claimed 1,200 in their reports. The Germans have an obvious motive for making the best of their dearly bought local successes. By pretending to have defeated Sir Douglas Haig in a great engagement they assist the Trotskys in Russia and the Bolos in Italy.

At the same time all accounts agree that in a given space and time this is the fiercest battle fought on the Western Front since the War of Trenches. The Germans are employing greater masses of men in a small area than at Verdum or the Somme. By sheer stubbornness and the most heroic resistance our troops have checked the Hun avalanche. The British Infantry remains true to its old magnificent reputation, and eye witnesses agree that nothing finer has been seen in the war than the furious counter-attack of the British Guards which recovered Gouzeaucourt and the great stand made by the East Surreys cut off in Bourlon until rescued."

A lot more was published about this fighting but the above accounts are sufficient to show what happened between Nov. 20th and Dec. 5th, when the attempts was made on Cambrai by our troops.

END OF BOOK 6.