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16-12-17: Just about a fortnight ago we had a very slight fall of snow, I was unlucky enough to be on guard and during my turn of duty from 1a.m. - 3a.m., what with the wind and snow I was saying some rather uncomplimentary things about the Kaiser for being the cause of our being in this cold country. Though the cold was severe the fall of snow was very slight and had all disappeared off the ground next morning. After that the weather seemed to get a bit milder and with the exception of an occasional fall of rain and heavy frosts at night there was not very much to complain about for this time of the year. But to-day Sunday 16th there is no more doubt about winter in the north of France, it came in the morning as a bitterly cold wind, almost impossible to get warm, fires in the huts of a day time are forbidden and all the Corporals in charge of huts were brought up before the Major for having fires alight. Soon after dinner a slight fall of snow began, there was no flying being done, so, early in the afternoon a mate and myself got permission to go down to the village. We soon found our way to a warm fire and stayed there till about 8p.m. had both wind and snow fair in our face for the two miles home, there was nearly a foot of snow on the ground and though the exercise of walking soon made us very warm, it seemed to cut into our face like red hot needles. On Monday morning in some places you would sink up to your middle in the snow, it had been falling all night and is still going strong at the time of my writing which is midday. Everything is a mass of snow, beautiful to look on but horribly cold on our feet, we can keep our bodies warm but somehow it seems impossible for the feet, our boys have snow-balled each other and done every kind of exercise for blood circulation but it is no good as five minutes afterwards your feet are as cold as ever. There is no work doing as the machines cannot go out in it and our quarters are as cold as anywhere since no fires are allowed till 4p.m. I am afraid some change will have to be made. It is not that Australians are unused to it for the Tommies feel it, as much as us, also the French folk do so. To think of our folk at home now in the heat of summer trying to find a cool spot and having iced drinks for refreshment whilst over here we would give all we are worth for some hot drink. We get hot tea for breakfast and tea, rum is issued every second night at 6.30p.m., has been so for some considerable time now only I have never felt any need of it so my issue has not been drawn by me.

25-12-17: Christmas Day in France. Although the day has ended up a little more enjoyably than I anticipated still there was a lot to be desired. Everyone gets their fits of the blues at times but usually I manage to get out and walk mine off before the fits get too serious but I must confess it got me down this time to a certain extent. This last week has not been too attractive to start with, it stopped snowing sometime Monday afternoon and it had proved to be a very heavy fall. In some places it was six and seven feet deep four and five days after the last snow had fallen. It was extremely cold every day, a hard frost would fall every night and everything became frozen. For the first two days all motor traffic was stopped, everywhere on the roads motors of every description were stranded and fatigue parties would go out and dig them out. One case is worth quoting. A party of our boys were out in a huge Leyland and in one portion of the road they ran into a six foot drift, natural consequence was that by the time they cleared the snow away the motor had frozen to the road. Just as they began to get exasperated and tried to move the car by strong language General Birdwood came along in his car and got into the same pickle, as it was night time our boys did not recognise him and when Birdwood called out, "Hey you men come and see if you can pull us out of this," the 68th men could not move an inch and one chap yelled out, "You fool, how can we (censured) help you when we are stuck ourselves." "Oh," says the General, "judging by their language they are Australians, leave them alone."

Several deaths have occurred through the cold, one Tommy belonging to an adjoining camp was down in the village one evening and came back towards camp with a full cargo of wine on board, he fell into a snow drift and very easily went to sleep, the poor chap never woke up again, he was frozen to death by morning. That is the worst of deep snow, you don't feel the cold but it makes you feel very sleepy, and once sleep masters you it is the end. One very sad case happened on the roads not so very far from us. Two Tommies were bringing a big covered motor in a lorry along when they got snowed up, had they known a camp was anywhere near they could have walked to us and got shelter but somehow the average Tommy does not seem to be able to think for himself, so when they found

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themselves stuck for the night they took the engine cover into the lorry and using it as a rug made themselves comfortable for the night. Next morning both were frozen to death. Whilst this cold snap was on and any of our men were compelled to go on a trip of any distance they anticipated being frozen in and always carried their blankets. Some of our men were delayed as much as two days but they always turned up sooner or later.

The last three days of the week were beautiful sunny days but it seemed to make very little difference to the snow lying on the ground. I took some photos of the road to Warloy four days after the fall of snow and if they come out at all decent you will be able to form some sort of an idea of what it is like here in the North of France in winter. So long as it was on the ground I enjoyed it, there is no denying that though perhaps I suffer from the cold as much as anyone, still I am fond of the cold weather and a heavy fall of snow on the ground has a fascination for me, I think it is a wonderful and beautiful sight, particularly this last week as it has been bright moonlight and with a bright moon and a foot of snow on the ground is to my mind one of the grandest sights nature can produce. But by the end of the week German prisoners had most of the main road cleared to a certain extent, what moisture that gathered on the road would freeze and everywhere you walked was like glass, the iron heels on our boots made us slip and slide and sometimes crash down full length which was no joke. One day I was trying to get across our transport yard when I came an awful cropper, two Tommy Officers were near me and stood roaring with laughter, certainly I looked funny but I had hurt myself and for a minute could not rise, when I eventually found my feet again I walked past them and remarked as I passed that an Australian gentleman would have helped me up. It was a victory for Australia, all my pain seemed to leave me when I saw the look of confusion on their faces, both were Captains.

On Thursday 20th as the day was clear and no sign of a fog our machines were run out on to the aerodrome. We came away from England with a type of machine known as D.H.5's a very fine machine with rotary engines. Our pilots did fine work with them as was proved in the late Cambrai fight but they were not suitable for the class of work required, for one thing they are very difficult to land, they have to come to earth at the rate of seventy miles an hour and more accidents happen in the landing than at any other time. So to-day they flew all our D.H. 5's over to No. 2 aerodrome at Chandos and brought back S.E.5's in their place. This is a faster aeroplane with several advantages over the other, easier to land, easier to fly and with a very fine stationary engine known as the Hispana Suiza. They also carry two machine guns instead of one, but like our D.H.5's there is only the one seat. During the afternoon all our machines came back but one, which was being brought over by Mr. Forrest, Capt. Bell's successor in charge of C Flight. A fog came up late in the afternoon and although we fired a great number of "Verrey Lights" he got hopelessly lost and landed at a Tommy aerodrome, twenty five miles away. The machine was damaged in landing so on Friday afternoon an English pilot brought Mr. Forrest over to this aerodrome in an R.E.8 and as he wanted either a man or some ballast in his second seat to go home our Major let C Flight decide who should occupy it. A number was put down and we started to count, the man that got the right number went for the joy ride and stayed at the aerodrome until a lorry went over next day to bring back the damaged S.E.5. I was unlucky in not getting the right number, a young chap called Dunnett secured the trip.

On account of the snow and extreme cold I spent most of the week in camp so that by the time Sunday came round the place was getting on my nerves. Immediately after tea Eric Wade and myself started out for a walk, passed through Balzeaux and about three miles further on came to another village, we poked around for an hour and then turned back for home, we covered about eight miles and as the whole distance was like walking on glass on account of the frozen roads, we were ready for bed by the time this aerodrome was reached.

Monday was Christmas Eve, work went on as usual during the day, we had not received any of our Christmas mail although it was supposed to be at Albert eight miles away, but in the afternoon a tender went over for a load of parcels. Word had already been received from our Headquarters in London that our Christmas Comforts from the Australian Patriotic Funds were delayed and we would not receive them until after Christmas, this load of parcels proved to be purely English mail, so only those who had left friends and relations in England were the

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favoured ones. I was fortunate as one came from Gosforth South full of cakes and chocolate, almonds, raisins and other things. My second parcel came from a Mrs. Neale in Grantham, her husband is over here in the Artillery and if his parcel was a better one than mine he must have got a beauty. Mine contained a big jar of spiced beef, a tin of my favourite English tobacco, packet of chocolate, fine big cake, tinned fruit, tin of cream and several other articles. According to letters I have ~~from~~ received from Australia there must be at least eight or nine parcels on the road for me, and if they come I will have enough food for suppers to last a considerable time. Up to the present two have arrived, one from Mum and one from Tasmania. Let us hope the others turn up. Apart from the parcels my Christmas Eve was non too brilliant. One could not help thinking of what was happening at home and of the urgent invitations I had received to try and visit Newcastle for Christmas. A crowd of our chaps arranged to have a great feed down in the village, but knowing how cheap champagne is here in France and also the mood some of our chaps get into when the wine flows freely I stayed at home beside the fire with half a dozen of the chaps. Just as well for late that night the village became lively, some of our fellows ran foul of what is known as "The pride of the English Army" viz. The Grenadier Guards, and a rough house was the consequence. Later on some of them came in contact with an English Officer, I don't know the particulars of the case but one of our fellows knocked him to the ground, unlike most Tommy Officers when he came to his senses again instead of calling the Military Police, he pulled off his coat with the remark that he knew a little about fighting himself but the man who hit him had disappeared.

When work is slack as it is at present our Major sometimes opens his heart and allows about 25 men, usually in charge of an Officer, to have a Leyland motor and go for a day's joy riding around the Australian Battle Fields in this part of France, as all this country is where our boys have done such good work, known as the Somme Front. A few Saturdays ago one party went but I was not one of them. Christmas Day was to see the second stunt. On Sunday night a German aeroplane came over the lines on a bombing raid and the British guns managed to bring it down about twenty miles from our aerodrome. It was arranged that we should start from here at 8 o'clock in the morning and inspect this Hun machine. From our aerodrome to Albert the sun was shining, after that the snow came but whilst we were examining the machine the sun was once more trying to shine. From Albert to Bapaume is practically one huge cemetery, a distance of probably ten miles, and one never gets away from graves and shell holes, the men are buried where they fell and in places the graves are so numerous that one cannot walk amongst them, every inch of ground is taken up. Round about Pozeries are great numbers of our own Colonial graves, in one spot the other side of Pozeries is a spot that can be seen very plainly from the road, shell holes and exploded mines all round and a small hill about 50 feet high, on top of which there is erected three big crosses. This spot has been set aside by the French Government as a lasting monument of the gallant stand made by the Durham Light Infantry during an attack. We passed through these places on our way to our destination. The machine we came to see was a beauty. Absolutely intact with the exception of one propeller which was shot off by the English gunners. I cannot give an expert's opinion as to the comparison with our aeroplanes, in my mind it was superior in some ways whilst ours had advantages in other ways. It had two engines, consequently two propellers. The body or fuselage was more roomy than ours, they carried a machine gun and a man in the front of the machine, behind him sat the pilot with his observer side by side, then in the rear seat was another man with two machine guns, one to shoot down under him and the other to shoot above or behind him, they also had room to carry about forty bombs, in fact when the machine was brought down she had over a dozen bombs still on board. We spent a very interesting hour round the plane and then started for home once more. On our way back we stopped at the spot where the D.L.I. were all buried and explored the battlefield, the ground was covered with huge shells, a great number unexploded. Our next stopping place was nearer Pozeries where several huge tanks had been put out of action. Needless to say the camera was being used a good bit. We stopped again at Albert but all canteens were closed and more snow was coming so we soon made

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for home and arrived back in camp about 3.30p.m.

Christmas Dinner was at 6p.m. and on the whole the spread was very creditable, during dinner time our Major presented Military Medals to four men for some work done by them during the recent operations against Cambrai. After dinner some sort of entertainment had been arranged, but after my trip out amongst all those graves I did not seem to have any wish for these jolifications so quickly got out of it and came over to the Office to write some letters. So ended Christmas Day 1917. Certainly the quietest Christmas spent by me during the whole of my life.

Boxing Day work went on as usual, during the night snow had again fallen and the cold was intense. It is wonderful how this severe cold is affecting some of our men. On Boxing night I had a very nasty experience. Three of us walked down into the village and after spending a couple of hours in a private house and enjoying a nice supper, started for our two mile walk home over the snow. There was a very clear moon, everything as bright as day which perhaps was partly the cause of the trouble as with a bright moon the snow causes a decided glare. For about a mile and a half everything went all right when one of my mates stood still, we went back to him and was just in time to catch him as he fell to the ground, not only did he faint but what frightened me was the way he stiffened up. We tried to carry him home and it was an awful job. Eventually we got him to bed and for 3/4 of an hour worked on him with the assistance of the Medical Orderly (who did not know as much as we did ourselves) before my mate came round. When he did gain consciousness he was clean off his head. Thought he was back home on the Paramatta River in Sydney and the boat had upset, kept calling me Mother and telling me not to worry as no one was drowned. Then he began to cry like a child and thought he had gone stone blind, wanted us to bring Vera to him (his little daughter at home), after about an hour of this we managed to get him off to sleep. He was laid up for a few days but gradually got better and once more is about his work. The doctor does not seem to be able to explain what was the cause of it. But winter is telling on a lot of our men now one way and another.

In the book before this I mentioned Captain Bell as being wounded during the first day of the Cambrai attack. Word had been received on several occasions of him progressing favourably but on December 28th we were advised by telephone that he had died the night before at 10p.m. And so that was the end of the three wonderful airmen we brought from Egypt with us, perhaps the three best men ever to fly in the Australian Flying Corps. By following this account of mine you will be conversant with the details of each man's career. First Capt. Guilfoyle who had such an awful crash in Harlaxton as to incapacitate him for active service, next Capt. Muir meeting his death the week before we sailed for France and now poor Capt. Bell.

You will also remember me speaking of a small monkey we brought from Egypt with us, owned by Capt. Muir, at his death Capt. Bell took charge of him and we brought him on to France, Capt. Bell died in hospital some twenty miles from our aerodrome and the night he passed away the poor little monkey died also, it seems a very strange coincidence as we had had many colder nights before. He had caused great amusement amongst the French folk, most of them never having seen a monkey before and as a Regimental ~~Piet~~ Pet he was a great favourite.

Jan. 3rd. 1918: Snow and ice always on the ground, since the first fall some weeks ago we have never lost sight of it and from what the French folk say we won't lose sight of it till the end of winter. New Year's Day proved a more enjoyable day to me than Christmas. I received a parcel from the two Miss Pyes at Gosforth South containing two cakes, some tinned rabbit, chocolates and best of all some decent tobacco. During the day work was carried on and instead of having tea in camp Dick Wade and myself went down to Warloy for the meal with some French friends (will have more to say about them later.) At night there was to be a concert at the aerodrome so instead of staying with our friends for the evening as we usually do we left early and got back here in time for the performance. I have been to a good many camp concerts since I joined the Army, they are very often good but one knows every performer and very often the song he will sing. This concert was an exception, they had been preparing for some time and presented to us a remarkably good programme for over two hours. The first half was all funny items by a Band acting as Pierrots, the stage was splendidly fixed up and scenery painted. After the first half was an interval taken up by a very comical farce,

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one of our sergeants was in a dummy aeroplane and represented an English Airman landing at an unknown aerodrome, during the dialogue that was carried on the men in the farce used our Officer's names in their puns and they were sports enough not to get offended. This item was the catch of the evening, after this was over the second half of the programme came on and I never realised that our Squadron carried such talent until this night, some of them had very fine voices and several exceptionally fine recitations. The programme which probably will be enclosed in this book (IT WASN'T) is rather good work, done on a wax sheet first and then run off by a duplicator that is used in the Orderly Room. Both Officers, men and visitors pronounced the concert a very great success and a Staff Officer who was present has asked that the Concert Party be allowed visit his Headquarters to repeat the Programme. That ended New Year's Day for us, we had settled down to the ordinary routine once more. There is practically nothing doing on the line as the weather has been too severe, most days our planes cannot go up on account of fog or snow, and when there is no flying naturally our work slackens off considerably. It is the 3rd January but our Australian Christmas mail has not arrived so far and yet we still hear rumors that there is one somewhere about. I get a fair number of letters from friends in England so am not altogether isolated from the world, still one always looks on the Australian mail as being the mail.

19-1-18: Before I move on to another part of France I have a little to say on this village of Warloy. Anyone who has travelled through the north of France will be able to picture the place when I say it is simply a village of the poorest class. One long straggling business street ~~of~~ of small shops, more Cafés and Estaminents than anything else, one mass of mud in wet weather and frozen like a sheet of glass in cold snaps. When we first arrived here after our life in busy England our opinion was so poor of Warloy that I for one never went near it except about once a week. But no matter how poor or small a place is a man is glad to visit it after a week or so in camp with no-one but his own soldier mates to talk to. Four of us decided that we would hunt round for a French teacher, this was more difficult to find than was anticipated. The language these folk talked was more Patrois than pure French and of course it was no use learning that, but at last we found a lady that would suit us to a nicety. Mademoiselle Le Clercq, she had lived in Paris all her life only just before the war her father and mother came north for their health. Not only did she talk Parisian French but was a fluent English speaker as her father whilst in business in Paris came in constant contact with English tourists. She was willing to give us an hour's lesson three times a week for a sum of money that the coin of England represented 7½ pence per hour. We got our books and made a start at once but we were unfortunate as very soon afterwards our class got broken up on account of some going to another aerodrome for a fortnight and as soon as they came back others going away, so we slackened off till New Year's Day was over, intending to make a fresh start in the New Year, but like all other private affairs, orders soon upset them. Mademoiselle Le Clercq was very good, of a cold night she would have a fire ready for us, very often a cup of coffee before our lesson and another one to send us on our two mile home through the snow. To you folks that might sound very ordinary but you must remember that we are in France where sugar, coffee and other things were at times unobtainable. We had an urgent invitation to come in and sit beside the fire whenever we came down to the village, the room where we had our lesson was kept expressly for to write in or talk. I called in often and spent the evening talking of Australia, Egypt and England. Then Dick Wade and myself found another home, often I have wondered how we were so lucky to come across it. I said this was a poor village, the war had robbed it of the men folk. The women had to scratch for themselves so that at almost any house one could obtain eggs and chips or coffee without sugar for about 1 franc, but oh if you could only smell some of these poor homes it would make you folk feel sick. There were some very nice homes but of course the soldier did not find his way into these. One night Dick and myself were walking home past a very nice house with a nice garden in front of it (a most unusual thing in these small villages.) Just as we were passing two young ladies were locking the gate and we chipped; "Avez vous café Mademoiselle s'il vous plait?" But they said "Non Monsieur il est trop late." But we persisted so they said if we called in the next evening we could get coffee. Several nights after, we called in and they made us at home,

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gave us coffee with milk and sugar and bread with very nice butter on it. We stayed for about an hour and they would not let us pay for it but gave us a very hearty invitation to come to-morrow night. The family consisted of a mother and three daughters, Lucie aged 10 and Prudence and Louise about 20 and 23 years old. They were superior to the ordinary class of French, their home was further north but had been driven down to Warloy as the Germans advanced in 1915. The father had been killed early in the war but as it turned out they had saved a little money out of the wreck for they seemed to have the necessaries of life. Louise the eldest lived all her life with an old couple who when they died left her eighty thousand francs and a very fine farm which the latter the Germans have possession of at present. We enjoyed our evening so much that we came back next night. I was making great friends with Lucie the little girl, she would get out her school atlas and I would tell her stories of the countries I had been in, she was never tired of standing, one arm round my neck and the other hand turning over the pages of the book. This second visit of ours was a great improvement on our first in as much as they spread the table and the six of us sat down to a proper dinner of meat and vegetables with the scarcest of scarce things tea to drink. Afterwards we had some little apple tarts and then (then) walnuts, as soon as the meal was over the usual cup of coffee came on and we sat round the fire until a few minutes after 10, then made for camp after promising to return next night. This time we compelled the folk to take money and then the mother only allowed us to pay a franc each. Well I don't think I missed one night after that without calling in at 'our home', sometimes I would stay in camp till 7.30p.m. and then walk down in time for dinner. They seemed to anticipate every wish before you had time to speak. I was a standing joke with the mother over my pipe, here in France only old men smoke the pipe and the young ones cigarettes. One night I arrived at the house only to find I had left my pipe behind and so Mother thought it was lovely to see me every now and again put my hand in my pocket in search of it. One of the girls went into another room and brought out a box of cigarettes. I smoked two of them and then stopped so Louise was not satisfied and came to light with a cigar, they belonged to an Uncle who was home on leave. Little things like this happened every visit.

On New Year's Night we had our concert in camp but nothing would do our friends only that we came down earlier and dinner was over in time for us to go to our concert. Little Lucie gave me a photo of herself for New Year. On the evening of January 4th we left the house about 10.50p.m. little dreaming what news we were to give them the next night.

Saturday morning 5th came with the news that our Squadron had twenty four hours notice to pack up and get off to another part of the line. I have mentioned here how we were suffering from the cold but it could not be helped, as far as possible everything possible was done to make ourselves comfortable. This move came as a rude shock to us since we all thought Warloy would be our home for the winter. After what I have just told you Dick Wade and myself were very sorry to move on but "needs must when the devil drives". Saturday was a very busy day for all and it was with the greatest difficulty we got down to our 'home' in time for dinner that night. All the way down we talked about what a surprise we had for our friends but our news reached them before we did. As soon as we entered the room Lucie rushed to me and as I lent down to kiss her she threw her arms round my neck and began to cry. Prudence had heard the news down in the village earlier in the evening. It was not a jolly meal that night, we all had got to be very fond of each other. Dick started to say good-bye first by shaking hands but that did not suit mother, she said to me, "My permission you kiss" and French fashion we kissed each other all round. I hate saying good-bye, goodness only knows we have had enough practice this last few years but it seems just as hard as ever. There was no snow falling to-night as we left the house, everyone was too serious and on our way home we wondered if we would ever see them again and whether we would meet such a fine family again in this country.

Sunday morning was rather quiet, the usual things which are always left to the last minute had to be done and the Squadron left the aerodrome about 11a.m. I was instructed to stay behind and go by a later party as it was expected that petrol would be wanted in the afternoon

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and I had charge of it. As the afternoon wore on I began to think that perhaps I would be able to spend one more evening down in the village but about 4p.m. three Crossley tenders were moving out and Capt. Tooth instructed me to go on with them. It is always much more comfortable to travel apart from the Squadron, we practically take our own time and are not messed about at all. In this case to get to our destination we would have to travel all night and that would be no fun with a foot of snow on the ground so after about a two hours run covering 28 miles we arrived at a big town called Doullens and decided to stay for the night. We secured a good meal at one of the Cafés and after having a look round for an hour or so we turned in to bed at a hotel, slept comfortably in a cosy feather bed instead of spending it on the road in a motor car. We got a move on about 9.30a.m. next morning and came into St. Pol for dinner, as it was Market Day in this city we spent a couple of hours here leaving at 2p.m. We got to our new home somewhere about 4p.m.

The worst of moving is the first few days in the new camp, we usually manage to make ourselves fairly comfortable in the long run so one feels that some discomfort at first does not count for a very much. We were most unlucky at this aerodrome, the Squadron we came to relieve were not ready to move away consequently there was no accommodation for us, our machines had of a necessity to be put somewhere out of the weather therefore they were crowded into the Hangars or huge sheds which are built on every aerodrome for that purpose. The men had to sleep in these sheds too for the time, naturally these sheds are very windy, only every man simply had to poke in anywhere he could. As a man is not even allowed to smoke near a machine on account of all the oil and petrol about, therefore there was never a fire of a night time. To make matters worse for the first week it either snowed or rained every day and froze of a night time. During the time it is actually snowing the temperature is not so low but as soon as it stops and the wind starts everything quickly begins to freeze. Our boots are strong and practically water-proof but the continual moving about in the snow lets the moisture through, your socks get damp and the boots become frozen, as far as the body is concerned I always can keep warm but the feet suffer terribly. A lot of our men caught cold living under these conditions but it seems remarkable how the average Australian seems to stand any sort of climate. This weather lasted for over a week but the men took it remarkably well, everything would be O.K. when once we got into our proper quarters, as fires could be lit of a night time then. One day we had a particularly heavy snow storm and one man took me to see his bed, there was a foot of snow covering it and all he had to say was, "I wonder what the folk at home would think of this." With all these disadvantages we were not the worst off in the world, there are many thousands in a worse plight than our lot and no prospects of improving their condition.

I forgot to mention one incident that happened on our arrival at this aerodrome. When we move like this our pilots fly their machines to the new aerodrome, on the first day after our arrival the machines came over, they all arrived safely but one, he came all right but coming down he crashed and burst into flames, evidently he was stunned for before they could get him out he was burnt to death. Lieut. Lawson was his name. On Saturday 20th Brig. General Shepherd flew over to this aerodrome and at a thousand feet from the earth his machine collapsed and he came to the earth, his leg was almost torn off and he was smashed up horribly, they had to cut the machine to pieces to get him out and he died before they got to the hospital. Buried to-day 2-11-18.

Just a word or so about Auchel before we pass on as our stay here was very short. We are in Flanders and not far from the front line, unlike the previous camp at Baizeaux we are now in a very thickly populated part of the country. Large towns are all round us and every couple of miles is to be found quite decent sized villages. Lillers a large town five miles away would have provided some amusement for our boys had the weather been decent enough to let them visit it. I myself took a trip in there on two different afternoons. Our aerodrome was built just on the edge of Auchel, a town of a fair population. It is a huge coal mining district and to see the huge pyramid of "slack" from the mine made me think of Rutherglen at home with its gold mines. Although so near to the line there was more life here than what we have been used to, the civilian population out-numbered the soldiers, we are the only Australians, there are some Tommies and a great many more Canadians. The miners swanked a lot of a night time, in the Cafés and

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Estaminets, a great deal of drinking went on and in a lot of the Cafes was to be found dancing. It was more continental than we had come in contact with so far. I could not settle down here somehow, did not fancy the place at all. I think it must have been on account of the attitude taken by the French civilians, and I am pretty sure had we stayed there long there would have been something doing. We often wished we were back at Baizeaux and could go for a walk down to Warloy for supper. Everything served to make us fed up with Auchel. Very bad weather, only biscuits and bully to eat, crowded quarters, and inhospitable people. Consequently not many of us were sorry to hear we were moving again in a day or so.

Tuesday 22-1-18: Saw us once more on the move. Made a very early breakfast and were ready to move out about 9a.m. At first the weather was bad, no sun and occasional showers but very soon they went off and we had a good day for our trip. Went down south to St. Pol and passing through that town we landed here at one o'clock. I cannot say much of this place at present but the conditions of our entry are much more favourable than at Auchel. First of all the aerodrome was empty waiting for us, there is plenty of accommodation in the huts and room in the hangars for our machines. The winter has completely changed, we are having beautiful spring days, not very cold at night and at times sunny in the day. Of course this weather cannot last but whilst it is on everyone seems happy. Another great change is at last a spell from bully and biscuits. To-day we started once more on a ration of bread after nearly three weeks of biscuits. Although it is prohibited for civilian shops to sell bread to soldiers I managed whilst at Auchel to buy a certain amount but here at Savy we have tried almost every house, café, shop and Estaminet without any success. Just before the day we came away from Auchel I received a parcel from home and it was very welcome too. We were in this camp two days before any mail came to us and then another parcel came for me and it is a bit of a mystery as it comes from the Williamstown Anzac Club and no name of anyone particular as the sender. I think it must come indirectly from Mrs. Snedden at Footscray becoming a member and nominating me for a parcel. Contents are useful, shirt, pair of socks, handkerchief, boot laces, cigarettes, chocolates, sugar, and some other small articles. Perhaps all my missing parcels may turn up yet, there are lots more due to me yet from home.

30-1-18: Some time ago I wrote about my application to qualify for Pilot. Yesterday the Major interviewed a large number of men who want to train for the same thing. He saw each man personally which took up the whole of the afternoon, each man was told some sort of a yarn by him, fact of the matter is that pilots are wanted only they won't let our mechanics and riggers go for it as they cannot get skilled men to take their places. I have bluffed myself all through that I stood a good chance, my only bar seemed to be my age and hoped that would be wiped out. When I came before the Major he told me that he had taken a lot of trouble with my case, interviewed two Generals as I could very quickly (with my present knowledge) qualify for an observer but they held out no hope as the extreme age limit at present was 30. I am not going to write down here all the advantages "for and against" in regards to the age question, sufficient for me to know that it was messing me up. There is a way out of the difficulty, one that is being used by a lot at present and that is to alter my age. I almost think my Major wants me to see a hole through a ladder and strange to say an opportunity has arisen where it could be worked but somehow I do not like to take it on. We will see later on. Last November when I first made my application and was asked my age they told me I was too honest.

Well the outcome of all this was that about ten were chosen to go to England and train but they were all of them what we term as "spare parts", the other men do not seem to have much chance, they are too useful where they are to be allowed break their necks in the air. All I know was that I was terribly disappointed but there were a lot more in the same boat as myself and all we could say was the old French expression, "Cee ne fait rien, c'est la guerre".

About three days after this word came down to my hut at lunch time that the Major wanted to see me at once. I had said a lot of things to him three days ago about the Pilot stunt and I wondered what was coming now. He was waiting for me and told me a long yarn about there being a vacancy up in the 71st Squadron which would be very suitable for my class of work and would I like to transfer to that Squadron. I had to

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make up my mind immediately as they wanted a man that day. The thing that influenced me most was that I knew Major Watt was leaving our Squadron. I had always got on well with him though many of our men had run foul of him. He had bad points perhaps but he also had many good ones. It helped me to decide and I said, "Yes, I will go to the 71st." He said on parting that I was going to my new Squadron with every recommendation that it was possible to send and he expected me to get well. I did not take much notice of a lot of muck he said for I was pretty sore over my failure in the other business. It was well that I made up my mind suddenly, otherwise I would not have left the old 68th. I found that I had grown to be very fond of this Squadron. All the old boys were Light Horsemen, we had spent some gloriously happy times together in England and as far as the original crowd were concerned understood each other thoroughly. The crowd I was with "C Flight" were on the whole fine fellows and to willingly leave them was a nasty break for me. Not only that but I was going to a Squadron who had not been away from Australia twelve months yet, and who had never been in Egypt or Gallipoli, in fact had only been in France a few weeks. Still Major Watt seemed to think that I would be foolish not to accept so there was no help for it but to get a move on and see later on whether I had made a mistake or not. The 71st sent a motor down from their aerodrome (over an hour's run from Savy) for me and that night I was in my new home.

I was sorry in more ways than one to leave Savy. Always upon arrival at a new aerodrome I either fancy or dislike it. At Auchel naturally the conditions were so bad that a great dislike of the place came over me but Savy was different. The aerodrome was comfortable, the village itself was very poor but less than an hour's walk from Savy was quite a large town called Aubigny. I walked in on several occasions and during my last visit was lucky enough to be introduced to the school Mistress with whom I made arrangements to continue my French lessons. The day I was to commence was the day I came away. Where I am now I do not see any prospects at present to go on with my French, perhaps an opportunity will crop up later on.

When I used to visit Newcastle Mary Erington often spoke of a Canadian who was an old friend of hers and her late husband, Pte. J. Hardman and was very anxious that we should meet. In the part of France that we are in there are practically no Australians but great numbers of Canadians. One day whilst at Savy a Canadian called at our camp but he had forgotten the name of the man he wanted so at our Orderly Room they showed him a Nominal Roll of the whole Squadron, he soon picked out my name as the man he wanted. I soon guessed who he was and as I had nothing to do we walked into Aubigny to tea and had a long yarn. I liked him very much, he is a Minister in Canada and is doing Red Cross work with his unit here. I enjoyed hearing him talk of his country, he comes from away amongst the Lumber Camps round about where Ralph Connor is so fond of writing in his books. We parted at about 8p.m. for our respective camps with promises to call and see me again. No doubt he has called since and I am many miles away so we are not likely to meet again for some time. That is the Army all over you meet each other and make arrangements then a few hours later am as far from each other as ever.

It seems as if I am in for a bit more fun than usual in joining this Squadron. The night after my arrival Fritz paid us a visit. Of course the camp was turned into darkness at once and the men were sent to cover in the trenches prepared for emergency. He dropped a couple of bombs which did no harm as he was wide of his mark. But two days after a peculiar thing happened. An English Flight of about six machines flew over our heads at about 3,000 feet at 11a.m. It was a beautifully clear morning and by some mistake they dropped two bombs on the town just a couple of hundred yards away, killing I think four people amongst the French residents. A night or so after that we had another visit from Fritz, he must be trying to find us but we are just on the edge of the town and of a night time it must be very difficult to find your target, as although an aerodrome is a big spot still when you are eight or ten thousand feet up in the air it is only a small place after all. Just as well for us.

7-2-18: There was to be a farewell concert over at the 68th for Major Watt who is proceeding home to England to take charge of an Australian Wing being formed over there. They rang me up in the morning asking me to come over and to get half a dozen others in this Squadron who used to be with us in England. Major McClaughry gave his consent

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and we went over in one of our motors. They had a fine programme, perhaps not quite as good as New Year's night at Baizeaux but very good all the same. It was then that it struck me how much it meant disconnecting myself from the 68th but the deed was done, had gone through Brigade Orders so it was no use 'crying over spilt milk'. We did not get back here till about 3a.m. as we had a long journey from their aerodrome to ours. Probably that will be the last I will see of those boys for many a long day, either one or the other Squadron will be moved to some other part of the line very soon as we don't stay very long in one place.

8-2-18: My birthday passed away uneventfully that until late in the evening I forgot it was my birthday. I could not expect to get greetings from the home folk as our mail is so irregular, a lot of my Christmas mail has not yet turned up. But I received two surprises all the same. My little friend at Warloy, little Lucie sent me a postcard (bright with every color of the rainbow) of birthday greetings. In fact Louise wrote on it but it really came from Lucie. The other surprise came from a married lady at Grantham. She remembered my birthday and said she wanted me to be a good mood so sent me half a dozen tins of my favourite tobacco for a birthday present. Her husband is over here in France in the Tommy Artillery. I have received several of my Christmas parcels lately, some from Mum and one Bessie sent me. Also my letters which are coming addressed via Newcastle are much more regular and up to date. Coming that way they seem to be nearly a month earlier than otherwise.

1-3-18: Saturday evening, we are having pictures here in camp but I want to put in an evening writing, so will let the pictures go for this evening.

The month of February has been a record for France as far as weather is concerned, the days have been wonderfully fine and usually sunny for a few hours. The nights are cold but nothing to cause inconvenience, until last night when it came up very cold. To-day it has snowed most of the time but a very fine sort of snow which quickly disappears from the surface of the ground, a bitter wind is blowing tonight and we are in for a very severe night. All day long, also all last night Fritz had been bombarding very heavily, has been trying to reach some iron works close handy to here with his big guns, we also heard that he had broken through our lines in one place but if he has it is not much to worry about as he cannot do much harm and will soon get driven back. At the present moment the guns are going hot and strong.

But the Hun has received a rude awakening this last week or so. About 16th February when the moon was very bright he paid us a visit, we soon heard his engines over our head and the guns round about opened up a terrific fire. Of a day time as you move around no one ever sees any big guns about but it only wants a visit of this sort when you hear them everywhere. This night you would hear the roar of a gun quite near and the scream of the shrapnell as it sped on its errand and then the sky all ablaze as the shell burst. They were bursting right over our heads and for an hour every man had to take cover from our own shrapnell as it came to earth, it was pouring down over our huts like hail. Fritz evidently could not find our aerodrome for no bombs were dropped and he cleared out only to return again in about an hour's time, when the din once more commenced, but he came once too often as he got one of the messengers of death and that was one machine less on the German's side.

That settled the argument for that night but the moon was so perfect that more came over the next night and succeeding nights until I believe several more were brought down. This bringing them down of a night by land guns is purely chance, they simply make the air thick with high explosives on the off chance of getting a hit. And now came a run of successes for our airmen. One day the Squadron I am in got a couple of Hun machines, the 68th got two the same, a couple of days after we got two more whilst the 68th got three and next day they got one or two more. But that was only our two Australian Squadrons, according to the London papers 104 German machines were brought down in four days. Of course our side of a necessity had losses too. My Squadron has lost two or three men lately but ever since that 104 were brought down we have heard absolutely nothing of Fritz in the air either day or night. He seems to have died right out for the time being.

There is not the slightest doubt that the Allies are masters of the

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air, for weeks now there has not been one scrap in the air on our side of the lines. Our Pilots have absolutely to go looking for a fight. Everything happens from eight to fifteen miles behind the German trenches. His method of fighting is to stay away up above the clouds very often over twenty thousand feet up and if he sees one of our machines cut off from the formation will swoop down on him. Our men stay together but sometimes one of our machines will have engine trouble or will lag behind then it is Fritz's chance and down he dives from up top. Even if our formation sights an equal number of enemy aircraft the Huns will not fight but go for their lives. Take for instance one of our Pilots from this Squadron a week ago, he was on his own and went after a Fritz, both his machine guns jammed and refused to work and yet our man drove the enemy down by simply diving at him, he kept this up from twelve thousand to five thousand feet and then the Australian turned about and came for home. And that has been the way for weeks, nothing ever happens on our side and our men have to go twelve miles into enemy territory looking for a fight. Since the 104 went west absolutely nothing of importance has happened.

But this is not meant to be an account of war, I try to cut out that as much as possible and write more on private matters. Have just been telling you of Fritz coming over and bombing us but we are so used to it that everyone takes it as a matter of course, the following will show you that we don't lose any sleep over him. Where we are camped is on the edge of a large town called Bruay, there are very few English soldiers here but a great number of Canadians and of course we are the only Australians. The Canadians have formed a Theatrical Party and at present are engaged in playing "Aladdin's Lamp" in the Town Hall of Bruay. A friend (Ned Pelling) and myself went to see it the other night.* The Hall is a huge place and yet to have seen better in Melbourne especially when you remember that all the girls' parts are taken by men. (THE FOLLOWING I LEFT OUT). (The Hall is a huge place and yet to get a seat one has to book in the morning. I really don't think I have seen better in Melbourne especially when you remember that all the girls' parts are taken by men.) One character especially is a marvel, he takes the part of the Chinese Emperor's daughter and you would positively swear she was a very pretty girl. It is not a play of the Aladdin of "Arabian Nights" fame but just a make up from that book and also a great mixture of China, England, a little bit of French front line talk and jokes, then back to China once more. Being all soldiers in it naturally the jokes were of a military character and we had a very happy evening at the Theatre. It opened up with a soldier lying out on the battle field and being Christmas Eve he dreams of home and wakening out of his sleep he sits up and tells how he can see Christmas Eve as we used all to spend it at home and all his home folk are there with him singing hymns and everyone is happy. It was just as if we all were once more back with our own folk in the daily walks of life and I'll bet there was more than one man transported back to his own country in thought as the actor went through his dream. Then the scene changes and the real play commences out in far away China and the Chinese Ruler tells how this girl is really not his daughter but a girl he adopted in France during the Great War, as he was serving in the country in Command of a Chinese Labor Corps (we have hundreds of Chinese in this district doing labor work.) Her people were all killed and no-one seemed to own her, the town was being blown to pieces by the German guns so the Officer took charge of her and eventually took her home to China where he trained her as his daughter. In the play the costumes and scenery were wonderfully oriental. This next act comes on as a country district in England and knowing that country as we do we could absolutely find no fault with the acting, costumes or scenery, it was life like. The Emperor with his servants and his family are paying a visit to this village and it is also the home of a young English man who is in his employment. The Englishman's mother now comes on and she was lovely, acted the part perfectly as a country woman. The last scene is where the name of the play comes in and I am sure the author of the play must have studied Guy Boothby's "Dr. Nicola" for I recognised him at once. The Emperor wants a certain lamp that was stolen from him, or his family many years before and offers his daughter's hand to the man who rescues this lamp. A Yankee is well to the fore here but eventually after a lot of good acting and many adventures the Englishman secures possession of the lamp and it all ends up that they live happy

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ever after. The whole thing was acted better than many a play I have seen at Her Majesty's or Princess in Melbourne. It has been running for a week now and will stand good for a few more weeks yet. The French population attend in great numbers and it seems so strange to come out of the Theatre and hear the guns booming out on the front line.

This book of mine is a mixture of back dates and present times. I want to take you back five months to when we were in England. Yesterday I was in one of our huts telling the boys of the death of Captain Muir just before we came to France. I gave you an account of his death and burial the day after I returned from my trip to Scotland. Just as I finished my account of the affair to these chaps over here one of them handed me a Melbourne Herald and the following article was published which I am going to copy as I cannot keep the paper, promised to return it to the owner.

THE WINGS OF DEATH. OF
FEARLESS HERO OF THE AIR WINS PRAISE BIRDWOOD.
ACCIDENT ENDS CAREER.

"He was such an excellent Officer, and I had looked forward to having him out here with our Squadron and doing really good work for us," writes General Sir William Birdwood in a letter to Major W. Oswald Watt, in command of the 68th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, when speaking of the death through accident of Flight Commander Stanley Keith Muir, MC. in England on the 12th September.

"It does seem so terrible," adds the General, "That he should have gone in this way, especially when I realise how keen he was to come out here and take part in some hard fighting with our Australian Squadrons. But it was not to be, and we can only mourn the loss of a really brave comrade."

SYMPATHY FROM THE KING.

The letter along with others, has just been received by the bereaved father, Mr. John F. Muir of Collins Street, Melbourne. One of these is a message from the King and Queen, expressing their sincere sympathy to the family. Another is from Lady Birdwood, who speaks with pleasure of her meeting with Flight Commander Muir at the aerodrome at Harlaxton, and adds that she is sure his death will entail a great loss to his family, relations and friends. She had forwarded a wreath to be placed on his grave.

Major Watt, a N.S.W. Officer of distinction, writing to Mr. Muir, stated that he had the honor of being his late son's Commanding Officer ever since the formation of the Squadron in Egypt in January 1917.

"Stanley was one of the staunchest friends a man ever had, and one of the most skilful and fearless Pilots I have ever seen," says Major Watt. "His sad death deprives the flying service of one they can ill afford to lose. We were just about to fly overseas to France, being due to start in three days time. He was buried with full Military Honors in Harlaxton cemetery, near the aerodrome, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England, with a firing party of Australian Machine Gunners. The coffin was borne by his fellow Officers, all Australians, the Service being taken by an Australian Padre, Chaplain-Captain Joseph Best, Ballarat. Never was an Officer more truly mourned by his fellow Officers or by his men."

"ONE OF THE BEST SIX."

"It appears that the late Officer was descending to the aerodrome on September 12th after having been in the air for about 20 minutes. He was just about to take his last swoop for landing, when, being then about 500 feet from the ground, when one of the wings snapped off. The machine fell at once and when Flight Commander Muir was picked up he was dead. His flying was greatly admired. He had been to France several times, and was to have gone with the Squadron on September 18th as stated.

He was said to have been one of about six of the best Australian flyers, and his steadiness, ability and wonderful piloting powers earned for him great praise. The feat for which he gained his Military Cross was accomplished in Egypt. Another exciting experience which he had was chronicled in these columns recently. Attacked by three German machines when he was out scouting at El Arish, Flight Commander Muir sent one machine crashing to earth and chased the other two over the Dead Sea

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till his petrol ran out, and he was compelled to abandon the pursuit. A wonderful flying performance which he had to his credit was a flight on his back for five minutes which constitutes a record.

Enlisting as a private in the Australian Imperial Forces at Euroa, Victoria the Flight Commander Muir, who was only 24 years old when he met his death, sailed with the first contingent as a Corporal in the 4th Light Horse. He went through the Gallipoli campaign, being wounded at Lone Pine. Invalided to England, he subsequently joined the Flying Service and went to Egypt, where a daring exploit gained for him MC. He returned to England in February to train for service in France but the accident cut short a brilliant career."

I suppose that finishes any more mention of Capt. Muir as far as this book is concerned. After the grave was filled in on the evening of his burial I took a couple of snaps of it covered with wreaths and crosses. One other I have is a full picture of the three wonderful men we brought from Egypt with us. All three totally different in disposition but bosom friends, Capt. Muir, Capt. Bell (both dead) and Capt. Guilfoyle (now Major) and incapacitated by a smash from service abroad.

5-4-18: A lot has happened this last few weeks but one gets so busy it is impossible to put it down on paper until some weeks after and then of course a lot of very interesting items are missed. During the month of March everyone could see something was going to happen on our front, our machines were doing wonderfully good work and I mean by that the whole of the Flying Corps. Every day fresh German machines were brought down on the German side of the line. We never saw a Hun this side during daylight but as soon as night came and the moon would rise, over he would come with his bombs, but some of our Squadrons which are fitted for that class of work were just as busy, during the month there was a continual procession backwards and forwards over our aerodrome of F.E. 2.D's loaded with bombs for Fritz and according to accounts they did deadly work on the enemy. One day our aerodrome was exceedingly lucky, a bomb dropped within ten yards of our cook house right in the heart of the camp about 10a.m. and did not explode, we were never so close to losing our dinner and incidently our cooks but "cee ne fait, c'est la guerre", work went on the same as usual. It seems a remarkable thing that he does not find us more often, we are just on the edge of the town, in fact to step off the edge of our aerodrome you are in a busy street and civilian homes are within a few yards of us on one side. That may be our salvation for it is a known thing that the place is full of German spies and people say he is very interested in the huge coal mines that are right in the heart of the town. Just before this Squadron came here Fritz dropped a bomb into one of the sheds destroying six machines and of a night time now you can tell by the way he flies round that he is looking for us. Last month he bombed places all round us, one night he made a mess of Lillers station a few miles away, then he got to St. Pol a couple of nights after and again got a railway station. He got all round us at different times, Bethune is a few miles away and it is almost a daily thing for them to be shelled. We all think that we must be blown out of this sooner or later and for weeks now have been under 12 hours notice to move. The 3rd Squadron (69th Aust.) were shelled out of Bailleau (not sure of spelling), the 2nd (my old Squadron) found it too warm and had to move but so far we are undisturbed and we are well forward too. Up to the time of my coming to this Squadron (1st Feb.) this lot had no Huns to their score but after that they woke up and in less than two months they were answerable for 36 verified victories, apart from the other enemy machines we brought down but without a verification from some outside source. The Squadron cannot claim such machines to their credit. Just lately three pilots have got the M.C. for good work. One man got three Huns in five minutes, he got one above the clouds and was diving towards earth to see if he had done his work properly and coming through the clouds he met a second one, sent that crashing to earth and was just turning to come home when a third came in his way which met the same fate as its two companions.

About 23rd March the Germans made their great push and it was over ground that is particularly well known to me as I have been over most of it where the worst fighting has been, you have read it all in your papers long before this so am not going to put much of it here. He pushed in towards Amiens via Perome, Bapaume, Albert and French fronts and his aim was Amiens, a large and thickly populated city in the Somme

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(REPEATING LAST SENTENCE ON PAGE 13 AS SOME WAS LEFT OUT.) He pushed in towards Amiens via Perome, Bapaume, Albert and south from there. It really represents the junction of the British and French fronts and his aim was Amiens, a large and thickly populated city in the Somme district. He came at his own game of hurling untold masses of men forward and although I always say we must win this war, if Germany could only keep up the mass formation no power on the face of the earth could stop the rush, but he would need to have almost a world's population to continue his game.

No doubt when this advance was being made many of our folk thought we were being beaten but it was not so, certainly there was nothing to do but fall back only in doing so the Hun was being slaughtered at the rate of ten to one and when I tell you that camped near us at present is the Leicesters (before the advance a full regiment, to-day 27 strong and in charge of a Lance Corporal) also a Scottish regiment now 32 strong and many more almost in the same state, so you can imagine how the German has suffered in this advance, and now our turn is to come when he will be beaten back for that is where our Cavalry comes into service. I will give you more facts of this advance in a few minutes.

Just about a week before this advance started I received a letter from little Lucie Grizelle, my little French friend at Warloy, in writing she wanted to know when I was going to come and visit them again, she had some pansy plants in her garden in bloom and wanted me to see them. Warloy is only a few miles from Albert and all the severe fighting has been in that locality and I am continually wondering what has become of my friends. Their original home was away up North and when the Germans advanced in 1914 they fled South. And now if they are alive it will mean they are further south again, and more than likely poor little Lucie's garden will be soaked in blood. I have tried to find out about them but no news can be obtained, will have to wait and see if any of them write to me.

Albert has been lost and won several times until I doubt if there will be anything of the town left now, it was a mass of ruins from the fighting of 1915-16. I gave you an account of the old battle field of Pozeliers, visited by me on Christmas Day 1917. For miles on both sides of the road and as far back as one can see is a mass of graves, usually not a foot of space between them and now there are hundreds of thousands more lying on the same ground dead, but more Germans than British.

The Air Service is taking a very prominent part in this push, on one sector of the front at one time they held up the German line for a considerable time by dropping bombs and using their machine guns whilst flying very low. As soon as the attack commenced our aerodrome was used by several other Squadrons as an advanced ground, they would come to us early in the morning and fly from here over the line at an interval of every hour, drop their bombs and return for more. We had therefore with us one Squadron of Dolphins, one of Bristol Fighters, our own Squadron of Sopwith Camels and our neighbours 40th Squadron with their S.E.5's. When the machines were all on the ground together they made a fine sight, I suppose about sixty all told and when they rose up to go over the line the air seemed to be black with them. We were all working day and night, could not write even a note home, for the first time during my Army career, I used Field Service Post Cards in place of letter writing. Our machines only flew in the day time, there were other machines for the night work known as F.E.2D. It is an engine Rolls Royce, 12 cylinder, 280H.P. and my word they could travel, all night long we could hear them passing over our heads on the bomb dropping work. Perhaps an extract from the "Daily Mail" will give you a better idea of the work being done by the Air Service which read as follows:-

"Yesterday (24-3-18) the activity in the air was very great. To-day was remarkable for the weight of bombs dropped by our aeroplanes, the number of flights that took place and the many thousands of rounds fired by our pilots from low altitudes upon the enemies' troops. The progress of the battle was reported by our aeroplanes, and our Artillery was informed of suitable targets. Masses of hostile troops concentrated in the battle area, were caught by our low flying machines both with bombs and machine gun fire. Our 1,700 bombs were dropped during the day on different targets which included Bruges Docks, Aulnoye Railway Station, a large camp south-east of Cambrai, high velocity guns and hostile reinforcements. The fighting was the most severe so far experienced. Our aeroplanes brought down 45 enemy machines and drove down 22 out of control.

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Two other hostile machines were shot down by our anti-aircraft guns. Ten of our machines are missing. After dark our bombing aeroplanes again concentrated their efforts upon bombing and attacking with machine gun fire the enemies' troops opposite the battle front. Bruges Docks and an aerodrome midway between Tournai and Mons, used by hostile night-flying machines, were also bombed. Over 14 tons of bombs were dropped. All our machines returned. During the night one of the enemy's large bombing machines landed behind our lines. Following the successful day-light raid, Mannheim and other objectives in Germany were attacked during the night. Half a ton of bombs were dropped by us on the railway station at Cologne where a fire was started. Over a ton of bombs were distributed between Luxemburg Railway Station where a fire was started and Courcelles Railway Station (east of Metz). Two tons of bombs were dropped on Metz Railway Station. Direct hits were obtained on a bridge south-east of the town and on a stationary train which was set on fire, a large fire was started on this occasion also. Other machines dropped a ton of bombs on Thionville Railway Station where a moving train was derailed and a fire caused. All our machines returned. Saturday's Air Report recorded 50 machines down whilst on Sunday 61 Huns were brought to earth, for the three days for which reports are to hand 181 German machines are accounted for."

And so this goes on day by day as long as fine weather prevails, the fighting down round Albert and Bapaume is as fierce as ever. One clipping from the London paper says, "He (the Hun) must already have employed some eighty divisions. How numerous his guns are is shown by the fact that on one corps front I believe he used on the first day some 700 guns. In this area the mist helped the enemy. In another I was told it hampered him as his troops had difficulty in keeping their direction, but generally the view is that the weather has been, and still is, in his favour. Wintry in the early part of the day, it turns to summer, and by noon the roads are all dry again. No better conditions for advancing could be desired. The Germans, or at least many of them are tired, and a prisoner taken yesterday said that his battalion had gone into action hungry, through the failure of its transport, but in general their arrangements seem to have been well carried out. The same prisoner said that his Company which went into action 258 strong was reduced to 50. A captured airman admitted that he had seen his countrymen lying dead in heaps. He explained the offensive quite frankly as an act of desperation made necessary by the German people's longing for peace. He spoke admiringly of the way the troops composing the first German waves marched to almost certain death and that in the German ranks the British courage and coolness were fully appreciated. A party belonging to the famous 51st Division was ordered to cover some neighbouring troops who had been ordered to fall back. They had to face very heavy odds and they came under appalling gun fire, but they held on until the movement was completed although more than three quarters were killed or wounded."

Sunday night's report says that after four days of the hardest fighting of the war, the general feeling so far as I can gauge is that we have not done badly. We have fallen back in some places to positions in the rear of those we held at first, but we have done this without the slightest disorder. In no case has there been anything which can be called a flight.

Before going on with this account I want to borrow as it were another man's brains and give you Hamilton Fyfe's account of the situation written from the War Correspondent's Headquarters on Monday 25-3-18. If I have the patience to write it out you will understand our position after the first 4 days of fighting.

He writes, "I think it is necessary to say a word or two in reply to those civilians, some out here, and many I dare say at home too, who regard too gloomily the recurrence of the River Somme in our War despatches, and who say, 'We thought all that country ours for good and all. How dreadful that places we fought for so long and so hard, should again be the scene of conflict.' This it seems to me is quite the wrong way to look at the situation. Read the history of any war and you will find there are just such ups and downs, such flowings and ebbings of the waves of combats in it. If a certain country is good enough to fight over, there is nothing to be surprised at when it is fought over more than once."

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In the early days, when the war was a war of movement, I saw the town of Albert twice occupied by the enemy and twice retaken after short intervals by Allied troops. It is true that the interval between the battles of the Somme, in which we pushed the Germans out of their very strong positions, and the battles which are raging to-day is an interval of a good deal more than a year, but this does not make any essential difference. During all that interval we and the Germans have been facing one another in trenches. Owing to the collapse of Russia, the Germans were able to bring large forces against us. Not only were they in the position to employ an unprecedented number of divisions on the 50 to 60 mile front of their offensive, but they had also command of an overwhelming quantity of guns. I mean overwhelming when used against such a front as that upon which they chose to attack. Thus attacked, we had no choice but to withdraw, fighting as we went, which our troops have done with their unflinching dogged pluck.

In three days or less the character of the war was altered entirely. It had been a war of fixed positions, it is now, as it was in the first month of the struggle, a war of movement. Now in a war of movement losses or gains of territory are of small importance. I want to repeat that warning. Now in a war of movement the only way to win the victory is to defeat and break up your foe's Army.

The Germans claim, I see, several "victories" already. That is done in order to cheer up the German people. They are in truth just as far to-day from having gained anything that can reasonably be called a great victory as they were this time last week. We have retired it is true, but we have retired everywhere in good order, and in the course of retiring we have made the on-coming enemy suffer severe losses.

From a number of points we have withdrawn our troops before they were pressed by the attacking force. The Germans then claimed victories. The object of these lies is to delude the German nation into believing that their soldiers have done much better than they have done. In fact so long as the British Army remains the fighting force it is to-day, so long as it fights side by side with the French Army, there can be no talk of its having been defeated, even in subsidiary engagements.

It has withdrawn as Armies often do withdraw in wars of movement, but recollect the French saying, "Going back a little to take a better jump forward." It is not the Allies who need to regret the change which has come over the character of the war. They did not make it a war of fixed position. The Germans did that when they fell back after the Marne upon fixed positions on the Aisne. Now it is a war of movement again and there is no cause for supposing the change will be the worse for us.

On Saturday night the Germans reached Peronne, and immediately set to work to try crossing over the Somme. All the bridges had been blown up except one at Saint-Christ. In the course of Sunday afternoon attempts were made to get parties of the enemy across at two or three different places on rafts. The stream here is neither wide of swift-flowing, but the canal which runs from Peronne westwards for barge traffic, is a greater obstacle. All efforts to cross on rafts were detected by us and checked. It was a bright hot afternoon. Our airmen could see splendidly and our guns played upon the spots selected, and dispersed the enemy.

This morning a more determined effort was made, two Brandenburg Divisions were given the task of attacking between Saint-Christ where they used a bridge and Ferry, towards Marche-le-Pot and Licourt. This attack was proceeding at eleven o'clock. About the same time or a little earlier a crossing was also being attempted at Eterpigny, but the last I heard of this was a strong counter-attack was being made. Reinforcements had been sent forward to the troops at Barleux, and to prevent the Brandenburgers from joining hands with the enemy force which was working towards them from the South. In the Northern area of battle we were fighting this morning North of Bapaume. Near Sapignies we were across the road which leads to Arras, but higher up this road the Germans got on to it at Ervillers. After all the fighting around Mory we cleared out of the village on Sunday night. The German attacks were so heavy and so constant that the loss incurred by holding on would have been out of proportion to its value.

No doubt, I think, the stories told by those who have been in the firing line as to the tiredness of the Hun must be true. On this point there is argument. The question now is will he fling fresh divisions in and keep up the conflict at the same pace or will he slack off for a while. He certainly has not come along these last few days as rapidly as he did

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during the first two. He has not yet begun to make much use of his Cavalry except for Patrols and covering screens. The steadiness with which our gunners have stuck to their positions and kept up their fire has prevented him from flooding the country with large mounted forces, accompanied by Horse Artillery as he would have done otherwise. The Germans, when they flowed over our fixed lines, got as far as Roisel Railway Junction, which was of some value, and an effort had to be made to dislodge them. For this purpose an attack was made on a village close by called Hervilly. Tanks assisted in this operation and Hervilly was rushed without much loss to us but with considerable loss to the enemy from the accurate fire of the tank guns.

Fair or foul, no weapon is left unused by them. It is discovered that they have agents going through the villages behind the battle on our side urging the inhabitants to flee. The German's object is partly, of course, to increase the traffic on the roads and so hamper us in our movements. I went out an hour early this morning with the idea of writing a description of what a battle looks like in a war of movement and I happened on just what I wanted.

In position warfare all that can be seen of the battlefield is a stretch of open empty country with two tracks across it, which represent opposing lines of trenches. Sometimes the space between them is narrow. I have seen it as narrow as forty yards. Sometimes it is wide up to three quarters of a mile. In extreme cases that is about all you can see of position warfare, unless you see men going out to a trench raid, or unless you watch an attack on one line by men who have got over the top and come through the protecting wire. In open warfare there is a vast No Man's Land about which are roaming or lying hidden Cavalry in small or large bodies. Units of Artillery conceal themselves in all kinds of ingenious and unexpected spots.

This morning I stood on a ridge over looking such a battlefield. Our field guns and heavy guns are very busy making it hot for the enemy who occupied the woods that could clearly be seen. German shells continually sent up black clouds of earth and stones but no-one on the road seemed to be paying much attention to the shell bursts, and not one had fallen really near the highway. While I was wondering if the troops out on the battlefield got their meals regularly I was answered by the sight of a side of bacon carried past me on the shoulder of a grinning A.S.C. man. Others were carrying boxes of tinned stuff. I saw faithful cooks going forward with boilers of tea and soup. Evidently the men were going to get their rations all right. On the way to another point of vantage we passed large bodies of troops and saw some tired soldiers sleeping soundly by the road-side. They deserved their rest after their increasing hard work of the past few days. We ran through a village which had been bombarded. Dead horses were lying about. There was a dead man with a cloth thrown kindly over his stiffening form. Outside the village a Chaplain in a white surplice was reading the burial service over others while their comrades stood round with bowed heads.

When we had left the car and walked up towards our hill of observation we came suddenly upon a moving and magnificent sight. Down in the spreading plain between two ridges was a large camp. The men were just finishing their breakfast. Some of their camp fires were still sending up blue smoke into the chilly air. Then I saw the tanks coming over the hill and waddling down into the valley. I could not have seen these sights in position warfare. I should not have been able to see bodies of the enemy's Infantry moving down the slope from the shattered woods of which the trees are mere blackened skeletons, nor should I have been gladdened by seeing our men go forward with cheerful confident swing. For my part I am glad of the change and perhaps we may all be before the issue is decided."

That is the finish of a report written by the War Correspondent Hamilton Fyfe. I want to give just one more short report of his and then we must jot down a few notes of interest nearer home, as figuratively speaking they are advancing right at our own back door, at the present moment guns are booming and roaring all round me and I have just to look out on the road and see a good deal of what is written in the following report.

He writes, "We had arrived at the third day of the battle, Saturday, when the sun rose more brilliant than on the previous days. There was no mist and not a cloud. It was a June sky. The leaf buds were

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shining with the sap of spring. At Foye I saw the first cherry tree in flower. The winter wheat spread a green carpet over vast stretches where later blood would flow. The roads were overflowing with life to an extent that we had never seen hitherto. It was something like a fair or an enormous caravan-serai extending for tens and tens of miles. The spectacle of an Army retiring cannot be a fine one, and yet this had something great. The most minute order presided over the movements of the immense machine in retreat. At all the cross roads the inevitable policeman was regulating as in Piccadilly, the procession of motley convoys. There were three strings of vehicles in the roadway. Artillery men were asleep on their gun carriages or on their horses. The material was in good condition and so were the horses. Quite a world defiled before us. Mingled with the British were Italian navvies and Chinese coolies, the latter carrying their "barda" in the oriental way, that is attached to the ends of a long flexible pole. They wore immense hats of dirty straw and the perspiration was streaming from their faces. It was a vast removal of men and things.

The Headquarters Staff of an Army Corps were installed on the roadside, and lorries were discharging furniture in the open field, toilet utensils beside the archives, while high in the air an aeroplane was just dropping the latest news of the forces engaged in the battle near by. Beyond Peronne high columns of smoke showed where stores of material and munitions were on fire. And here another reality more touching than all the rest was seen. It was the procession of the French fleeing before the new invasion. All kinds of vehicles were there. Often it was a cart heaped with mattresses, sacks of wheat or oats, old iron, family portraits and odd articles. The cart, drawn by horses or oxen, was driven by the father or grandfather of the family, while the women, wearing a handkerchief over their heads, had a resigned air as though this was something they had already seen before. The cattle followed, tied to the cart or led by a boy. Many animals, however, were abandoned in the fields.

During Friday night the Havrincourt salient, better known as the Cambrai salient was evacuated as well as Monchy-le-Preux. The enemy claims that he took it by assault but that is false. At an early hour on Saturday the Germans on the British left wing attacked astride the Bapaume-Cambrai road. They succeeded in piercing our line at the village of Mory. The second attempt at two o'clock was more successful. The enemy was driven back east of Mory."

26-3-18: Rather an exciting incident which may have proved fatal to one man at least, happened on the evening of this date. We had just finished tea when everyone got wildly excited over an aeroplane which was circling round at a great height above our aerodrome, we soon recognised it to be a German machine of the Albatross type and it was gradually getting lower and lower as if he was looking for a suitable place to plant his bombs. Our machine guns were immediately trained on him and no one to this day can explain why he was not fired on, he acted in such a way that we could tell he intended to land which he did do, when an English Officer stepped out of the Pilot's seat. It turned out to be an enemy machine that a neighboring Squadron had captured and one of the pilots had flown it across to our aerodrome to show it to us, on the way over he was chased by some of our own planes but got away from them. That was the second type of Hun machine I was able to study but apart from its engine there was nothing out of the ordinary, the engine was a Mercedes which is undoubtedly one of the finest in the world.

Since we came to France we have come in contact with almost every nationality taking part in this war but practically have not met our own boys from Australia with the exception of a few odd ones, they are mostly up in Belgium, it is mostly Canadians about here. About midday our Australian Artillery started to pass through Bruay on its way back to the Somme where the severe work was going on and where our boys did such wonderful work about this time last year. All day long for eight hours there was one long procession of our boys passing the aerodrome, judging by the colours they were the same as Ivo was in and my word they were a fine crowd of typical Australians. Some of them dirty, all of them dead tired as they had been in the saddle for days without a spell but to look at them one could not help noticing what a totally different class they were to the present day Tommy, they sat their horses like horsemen and came along in the usual easy going Australian manner, certainly not red tape soldiers but one can just imagine them doing what they said they were going to do when asked by one of our chaps, "Where are you going digger?" And the matter of fact reply which came back, "Oh going down

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to kick those Huns off the Somme again." There have been times when in Egypt and England I have seen some dirty actions (for we have a few fools in our Army) and have felt ashamed of being a soldier but to-day as I watched these boys going by in one long endless procession, some lolling on the gun carriages, carts, half asleep in the saddle or walking along the road to relieve their horses, I was proud of our Australian boys, wondering what they had gone through in the past, trying to read it in their faces as they moved along and thinking how many more of them were going to be buried in the Somme Valley where so many thousands of our boys were already sleeping. For some days after that Australians were passing through in batches and then a week afterwards I met a Tommy who had just come up from Albert, and a Tommy usually does not give us much credit and he told me how our boys did grand work in and around Albert. The English papers called them the Iron Australians and when one sees that in the paper you may be sure a large number of our chaps have been thrown into it and slaughtered. This Tommy said the boys got up to their old game with "Mills bombs" and stirred up the Hun, in some cases they would run along a street, plant their machine gun in the middle of the street and set it going. But I have to put my account down in good English, this Tommy was much more emphatic and gave a very blood thirsty account of it all.

You have had a lot of blood and death to read about lately and I want to make a bit of a break. I just told you that a Tommy does not give an Australian much credit and I want you to understand that I am not narrow minded in my attitude towards the English soldier. When you meet a fine Englishman he is one of the best fellows in the world. I have friends I am proud of amongst them and hope to meet again after the war, but so many act in such a paltry manner. Mind you our boys though they are always willing to hold out the hand of good fellowship to every Tommy can be just as nasty if the other man shows him a point, but he will always allow the Englishman to show his hand first before he acts dirtily. A little thing happened to me the other night and I must confess the way I got quits with him did no credit to the way my Mother tried to train me, I did not act as gentlemanly as I might. The incident was this:- Not far from our aerodrome there is a home of a father, mother and one daughter, it is not an Estaminet but still they fry eggs and potatoes for soldiers if they call. Ned Pelling and I visit it fairly regularly as we like to go there since no others of our Squadron ever visit there. We are the only two Australians ever been there and as we act in a gentlemanly manner they always treat us as such. One night we had our supper and on leaving, Raymonde (the daughter) said "Bonsoir, quel heure teo to-morrow?" and I answered "Neuf heure." The explanation was that every morning I pass a millener's shop in the town in a motor and Raymonde who works in the shop asked what hour would I be passing in the morning and I said nine o'clock. Some Tommys were having supper at the time and though they had never seen me before as soon as I departed they told Raymonde and her mother that Australians were all no good, and thinking Raymonde had arranged to meet me at nine next day they said that if she had anything to do with me she would be no good either, knowing that a decent French girl thinks more of her good name than anything else in the world. Certainly there are two classes of French girls but unlike our own English speaking girls there can be no half measure, in the eyes of the public you must be either one thing or the other.

Well Raymonde and her mother had formed their own opinion of Ned and I, she is a very pretty girl and we have never tried to claim friendship anywhere but in her own home, several times she has accused me of passing without speaking in the street and although I have not told her the reason it was because some of our boys were about and my speaking would only draw attention to her, anyhow they told us about the Tommys and a few nights afterwards we all met once more. Ned and I were the only two Australians to six English, we did not join in the conversation until one Sergeant said to his companions whilst talking of the advance at Albert "I'm willing to bet one pound the Germans enter Amiens before the end of the month. I butted in and said I would take that bet, on one condition and when asked for the condition I said "provided you leave the Canadians and Australian troops on that front." For a minute I thought there was going to be a fight, the six of them sprang to their feet and you should have seen the looks we got, it was the greatest insult one could offer to the Tommy for it is a known thing that Fritz

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always breaks through where the Tommy is and then Colonial Troops are sent down to the scene of attack. They were sent to Albert one week, the next week they were back once more at Bethune and the following week elsewhere. Anyhow there was no fight, Ned and I sat there smoking and they once more went on with supper.

Now I have a funny incident to relate before we get back to the war again. Ned Pelling and I know a civilian family right on the other side of Bruay and we spend some very happy evenings with them. One night we were coming away from the house, I had got about twenty yards along the road and Ned was still at the friend's door. A man was standing at the open door of the second house down from Ned and two women passed me and called out something to the man. Instantly he rushed into the middle of the street and grabbed one woman by the throat, yelling at the top of his voice. Not wishing to be mixed up in any street brawl I stepped back into a deep shadow. I never saw such a scene, I had better offer the explanation before I go on with the yarn. This man was married to this woman but she was a drunken good for nothing, never at home and always drinking in cafés with the lower class of English and French soldier. The husband who was living with his mother also had his little daughter three years old with him, he was earning good money and his mother worships the child. The wife tries to steal the child and never feeds it, clothes it in rags and makes it dance in cafés for the amusement of the soldiers. On this particular evening the mother had got possession of the child and had come round to the Husband's home to annoy him accompanied by her own mother who is worse than herself, seeing the husband at the door she had jeered at him with the result above. Immediately he yelled, out rushed his mother and they went at it hammer and tong, husband and wife, and the two mothers, as I said before I was in darkness but only had to move a few feet either way and come into bright light as every door in the street was thrown open and its occupants poured out to see the fight. Hundreds were in the street and the four combatants yelling and screeching. Ned could not get to me without exposing himself nor could I get to him. For half an hour the battle raged on. On the whole not much damage was being done, the husband got a beautiful black eye, the wife had her blouse torn off her back and a few other items. Eventually they separated, the husband and his mother retired to their own door, the wife and her mother came over to my side, just a few feet from me, little dreaming I was so near, the neighbours were scattered along the street. I received a different kind of French lesson to any previous ones, French that would not be called Parisian by any means. Until at last I got tired and wanted to go home. I suddenly let out a blood curdling "Cooee," it was in a thickly populated part of Bruay and the cry echoed back three or four times. Before the last echo died I don't think there was a soul in sight, the wife and mother gave one scream and went for their lives, doors slammed and the street was in absolute darkness, two men in their mad rush collided and nearly stunned each other, and retired to a back street to fight. My friends got as big a fright as anyone but Ned soon explained that it must have been me and when he came to look for me found me sitting on the curb unable to move from laughing. Next night we again visited that home and they still were enjoying the joke and a dozen times they said, "Jim très bon policeman". That is the second time I have given our Australian 'Cooee' and it has caused confusion, once in Newcastle and now here in France, there must be something very unearthly about it which we don't notice out in the bush at home. Anyhow it served its purpose on this occasion for it cleared my path for me and was the means of stopping a disgraceful exhibition of family 'love'.

Some American (5-4-18) mechanics have been attached to our Squadron to become familiar with our machines and learn the general routine of the Flying Corps. Of course when our chaps heard that they were coming to us they began to think there was going to be some fun, I for one was very much mistaken for after about ten days of close contact with them I find on the whole that they are a splendid crowd of chaps. Some of them have a few peculiarities and all of them have the Yankee twang but they are always willing to hop in and give a hand, never push themselves forward un-necessarily and are much more after our own type than the Englishman is. In fact to sum him up I would class him amongst the Colonials. You never hear the great boasting that the Yank is supposed to be good at, in many cases you have to ask about the States before he will get going and I can safely say that if the 45 we have here are ordinary representatives

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of U.S.A. they must be fine crowd of men.

My convictions have undergone a great change this last ten days. I have not given you a detailed account of the death or wounding of any Pilots in this Squadron. For a long time after joining the 4th Australian Flying Corps I did not seem to be very interested in their doings over the line, at least not to the same extent as I did in my old Squadron. But lately I have settled down to it better and am becoming more interested. One man I was watching as he was doing some very good work, and am sorry to record his death. Lieut. Courtney by name who went out with some others on a bombing expedition over La Bassée on 7-4-18 received a direct hit from an anti-aircraft gun and crashed to the earth in flames the other side of the Hun lines. Getting a direct hit would probably mean that he was killed at once which is to be hoped was the case since the machine burst into flames and he had not the slightest hope of escaping. On the 10th Lieut. Love was brought down by enemy guns only he was not wounded and tried to restart his machine and come home but Fritz was not having any of that, he was taken prisoner and is safe till "Après la guerre," but King, a young chap who came from Egypt as an air mechanic with the 68th and who took up flying in England is now a pilot in this Squadron. He had a funny experience a few days ago, he experienced engine trouble or something and was compelled to land miles away from anywhere, he soon fixed things up but in landing he tore one of his wheels off, a motor cyclist came along and with the aid of a few bolts etc. they soon got the wheel fixed temporarily but when Lieut. King got into the seat to start he found that the cyclist was not experienced enough to swing his propeller for him so King put the cyclist in the pilot's seat, showed him what levers to work and then swung his own propeller, changed places with the cyclist and flew home. It is a hundred to one that had such a thing happened to an English pilot he would have left his aeroplane there and come home by motor for some mechanics to go out and fix up his bus for him. Owing to the work done by our Squadron lately we have become very popular in this Wing, the Colonel continually compliments our Major.

To-night I met a Canadian N.C.O. who left the front line at Albert yesterday morning, was sent here to meet some reinforcements for his Battalion and take them back to the line. Of course I was very interested in what was doing down there as all that part was so familiar to me. He tells me that there is not a soul in Warloy therefore it is no use my writing to my French friends there. Since then I have heard that although Fritz cannot reach Amiens he has poured so much gas into the town that it became necessary for it to be evacuated. I suppose Amiens is the largest city in the North of France and it must have been an awful job to clear it of all the civilians. When we were on the Somme last year our boys used often to get a day off and run into Amiens as it was a very fine city. The 68th Squadron have had several moves this last month. They went from Savy to Serny and from there back to the Somme. At present are camped at Bell View just outside Doullens and the Aust. Squadron (69th) are down that way somewhere too.

And now I must come nearer home, for we have the Hun right at our back door. On 9-4-18 he commenced his push further north than the Somme and that is the part of the line where we are. He was evidently trying to find the weak spot in our lines and in this attack he found it for he concentrated his strength on a portion of the line held by Portuguese troops. They gave way almost at once and then commenced a mad rush on the part of the Portuguese to see who could get farthest back in the shortest time. I am told that they could not run fast enough but climbed into carts, motors and every other means of conveyance. Anyhow it made an opening for Fritz and he is never slow in availing himself of an opportunity of that sort. All Colonial troops had been moved down south to the Somme and before we knew where we stood, Fritz had pushed in almost to Bethune. Poor old Bethune is in the habit of being shelled every couple of days and now they started to pour gas into it in real earnest. One Australian speaks of seeing nine women lying dead in one room. Bethune is only a matter of four or five miles from us and we immediately received orders to pack up and be ready to fall back. I might say here that a Flying Corps carries very heavy stuff in their workshops and we cannot move on a minutes notice. The day was very foggy and one Squadron near by got shelled so severely that they could not even fly their machines away, they succeeded in getting the motor transport on the road and had to burn all their aeroplanes but one,

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which paid us a visit that evening. I believe 19 machines were burnt. That afternoon we sent away all our heavy stuff to another aerodrome. Of course all this time the guns everywhere were talking to some tune, one particular gun near us which only goes on dude days was roaring its hardest and Fritz was not behind in his answers. The bombardment was terrible and during the evening some of our machines faced the fog and crossed the line to see what was doing. They all returned, but the Flight Commander came back with a bullet wound in his leg. Our medical Orderly dressed it for him and about 7p.m. he went to the hospital in the Major's car. He is well liked by everyone and no wonder for he is one of the few who tries to make his men comfortable and as he sat in the back seat of the car waving to the boys everyone hoped he would soon return. He stayed in hospital two days and then as hundreds upon hundreds of wounded came in he refused to occupy a bed and asked to be sent back to the aerodrome. The wound was only a flesh one and now he is hobbling round with the aid of a stick. That same night the refugees began to pour into Bruay.

10-4-18: Things are a bit steadier to-day, the bombardment goes on the same as yesterday but no word has come for us to clear out, I for one do not want to go. One of my duties every day is to go down to the ration dump at Barlin every morning and draw the day's supply of rations, petrol, oil, etc. and this morning I witnessed a sight that will stay in my mind for the rest of my life. The distance is about four miles and the road was packed with refugees coming from every direction, along back roads, across the fields and a great mass on the main road and it was an awful sight, old men and women, girls, little children and mothers with babies in their arms. Those who had no conveyance (and very few were so lucky) carrying their worldly possessions on their backs. You would see an old woman sixty years old with a few blankets, young girls with a straw mattress, sometimes an old man with a couple of fowls in his hand or half a loaf of bread, groups of a dozen or fifteen sitting on the side of the road absolutely done up, young children dressed in fine clothes leading others in rags and tatters. Sometimes you would come across a dray loaded with bedding and away up on top some little children, one case came home to me of little girl on her own as she had got away from her own folk and though covered with mud and grime I could see she was very pretty, had a little dog on the end of a piece of cord. It made me wonder if poor little Lucie Grizelle was in a like position down on the Somme. I was picturing my own Mother and Father with the folk at home as being amongst this crowd of humanity, homeless and penniless. That night at 10p.m. I was walking back to camp after visiting some friends and still I met mobs of refugees going from house to house trying to find a roof to cover them for it had come up bitterly cold and wet. People were sleeping out in the open, anywhere they could put their heads. Twenty-five villages had been evacuated that day and anyone knowing how thick the population is in this part of France may form a sort of idea what this district is like at present. This has been going on for days now but all those coming in from the country are being moved further back, thousands must have passed through. The chief means of transport is a bicycle covered with bed clothes so that you cannot see an inch of the machine, the owner walking along beside it simply using the wheels as a means of carrying the bundles.

10-4-18: I have mentioned before that this town is supposed to contain a lot of enemy spies, how true it is I am not in a position to say, still in my opinion there is something very fishy about the way Fritz seems to leave us alone as compared with all the towns round about, anyhow a very amusing (and to a certain section of the population) inconvenient incident took place this evening. The reward for capturing a spy is I think eight hundred francs and some months leave in England. About 10a.m. three men in priest's garb were noticed standing on the street corner over-looking our aerodrome, there was nothing very suspicious about them only that they were pointing out to each other different sites and positions and two of them were studying what appeared to be a map. Some of our boys noticed them and in one case remarked that they looked very like spies. As I have just told you the town is one mass of refugees and it would be easy for spies to mix in with them. No action was taken at the time and these three clerical men were allowed to go about their business unmolested. Late in the afternoon word came from Wing Headquarters saying that three men dressed as priests were supposed to be spies and if anyone saw them they had power to place them under arrest. Immediately after tea some of the men turned themselves into amateur

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detectives and went off down into town to look for spies. About 7p.m. I was in my hut and hearing a great uproar out on the aerodrome went to see what the excitement was over and the sight that met my eyes was enough to make a cat laugh, up along the street came a huge crowd, in front was a poor priest looking as if his last moments had come. I never saw a man in such an awful funk, behind him came two of our men with revolvers in their hands and serious faces whilst behind them came nearly the whole of Bruay, men, women and children by the hundreds, yelling and awfully excited as the French always are. It was serious but never-the-less very comical and we could do nothing but roar laughing, on came the procession getting larger every moment, soldiers, Officers, civilians and hoards of children with the poor old parson leading the way. He was bundled into the Guard Room with an armed guard over him, one of our chaps identified him as the man with the map seen during the morning. Half an hour after up came two more priests escorted by more of our boys but the last two were most indignant and could not talk fast enough, they were also identified and as they were too excited and angry to make themselves understood an interpreter was sent for. Things were getting mixed on the aerodrome, the crowd was still gathering of angry Frenchies and our Major did not receive much consolation when one man told him that it was alright since the Australians had been "sooled" on to the 'parson hunt', there were thirteen more in Bruay yet and he was ready to bet any money that the boys would dig them all out.

The first arrest was very dramatically made, two chaps went into a Church where evening service was being held, they walked up the Aisle to the priest and asked him was there a strange priest with him. He said "Yes," and pointed the man out. "Ah," says our chap, "you are the man we want, come with us." And with a couple of Army revolvers pointed at him he had no alternative but to say "Amen" and come. The other two men arrested I believe were on their way up to try and get their companion out of trouble when our boys met them and escorted them to the Guard Room. These were the three men wanted alright but when the Interpreter turned up an explanation was forth coming explaining their actions of the morning. It seems that one of the priests was stationed here before the war and was rather keen on building a mission just where our aerodrome is situated now. For many months he has been out on the front line and being granted leave he paid a visit to Bruay, this morning he with his two mates came for a walk up this way to see what chances there was of his going on with the good work. It had caused great amusement, when they were released we had to provide a motor for them to drive home in as the mob was so dense. For days afterwards I never saw a priest in the streets of Bruay and am only waiting now to see this incident come out in your Sydney Bulletin or some other paper.

Things are still very much mixed (I THINK) out a few miles in front of us, the guns are roaring continuously day and night and our machines are kept very busy crossing the line to drop bombs. In the evening we witnessed rather a fine exhibition, it was not yet dark when six Hun machines came over from the south, the one that led the formation must have had a fine nerve, he was only at 6,000 feet up and he steered his course direct for the town. Anti-aircraft shells were bursting all around him but nothing turned him from his course, the gun fire turned the other five back but No.1 flew right over the town. He was evidently out for observation as no bombs were dropped. He came back again at 10p.m. but evidently was not able to locate the town on account of a heavy smoke cloud which was caused by all the mines firing up their furnaces. Ned and myself were visiting our friends that evening and of course witnessed the same exhibition of "Wind up" amongst the civilians.

For days the fighting has been very severe out in front of us. Nothing on earth can stop Fritz when he starts this mass formation business and all that can be done is to check him as much as possible and wait until he runs short of men, he has almost entered Bethune and that is only a few kilometers away. It is heart-breaking to see the refugees coming in, my work takes me down to a Rail Head called Barlin about four miles from us and to-day the whole road was packed with these poor civilians. They were coming in from all the side country lanes, over the fields and from all directions. I was in a motor car and it took an hour and a half to do the four miles. Sometimes a family would be lucky enough to own a horse and cart and they would have it packed

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with a few bits of furniture, some bedding and odd things and then away on top would be seen perhaps a very old woman or some children, two or three years old, whilst on the ground would be found the old men and boys, women and girls. But these were the lucky ones and seldom seen, usually they had all their worldly possessions on a prambulator, everyone would have huge bundles on their back, just a bed sheet with four corners knotted, and often you would see an old lady bent double with this load on her back struggling along, the men would have the same load and a couple of fowls or a basket of eggs in their hand, young girls were the same whilst sometimes a man would have a bicycle loaded with bed clothes and pushing it along the road, simply using the two wheels as a means of carrying his possessions. Besides this, would be seen women with babies in their arms, little toddlers coming along behind, well dressed children hand in hand with others in rags, everyone was equal in these days. Groups of females would be sitting on the side of the road taking a rest as they were completely done up and then when an extra big gun was fired they would rise and stagger on again for another weary mile or two. And yet many of these people were leaving homes as good and as comfortable as our own out in beautiful Australia. I sat in the car and pictured my mother and sister just as these folk were to-day, their men folk away fighting whilst they were sleeping out on the roads in the cold and rain without any cover. I leave it to you folk (sitting in an easy chair beside a warm fire whilst you read this) to imagine what my thoughts were. In one part of the road I met a little girl, hugging a little poodle dog in her arms and looking for her mother whom she had lost. I took her up with me and pushed on about a hundred yards when we found her big sister. It made me think of poor little Lucie Grizelle down at Warloy, she was now a refugee with her nice garden and home in the hands of the Germans and for all I knew they were in the same plight as these poor folk, homeless and desperate.

But these roads had other traffic as well. At the best of times it was very busy, hundreds of other motors were on the same errand as I was and on top of it all was one continual line of Artillery moving forward. They must not be stopped, they were wanted in front to stop the rush of the enemy. It was for all the world like a huge ant bed after some mischievous boy has run his foot across it, you see myriads of ants come out and rush about. But with it all there was no confusion or panic, no crying and hysterics, the look on everyone's face was just a dogged determination to go forward. The common saying of the French seemed to fit in here to perfection, "Cee ne fait rien, c'est la guerre", meaning, "It is nothing, it is the war". As soon as a party stopped to rest little children would commence to talk and play in the adjoining fields whilst the older folk sat on their bundles.

I am not a paper correspondent, therefore cannot put this down in the same language as he would nor paint the picture so that you can actually live through it as these refugees did, only have put down actually what I saw for days and days and the thoughts that came into my mind as I witnessed the scenes. Many things I have left out, these books would not hold them, accidents happened along the roads, impossible to avoid them, many of these folk had lived all their lives away in the country. French are like the English never move about much consequently a great number had never been in a bigger crowd than their own small villages produced, and now they were thrown into a whirlpool worse than any ever seen in London or Paris. It must have been an awful experience for them, how confused and muddled their minds must have been, whilst behind it all was the unholy fear that Fritz was coming. I tried to pacify two girls once, pointed out how utterly useless it was to be anxious, I said, "Why get excited, if we are all going to escape we will do so but if it is our fate to die we will die." (Arabic doctrine learnt in the desert.) But their only answer was, "Oh you are a soldier, you don't care if you get killed or not, you Australians are wild and reckless and seem to have nothing to live for but we are all civilians and want to live." And as she told me that I could not help thinking that we Australians had more to live for than these poor beggars who had lost everything but their lives.

I have done my best to give you an idea of how things are at present and as a finish to it I want you to come with me into Bruay where all this mob is aiming for. A mining town built to hold a population of ten thousand, before this rush came on, the residents including refugees

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that had settled here during the early part of the war was estimated at 70,000, and now here was the inhabitants of seventeen towns, villages and surrounding country coming in to swell the congested homes. Late that night I was walking home from my usual visit to the friend's house and I still met groups wandering from house to house looking for a cover as it was raining, yards, gardens, Public buildings, every available square inch was taken up and so they simply had to move out into the country again on to the next towns. It reminded me of the girl who told me that as a soldier I did not care if I lived or died, but I was on my way to camp to a comfortable bed and I'll guarantee it was more than she had that night, as I got in under my blankets I felt very thankful. I might state here that a couple of days after every man in the Squadron was called upon to hand in one blanket per man which were sent down to Paris for the refugees. Probably this was done in all Units out of the Line.

14-4-18: Came up very dull and windy, practically no flying was done, in fact this Squadron had the satisfaction of knowing that they were the only ones who crossed this line in this sector. From now Fritz's attack seemed to fizzle out, he had come to the end of his tether for the time being. At Arras not far away he came over in one of his mad charges six times in one day and was beaten back every time by Canadians and the Scottish. Australians have been brought back from the Somme and others have been up here all the time. The following has just reached me from England, being a cutting out of one of the English papers, Nottingham I think. These cuttings are sent to me from England by admirers of the Australian soldiers. They come out of different publications and are connected with the fighting I am writing about.

1.

AUSTRALIAN RAIDING
NIGHT DASHES INTO ENEMY LINE.
A DEBT REPAID.

IRON CROSS HERO BROUGHT IN.

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT - H. PERRY ROBINSON - FRANCE - TUESDAY.

"With a great improvement in the weather and a sunny day there has been a considerable increase in activity in the air, and on some parts of the line there has been heavy shelling by the Artillery on both sides. There has been, however, no large movement or any operation of which you will not have been informed in the Official Communiqué.

The most interesting minor affair has been the quick repayment by the Australians of the German raids which I reported on Sunday. As a matter of fact, in their raids the enemy suffered a greater loss than they inflicted, so that not much repayment was owing. Now, however, they have something more than full exchange, for the Australians in the last two nights have visited their trenches three times. Some of the German positions they found very lightly held. What enemy were there were killed or captured, and the dug-outs were blown up, and so forth.

The largest of the three raids, however, was more serious. It was made by two separate parties under a barrage. The party on the right found the enemy on the alert and manning the parapets. The Australians simply rushed him, however, entered the trenches, which were very wet and in bad repair, blew up the dug-outs, and came away with a party of prisoners.

On the left there was a wide ditch to cross and then uncut wire, but both obstacles were overcome, and here also the Australians entered the trenches and did their work of destruction and brought their prisoners away. They did not bring all of them, for there was one man with the Iron Cross who at first refused to leave his own trench, but when persuaded to by an Officer he ran so fast across No Man's Land and reached our line so far ahead of his guard that it would be absurd to speak of him as having being brought.

The whole operation was very neatly and successfully carried out. These things are small, but they are enough to show how far the German is from having anything like superiority over us in enterprise or in moral."

2.

HEROIC AUSTRALIANS.
SERGEANT WHO BAYONETED 7 GERMANS.

Mr. F.M. Cutlack - correspondent with the Australian Force, writes:-

"Many stories are told of individual heroism among Australians during the recent heavy fighting in the Valley of the Ancre, south-west of Albert. Among them stands out the daring initiative of a Queensland Sergeant.

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The enemy suddenly advanced in waves through the mist upon an out-post line without warning, and came streaming across the railway in columns, then spreading out and skirmishing in lines up the gullies on our side. This sergeant, without waiting for his comrades to accompany him, although these shortly followed, dashed at the centre of the on-coming line with his bayonet. He killed seven Germans immediately and captured a machine gun which he turned on to the second wave of the enemy following.

The gun jamming, he seized the rifle again, and fired at the figures in the second line. Then he picked up a Lewis Gun dropped by the first wave until his hands were badly burned and he was unable to continue. This fanatical bravery absolutely disorganised the head of the German attack. Once he was surrounded by Germans at twenty yards distance. Australians coming up on the flanks completed the slaughter of the enemy, and the remainder, to the number of 30, were taken prisoners."

A stirring story is told of a West Australian private in the heavier battle a few days later. The Australian flank at the right of a British Division was obliged to retire a short distance after six hours' resistance, and tried to signal to the British across the valley, but was unable to attract an answer. The private volunteered to carry a message and ran out carrying a signal flag.

Fierce enemy machine-gun fire swept the valley and cut him down. He struggled up again and ran on. Again he fell, but staggered on for the third time, and finally fell, badly wounded, 100 yards from the British Post, and feebly waved his flag in the air.

Two British soldiers ran out and brought in the Australian to their lines. The message was undoubtedly delivered, for immediately afterwards the British signalled and communication was established.

3.

QUEEN AND ANZAC.

YOUNG SOLDIER TELLS THE STORY OF HIS VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

Ted Wharton, the Australian soldier of 16 in whom the King and Queen have taken a special interest, related yesterday to a "Daily News" representative the story of his recent visit to Buckingham Palace. He spent, he said, two days at the Palace, and lunched and dined and had breakfast with the King and Queen and their two private secretaries. "I felt a little frightened when I first entered the Palace," he said, "But in about 5 minutes the Queen made me quite happy. She asked me what hospital in Australia it was that she nursed me in when I was four days old. I told her it was the Women's Hospital at Carlton, and reminded her how my mother lifted me up as her Majesty passed through the Ward, and how she took me for a moment into her arms. I gave her a photograph that was taken at the time. The King wanted to know how I managed to get into the Army when I was only 13. He noticed that I looked a little older than my age, and I told him that with my parents' consent I put my age on to 18 years and 2 months. His Majesty said he was very proud of me."

4. (I HAVE ONLY COPIED SOME HEAD-LINES - CUTTINGS TOO LONG IN SOME CASES.)

AUSTRALIANS IN THE CENTRE.
THEIR FIRST TOUCH WITH THE TIDE OF ATTACK.
A CAVALRY ATTACK. (FROM C.E.W. BEAN - FRANCE.
TUNNELLERS IN ACTION - CAUGHT BY OUR CAVALRY.

5.

STRAIGHT INTO ACTION.
AUSTRALIANS FIGHTING ON THEIR OLD TRAINING GROUND.
(F.M. CUTLACK - FRANCE.)

6.

AUSTRALIANS RAID AT MESSINES.
HEAVY ENEMY LOSSES.
BERLIN REPORT OF VIOLENT FIGHTING. (BRITISH OFFICIAL.)

7.

AUSTRALIAN HONOURS.
Sir D. Haig has wired as follows to the G.O.C. 4th Army:-
"Please ask General Birdwood to inform all ranks of the Australian Corps that the Field Marshall is fully aware of the gallant conduct and magnificent achievement of the Australians, and wishes to thank them. The splendid service of the 1st Australian Division in the north has not

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escaped his notice, and the Field Marshall desires to include them in this expression of his appreciation."

8. PRAISE FOR AUSTRALIANS - 3,000 GERMANS KILLED.
"ALL OVER" the ENEMY.

9. A FIGHTING "CIRCUS".
VICTORY AGAINST ODDS BY THE AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS.

Describing the work of Australian Airmen at the front, Mr. F.M. Cutlack - Official Correspondent writes: "The Australian Flying Corps is well represented in a certain Wing of the Royal Air Service, which has been doing heavy execution among the Germans. In six days this Wing shot down 61 enemy machines, which either crashed or descended out of control, probably destroyed.

As usual after our men have had an especially successful period, an avenging circus arrived. The circus is a selected number of crack airmen, each flying the type of machine he prefers individually, and acting in combination under a famous leader. The best known enemy circus is Richthofen's. His or another renowned enemy circus, reappeared over the British front two days ago. A Patrol of seven Australian machines on Saturday met about twenty of this circus at 12,000 feet. Ten of the enemy dived to attack our men, a regular dog-fight ensued for half a minute. Three of the enemy were shot down, two of whom fell in flames, and the other probably crashed.

Three others attacked one Australian machine, which descended with a spin, affecting to be out of control, and then escaped and flew home. One of our machines which was forced down nearly reached home, but was compelled to land between the enemy front and the support lines. The other five returned after the enemy circus had broken off the battle and retired.

END OF PAPER CUTTINGS.

I think I have mentioned the facts leading up to this paragraph about the German circus. And once more Australia has come to the fore as regards good work. The leader of the "Circus" is Baron Richthofen, Germany's greatest airman, he has had such a long run and brought down so many of our machines (between 60 and 70) that he openly boasted that no man could bring him to the ground. He had reason to boast too, for he has some wonderful experiences. The story goes that he sent over a challenge last year to fight a duel in the air with any one man in our Army. Captain Ball (now dead but the record holder for Huns in our Army) took up the challenge and a meeting was arranged. I think for two hours they fought until both men ran out of ammunition for their machine guns when they flew side by side, saluted each other and then flew home. I know numerous stories of his doings which can be told at some future date. But in this way like in all other things every dog has his day. A few weeks ago Richthofen met his death under very peculiar circumstances indeed, of which I have a true account. He was standing off in his machine watching some of his own men having a fight with some of our machines when he got cut off himself from his formation, an Australian in an R.E.8 machine tackled him but he got away when he ran up against one of the R.N.A.S. Sopwiths. Richthofen dived towards the earth to escape this pilot and an Australian machine gunner opened fire on him from the ground with a Lewis Gun and brought the champion to earth dead. Both pilots put in a claim as having got him but the Medical Officer who examined the body proved that the bullet must have come from the ground to enter his body where it did. Our men buried him behind our lines. It seems strange after boasting that no man flying could get him, that this great man should meet his end at the hands of a man on the ground. The Hun "Circus" must find another leader now and they certainly won't find one as clever or as daring as the last one. His life history is well worth reading. I have read portion of it.

For the next couple of weeks things began to quieten down a bit, sometimes during the nights terrible bombardments would take place but Fritz was not able to advance and so everything once more settled down to normal and then an earth-quake was sprung on us one Saturday morning, date 20-4-18. It was rather a fine morning and I had just returned from my daily trip to Barlin for rations, just as I arrived the Sgt. Major told me he wanted us to go immediately to the Ordnance Stores at Pernes about 10 or 12 miles away to get some clothing and from there go on

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another 14 miles to Esther-Blanche near Cerny where all our heavy stuff was so as to give some rations to our boys who were there with the stuff. It was going to be an all day job of motoring round the country so I hurried up and got away. Just as we started from the aerodrome a terrific explosion happened on the opposite side of the town to where we were camped. Some English machines were flying overhead and we thought that some bombs had accidentally been dropped the same as once before, some months back.

Jack Fraser was my driver and as we passed along the Rue de Nationale we could see where the explosion had taken place up on the hill so went up to see what damage had been done. We soon saw that it was not the work of a bomb but an enormous shell which had landed fair on a two storey house and never saw such an awful mess, it was in the most thickly populated part of Bruay, windows half a mile away were smashed by the concussion, and the streets surrounding the wrecked house was covered with loose earth six inches deep just as if it were ploughed and harrowed. The photo I took of the house will show you better than my words what it was like, some folk were killed others wounded but in this case I cannot tell how many.

At last Fritz had decided to bombard us and this monster was his card of introduction, we poked round for a few minutes and then went on our way to Pernes. On arrival I paid a visit to a huge ration dump just opened up there and found a lot of Canadian friends from Barlin and Houdain running it. We stayed and had dinner with them and then set about finding the Ordnance Stores. These stores up to a week ago were situated in Lilliers but when Fritz blew up Lilliers Station and half the town the 1st Army Headquarters moved to Pernes. After a lot of messing around I found them out in a 40 acre field in some very large marquees. We got what we came for and then went on to Esther-Blanche, a dreary desolate aerodrome perched up on a hill outside a miserable little village. The boys were very glad to see us as we brought food and what was of more importance letters from home. They set to and made tea and laid out a meal and we started for home about 3.30p.m. Called in at Pernes to take one of the dump boys to Bruay and ran into that town about 4.30p.m. Pulled up in the Rue de Nationale to point out the spot where the shell landed when crack went another one not 100 yards from where we were. The aerodrome was only five minutes run from where we pulled up but before we got there two more came over. Bruay got twenty one shells that day and night, from fragments some of us found it was proved that Fritz was sending some of our own shells over to us, either stuff captured by him in the recent fighting or else shells we had sent to Russia. Later on when one came over and did not explode we found that he was giving us 17 inch shells standing five feet 8 inches high. But they are different to any I have ever had to do with so far. Usually when a shell is coming at you there is a shrill whistling sound, this proves as a kind of warning and then the explosion comes, but not so with these, the first and only sound is a terrific explosion and then a mass of iron, bricks, dirt and smoke come crashing down all round, he had the exact range, every shot landed in the town amongst the thickly packed houses. The particular gun was located by our balloons later on and it was in a wood eight miles away, just outside Lens, we quickly named it "Gentle Annie" and I will have more to say about her later on.

During the afternoon and evening the civilian population began to evacuate Bruay, Ned Pelling and myself went up to our friends home in the evening but that first shell was only 100 yards from their home and so we found the house empty. Poor Germaine used to be in an awful state when Fritz flew over at night time, she would almost be dead from fear now. About a week after, we met her girl friend living in a village called Divion, but Germaine and her people had gone south as fast as they could. The country roads were once more packed with refugees, not carrying anything this time but a few bed clothes, did not know where they were going, anywhere to escape those huge masses of iron that were being thrown at them. He gave us some more during the night but most of them were a fair distance from our Aerodrome, down round the Market Square right in the heart of the town. Our turn was to come later on and we knew it too.

21-4-18: Sunday morning came up wet and miserable, Fritz left us alone until 1p.m. when "Gentle Annie" once more came to light, Fritz was still fooling round the Market Square and his first shell caught some poor Tommies coming away from a Church Parade, killed 17 and wounded about

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We soon learnt his tactics, would put in six shells at an interval of three minutes between each and then wait for four hours. It was no use seeking cover, when a shell landed on a solid paved street it would leave a hole 15 feet deep and twenty to thirty feet wide. At 4p.m. he again came at us and then so as not to prove too monotonous he opened up at 6p.m. and again at 8p.m. Ned and I went for a walk this evening and at 8p.m. we stood on a high railway embankment and watched four shells burst in the town, it was an awful but wonderful sight to see perhaps a couple of two storied houses suddenly go up in the air just as if a mine of gun cotton had been fired underneath.

After every fresh bombardment more people would evacuate, the majority without hats and only the clothes they stood up in. We could see that one of these last shells had burst very close to the home of some folk we used to visit. In fact I had been at this house during the afternoon taking a photo of their only child, a girl about 20, so we hurried on to see if they were safe only to find the house closed and everyone gone for their lives. A few days later I also found this family living in Divion a few miles away. On our way home we walked through the town to see what damage was done and it was a scene of destruction. Imagine for yourself a large town at home in full swing as far as business is concerned and then without closing the shop doors just remove every resident and there you have Bruay this evening. Estaminets and Cafés were open, clean glasses on the counter and barrels of beer, bottles of wine, everything just as if the day's work was going on. The particular shops that were closed, being the Sabbath, had not a vestige of glass in the windows as the concussion from these shells smashed everything. I saw grocer's shops with rows of tinned fruit, fish, and all the other things usually exhibited in their windows and anyone on the footpath had only to reach out a hand to help himself. Boot shops with ladies latest shoes, milliners and dressmakers shops, either with doors open or no windows. And then as you passed through the residential part of the town, not a soul to be seen and every house open, it was almost laughable to see the domestic cat sitting on the front door step as much to say, "I wonder where they have all gone this evening." So there you have Bruay this calm Sunday evening. a town which an hour ago was populated with anything up to seventy thousand people. We went and had a look at some of the shell holes and after you saw one of these and the wreck all round for one hundred yards there was no necessity to wonder where everyone had gone to, in Australian French they had "parted toot sweet".

22-4-18: Monday opened up showing where more shells had landed during the night. One thing I am glad of and that is the fact of my being a sound sleeper. Naturally when these shells burst they make an awful noise, during the day time he has taken to putting in ten or a dozen every three or four hours, by the time twelve have burst my head (and a good many more heads too) is inclined to ache, but of a night time when once I get to bed and sleep nothing ever disturbed me, next morning the boys tell me how many have come over during the night. This morning at 10a.m. he planted one in a two storied shop just on the corner of the Rue de Nationale and a side street, it is perhaps one of the busiest corners of a very busy street and within twenty yards of some railway gates. In this case trucks full of coal were blown off the line and over-turned and a great number of civilians killed, one man was torn right in two purely from concussion, some poor folk got buried alive and others get struck with flying stones, iron and debris. Several other shells landed at the same time doing the usual amount of damage. This bombardment is beginning to get on the nerves of some of the boys. One never knows when or where the next one will arrive and the large majority of this Squadron had never heard a shell burst until now, and perhaps as a beginning it was rather solid to start them off with 17m. navel shells for they are holy terrors. Nothing very startling occurred during the day the poor civilians would come creeping back with hand-carts and wheel-barrows to carry away a few odds and ends but as soon as the first message from "Gentle Annie" came, away they would go again. In many cases they would be found digging homes for themselves into embankments along a sunken road or under a railway embankment, and there they lived for as long as I stayed there at any rate. Poor folk, what had they done to get all this done to them.

I said nothing very startling happened during the day but allow me to correct myself. It was an understood thing that in bombarding Bruay

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Fritz wanted three things. The Chemin de Fer (railway line), our aerodrome which is twenty yards away from the line, and he also wanted to smash up the main roads, one of which was a boundary of the aerodrome. At 4p.m. exactly I was busy writing to my cousin Mary in Newcastle, England when crack went a shell and iron and dirt fell on the roof like hail stones. It was the first one Fritz had put on the aerodrome and it was not too far away either. Of course everyone came out to see the damage and exactly 3 minutes after over came the next one, this time between the Motor Transport Shed and the Railway Line, nearly buried the shed and put a hail of iron on to us, we could do nothing but simply crouch down beside some of the rivetting round the huts and hangars. He gave us ten, one every three minutes, getting them all around us and everyone close enough to shower huge bits of iron over the buildings. It proved too much for some of the latter day soldiers, they never waited for tea or anything but went off like greased lightning down towards Houdain, of course it was only certain ones who did this and I must say there were more from the Tommy Squadron than from ours. The Americans who were attached to us were most of them in an awful state. They had been unlucky, before they came to us they were camped on the Somme and although they never have been in action they were shelled during the advance on Albert and a number of them killed. Then even here in Bruay though attached to us they were billeted in civilian homes and so really were getting a shade worse time than we actually were. They had made dug-outs for themselves away out in the fields amongst hay-stacks etc. I cannot help laughing at one man in my hut, a son of one of Bendigo's largest firms, a team of wild horses could not have brought him back to camp that night. It was bitterly cold and wet but lots of them sat out in the open fields all night listening to the explosions in the town. I used every argument to prove that the aerodrome was safest and candidly speaking I considered that lying on my bed in the hut was absolutely the safest and best place, I used reasons that I have not room or time to put down, a man was not safe anywhere so he might just as well stay where he was.

For my part I spent the evening in a very different manner, in the street just behind the aerodrome a shell had crashed through a house and buried two little children (a boy about 8 and a girl 6 years of age) in the cellar. For three solid hours we dug away debris and rubbish never for a moment expecting to find the little mites alive. The mother I never saw, the father had been taken away wounded, we got the girl first and she was dead, the little boy caused us hours of work and when eventually we did bring him up it was to find a hole in his head large enough to put your fist in, his arm broken but he was still alive. Cannot say if he is still alive.

On this day there was heavy loss of life, mostly amongst civilians, in one case a party of young boys were just going home from working in the mine and a shell got them. That night our guns out on the front opened up a very heavy bombardment and made the whole night hideous with their roar but as I said before when once I get to bed nothing worries me, for I am very soon asleep. At midnight Fritz gave us a dozen more shells and wrecked more homes.

24-4-18: Saw us still on the face of the earth, our balloons had located the position of "Gentle Annie" away over near Lens. Bruay was not the only town to receive her attention for she was reaching everywhere. The Hun had this gun hidden in a huge tunnel and after firing a salvo at us would run the gun back into the tunnel for a few hours, of course our machines could not hang round over this wood waiting for Fritz to come out as hoards of Hun planes would come at them, so on Wednesday 24th an Armstrong Wintworth (OR WENTWORTH) two seater bombing machine escorted by two S.E.5 Scout planes went off to see what they could do, in the afternoon they returned to report that as far as they could tell their bombs had blocked up the mouth of the tunnel. About 6p.m. that evening when we were all in our hut after tea, one of the boys remarked, "What has become of "Gentle Annie" she has not sent any ironworks over this afternoon?" "Oh," says one man, "an A.W. went over today and blew her up." The last word was not out of his mouth when bang went a shell closer than ever. We went out into the yard to see what damage was done and another one came, this time a piece of iron about a cubic inch whizzed down and just touched the rim of my hat, half an hour after when

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another shell exploded a huge piece of iron weighing about twelve pounds crashed through the roof of our hut. It cut a hole six inches big through three sheets of corrugated iron and fell on the bed next to mine. There were a lot of empty beds in camp that night, I can assure you my bed was occupied the same as usual for it did not shake my opinion that I was as safe there as anywhere, and I intended staying there. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday was just a repetition of these days, we were expecting to move any day consequently I was keeping all my washing on hand for fear I took it out to be done and we left hurriedly and I would not be able to get it. By now all the washer-women had gone from Bruay and the only civilians were such men who were compelled to stay to keep the mines going. But I had gathered up a mass of dirty clothes so in desperation I carried it down to Houdain and the girls who were going to do it promised to have it ready Monday evening. Saturday morning Fritz got to work early, I think I have mentioned that there are huge coal mines here, the town is built all round them, this morning he landed two shells right into one mine, the first one fair into the boilers, the second in amongst the works and the Manager or as he is called here the Chief Director had his head cut clean off. We always used to think he was a German, poor chap shared the fate of so many more during the bombardment no matter what nationality he was.

During the day a report went round that we were going very soon so that night as a very fine concert party of Canadians were performing at Houdain a crowd of us went down and on the way home I called in for my washing but it was all in the wash tub so hoping that the rumor was only a rumor I decided to leave my washing. On arrival in camp about 10.30p.m. we found that orders had been issued for Reveille at 4a.m. next day and we would march out at 8a.m. I was in a hole, all the under-clothing I possessed was on my back but it was no use worrying, it was simply a case of saying "Cee ne fait rien, c'est la guerre". I had been just as badly off out in the desert and could manage again somehow or other.

Sunday 28-4-18 Reveille was blown at 4a.m. sharp, no sooner was the whistle blown when bang came another shell, we worked hard and everything was packed ready for the move off on time. I was sorry in a way to leave the aerodrome, apart from the shells it had proved a good home and before Fritz began to bombard I had some nice homes to visit of an evening. Some of our boys were very glad to get away as I think our aerodrome was the most advanced of any at the time. We had a fine day for travelling and all along the line of motors they were singing every kind of song imaginable. We passed through Houdain but of course I was not able to drop out for my parcel of clothes, went due west through Divion and many other villages and towns until dinner time when we reached a large and very ancient town called St. Omer, but that was not the end of our journey, continued on through Argues and more villages and at last pulled up at an aerodrome called Claremaris about 10 kilometers past St. Omer. By evening we were settled in our new home.

We were now in Flanders and a totally different kind of country to Bruay with all its dirty coal pits and smoke stacks. It was like coming from the city to the country, the atmosphere is beautiful and fresh but we were a long way from any decent sized town, as you will read further on that was of no consequence to me, a few villages are situated round about but very small ones, usually a Church and a couple of Estaminets. One thing that surprised us very much was that almost all the young ones amongst the Flemish could talk good English. We forgot that this part had been inhabited by English and Australians ever since the beginning of the war. The people are very industrious and now spring is coming everything is beautiful to look at. The canals through the towns, used in many cases more than the roads and the fields and woods are a picture after Bruay. We are almost as near the Line here as at Bruay, the guns are just as noisy but there was no "Gentle Annie" with her iron-works, although we soon found that there was something else to take up our mind. I move about a lot in connection with my work and every day makes me think of England, exactly the same country lanes and woods and the same weather as last May, June and July of last year when we were so happy over there.

Right through-out the time since I left Australia numerous instances have happened showing how useless it is to worry about anything. All my clothes were down at Houdain and I was thirty or forty miles from them, with without any prospect of seeing them again. Coming away from Bruay so early on Sunday morning I had not done my usual trip to Barlin

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for rations, so as it was impossible to get any rations where we now were for at least 24 hours, I suggested to the Serg. Major that a light Tender be given to me early Monday morning and I would return to Barlin for Sunday's stuff. I won my point, returned to Bruay early Monday morning, called in at Houdain for dinner and my washing, in the afternoon I went on to Barlin and arrived back in camp here about 6p.m., very tired but satisfied as I had achieved my point.

As I said earlier in this account, my work as Quartermaster enables me to go about a lot, it leaves me when in camp a kind of free lance, I am free from all guard and fatigue duty and my Serg. Major is the only man whom I am responsible to for my work, he is a very fair man and as long as I keep the camp supplied with everything he is perfectly satisfied. This time my main place for drawing what was required is to be St. Omer but I have done more travelling around to different places from this aerodrome than any previous one. I leave here in a Tender every morning at 8.30a.m. and go to the Detail Issue Store at St. Omer, if we are drawing petrol or oil I sign for it and see that it is loaded on to our Motor lorries and dispatched to the camp. After I have drawn the rations at the Store I usually run the car up into the main square and then spend an hour or so in town buying things for different men at camp as they have no opportunity of coming in themselves. Very often I do not get back to camp till three or four in the afternoon. Sometimes we find that there is not enough petrol alone or oil at this dump as we draw about 4,000 gallons per week of petrol alone and 1,000 gallons of oil, then I have to go further afield, sometimes away down the canal to Wattan or in the other direction to Argues. Then our Ordnance Stores are in another part of the country and I visit them very often. I reckon I will know more about the North of France soon than I do of my own State of Victoria. It is a very nice job, in the winter I am provided with plenty of coats and rain-coats but now summer has come I enjoy every minute of my motor rides around the country. I come in touch with every type of soldier and know many friends amongst the English, Canadians, United States and French soldiers and am meeting fresh folk every day of the week. My evenings as a rule I have to myself and spend a lot of time writing. Of course there are times when we are busy as at present and I come home very tired and weary because if I set out to get something I have free liberty to go anywhere and as far as I see fit until I get what I want, the driver must take me where I want and petrol for the car is of no consequence. In fact all the motor drivers rush my trip as they are sure there won't be any Officers to mess us about so now every driver must take his turn for the ration trip in the morning and there is no dissatisfaction amongst them. Sometimes I cover seventy miles in a day. But there is always the satisfaction of knowing that when once I arrive home my nights will not be disturbed by guard or other duties. When I am in camp of an afternoon I am responsible for the issuing of clothing and also giving out the proper proportion of rations to the Officers, Sergts. and men's Mess and you may be sure that neither Officer's or Sergt's Mess run the Men's Mess short for all my interests are with the Men's Mess. Every man and Officer gets equal shares. So now I think I have given you a good idea of how my time is taken up, I have plenty of work but it is acceptable work and after my own liking. I suppose someday I will get restless and dissatisfied like when I was with the 68th and ask for a change but not for a while yet.

The camp itself is situated in a very pretty spot near some woods and only a few miles from Cassel, which town used for a long time to be General Douglas Haig's Headquarters. You may be sure he is not there now it is too near the front line, in fact now and again Fritz shells that town, it is in plain view from our aerodrome. Going into St. Omer every day as I do makes me appreciate this camp out in the country much more than what the rest of the Squadron do. Of an evening, I enjoy long walks along the country roads and lanes, we are all supposed to be in bed by 10p.m. but many a night I don't get home till long after that hour, our camp life is not so very severe regarding a lot of things like that but of course one always wants to take precautions. For about a fortnight we spent rather a busy but on the whole uneventful time of it and at the end of that time had made ourselves rather comfortable. At first our huts were horribly crowded but now and again a man would go to hospital and no one comes in his place so we gradually got a bit more room but even now there is none to spare. But if there

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were 100 disadvantages we have one advantage that will make up for all the others. This is an old aerodrome and just about 100 yards from the men's huts a small creek is running past. A large shed has been erected and a water scheme inaugurated so that at certain hours of the day men can have a hot shower bath, and if he is willing to pump his own water he can have a cold shower anytime. The room can accommodate ten men at once. I often go down at 6a.m. and have a cold one and now the days have come up warm and sunny I enjoy my shower at 6a.m. within sound of the guns at the front line. I am willing to stay here as long as they like but a big attack is expected from Fritz, just behind us crowds of men are digging huge lines of trenches and putting up barbwire entanglements, they don't want a repetition of the Amiens business up here in the North in connection with St. Omer, the Flemish people are very proud of their city of St. Omer and justly so for ancient and all that it is I consider it a fine city. One big Church in particular fascinates me every morning as I pass it, was built somewhere about the year 600 and with the exception of the windows appears to me to be absolutely intact, I must try and go through it some day as I have a daily opportunity.

We have large numbers of English and Canadian troops, one Division of Australians and a fair number of New Zealanders in this part of the line but soon after we came here a portion of the French Army moved up here too. I always have thought that the French Army was done almost but I never made a greater error in my life. When you meet a Battalion of Tommies now-a-days one cannot help noticing the youthfulness of the greater number of them, not so with these "Soldats de la Francaise". For two weeks convoys blocked the roads, we would be stuck up some times for hours going to and coming from St. Omer, always Artillery and Cavalry. I tried all the short cuts and back roads but it was no use, everywhere I went was the unending line of blue uniforms, almost to the man were they solid in physique and years, our chaps all say they were the finest crowd of chaps they had ever seen since they came over. At last they all got through to the line with their guns and wasted no time getting into action. In one place there we came in contact with them, blazing away with their 'seventy fives' (equal to our 18 pounder) and all the time singing their popular song "apres la guerre finis."

Now one more item of interest before I once more get on to the blood and thunder portion of this narrative. When I first commenced to go into St. Omer there was an Australian Sergeant belonging to the Aussie Seige Gun Battery drawing rations from the same store. I got an idea into my head that one of Bob Andrews' brothers joined the Seige Guns some time before Bob and I enlisted so one morning asked him was there an Andrews in his lot. It seems there used to be but he had stayed back in England only he was a Queenslander so was not the man I wanted. But this Sergt. told me he knew a Victorian called Andrews and it turns out that the night Bob deserted from Queenscliff so as to join camp with me this Sergt. deserted with him. I told him of Bob winning the Military Medal and then dying in hospital which was all news to him. There was another meeting of old friends at that same Store, a Quartermaster from a Tommy Squadron made himself known to me, it was the Squadron that used to be on the same aerodrome at Grantham with ourselves, I heard news of all the old friends from the 44th T.S. that used to be.

15-5-18: We had been left in peace for over a fortnight but now the moon has come along and we are just the ones that are going to know all about it. Ned and I were on our way home after a long walk when we heard the bur-r-r of a two engine machine coming up over the horizon and at once recognised the beautiful regularity of a Mercedes engine in the German machine called the "Gotha". Search lights sprang up from all directions, stretching out their great arms of electric light looking for the enemy, and it was not only one either but a dozen were soon buzzing merrily overhead. The Artillery opened out at once and shells by the dozens were whistling through the air and bursting in all directions. Sometimes one of the lights would find Fritz and then about six more would join in and light up all around the Hun, then Fritz would get a lively five minutes as he raced across the sky with the search lights well on his and shells bursting all around, he would ascend and dive, twist and turn until at last our men would lose him. He came to us at 10p.m. and stayed about till midnight, dropping bombs and what was worse than bombs using Buckingham Bullets in his machine guns which he poured down on any likely looking target. I don't suppose you folk know what Buckingham bullets are so let me explain. When one of these bullets hits a man it burns all

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the flesh and nothing will prevent the burning until all the fire has used itself up, if an aeroplane is hit it bursts into flames at once, every fifth bullet in the gun is what we call a tracer bullet and a Buckingham tracer comes out blood red and can be seen travelling through the air. These bullets were forbidden at the Hague Conference but like many other things Germany is using them, just last week he got three of our machines down in flames with them, so now we are using them on him since this last raid of his.

On 15-5-18 enemy planes came over again during the night but he did not trouble our aerodrome but Saturday the 18th was a night to be remembered by us. We have been bombed and shelled a good deal this last three months, the shelling of course was worse than bombing for it was a continual strain never knowing when the next shell was going to come and always expecting one. But as far as bombs are concerned I reckon this night was just about as bad as it could be. Ned and I were out as usual and exactly at 10.30 p.m. when we were about 11 miles from camp over came Fritz from every corner of the earth and it had many corners that night. In a few minutes there must have been quite thirty machines overhead, the air seemed to be thick with them and guns were roaring all round us. We stood and watched the sight of forty or fifty search-lights travelling all across the sky and could see the burst of every shell. I suddenly heard the well known Buzz and only had time to yell out "Down Ned" when bang went a bomb somewhere within a couple of hundred yards of us. We lay full length on the grass and immediately after the first one five more dropped much closer and all around us, we had a wall of smoke all round and got nearly buried with falling dirt. That was our share for a few minutes but we lay there listening to other bombs bursting in all directions. Less than five minutes afterwards a huge blaze lit up the sky, we found out afterwards that Fritz had got an ammunition dump just on the other side of us and yet it lit everything up so plainly that we could see men walking about in our own camp so you can well guess what a fine mark our place was making for the machines overhead. And now we witnessed a sight if painted would make a man's fortune. When a plane is in the air and a search light playing on it the machine looks as if it is made of silver and it can be seen better than day time when the sun-light is all around it. Just at this time there were about forty lights placed at intervals all round us, every few minutes one of the lights would locate a Hun and then some more would play on him, the Hun adopted new tactics to-night, instead of trying to get out of the glare he would dive down along the light with his three machine guns spitting out blood red bullets in three directions at once. It was plain as day, the streak of silver diving towards the base of the light and all the time shells bursting everywhere, away over in the distance was the ammunition dump going merrily, forty search lights stretching their long arms into the sky and innumerable guns roaring, the shrill scream of the shell going through the air and then the explosion and the shrapnell falling everywhere.

This went on for hours, in fact he did not go away for good until three in the morning but I went off to bed at 12.30 and was very soon asleep. Fritz must have dropped two hundred bombs that night. We had to wait till next day to actually see the damage, four or five bombs were on our aerodrome but no damage resulted other than making huge holes twenty and thirty feet deep.

But my visit to St. Omer showed me the fruits of his work, houses and shops were blown clean off the face of the earth, he followed the canal to try and find the station and nearly succeeded. In the station yard he killed three Canadian Sergeants and seven men from the dump where I get all my oil and petrol, all of them well known to me. He got the Veterinary Hospital, killed 9 and wounded 20 odd. Up in the city some of the streets were absolutely blocked with wreckage, he blew up their water supply and killed civilians by the dozens, all over the country outside the town were huge holes thirty feet deep and as wide across. At eleven in the morning the death toll was sixty and gangs of men were busy everywhere still digging away wreckage for fresh victims to be unearthed. In one spot between Argues and St. Omer I found a vacant piece of ground about half an acre in size where four bombs had landed, it was one huge pit. I cannot actually vouch for the lives lost in this raid but one Hospital Orderly tells me that the casualties were 600 including wounded

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Three of the enemy planes were brought down between here and Calais. I have never seen a French city so subdued as St. Omer was on Sunday morning, everyone was either in doors or else had cleared out. It made me think of an Australian town on a Sunday morning instead of a Continental town. And here and there you would come across parties of men clearing away bricks and wood from what was a few hours ago somebody's fine comfortable home. Hospitals were full of wounded, Ambulance Motors plentiful. I have a little more to say of this night's work and then pass on. Book 8 must carry it, when I am able to secure another book.

END OF BOOK 7.
