Diary

of the

Reverend Edward Dowling

ArmyChaplain

Great War

Reproduced in 2014 by Tony Mooney from material supplied by Sarah Pearce.

Editor's Note

A transcript of the Rev. E. Dowling's wartime diary was sent to me by Julie Dorgan in 2005. Her father had obtained it from 'a Dowling lady' and thought it might be of interest to me. It is not known who typed it but whoever it was did a fine job of following the Reverend's handwriting and annotating the text in a variety of ways where the handwriting was obscure.

I have scanned the pages with ABBYY FineReader, a computer program, and converted the diary to produce both a Microsoft Word document and a PDF one. I have edited the text only to make it more readable. In doing so I have adhered to the original wording of the transcript, corrected the typographical errors which were evident and placed all the typist's annotations in square brackets for consistency. In a few cases I have changed spellings, inserted obviously omitted words and changed the tenses in a paragraph to be consistent. In all instances I have tried to do justice to the Rev. Dowling's intention.

I suspect that some of the proper names and place names are misspelt but I have left them as they appear in the transcript except for a few instances where it was obvious from other references to the same name that a change was justified.

I am grateful to my wife Judith for her valuable suggestions and for proof-reading the document for me.

T.M.

Author's Background

The author was born in 1886 to William Dowling N.T., (a former president of the INTO) and his wife Catherine Hackett N.T., of Slieverue, Co Kilkenny. The couple had married in 1883, he being the son of Edward Dowling N.T., and she the daughter of Patrick Hackett. The couple's first child who was given the name Edward, was born 16 December 1884 but was obviously dead by 1886 when the future Red. Edward was born. Other siblings were Patrick J. Dowling (who married and had a daughter Catherine and a son Thomas Lionel), Julia Kate Dowling (who never married but who was alive as late as 1959 as she is mentioned in the Rev. Edward's will.) There may have been other siblings as the Rev Edward Dowling had a nephew Mr. J. J. Brennan of Southsea, Hants., and two nieces Mrs. William Walsh and Mrs. Pat Phelan, both of Slieverue.

In his will dated 22 September 1959 the Rev. Edward bequeathed 'such books from my library as they choose ' to his brother Patrick J. Dowling, and the latter's daughter Catherine. 'My war medals and cross and star of the Grand Officer of Aviz (Portugal), with certificate to my nephew Thomas Lionel Dowling, son of the above Patrick J. Dowling.' The rest of his estate was willed to his sister Julia Kate Dowling of Slievrue, Waterford and 'if she is dead to my nieces in equal shares, Mrs. William Walsh and Mrs Patrick Phelan, both of Slieverue, aforesaid'. Total value of the estate was slightly less than £1100.

According to the Ossory Clerical Records, the Rev. Edward was ordained at Maynooth on 21 June 1908. He initially served in the English diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, where he spent three years. He was then appointed professor at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny from August 1911 to November 1914 when be volunteered (?) as an army chaplain, in which capacity he continued to serve until 21 February 1920. In February 1920 he was appointed C.C. Castlecomer, which post he held until 16 April 1923. Thereafter he served as curate in the parishes of Lisdowney (1923-1925), Dunnamaggan (1925 - 1932), Gathabawn (1932-1942), becoming finally parish priest of Camross in January 1942, which post he held until his death on 7 June 1960. He is buried in Camross.

He worked with his brother Patrick J. Dowling (Hedge Schools of Ireland) on the history of St.Kieran's College. The Dowlings collected a great deal of information for the project during the years 1934 to about 1941, but Bishop Collier then assigned the project to the Rev. Peter Birch, (future bishop) who used the Dowling findings in his educational history of St. Kieran's, gaining a PhD for the work.

His obituary appeared in the Kilkenny Journal, *11 June 1960, p. 5.*

The Diary

There must be many who followed in our footsteps who will recollect with sad and forceful associations every foot of the ground I cover - many there must have been whose experiences were like to ours, but who had never and never will have the chance to tell of them to their friends at home. And to these latter our lives must have seemed one long horror with the doom of the casualty list always looking up ahead. If they could realise that we lived as others lived, with even a hint of poetry in our lives and humour and good fellowship, and a great deal of healthy thoughtfulness even to the last, it might help to console them. If they could realise, that no matter what our miseries, we had always room for pity for others: for the poor devils of sailors who ploughed the North Sea and were shelled on board an iron vessel, with the cold ocean leaping round them. Pity even for the poor beggars down at the base or at the home who couldn't get up the line, or didn't want to. For ourselves in the main we weren't sorry. We deprecated the slush the daily papers talked, and we laughed without malice at the photos of heroes who never heard a shot and weren't likely to. It didn't even worry us that people in the cushy jobs should get all the honours. We knew that that was as it should be - they had much more chance of living to enjoy them, and it was in the cynical nature of things.

If one can so picture the lives of some gallant gentlemen in the big war, that their friends can see how they could be still their real selves, amiable, unselfish, courteous even without the associations of civilization, then the pleasant hours passed in revisiting these scenes will have another value - that of giving a calmer saner view of this our life to dear friends who think us [???] with continuous horror.

(Written early on, when I was asked by Rawlinson to scribble an account of things - the trouble at home took the interest out of it.)

Christmas Day 1914

I had been dreaming of home and other Xmases, the result of our conversation of last night. When I woke and realised where I was, I would have been quite content to go on dreaming comfortably of the things that were not. My bed was not a bad one, a sleeping valise stretched on straw. It didn't look much, but from the practical point of view of sleep, no bed has ever felt so good to me. The morning was clear and dark, with many stars, and very cold. I had no time to call up memories of other awakenings. I might have tried to, but my servant entered with a candle and hot water. Other Xmases faded, and I was in the present again. It was cold in the little sacristy of the farm chapel. My arm was still stiff from the inoculation of two days ago but I was soon ready. Outside the men were forming up in the courtyard, white with frost, and in a few minutes I was with them preparing the altar, and was ready to begin. As we had been relieved from the trenches only yesterday, and they could not have had an opportunity of going to confession for the great feast, I gave a general absolution before the Mass, no sermon except a few words of greeting, for it was cold standing there bare-headed and the Communions took a long time. Mass finished, all the altar things were packed into my saddle-bags, and I mounted my horse to ride to the piggeries. I had not gone two hundred yards past the howitzers close by when I realised that the road was impossible

for a horse. We unpacked and Leary and I trekked across the fields to my next destination. Here the mass took place in the large piggery, to the accompaniment of many grunts and in a dense atmosphere of smoke. That finished, back again to Courte Dreve, where I decided on a bicycle as the readiest transport to the little farm by Romarin. My lares and penates were all placed in a pack, and the pack on my shoulders, and I on the bike, (which had to be thawed before it would move) and eventually, after casualties to my person and temper due to the unyielding ruts of the villainous road by Petit Pont, I arrived at the transport farm, a little late, but not too much so. The table was full of parcels and letters - but they kept until I had finished my third mass and wished the good old fellows of the transport all seasonable wishes. No child waking to investigate the outcome of Santa Claus' visit could show more pleasure than I did in opening my parcels. Amongst the little gifts were two new pipes and, things I had sighed for, pipe-cleaners. I was fondling them, preparatory to tackling breakfast when Toppam came in, bringing the transport -sergeant's good wishes, and would I drink their health in some of their Xmas rum. I had been up six hours without yet having broken my fast, but it was stern duty, as I drank deep of the torch-light stuff. Half-way through my breakfast, Leary arrived with the sergeant-armourer's compliments, and would I taste a little of his plum-pudding. I am a delicate man, who has threatened more than once to shuffle off this mortal soil, but I did that too. Rum and plum-pudding after a six-hours' fast! The thought of it would have killed me, and my doctor, six months ago. Perhaps I am destined to die a less happy death. A good smoke, and I am arrived, per the same unholy means, back at Courte Dreve. The companies there under Smithwick were setting out on a short run to keep the men warm. They teased me until I consented to run with them. I put forward my tight leggings and my weariness as an excuse. It was no good, and we set off. I plugged along between Smithwick and Firgona. They made the pace hot to tire me, as they confessed afterwards. And I suffered so much less than they did from the spirits that I had to confess my age: whereupon they begged to withdraw all the respect they had shown heretofore while under the impression that I was a man of years. The afternoon passed quietly reading such Xmas numbers as we had and cussing at the fire which persisted in behaving in an un-Xmas-like manner. About tea-time old Burke arrived with his usual flow of stories and good cheer. The men had their beer, only French beer, potent only in name, but still something. Last evening a rascal of the rations party of D Company set down his load as I rode up and wished me a happy Xmas. 'Sure it's a grave Xmas entirely. Any other Xmas Eve with the help of God I'd have been as drunk as a Lord at this time of day.' No words of stern counsel occurred to me, so frowning I left him still lamenting his sobriety, to his mind, an un-Xmas-like condition, unworthy of the high festival. Dinner was a quiet little affair. We got champagne somewhere, and in it old Burke in a bloodthirsty speech toasted the regiment. After the port went round we lit our pipes, and in an hour I was back in my little sacristy between the folds of my flea-bag, as contented with life as any man has a right to be. Next day it was still cold, but the frost was not so great. At breakfast Colonel [???] came in to announce that a football match had been arranged between the [Lanons] opposite and his fellows. 'Of course it will be a farce' said he 'with the ground cut up so badly between the lines, but then the fellows are keen on it.' He had to station sentries half-way between the German trenches and ours to prevent the too friendly enemy from seeing too much of our miserable defences. He left us on his way to the gunners to warn them of the proposed game.

No one thought at the time very much of this little entente. Our fellows were not a vindictive crowd, neither were the Germans opposite, though indeed my lot had suffered heavily from German savagery more than once. At Le Cateau in their advance they took prisoners one stretcher bearer who had stayed behind with the wounded, and at the point of the bayonet made them march in front into the attack on their own regiment. The poor fellows were shot down by their own comrades. Still here in the trenches they had been living like rabbits for a couple of months, and no one knew of their lives except those that had to live them. And in those days, while we were still certain of speedy victory one had more fellow-feeling for a supposedly decent enemy living the same dangerous uncomfortable life as oneself, than one had for all the people in safe jobs; one's political opponents, or even the ordinary civilian. At any rate, when on Xmas Eve, an hour or so before our relief, (which relief, and what was to relieve us, the German knew quite well,) the enemy came out from his lair and sang out to us, our fellows were not behindhand in showing the same friendly spirit. It didn't mean that they wouldn't cheerfully have bayoneted the lot in a charge, it only meant that as there was seemingly no immediate prospect of killing any large number of them according to the rules of the game, they were quite ready and curious to approach them in a spirit of temporary and strictly limited goodwill. Many a little souvenir changed hands in these days, buttons, electric torches, cigarettes and cigars. Personally I was very pleased to smoke their cigars, and was very sad when a box bearing on the lid the Wethnachgnisse of the Stadt of Leipzig had shed its last fragrance on the Flanders air. The football match by the way was very short as the guns had orders to fire some rounds. Someone was sent out to tell the Germans so. He did so with many apologies stating that of course they had nothing to do with it. The enemy politely cut him short, explaining that they knew what selfish beasts gunners were, leading a soft life at least a thousand yards from the firing line, and shelling poor helpless devils of infantrymen. There was mutual understanding and sympathy expressed. An hour later a few rounds were fired at nothing in particular and peace reigned once more. Not a rifle shot was heard for several days. The day before New Year Eve a single bullet came over and killed poor M - I asked his company that evening as I went round how it happened. They couldn't tell. The Germans in front denied having loosed off a rifle, but they said it was probably a spent bullet from their unloved brethren the Prussians away on their left. It was hard luck on poor M. I believe he was the only casualty in the Brigade that week. It was very difficult to believe that there was a war on, it was such a peaceful contrast to other nights. One walked along the same paths and no bullet pinged past. The danger spots held no danger, one walked by the barbed wire as one would skirt a meadow at home. In the light of a slightly clouded moon one saw the German defences, in one place seventy yards away. On the night of the 30th I accompanied the Colonel around. We visited the machine gun emplacements by the barricades in St. Ives. We looked into cellars where men sat and joked and chaffed in a dense fog of wood smoke from their fires. We passed the thin pretence at a reserve trench, occupied usually by the ration-party, and on the road at right angles we crawled into B Company's dugout. Dugouts at that date were architecturally or from an engineering point of view, nothing to write home about. A couple of rough branches stretched from side to side of a shallow hole, roofed with straw, small branches and clay, carpeted with damp vegetation, fences unrecognisable, and you had in a space of six foot square by two to four feet high, the dining room, salon, bedroom and study of the average company commander and his satellites. You crawled in on hands and knees, and arriving, you turned gently to a sitting position so as

not to disturb the lighting arrangements, and to avoid adding the contents of the walls to the already suspicious carpeting of the chamber. Sitting down thus, with one ear tickled by the curly cover of a plum and apple jam pot, one's head in close proximity with some rifle grenades stuck in the ancestral roof tiles and one's feet pointing at the stars through the door-way, one was able by subsidising some ingenuity to accept the hospitality of a cherry-whiskey or a cigarette without bringing the fittings of the chateau down on the heads of the occupants. It was their home, and they did the honours no whit less beautifully in this little hole, that the most miserable at home would not be found in than they could do in a stately English home. No better example of the triumph of the mind over matter or the maxim that the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven or hell, a hell of heaven, as some civilians once wrote. One line formed a peculiar salient, and the trenches were by no means linked up, so a great deal from [t]alking was necessarily over the top, even when one wished to speak to the men and hear their stories, gay enough and droll enough even at the worst of times. We returned by the barricades as we had come, and crossed to A Company's dugout by a hedgerow which ran into another hedge along our firing trench. This was a rather damp corner, though ordinarily hot enough. Where the hedge ran across the trench was the place Fr. was sniped a month or so ago, the first officer casualty since my arrival. Now in the dim moonlight it looked like any hedge and the trenches like any ditch that one had to [negotiate] on a cross-county stroll at night-time. The men came and went with frizzling bacon or hot MacConachies, or laboured to make a dugout more habitable, though it is difficult to persuade these fellows that they should make themselves comfortable.

Dinner in the little dugout was a very social affair. An aperitif of rum and milk was as good as any other, because they only are obtainable. There was room for two at the table if one was not selfish. It usually accommodated four or five. Any others took their plates on their knees as they squatted on a folded flea-bag on the floor. The soup was always good, the meat varied somewhat, but not so one's appetite. A savoury of some sort was always present. The Colonel liked most of all poached eggs on toast. When it rained it was these latter that seemed to suffer most, for everything had to be carried from the cook's dugout to ours. I don't know why we called this row of habitations by the name of dugouts. They were only tiny ramshackle buildings laid gingerly against the side of a sunken cart-track. But such as they were, they were ours. All we could call our own, between this and the 'ould country', distantly [one Kathleen Mavourneen leave.] But this particular evening we were a little better off than usual for we had some whiskey and [sp.…], port wine, the remains of our Xmas jar, and rum and curaçao, a delectable mixture discovered by the M.G.O., in his laudable desire to make the curaçao last a bit longer. We didn't trouble much about cigars; in an infantry regiment moving every four days from trenches to reserve and from reserve again to trenches they spoiled too easily: and our pipes became out last friends. Coffee drunk and a pipe or two smoked, there was the road home for Leahy and myself, the desolate little byroad that led from St. Ives up to the Great Messine road by the chateau. There was a nasty little place a couple of hundred yards along where some trees overhang a stagnant pool, and on dark nights here there were two shell holes taking up the road, one to the right normally flooded, and further on a dry hole to the left. When we walked it alone coming or going it seemed very long indeed, and bullets seemed to whine along it continually. When we reached the [piggery] the trees gave one some imaginary shelter, and another hundred yards or so one felt at liberty to light the pipe one had prudently filled before

leaving the shelter of the dugout. Leahy used to wonder why my pipe lit so easily, until he noticed that in the dugout, after filling a pipe, perhaps two, I took care to singe them slightly with a couple of [whi....] before putting them in my pocket. Our horses usually awaited us at the comer where it joined the road to the Red Lodge, or if the night was bad, we found them in the farm stables just beyond the lodge. And back we trotted by the gunners' lines and Petit Pont until we reached by devious ways the little farm which was all that was home to us. On a very wet night, when often in spite of cap covers and raincoats we were pretty well soaked through, a steaming glass of rum punch did much to console us. And once inside our flea-bags, after a day of work leavened with a measure of the excitement that shells and bullets carry with them, the voice of one's servant in the morning sounded like an unmerited insult. Apart from other work during the day which involved a morning's ride, often both morning and afternoon in the saddle to Armentieres, Plugstrat, Steenwerck, Nieppe, we walked to meet old Burke with his rations, and at the tail of his wagons marched with him to the Dump (?), thence we went to the trenches, to whatever awaited us there. By many twistings and turnings we walked two miles from the trenches to our horses, and from that it was three quarters of an hour's ride home. And yet the transport-farm was not far from the trenches as the crow flies. Little Willies dropped near us many a time, and five-mines searched for the guns behind us.

In this war, the most tragic the world has known, against an enemy ruthless and dishonourable, a man's cheerfulness learns to assert itself in quiet homely ways. Instead of playing up to the idea of war for all he is worth, he plays a continual game of pretending to be at home. War becomes simply work, and the danger thereof is "all in the day's work," that's all. A working-party is going out to put up barbed-wire between the lines. A man talks about getting a job of work done. The work might be anything from a mine or countermine to a scrap with the enemy by the Boche's barbed wire; from the doctor or the padre plying their eternal trade to the C.C. Swells preparing his gentle zephyrs for the Hun. And it was just work - using the same muscles and the same brains as men did in peace-time. Many a time the young territorials on our left must have put up barbed wire to keep their sheep in. They put it up a bit thicker now to keep the Boche out, and they do it at night, and while they do it the Boche plays them with his machine-guns. Digging, too, is no fun at any time, it is less fun when you have to begin all over again, practically every day. And sometimes it is very like digging your own grave in a cemetery where the landmarks have been lost, and corpses come to light in an unwelcome fashion.

But, of course, it is their continual unremitting idea of work that makes such a calm every-day attitude of mind possible. It took us some time to realise this aspect of things. The old devil-may-care spirit died hard. The men who had gone into the army to avoid hard work, the officers of the leisured classes who went into the army as men might join a select club, found themselves up against a navvie's job rather than a soldier's one. They worked at first to give themselves a sporting chance of getting their own business later on. They are working still, the gentleman doing work he never thought to do and the unemployable filling sandbags for dear life at his side.

The word 'rest' is known to us - but what the G.O.C means by it is not to be found in its definition. Strangely enough we get on fairly well without it. The necessities of

recreation - as we understood it, seem to have been over-rated. Possibly its essentials, variety, to an extent, and excitement, of a kind, are with us

Dugout at St Ives

It was a quaint little house. The back was part of the bank, the sides and roof were of straw and the front was mostly door, the same being a ground sheet. The floor was soft and springy to the tread there being indeed a spring in one corner of the dugout. As time went on we became more civilized and we got hold of a magnificent piece of corrugated iron which we expected to keep the rain out, and even shrapnel. In those days we were rather trustful, a feeling which wore off. It wasn't a place one would select for a home, but for all that, when we had lighted our candles, one two or four, and the mess-sergeant had done his best you couldn't have found a more happier crowd that ours. Especially it was so when the precious glass of port went round and the Colonel's stories began to flow. All else was but a dream, the day's work, the strafing, the poor fellows laid under the sod but a few minutes before, even the long bullet-swept road home, and we lived in the Colonel's stories of twenty fields. He was a man in a hundred thousand, with a fund or irresistible drollery that nothing seemed to daunt. And a man of old-world courage, at his best and most sympathetic when the danger was greatest. That miserable little crawl took on another aspect when he was there, and became what he made it, Home, God Bless him! He died, defending with the remnant of his men, the broken line at Shell-trap Farm, Ypres May 1915 (24/5/1915)

Chaplains

We had out little meetings from time to time in T's (or F's, could it be Fitzgibbon) room, back at rail-head. S - who loved meetings, 'to exchange views you know,' and get one another's advice, was always the promoter of these things. But really S's views were not exchangeable. As far as views were concerned, he thought it more blessed to give than to receive, and he gave it to us in extensive rigmaroles on the obvious and the banal. And there was R who was ever in the throes of some fresh mare's nest. While F looked on tolerantly and gently, with a charitable explanation of each absurdity. Being in danger doesn't give men brains nor does the presence of death make us forget the tribulations of life, otherwise R wouldn't have been so righteously indignant when the orderly took advantage of the entry of a five-nine, and some sudden deaths therefrom, to steal his hairbrush - the man's excuse, that he didn't think the brush being so dirty could belong to an officer and furthermore that he didn't think it could belong to R - the same having no hair, did not, as the man meant it to, put out the fires of R's wrath. It is well that it is so, for otherwise, how is the humour of life to last.

It was helpful for all that for brothers to meet together, even though the net sum of our conference was often some cynicism at one another's expense. We could afford to laugh a little at one another's expense, for we knew the other's worth. For me it meant a great deal living away by myself in the midst of vital things, to meet occasionally other and wiser souls, whose zeal I could not question.

A war is a war - but it is the accompaniments that interest me - the little peace-time happenings that even a war like this cannot exclude - the quiet thoughts that possess one

even in unquiet times, the sense of peace where there is no peace, the romance wrested from the unbeautiful, those are the things that make life possible, make it more than a mere existence.

What did we talk about? Mostly the things that men talk about anywhere and anytime, the rumours that kept on flying and lying, a new life, the latest yarn and sometimes, but with respectful rareness work!

It has often seemed a desperate thing, that while we were getting galumphed over by the Boche, and while our counter-strafing seemed like tiger-hunting with a rook-rifle, home as represented to us by our newspapers seemed to have gone mildly foolish, imbecile even. Writers of sensational fiction giving their views on war-economies; amateur economists writing on modem strategy, ministers sending and receiving messages congratulating one another that by their efforts the Boche was now done in, wearisome old penny-a-liners strafing the higher command - violent old indispensables being patriotic - on paper - the eternal crowd of furious reactionaries proving that Ulster, right or wrong, is right - and foolish caricatures of the Hun in every posture of abject humiliation. God knows the Hun doesn't need any more black paint, but the silly drivel written about him has made everyone including the trenchman, sceptical anent the vices of the enemy. And the rest of the journal is taken up with a column or two of description of a battle by an eyewitness who has seen it through the garbled imagination of some garrulous tommy, and long notices of people who have discovered that bluebottles have souls, or that men haven't.

It is a dreadful picture and one that we hasten away from. On the other hand, up here there are gentler thoughts of the old things, born out of the desolation that surrounds us - reverent thoughts of the old sane life, peaceful scenes and happy faces innocent of wrong. And we who suffer have a right that this picture and not the other shall be presented to us, when if ever we return.

What thoughts come to us here of the 'ould country' - a nation of gentlemen, as many a foreign friend has called it - a nation of laughing eyes with the purity of the Mother of God in them! And how this bleak sodden country, and these our habitations of clay seem glorified because we are here in the name of Ireland - poor Ireland struggling for her little bit of proper pride, and yet not too poor nor too absorbed in her own needs to sanctify the world-struggle by giving of her best.

It is perhaps the most generous thing the world has seen - Irishmen, to whom England has represented what the Prussian is to France and Belgium, the fierce intolerant oppressor, the despoiler of our lands, the persecutor of our religion, joining with their ancient only half-repentant foe against the enemy of all liberty - their efforts and their offers mildly scorned, half-mistrusted by England, their generosity ungenerously responded to, they consented - they almost had to consent to become Englishmen that they might be permitted to fight, because so sit seemed good to them.

Irish flags in Ypres - relics of the old days when men fought first and asked questions afterwards, Irish brogue piercing the fog, cheering up the darkness making the danger seem a joke, bringing the flavour of the old country into dugout and trench and listening

post, and its welcome everywhere.

There was a lane that ran by a turnip-field that might have been a lane in old Kerry, so wet was it. But no sweet colleen's voices were heard there, only the whine of bullets all night long, while by day 'little willies' altered the likeness of it. We pulled the turnips and ate them, for the farmer was not there to say us nay; and they tasted just like any old turnip that one might dig up out of a graveyard.

Our everyday experiences here provide a terrible test of the realities of things. Art, poetry, music stand out thin and meaningless for the greater part. One understands why the old stern fathers, in the stern old days looked upon them as but an appeal to sensuousness, as something detracting from our manliness and strength. The fine points of theology and philosophy seem a waste of time, a futile display of mental gymnastics. One descends to the least common multiple of intellectual things. The shadowy the [exotic], the altruisms have no place in our hand-to-mouth existence.

Our world is more than ever, an *'affaire brutale'* but who could guess it, to see around him, in quaint ways, so many contradictions of the saying.

Note - 2.30 am. Just in from trenches on Yser Canal. Due at 3.30 am at advanced post near Elvendinghe.

Night-time, no wind and countless stars. Glow-worms shining in the banks, a heavy dew on the grass, a nightingale singing in the woods of Ulamertinghe - the soft shuffle of a wakeful horse, the pad of the sentry's feet, and how peaceful it all is! Any moment a few bursts of shrapnel may come, but still this is peace. A few miles away where I buried those poor devils, it is war with a vengeance. In an hour's time, if I hit the same strafe I rode into last night, it will be war again. But here, sufficient for the moment is the evil thereof. At present the stars shine reflected by the dewy grass, the nightingale is up against the same old thorn, and in revulsion from the things that are my daily life I conjure up from these associations such gentle idyllic pictures of peace and happiness as only a war-diseased brain could create. One must not be cynical - they may be untrue, impossible, a child might laugh at their unreal sentiment but they help us on. They are the psychologic balance to the horrors we endure.

1916

At night time, in village or in trenches or along the paved high roads, one might fancy oneself in the 'ould country' so thick is the air with the accent thereof. Ringing out often in the sharp challenge of the Sentry, or the 'good night to ye' of the casual passerby. For months and months the sublimest heights of tragedy and comedy have gone to the tune of it. It is hard now to hear it lifted in pitiful egotism and I hate to think of it, camouflaged poltroonery. To think that generous souls could be so perverted, that Irishmen could be found to deny what their bravest and best were dying for. England has been a cruel step-mother, arrogant and contemptuous - but she is fighting now the one clean fight of her life, and hatred of her is no ultimate justification.

[Graves] at St. Ives

On a bit of high ground where a sunken cart-track joins the road we plant out dead under cover of darkness. There the brave fellows lie at rest as if they had been buried with the honours they deserve. Men who served their country to the last, who stood day after day for months in the post of danger while their friends were torn and mangled by their side, and, while all day long the same fate came whining or hurtling over their heads, their turn came at last, they paid the price that heroes pay, and died.

Men have had public funerals for less - ye gods for how much less: and for less even the tears of hundreds have flowed. But here their poor remains are placed in a hastily- dug grave, some prayers are said, short lest a hard worked pioneer should share the grave he dug, and all return to the usual night's routine - they cook the recently arrived rations in the best way they can, and repair such damage as the day's shelling has caused to their earthly habitations.

One felt, as a chaplain, when one's work was done, how much one was left out of the real business of the day. Unregenerate thoughts assailed one, relics of chivalrous dreams one wanted to be up and doing. For the good of the world the Hun had to be strafed, and one was straitened until it was accomplished.

I envied the patrol officers, and the eerie experiences along the Boche barbed wire. A glance into a German dug-out, a bomb in hand, would have been a joy to stink out a useful machine-gun emplacement, to calculate to a nicety the hoped for damage I could do with an eighteen or sixty pounds would have been like wine to me. One is human, and one must have one's relaxations. But regulations and Canon Law have forbidden it. 'They also serve who only stand and wait' - but they don't enjoy it.

Mud (12.12.15) White City & Redan Ridge

How the magic word thrills one. I remember one of the prettiest scenes in 'Our Village,' a snow scene. It pictures the effect of frost and snow on tree and bush and stream, giving them an aspect untrue to themselves. The trees became like the great stone arches of some cathedral roof, the stream became two fringes of delicate lace bordering a current, and bush and meadow and windowpane through which one saw them all took on likenesses to something other than themselves. In other words, the beauty of the snow was unreal. Now, it is not so with our mud, for mud is fact and more than being a fact, it is a force. It is even more, it is history in a nutshell, *c'est tout surtout* when you've got all of it there is.

When borne on the refrigerating zephyr you hear the very tones' diapason of strong men struggling in the throes of tense expression, and horses fighting a floundering tug of war with the slimy enemy, you know him. Our mud again! What is it that can reduce strong silent men to helpless language not becoming this virgin page? Who is it that when the Hun has done his bloodiest, steps in and takes the cake? It is again our bally mud. You ride through the desolate miles of it, bordered by sodden grass, to the trenches; you slip you slide, you gloom, you glance, you gloom again, you do any damn thing except be happy. And if you fall, you fall like Lucifer, with your leg caught under. Athwart the ridge the maxins play and they distract your beast from giving all his attention to his

footing. If you do come down, your bed will be soft, three feet of it. And you will lie in it, for people do not take the air on this boulevard - mud and machine guns have done so much to render it unpopular.

In the long weary communication trenches, there the mud has you all to itself. Ankle deep, knee deep, thigh deep. You are its for better or for worse - mostly for worse. You pull one leg after another, grasping the slimy sides. You linger like an unloved guest where you would fain hasten to the shelter of some distant dugout. A shell whistles, and crashes near, and then another. But it sticketh closer than a brother and you may not flee. You've mud on your fingers, mud on your toes, mud on your stomach. You cuss it all. You plunge, a wave goes over your thigh-boot, you cuss again, you drop your pipe and feel so sad for cussing - you look upwards and sigh and hope that someone is happy somewhere.

After hours of wading, and anxious calculation, induced by previous experience, of further Hunnish frightfulness, you round a few more corners and you see a man, and all is well with you for the present. He probably possesses a brother, and then you fall on his neck and its (sic) weep sweet silent tears. 'Peace after toil, port after stormy seas.'

April 1915

Our last day in these trenches had been an unlucky one, and we bade farewell to them without regret. The Hun seemed to have become gradually more insolent, and with impunity, for our guns did not seem to have the strafing qualities of his. Therefore we cheerfully told the incoming lot what to expect, and trekked off. I was delayed some hours after the others, an unexpected number of graves having to be dug. Finally I too departed, and once out of range of rifle-fire, settled down to happy thoughts of letters from home and a comfortable bed, the first since leave. Passing at length by our old home, my horse restively endeavouring to break away to his old stable, a stranger jumped out with a bayonet and 'Halt, hands up.' When I had quieted my horse sufficiently I told him what I thought of him and continued. I was now on a cross country track in the darkness, where one had to ride circumspectly to avoid being hung up on barbed wire. Eventually I came out on the road to find a company of my battalion taking their ten minutes rest en-route. I had cut off quite a corner. A few words with them and I was off again, already a couple of hours late for dinner at B. Once or twice I pulled up to listen to a noise like several railway-trains, then some very big guns or shells boomed a couple of miles in front. To my right a little later I saw tiny flashes that descended in the distance, signals, I thought from some aeroplanes. And at length entering the town my horse shied abruptly at some blood. The town had just received a visit from a Zeppelin. A major, I. F. hailed me, and gave me the news - enormous things he said, and worse than 92s. I heard the rest of the story on my arrival at the mess from the doctor and a [Lieutenant] who told me with tears of a beautiful young woman whom he had seen carried forth dead. The doc. hadn't much use for his pathos, which he labelled 'Christopher's' (a despised whiskey).

One of our servants it appears, the same having a reputation for untruthfulness and a leaning towards door posts, returned from the street with tales of an airship. He was promptly cursed by the mess-sergeant and told to get on with it. He insisted, and a loud

crash gave him his triumph. In a moment they were all at the door, and they saw the thing plainly, only a couple of hundred yards, in the darkness, above the street. They rushed back to the mess and asked the Colonel for permission to fire. The Colonel was loudly sceptical, but went to see. He had just time to gaze upwards from the middle of the street, when with a long screaming whiz, a bomb exploded with a tremendous crash. The Colonel ducked and rushed for the doorway, butting the regimental doc in the abdomen - as it happened, our only casualty. The servants opened rapid fire into the enemy, and the Zeppelin having thrown possibly all it had to throw, made off. To us it was a small incident, of no importance as none of us were hit. It cannot have been the same for the civilians in the place though indeed they took it most pluckily and made no noise about it. It was our experience of them everywhere. Faces of young mothers grew pale as they thought of their children, but they were always dignified. The volatile and superficial French seemed to take their troubles lightly. It is the phlegmatic Saxon that does the screaming.

Nov 16th 1915. Acheux

[Rime] and light snow on woods and fields brought back to me by first leave. Ye Gods, only nine months ago, and the years that have passed! The exhilaration of getting away from the sound of the guns, from trenches and the life generally rose triumphant over mere influenzal depression. I coughed merrily from Steenwerch to Boulogne, enjoyed a meal there, and failed to enjoy the five hours wait on the deck. Folkstone reached about 6.30, a well-warmed and lighted Pullman took me through the pretty English countryside, all beautiful with a thin virgin sheet of snow. My eyes sought unconsciously and failed to find the accustomed shell-holes. No lines of horses, or gun shelters or transport, troubled the vision. A new scene had been laid on. It was hard to realise four short months had bitten into me more than so many years. The old easy-going impressions had given away to the strong tense ones of life on active service.

It seemed strange to look forward to white sheets and electric light, to taxis and dry pavements, to promenades untroubled by machine-guns, to the absence of one's horse and to the company of women and children. It was a change and a very pleasant one; just a change, not a home-coming, for my home was with the boys in the firing line. To have remarked on it, would have sounded artificial in one's own ears even, while amongst those whose lives ran in the same old grooves, there was little in common. One didn't try to bridge the gulf and felt little intellectual satisfaction in thinking of it. But it was pleasant, not uproariously so, as is a school-boy's home coming, but deep and tensely felt. The arrival at Victoria, the second breakfast with the little ones and the long happy day in deep cushioned chairs before a roaring fire. I felt that one long deep grin of satisfaction was the only appreciation possible, and then my mouth didn't seem big enough.

Approach to St. Denis

The paths from Hyde Park Corner dipped into a hollow close by a little house not yet ruined, ran by some gunners' graves neatly decorated, and entered the outskirts of the wood at about three hundred metres. Here one went on duckboards through a thick forest of young saplings, much scarred by bullets, and crossed a pretty little stream on a

very shaky footbridge. I thought it always a nasty place to meet a chance bullet and hopped across quickly. Ten minutes' hard walk brought one clear of the wood to where the path wound between small shell-holes across the flat to a hedge protected by a bank. To the left were the eighteen pounders, and a couple of badly ruined cottages, reinforced with canvas, which the gunners used as shelters. Off the duckboards then, through a hedge, and one hove to in the shelter of the boreen.

Most of Bairnsfather's scenery is taken from this particular spot, and the trench H.Q. at Walreiphen, a more unlovely place than St. Ives. One first knew there was an artist about by the drawings on the mess table. At Walraphen he blossomed out into mural decorations, one comic study of two Dutch kiddies, but mostly pretty ordinary female studies, like advertisements. There was an obese girl on the wall of the Colonel's cell that used to give him the horrors. 'Bloody awful war, Padre, why make it worse!'

Civilisation

Beauval & C.C.S. or shortly after p. 21

It is strange how interesting ordinary civilized existence becomes after the good lengthy experience of trench life. One didn't look for it, but it has its points, as a change merely, for one gets bored with all things. Being strafed even, loses its keener fresher interest when one recollects the number of one's friends, almost all one's friends, in fact, who have already stopped bullets. One is only a drop in the ocean, though infinitely superior to the blackguards at home whom he is at the mercy of. And this is also very boring to the short-lived trench-man. It was not the same thing as this. Night was not the ' time for sleep, and the gay romance of life' - but for riding along miles of road marked on the German gunners' maps, and otherwise heavily marked by them too; guessing the intention of the enemy's shells, watching for the ubiquitous shell-hole in which one stood a chance of being kicked to jelly by one's nag; meeting transport creeping along by hedges, or galloping past the danger-spots. Strange how the limber [men's] gunner driver selected his 'Hell Corners' and 'Devil's Elbows,' often with good reason as sight and smell testified. Often enough I found them same as any others, safer than two or three others, nameless ones that showed a heavier toll as I hurried past. But then these latter were nearer the trenches by miles, used only by fighting-men who kept their appellations for luck, tuned to a more hopeful key. And in the weird way it was cheery. Men were alert and kindly, and our little meetings were cordial. Not all the evening late or sniper's bullets, or vicious spitting of the mitrailleuse could rob our men of their power of humour, or me of the strange content I found amongst them.

Each evening was new, just as it might be the last, with its burden of dangers and after fears and its quota of kindliness and fun. But now there isn't a memory without its crowd of spectres - the happy little dinner in dugout or in cellar, the cigarettes lighted cautiously in the bottom of trenches, the chats in all kinds of odd corners, and the old familiar faces, and friendly newer ones, that are almost disappeared. And so the long nights passed in the days that are gone. Then to bed, in the morning light as the nights become shorter; to wake in the broad sunshine to an open-air bath, one's meals and letters, a visitor or two, some new arrivals perhaps - a scamper on horseback, and the

nightly round began as before. It had its weariness, and one had often to carry on when sick and over-tired, but it was a happy time beyond most holidays I remember. It had its compensations and they were great ones.

Battle of Ypres April - May 1915

Riding back from a visit to Forrest - taking a toss on the way by Neuveeglise - I called at the hospital. There I met a chaplain, an international footballer whose name I forget, who informed me that we had orders to move. His informant was the Staff Captain, so I got through my work quickly, and hastened to the mess. There I found everything packed, and everyone in the confusion of a sudden move. I made sure I had a sufficiency of pipes and tobacco, looked up my servant and then tried to find what it was all about. As usual there was no definite information to be had: plenty of emphasis but as yet only conjecture. With a hasty goodbye to the lady in whose salon we had so many pleasant evenings, we look in the darkness for our horses mustered in the Square. The front companies are already on the move, and Bankes hearing my voice, asks me to ride with him. Our first halt is to be at [Dramontic] About 6 Ks away, he tells me. And while the men step out singing cheerily, because they had nothing to talk about, we discuss the pros and cons of the present move, the chances of carrying out our original programme of an attack in a few days further south, or the chances of being drawn into the present Hill 60 show. At the moment, however, our move looked a mere precautionary measure.

B. was a big man, and a good one. He spoke, I remember, about his home, remarking that in all truth he often reminded himself out here that he was standing before his home defending it and all it meant, from the brutal German. It was true. It seemed an unnecessary thing to say at the time. A few days later I knew why these thoughts were in his mind, for he gave his life for his ideals in the shallow trench by St. Julien.

It was a cold night, and when the doctor rode up, it was easy to persuade me to dismount and get warm: the doctor was always happier on terra firma. When we arrived at the village I found we were to billet at a mess where I had had tea that afternoon. It was an unexpected return. The men had to sleep wherever they could shelter, and the horses were picketed in the open. I had fears for my old girl, she had always lived in luxury, but we managed, Ryan and I, to get her a sheltered place by a hut. On my return to the mess, I found a slap-up supper in progress; chatted for a while, smoked and curled up quite happily in RAMC blankets on the tiled kitchen floor.

April 24th 1915

The morning was frosty, and at 5 a.m. I went outside to shave, using the kitchen window-sill as a dressing-table. Shaving with hot water in the wind on a frosty morning is a mixed luxury, but it was that or no shelter. An early breakfast, and at 6 a. m. we were on our horses again.

Nearing Reninghilst we branched to the right, and by our left in a few moments we saw some squadrons of cavalry at the trot on a paved road. The trot looked like a hurry of some sort, and the prospect of [our] move being only a precautionary measure seemed

thinner. (opposite p. 23)

In those days it was not a very unusual sight to see troops in numbers on the main roads - for we hadn't got troops in numbers - so our progress excited comment. By midday the sun was shining and the roads were very dusty underfoot as we reached Reninghilst. The old girl was in great form on the way. She seemed to feel the excitement in the air, and gave her usual expression of it.

Poor young Peel was loud in his praises of her, and he ought to have known something about horses. Anyway I liked to hear my thoughts expressed by others. Even still our destination was uncertain as orders and counter-orders kept coming in. At any rate we were under instructions to settle down for the night. I had just arranged for services in the morning, having interviewed the crusty cure, when further orders came, and we were on the road again, this time for a brigade rendezvous somewhere ahead. It was hard enough, for we were pretty tired - most of us had fallen asleep during luncheon - and, in scraps I was reading 'Robbery under Arms.' It was impossible to tell what the higher command were up to - one suspected that it was some of the usual precautionary measures, or 'wind-up'. One was tired and yet one couldn't make arrangements for the night - it might be a hell of a show or a nice quiet Saturday evening smoking in the Spring sunshine. It was such an evening as one gives over to contemplation of the [greater] works of the Creator. The touch of life-giving warmth in the sunshine, the smell of growing things in the brown earth, the primroses along the sunken road and the violets by the wooded places, and the birds that were discovering how good it was to be alive and lay eggs and things, these and a hundred half-sensed memories made one resent the sordid necessities of war. And [it] reminded one of anything in the world but Spring. Weary, covered with dust, not knowing what lay before us - which was just as well - nature seemed to be quite out of touch. The grim desolation of the Wulverghen trenches, or afterwards the trenches by Combles did not seem to hurt one like these primroses and singing birds. And unfortunately we had had not our gramophone to dull the finer edge of our feelings with the narcotic of its vulgar rag-time.

In the meantime, while we were looking for a place to spend the night, in case we did spend it there, falling asleep and waking again, thinking half-resentful thoughts, our fate was being decided on a big scale fifteen miles away. We, poor uninformed mites, were stoutly of opinion that the beastly Hun was down to this penultimate bolt. Generals, even were of that opinion. The wish was, perhaps father to the statistics. A few days before these sudden orders, Loreband walked into the mess in Balleul, rubbing his hands and giving his great cheery laugh and would make a weeping willow curl upwards. 'The General' said he,' is offering twenty to one that we knock the Alleman into the seat of his trousers when we move.' 'Did you take him on, Sir' said Leahy, the men without delusions. 'No,' roared Loreband, 'I would if he had been a subaltern; I'd have had it in sovereigns, but Generals only bet in shillings.'

We were to do the moving and the Hun - well we were, in spite of all his atrocities, almost sorry for him, when we thought of all we were going to do to him. Of course it was the Hun that moved, and when he did he shifted things. He annihilated the landscape, he sent castles into the air, he even at times blotted out the firmament. The seventy inch shells were screaming into Ypres, bringing that city into its own [glitter].

The Turcos had fled before the terror of the smoke-magic. The fifth and third divisions were only remnants and the Canadians were being shot to pieces. And I was walking about looking for a quiet spot to say mass on the following morning; and wondering if the next evening wouldn't find us back in our feather beds at Bailleul. In a moment the order to move again was passed around, and with pretty mixed feelings we pushed along the slope to Ontredom. Some kind of hutments were thrown up on the right of the road, but we knew by this they were not for us. We marched into the left and formed up by companies. Two sand bags and an extra hundred rounds of ammunition per man were handed out - they looked to most like single tickets to Hades, and to most they were. In another hour or so we hit the great road that runs straight as a railway track from Ypres to Popenghe, and the scene became business-like with all the horrid business of war. Ambulances tore past with the usual rear view of four pairs of nailed boots. Men dragged by limping, staggering, covered in blood and dust. The look on their faces gave one a shock. I don't think our Dublins ever looked as these did. French coloured troops, French Dragoons and Spahis made a bit of colour under the great trees. At one time a staff officer on a spirited horse rode cheerfully towards Ypres; one of his arms tied to his body with a sling. The remains of a kilted regiment retired from the trenches gave us a cheer as they passed. 'Good the old Dubs.' It was the first greeting I had ever heard from one regiment to another. And I asked Major Burke what it might portend. 'Why' said he, 'didn't you know they are the Gordons'? 'Yes' said I, 'Well' he went on, 'The Gordons and the Dubliners are the sworn friends in the army. They treat one another till all the pubs run dry. When after the Boer war, the Dublins was given first place as the most popular regiment, the Gordons were bracketed with another (Devon or West Kents, I forget) as second.' 'What's it like Jock?' shouted one of ours. 'Hell' said the laconic Jock. 'We'll keep it burning for ye till ye get back.' 'Jock' said another 'don't be too long.' The reply seemed in the nature of an expletive, so I modestly turned in the flaps of my ears.

The whistle went again, this time our march had many halts owing to the press of traffic, ambulances, field guns, ammunition limbers, and the sad procession of people fleeing from the city. They were mostly women and children and of all sorts and conditions. Some we passed near Ontredom, and who looked as if they had fled some days previously, had painted faces. It gave one a start to realise that war hadn't washed out ingenuity. But along the roads they came silently carrying all they could on their backs, in perambulators or slung on bicycles. Daintily dressed children walked wearily along by their mothers: old and young, pretty and plain, high and low, all followed the same dusty high road away from the homes they loved, because they had to. Many would have remained and died in their homes, but the orders were to evacuate, and it took nearly another ten days to persuade all to go, including the brave priests who ministered to the doomed city to the last. As we moved nearer, we could see huge volumes of smoke: the city was on fire in three quarters. The great 17 inch came every couple of minutes with a noise like a train in a forest and landed with a crash like an earthquake.

The halt on the Ypres Road (opposite p. 26)

This time there wasn't much doubt left as to our fate. A Brigade of cavalry in full marching order went up the other road, a pair (?) at a trot, which was rather significant.

The sun became clouded again, and a strong wind began to blow. Refugees came pouring by, pathetic sights. Little children, young girls, old people leaving all they possessed and all they knew to take their chances among strangers. They streamed by us looking dazed and forlorn. I think it hardened our men's hearts for the job before them. A couple of weeks later when censoring the survivors' letters I noticed not a few in which men told their wives not to worry, and that if they could have seen refugees they passed on the way to the fight, they wouldn't be sorry that some one of them was there to strike a blow for them.

We found the brigade drawn up by battalions and companies; and each man was given two sandbags and an extra hundred rounds of ammunition. The men were as cheery as usual. As the H.Q. servants and orderlies marched up some of them greeted them. 'Here come the 'working' men, the last hope of the regiment' - an allusion to their small part in active warfare, but an unjust one. In a quarter of an hour we were on the road again.

It was a long trek, and as usual one lost the sense of interest in what was before us in the sensations of weariness and mealtimes ignored. A convoy of ambulance cars came by at a good speed as we neared Vlamert, their speed suggesting trouble. In Vlamert, where we hit the main Ypres - Pop road we were able to gather some idea of the magnitude of the show in hand. Parties of French, Belgian, Algerian, Indian and British troops came by. Excited staff-officers; Spahis with their strange chain-saddles, guns rambling past and ammunition wagons going up in haste, ambulance cars of wounded tearing past to return with equal speed for those still to be carried away. And the walking wounded came by in a continuous stream along the great high road, arched with trees. It was a countryside made for the works of peace - rich and highly cultivated. Green leaves and flowers and sunshine emphasise the contrasts of war. Not far away shells were crashing; a great battle was going on. But we saw and heard nothing but the confusion around us.

In the cold spring sunshine it looked peaceful enough from the level crossing where we halted to wait for rations. One thought of other days when the flags of the Irish Brigade were hung there, and one hoped, when we had driven the German far back enough to make a pilgrimage to see them for ourselves. At the moment our eyes were straining, not at the doomed city before us, but down the congested bye-road to see if by any chance some nourishment might arrive. We sat on the railway track and the rails were still bright - and the men made themselves comfortable in the furrows of a ploughed field. Word came that we were to move again, and then we were to stay, our ration-limbers arrived. A tablecloth was laid on the grass, tongue, fish paste and whiskey were laid on it, but did not abide there long. The wind was cold and our appetites were keen. Then the rain began to fall, a gentle drizzle at first, a regular downpour later. We built a kind of fire which asphyxiated us without making us warm, so we let it die. It was a weird scene. The wild looking faces of the usual spick-and-span officers, covered with dust that perspiration had made of their faces around the fire. The talk of our fellows across the road, and the continual rumble of limbers passing by. Once there was a shriek close by, and they said someone was hit. We were too tired to notice if any shells had fallen near. We thought we were not yet in the strafing area - we didn't know any better - then. The flames of the burning city could now be seen distinctly for night had fallen early, but we were not interested, we wanted to know what we were in for, though by this time the feather beds of Bailleul had all the insubstantiality of a dream. We were

enlightened eventually, after a fashion. The Colonel and Watson drifted along, Lorchard, for him rather quiet. He sent for the company commanders, and in the ditch by the embankment we held our pow-wow, and the plan of battle was unfolded. It opened well. We were to have lots of artillery support, and were to be flanked in the attack by the brigades, Northumbrian and Durham. The Canadians were in St. Julien, about eight kilometres ahead. We were to join with them, push off into some wood where some 4.7 guns had been left, and carry on indefinitely. Le Mesurier wished to know if any particular objective was in view. Lorchard closed his map-case, and said 'I've told you all the Brigadier was able to tell me.' Digby Johnson said it wasn't soldiering, and Bankes and Basil MacLear looked it though they didn't say it. Certainly it qualified in a sinister way the hopeful way the pow-wow opened. There was nothing to be done, however, except to take what rest we could. We were to start at midnight.

I moved round for some time amongst the men, in case anyone needed me, and then I placed my cap on one of the nails and did my best to sleep. It wasn't easy. It was blowing hard, and by the time the rain was really heavy. I must have slept for a while for I got a distinct shock when someone walked on my ear. It was the doctor, and he bade me to follow him. It was so dark that I had to take his arm.

We crossed down to the main road, up a little garden, and there in the kitchen of a tiny cottage the H.Q were having supper. It was a silent affair, like a farewell. Our old times were at an end, the hundreds of times we had foregathered in trench and dugout and billet. Something more serious than trench-warfare and bombardments was in the air. And the heavy rain outside, which our men had to face in their tunics only, the steam, in the tiny overheated kitchen, from our wet clothes, the awed silence of the two peasants who treated us with a corpse-like respect, did not serve to distract our thoughts. It was so utterly unlike what we expected an attack to be - no glorious going over the top to boot the Hun from his fortifications, no proud assemble of men who have got a fighting job and are going to do it, but rain and blackness and uncertainty. The morrow might bring anything, so in a thoughtful silence we drank hot coffee and ate sandwiches, and what we couldn't eat we put in our haversacks, for, from all we heard we were not going into a land of milk and honey, but into a region where the bully beef tin even was a welcome stranger.

Midnight April 24th / 25th 1915

Watson departed, and in a few minutes the whistle sounded. It was scarcely possible to recognise anyone in the dark. I nearly missed them, in fact, and was wondering how I could find the road they took when I stumbled across Treacher and his merry machine gun section. In their company I stepped it along a most cursed road, where the bumps were of rock and the puddles bog-holes. Along a better road, something like a boulevard, we met some horsemen, a limber or two, and a few ambulances. These ambulance-drivers must have had some stomachs - shell-fire, and shell-holes, no lights and those awful cases. At the next turn we saw the cathedral burning from end to end, the tracery of the windows standing out in wonderful detail. Then we had to double around some corners that were being heavily shrapnelled. In the light of some burning houses near the lock one could see a broad street with suspicious looking bundles lying here and there. I was told afterwards some of them were women, killed by the shell-fire.

Our job was to get on - at any moment we might have to take our place with the things by the way side, there was no sense in anticipating things. I was tired, the pave[ment] was slippery and rough, and I but half noted the tragedy of the night. A well-trained regiment marching to their death as if on parade, to the right the burning homes of people who had done no wrong, the great cathedral a blazing magnificent sacrilege, with its light gleaming on the rain-washed faces of the poor dead huddles in the hedge. But the flare-lights seemed to be closing in around us like death, and still we hurried to meet it.

In an hour or so we are at St. Jean, and of course we are halted in the village. The night is a little clearer, though the rain is still falling, and we can see the dead men and horses by the church-gate. There is a faint glimmer of light here and there, Canadian aid posts we find. They haven't heard from St. Julien for thirty-six hours. They suppose it to be in German hands. We say nothing to the men, and stick to our very vague instructions. I move up the street, Salresen is as cheery as ever, the officer to the last. Poor Dickie lies in a puddle somewhat feverish, swears it is only a strain from a fall from Digby Johnson's horse. Digby himself hails me out of the darkness to give me another lecture on the lunatic ways of all staff people, and the general idiocy of everything under the sun. A little sun would have served to dry us just then. Hall wants to know what is before us. I assure him that with the supporting brigades it is going to be a walk-over. MacLear is not so sure, but it is not his way to be faint-hearted. A couple of ambulances pass us by, and for want of room, bump gently over the corpses. It gave one a distinctly creepy feeling. On the whole it was quiet there that night, which from what I know of the place now, was strange. The poor old Rifle Brigade were not so lucky.

Dawn 25/4/1915

Whatever was blocking us must have moved or got out, for we fell in again. The skies were getting grey when another block occurred. Watson said it was those dammed Argyles. I suppose the Argyles blamed the blasted Warwicks. In cursing as in war a definitive objective is a desideratum. The doctor gave it as his opinion that the show was already a washout, but he used other words. Dawn was upon us, and the element of surprise impossible therefore. We passed through Widtze, there the brigade split up, and we bore up to the left through still smouldering houses. Scattered groups began to pass us. 'Sole survivors of the Canadians' each party called itself. It seemed mere bluff to us, when we had heard it five or six times. 'The whole bloody Canadian division seems to be a sole survivor,' said the Colonel, and we echoed it. We didn't know then the magnitude of the show we were going into, nor how lost men get when their officers are gone, and they themselves are isolated [and] often fighting against an invisible enemy.

Another meaningless halt, and we top the ridge. I am now walking with the Colonel and Watson at the head of the battalion. Watson's language during the night had been frequent and lurid. In a moment's calm, it was only a moment, he observed that perhaps it wasn't the correct thing to curse and swear and blast things going into battle, and that it would be a sound thing on my part to give him absolution. I don't know whether I had time to answer him, for just then a few cries came from behind, and one could hear the spates and thud of bullets all round. The Colonel, who had just taken a message from Leahy shouts to the men to deploy and lie in the long sodden grass. The guns were not

to open for another hour, and it was daylight already! Thoughtful as usual he turns to me and tells me that I could do my best work with the doctor. I walk back a few steps up the road. The men are crawling on all fours on either side of the road. I feel like crawling too: the bullets are striking the Pare in front of me. Down the centre between his men marches Le Mesurier, holding out his hand. 'Goodbye Father.' I try to tell him that it is ' goodbye', that I shall see him in an hour or two when we have all done a bit of work. But I notice the men as they creep by, touching their caps, and in a confused way, I keep on giving them absolution as they pass. With another grip of the hand, and a strange look that I remembered all that day and many a time afterwards, Le Mesurier is gone - to his death, an hour later. I move slowly up the road, with an uncertain sensation in my knees rather like my first effort on skates. The doctor appears out of nowhere, curses me, and drags me into the ditch on top of several corpses. It is impossible to get low enough. The machine gun bullets hit the road just by our heads, knocking red sparks out of the wet stones. As some part of me seemed destined to be hit, I didn't want that to be my head, so I get onto the road again, and inform the doctor that I shall wait for him in the cottage straight across from us on the other, the Fortium road. The doctor makes away with his stretcher-bearers to bring up his bandages, and I start on my lonely walk through the grass. It wasn't far - but it nearly was. I had time to pay more attention to the bullets jumping around, and I noticed the grass jumping in the air. If one of these got me in the knee, I thought, aloud that I might not be able to stand upright, the rest would get the rest of me. It wasn't cheerful thought, and I had no one to put on airs before, which is a good substitute for courage. I dare not hurry, for the bullets seemed, naturally, more plentiful in front than behind - where I couldn't see them. The cottage itself was either a special target, or, as was more likely, merely showed up the intensity of the rifle-fire. At any rate, I deemed it wise to shelter for a few moments in a cow-byre before investigating further. The cow-byre was not bullet-proof, I believe; in my loneliness, I would have sheltered behind a thistle - but it did not seem to me a suitable place to die, so I sneaked round the comer of the cottage, and found myself in comparative shelter.

The owners had not long left it. The clock stood at 4.40 a.m. and was ticking away. The cellar was badly smashed, and the end of the house farthest from the Germans. But there were glasses on a dresser, and I collected them, remembering how badly our whiskeys and soda tasted yesterday out of tin cups. There wasn't anything else to do for the moment, except wait for the doctor, so I went on with a letter I had been writing in Reninghilst (Le Measurier). A few shells landed near and I went to the door to see where they had fallen. A Canadian moved across the yard, and nodded to me in a casual way. He was making with an empty carbine (?) for a wounded cow, and the cow was making off. He finally managed to bottle the cow in an angle of some outhouses - but a burst of light and a great crash landed on them, and the scenery went up all around. I was pulling myself together to walk across when a similar Hun effort landed on my little cottage and upset me considerably. My little home was being registered and it would be wise to be absent - until they should have finished. Closing up my haversack, and making again a mental note of the glasses, I sped to the door. At the corner the bullets were chipping viciously at the walls about on a level with my face. 'Tis not a nice face, but I didn't think of that at the time. I paused in doubt. I was between the devil and the deep sea, the shells and the bullets; but the heavies won. Another crash plump on the roof-tree rocked me on my feet, and holding my breath I stepped forth.

The landscape by this time was like the waves of the sea where the rocks are rugged, going into the air and subsiding again, only the landscape did not take to it as kindly as the sea. Crossing to the road I noticed in a depression below me twenty or forty men lying in a clump. I sloped towards them, and sat down where the rifle-fire might fire away to the devil over my head. The officer told me they were Canadians, and temporarily, he hinted, out of a job. They had lost the rest of their push. He said it was a hell of a war, and as if to punctuate and emphasise his remarks, thrice or perhaps it was only two, big ones landed in the middle of us. There was a moment's confusion, and when the smoke had cleared away, so had they, and I was alone once more. I noticed some others trekking back a few hundred yards to Wieltze, but as my fellows were in the other direction, I thoughtfully plodded again up to the ridge. Several bunches of soldiers passed by without rifles, unwounded. I tied up several of my own. One with a badly smashed arm - he said it was hanging by the sleeve - I planted against a tree in order to strap the arm to him in case the doctors could do anything with it. The shells were plunging around and as I unwound the field dressing, he fainted, and slipped to the ground. When he opened his eyes he asked me if I were there still. I propped him up again, when he told me that he saw a shell go clean through my head, Right enough there was a fresh hole about two yards away to my right. By this time the shells that didn't hit one did not hurt, and I watched them spouting all over the place, around, in front, and everywhere but the few yards I was in. The noise, the bullets that didn't hit and the shells that missed had reduced me to a state of intellectual coma. The only idea in my mind was to see a heavy fight and then a quiet-time when I could attend to my men. It was an idea that wasn't, in the circumstances, worth much. This was a different war, and therefore unlike the others - there was no quiet time.

Right at the top of the gentle slope someone had stuck up a few sods of turf on end, goodness knows what for. It was a meaningless rubric, if its presence was in any way connected with safety from rifle-fire. Six inches of loose clay would only serve to dirty a wound, not make it less. Anyhow the appearance of the thing was something, and I lay in the shelter of it. A few wounded were about, two quartermasters and the RSM of the Seaforths. I was tired and fell dead asleep, wondering what the chances were that I should wake again. I did wake, a poor boy whispering in my ear to tell him the time of day. My watch registered 7.20 'Morning Father.' I thought it was morning but wasn't sure. Then an Argyle cursing Germans and most other things, swore that his rifle was full of dirt, and loosed it off into the air to free it. He was probably off his head, as evidently thought the Seaforths S. M. for he didn't report him. 'He did that before' said the boy. 'It was that woke you.' A lunatic was felt to be an added discomfort.

The road was pretty full of men wounded and lost. Some were frankly retiring, I stood upright to claim my own and keep them by me in case they were needed. A few Dubs. assured me that the regiment was all gone, and pointed out down the road what he conceived to be the Colonel and adjutant going back. I told him it was impossible and to stick by me anyway. With that a few others came along whom I retained also. I had to tell them that the officers needed them badly, and that they were not to let down the others even if their own officers were washed out. I was just on the point of bringing them up myself when a sergeant appeared looking for S.A.A., so the C. QMS gave him the small arms ammunition, and I bestowed on him the men. One of them was a little kid who used to serve my mass, he was only about eighteen, and the look on his face

worried me for the rest of the day. By the time I could think of some excuse to keep him by me, he was swallowed up in the smoke. For a moment I was directed by an artillery man on horseback galloping wildly amid bursting shells past shell trap farm. He may have had a dispatch for some Brigade Headquarters there, but the men said he was off his head. Then up the road, plugging steadily away came a motor cyclist with his signalling [brassard] He disappeared in the direction of St. Julien. I didn't notice him come back. The stretcher-bearers were magnificent. The road back to Wieltze and farther back to St. Jean was rooted up momentarily with fire-mines, and these fellows with their cases shoulder-high stepped solidly along as if on parade, and with empty stretches returned gamely for more. To my mind they were the bravest of the brave. No officer could have got out of them a tenth of what they did on their own initiative. Like the others they saw nothing heroic in themselves or their work, but very simply and very pluckily they moved about in the open in the thick of the shells and bullets and carried their wounded each a good mile and a half back to the air-post. When they got there they picked up another blood-stained stretcher and cheerfully made their way again right up against the German rifle-fire. It looked as if these men, detailed from the battalion for this service, and prevented from having a shot back at their enemies, felt bound to risk themselves more than anybody else.

There was a badly wounded young fellow by me whom I noticed draining the last of his water-bottle. It reminded me of the few sandwiches I had put in my haversack. I divided them up between the few around me, and in return spared the bully-beef of one of the Company Q. M's, tearing it to pieces with my fingers. I don't know how the time went, it was impossible to recollect all the incidents of that morning, for me it was certain that there would be no need to remember them. At times it seemed an eternity and then each moment looked to be the last, with a fleeting thought that the Dublins would them have to do without their chaplain. Anyhow it was about ten- hours from the time fire opened on us, when a few stretcher bearers asked me how my leg was. My leg as a matter of fact, both legs, were all right, and I could have used them well too, were there any advantage in so doing. The S-Bs insisted that they had carried me down early in the morning, and wanted to know how I had got up again. Actually it was Teoband of the Seaforths they had in the confusion taken for me. They said the doctor had been looking for me for several hours, and that a few times I had been reported dead. Some of the fellows must have seen me asleep. So back the road we went. The bullets dropped behind, but the big shells dropped everywhere. For part of the morning on the little ridge I had been watching Wieltze, Potije and St. Jean getting hell - great whistling things hurtling over my head, thudding into a house then a great volume of red dust stones and iron vomited fifty feet into the air, and then the crash. Now I was walking into it. The bits were falling all about, so I folded my sodden raincoat into a thick hard oblong and pulled it over my cap. It saved my soft head a few times during that little promenade. They landed all around, two at the other side of the road where a moment before I thought I would be safer, and a couple on this side where I would have been if a blinding burst of shrapnel had not made me stop for a moment. One of the damn things would have served me at ordinary times for a life-adventure. But they came and came, and houses went up and fell down, sections of road flew at me, and German scrap iron danced giddily around my legs. The detestable noise, I think, helped to dull one's sensibilities, which was lucky. For it was no place for a nervous man, and at that without a friend near. But ducking, dodging, cursing and praying I eventually covered

the couple of kilometres to St. Jean, and was greeted by an angry punch in the ribs from the doctor.

The firing line in the rain had seemed to be about the most desolate place I had ever seen, but now the sun shone out, and our sodden things began to dry. Hall was with the doctor, and with reaction from shock and excitement his teeth were chattering helplessly. We were hungry, and the thought of grub hit us simultaneously. Man is a social animal, forking in food is a social affair, and the sight of this reminded us of our duties. This was all right; our hearts were in the right place, but the grub, where was she? In Hall's pockets we found some wet cigarettes, matches, also wet, some revolver ammunition and sixpence worth of chocolate. I protested I wasn't hungry, but luckily my eyes must have given me the lie, for they insisted on my having my share. A further search in Hall's bullet torn tunic revealed the saddest thing of all, a whiskey flask pierced by a bullet, and consequently bone-dry. Hall was a teetotaller and kept it only for others. Unfortunately it didn't keep; and there was one more deep nick in our count against the Huns. We were talking a few yards away from the Church. A few shells had landed near it, when with a whistle and a snick a big dud cut clean through the spire. Another and another fell, and in a few minutes the church that I hadn't even time to look at, was in flames. As that seemed to be the general fate of us all, we scarcely remarked upon it.

Watson, if seemed, had gone through with one in the leg, and Wheeler with a badly smashed arm, got just as I left him when the show opened. White was killed as he lay in long grass, and [Onlton], who was sent back with Hall to stop the fire of our own field-pieces, had got sniped through the stomach. Le Mesurier, he believed, was dead. We drifted somehow into a little bricked archway rather like a tunnel, and lay on the straw and slept. A moment or two afterwards I overheard the doctor talking to someone; the words 'something to eat' brought me at once to attention. It was a Canadian officer; I forget his name, but I shall never forget his kindness. He piloted us along to a cottage redolent of heated MacConachies, awful things, about as digestible as their own tins, but just then I had difficulty in letting one be carried past me to my neighbour. I have an idea that when that Canadian colonel asked me if I would have some, I merely nodded, with tears in my eyes. Heavy shelling is a wonderful appetiser. An hour's bombardment after a heavy meal made that repast seem unreal and a myth. I do not remember saying grace. One felt it too deeply for words.

Hall's nerves were still in a rotten way, but he would not take a whiskey. I simply had to bully him into it. These Canadians were good fellows, and seemed to take life, and death, pretty easily. A remark or two from the Colonel to some of us was answered as often as not by one of the servants. These latter were by no means stand-offish, and aired their opinions quite freely. Standing at the door for a few moments our first friend pointed across country to a clump of trees. 'They are giving my poor fellows hell' he said 'I must be off.' He was observing officer for the four field-guns that remained active in the Salient. All the others had been washed out, and their gun teams with them for the most part.

Hall, and Doc and I went to our aid-post. Treacher was there, practically at the last gasp, pretty badly shot up and with a smashed femur. It was a shock to see him lying there

near to death, a stout fearless fellow as he always was. Someone told us the Colonel was wounded too, so we went up to meet him and bring him down. We had got pretty far up when we met Radcliffe walking gaily down, his shirt flapping outside his breeches. He was covered with blood, and wounded slightly in several places, with one arm tied up. He was very cheery and wished us luck. Farther on we met the Colonel limping along on his little blackthorn stick. His voice was gone, and his usual great laugh was only a hoarse whisper. 'Missed everything, dammit, Padre, nearly got me.' He had a flesh wound on the inside of the thigh. It was he that told me my poor servant Leavy was killed. The H. Q. servants, it appeared, having had it thrown up to them on occasions that they had a cushy job, had insisted on going into the battle with the others. Of these Leavy was knocked out while running forward re-loading. Street was wounded, Sergeant Berry was killed, and Colville badly shot through the shoulder. The poor fellows had proved themselves. Street, who couldn't carry a cup of tea without falling into it, and whose slackness was responsible for fifty per cent of Watson's language, fought like a cat. Berry was everywhere in the thick of it, and had only just pulled and thrown Street bodily into a shell-hole when he stopped a whole one himself.

Later on the Doc and I moved up to the battalion with a few emergency stretcher-bearers. We found some wounded and dead in some houses beyond Wieltje on the [F….] road. It was now dark. The close-range shelling was taking it easy, though we could hear above the crack of rifles and distant guns the big seventeen-inch rushing over the heads like a train through a forest, and crashing down away behind us on poor Ypres. There was a big number of dead near the little shrine on the road, and past these we moved into the fields. It wasn't a reassuring sight, this aftermath of the day's slaughter. Corpses were everywhere, in every possible position, some lying peacefully as if asleep, others with faces buried in their hands, and others in all attitudes sprawling awkwardly or cramped. One had not much time to look at them, and the general impression was only of multitudes of dead, of Very lights throwing a ghastly radiance all about us, smouldering houses here and there, figures passing with stretchers, and the constant whip and knock of the German rifles. The doctor began to run, and to keep up with him I ran also. He swore a little - not a great deal for he was panting, and I noticed him drawing a big Webley from its holster. A poor old cow had been trotting behind us for company, and the doctor thought it was a bull with a mind to gore us. We might have walked over our trenches if some men had not been about. They were only hacked out with entrenching tools, and were from a foot to a foot and a half deep. About seven hundred of our men had been killed or wounded and about eighteen officers. Haines who had taken our photographs a few days before was killed and the photos taken. The German who had taken the films was himself killed and the films re-taken. Finally, the fellow who had re-taken them was killed somewhere else. Sabresen got a bullet through the head. Young French, who had only returned from sick leave after his wound in Plugstrat, fought like the plucky kid he was until he stopped one. Peel was killed, Sparrow killed, Digby-Johnson shot in the ribs, and Dickie, with an attack of pleurisy, fighting in his fearless way, was wounded in the side. Of the company commanders [Basic], McLean] and Bankes were still to the good. And of the little crowd that met in the cottage last night Loreband, Wheeler Wats[t]on and Treacher were gone, Leahy had been taken on the Brigade to replace Ellis, and the doctor and myself remained. Most of the sergeants, including a Major Moloney, were gone, and of the officers, Maunsell, Hazeldine (both completely done in and practically off their heads), Panton, Glipp, and

Head remained.

We trekked back along the other road, calling at the Seaforths' Headquarters on our way. There wasn't much to learn. The Argyles 7th and 9th battalions were practically washed out. They themselves had suffered pretty much as we had. Along by shell-trap farm some Canadians were still in a pretty sound trench along the cart-track. Farther down, half-way between Wieltje and St. Jean we dropped into Brigade H. Q. to see Leahy. The General was sitting with his head in his hands. His greeting was almost fierce 'The Dublins haven't suffered the heaviest, Father.' As a matter of fact, I hadn't said they did, I had only thought it. He was one of the bravest and the best, and it was discouraging to see him down-hearted. He asked me to stay to dinner, but as I was afraid of casualties waiting for me at St. Jean, I told him so and excused myself. Before going I asked him if Hall, who was a nervous wreck might stay with me that night. 'Do as you like, good night,' and back we marched to St. Jean.

The wounded were everywhere, and everywhere was confusion. Motor ambulances came and went. I attended as many as I could, but the thing was hopeless. The only light was the fitful light of the burning church, and the flares from the trenches all about us. As I got on to the street I saw the Eleventh Brigade and tried to get them to look for Hall. I found him eventually, and we were making our way through the press of wounded and unwounded when some shells fell near. Then a mighty one blazed and crashed close by me right into the middle of the Rifle Brigade. It was an awful sight - one man screamed like a woman; it made my blood run cold. And a big man, a Major, walked by crying with agony, as he leaned on the shoulder of a short squat officer. No other place would do to halt them but this that had all day long been more pasted with shell-fire than even the trenches. Under it all the poor wounded had to lie in the schoolrooms and the recreation ground waiting all day and night their turn to be taken away, perfectly helpless while the high explosive and shrapnel crashed all about them and sometimes through them.

Eventually we decided to rest and take what sleep we could. Our gunner friend suggested using the cottage he was observing from. There was a cellar of sorts to it; it might save us from splinters and shrapnel, but was a death trap with a direct hit. We managed to get some black tea, a loaf and some plum and apple. My clasp-knife had to serve everything and everybody. It was a dirty hole, and we were if anything, dirtier, but after the day, it promised comparative shelter, and sleep. In the light of the candle the others looked anything but warriors. With the slight gas* we had run into, with its sickly smell of lilac, our eyes were running, making tracks down our muddy faces, our noses were swollen and red, and a certain amount of beard further disguised our beauty. I thought it amusing and said so. They looked at me laughed and agreed with me, then they looked to one another and sighed, each man realising what a freak he must look. It did not however, as I had hoped, spoil their appetites. We wolfed the rusty hairy loaf moistened with turnipy plum and apple, drank our cold black tea, and curled up, with

*The gas was not severe. It made us feel as if we had pneumonia without the temperature. Naturally with the cure-alls, in the shape of German lead and metal flying about, one did not pay much attention to it.

the best hopes in the world, on two filthy gritty mattresses to dream of sunshine and roses, of cosy firesides and home, of revues and revelry according to our several temperaments.

It wasn't easy to sleep, for bitter thoughts would come. As far as my work went I was like a blue-bottle in a window pane, strafing around in a kind of helpless way seeking whom I might anoint. A little thought would have made me more efficient, and anybody could have told me that. But the people who give advice were far away. I grinned to myself when I thought of how I should like to see them in this show. It would take the smugness and self-complacency off their faces, and replace it with the look I was getting accustomed to, that of stark staring fear. Some would make good, and I nearly wept as I thought how I should like to have them by me. I felt damnably lonely and Later, it was to be the most feared of all.

useless. That morning I had sent men back to their deaths - but the alternative was to let them sneak away, and I had no scruples. Still in the silence of the night, with another day like the last to face, and perhaps other and other days until a merciful bullet arrived, it was a responsibility. And there was poor young X who had held his isolated trench all the winter against the Saxons in Plugstreet, his nerve was now gone. Time after time he implored me to get him away. He was not afraid of death, but of being a coward before the men. It was pitiful, the brave, good boy, with a sense of duty to God and to his regiment that edified the roughest of us, to see him reduced to this. 'If I had only your courage,' or 'coolness', or 'pluck' or something equivalent, he said several times. My God, if only he could have looked into my craven heart. And I dared not tell him, it would only hurt him more. So I told him of the boys who loved him, who would miss him and be lost, perhaps, without him, until consoled, he slept and left me awake to console myself. The doctor snored on the other side, sleeping awkwardly with no pillow. The gunner muttered away about ranges and rounds, and finally I added my snore to the others. And it was morning and evening of only the first day.

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How to account for my movements within the next week it is difficult to say. Moving cautiously here and there, as if caution mattered in the least, attending wounded wherever I saw them, hanging on at times to the doctor, again with the gunner watching the attacks and the fire of his guns, and feeling indescribably filthy. No servant, no linen, only such food as we could pick up, oftentimes from the dead, and little hope of getting any of these things from behind. We were bad enough where we were, but, by all accounts the road through Ypres and on to here was a death trap every inch of it. One pitied the poor devils who had to make their way up it, pity somewhat wasted, as I found out afterwards; our spot was about the hottest of the lot.

The Northumbrian Brigade was due to attack about eleven, and about half-past ten our gunner's four puny eighteen-pounders were belching away for dear life. Their efforts looked ridiculous in the face of the stuff the Germans were putting over. The shrapnel hung in constant clouds over these devoted field guns, and the heavies of every calibre pelted them with tons of metal. And all through it the little devils barked and spat like wild cats. It wouldn't have been so brave if it hadn't been so hopeless. Still, as the

observing officer and I look[ed] through our glasses, his shells were bursting neatly on the enemy parapets. It was sound range-finding, and must have made the Hun think he was up against quite a lot. It was good to think that these Northumbrians would fire the Germans an extra welt or two, and that our own poor fellows would get relieved. One couldn't see anything of them after they topped the ridge, but the Dublins told me they fought well. One Dublin told me that night, after the Northumbrians had by mistake fired into them, 'It would make you cry, Father, to see them coming on to be slaughtered and marching as if they were on parade.' It was horrible, two days of a futile display, of infantry without artillery against the might of the German guns. Their heroism went for nothing, and they were washed out. It was if anything a more complete holocaust than ours. General Riddell was killed and nearly all their officers. They killed Bankes, who was doing our temporary O. C., and knocked out about thirty others. Bankes was elderly and very rich and devoted to his wife and kiddies. Still as he told me a few days before, there was no difference between defending the wife and children in the trenches and defending them on his own doorstep, and like the others he gave his life for his convictions.

If anything the attack made the loathly Hun more offensive. Shrapnel crashed down on the wounded, walking and lying, crashed into the swollen corpses of men and horses, letting loose odours before which the other horrors of war took a back seat. The wounded were in a pitiable state. It seemed to them their cup of bitterness was still filling. The ambulances, working at full pressure could not get even the lying cases away. The roads were pitted with shell-holes, and great crumps kept bursting on them almost continually. About this time I met a scared Tommy leading a sad-looking light draught. He told me that a chaplain, a little man with glasses was looking for me. He wished something would happen [to] the horse, as he wanted to get off the blinking road. I sympathised with him, and forthwith ran into Ryan. Ryan was full of beans and buck, but nothing else. He had no whiskey-flask. He told me all in one breath that I was reported dead, that I was a hell of a brave fellow, and that he got up as soon as he could to attend to the men. A good little man, sound as a bell on essentials, and plucky too, he spoke in awed whispers of the slaughter, of our un-preparedness, of bad staff-work and no artillery, all things I knew better than he did, but which I didn't want to admit to myself. Had he had that flask I would indeed have borne with him, and gladly. But his Jeremiads, unaccompanied by alcohol, were simply un-necessary, and I bolted. A few shells came down behind me. I learned later that three of them hit ambulances. One ambulance was burned and the driver killed; Ryan attended to him. He told me later that he salved (sic) a piece of the burnt car to send to the poor lad's mother. Gruesome bird, Ryan. I told him he ought to have been an undertaker.

Within an hour or so of dusk Hall and I moved up to the firing line. The shelling was much quieter, only a few bursting here and there, and along the road the rifle-fire was insignificant. An occasional one pinged near - one only observed that the stillness was not absolute. If it were, it would have probably meant a German attack. So we welcomed the intermittent sniping. Northumbrians had now replaced Canadians in the trenches by shell-trap farm. From there to the firing-line the wounded and the dead lay thick. Many wounded were already bandaged and waiting for an ambulance to pick them up. Hall was tireless. He kept ears and eyes open for signs of wounded. He dragged me into the blackened fields where the men were indistinguishable from the

tumbled clay because he heard heavy breathing of wounded men. Many a man owed his life to him that night. We dragged them on to the road where they could be seen by the stretcher-bearers, and gave them the best chance we could. I was impatient to get to the firing-line and start my work from there. We met a few of our own looking for water, brought one of them back with us, and finally met our own stretcher-bearers, tireless fellows, doing all the heavy work. They told me they couldn't touch all the work; some of their men had been knocked out. So for a while I did some stretcher-bearing and came away from it with torn hands and a broken back, admiring them more than ever. At the burning farm I found Sergeant O'Connell. He took charge of me, and gave me umpteen jobs to do. He was killed a day or two later, a cheery capable Christian, doing his duty to the last. First of all he had about forty men who wanted to go to confession. These I heard in a corner of a stable they had been defending all day against a regiment of Germans, Westphalians, I think. In one of the cow-stables Maunsell was lying, down and out with overwork and nerves. He had been holding the place with great pluck for about thirty-six hours, and it had been too much for him. I implored the doctor to send him down. But the doctor gave it as his opinion that we were all in the same boat, and had got to stick it. He was right in a way. The fortunate devil who got wounded, got out of it; the poor fellow - in those days - who had been rattled and jangled and shocked out of all semblance to himself was supposed to have only a touch of nerves, and to damn well carry on. Hazeldene was pretty rocky too and had to be sent away. O'Connell told me that a big number of wounded were in a farm-yard I had just passed, where the Seaforths were. I thought I would see McLean first and do them on my way back. We walked up and down, talking cheerful stuff about the certainty of being relieved perhaps that night. Most of the conversation was tuned to that strain during these days. Otherwise we might have gone brig-house. I attended in a shallow transverse a poor fellow who had been shot through the throat. He wanted more and more water, but it only gurgled through the wound. Some Germans were brought in, badly wounded, whom they asked me to speak to. I took their papers, glancing at them in the light of the still burning farm house. A couple were Catholics. When the men saw me hearing their confessions they took a new interest in them, brought them some grub which they wolfed and even some hot tea. One unter-offizier, a Rhinelander, looked so pleased with himself at falling into Catholic hands, that he offered his cigarettes, all round, and when they wouldn't take the cigarettes, he offered the silver case. Only one hand was stretched out to take a cigarette, and that was struck back by a corporal with 'Leave the poor devil his fags, sure they might be like the officers' stinkers and no use to ye.' I explained all this to the grateful Hun, to his intense edification. This N.C.O. by the way had not seen a chaplain for several weeks. It appeared that the German priests are not allowed beyond divisional headquarters. They were certainly a well-equipped crowd. He had actually, on him a song-book of marching tunes 'for the use of Catholic soldiers.' The old Hun was thorough in everything.

The fire-trench was a good foot deep. The men were too few and too beaten to put up a deeper effort; and they had only their entrenching tools. I found McLear sitting in a dugout about the size of a hen-coop. All the company commanders except myself were gone. He hadn't a single officer left under him who had been out more than a couple of months. 'Let's crawl in here, Padre,' he said, 'you are the oldest Dublin left. I want to talk about things.' When we crawled in, there was barely room for us to lie side by side on face and hands. We had a drink out of his flask, and then he unfolded his map and

his mind. At a point fifty or a hundred [yards] ahead a trench across the road was a vital necessity. A motor machine gun had come up a few times last night and sprayed them heavily. They were expecting it again any moment to-night. But he had no picks and shovels, the Brigade couldn't supply any, God knows where the Division was, and that was that. I had a brain-wave. I dimly remembered, while stumbling along with Hall looking for wounded in the grass, I observed some pick-heads and handles lying about. It was not a thing to remember at the moment when a machine-gun seemed busy in our direction, but that my attention was called to them by the point of one pick getting me in the ankle. I asked McLear to let me have a few men to go and look for them. He looked doubtful, thought I was dreaming, I suppose, picks and shovels the one thing necessary growing around like mushrooms. But I got the men, and with great good luck, I led them practically straight to where the picks and pick handles were.

By this time, the fields reminded me of wounded, and wounded reminded me of the Seaforths farm-yard. I told one of the men to report to Captain McLear with the picks, and to tell him that I had discovered an urgent job of work to do. When I reached the farm, I saw a strange sight, a great farm-yard in the misty moonlight, covered with straw that moved up and down like the waves of the sea. It was uncanny. I wondered if I was quite well. Diffidently I remarked it to a stretcher-bearer. He was one of ours. 'The wounded are under it, Father. We put the straw out of the barns under them, but with the pain they turn and twist until the straw is all over them and you can't see one of them now at all. ' And it was so.

Gently I picked my way along the hollows, the troughs of the waves, but even that wasn't successful. There was an occasional groan as I walked on some poor battered limb, and once a shriek and a perfect volley of curses brought me to a standstill. 'I am awfully sorry,' I said, 'I am looking for wounded Dublins.' 'Oh Father' he began, and if his sorrow for his sins was anything like his grief at all, the few necessary words he used, his crown in heaven is a big one. After that I crawled round on hands and knees. In a clear part of the yard was a young doctor in charge of the ambulance convoy. It wasn't much of a doctor's job, but it was a sport's, and he looked one. He was going back to comparative civilization, and we estimated that it took more of a man to take this life in spots than to be up to the neck in it all the time. That is how I felt anyhow.

In other wars a regiment that had lost anything like half its establishment was taken back to refit. If they had gone through a stiff time without food or sleep, this also was reckoned to them unto righteousness and they got a holiday. But here the line had to be held, and the Dublins had to hold it few or many, and of course they did. They were cheery about it too. It was a grim sort of cheerfulness at times. 'There'll be a lot of strange faces in hell to-night, Father' was the brisk greeting of a Dub with a sound blighty one, when telling me that the brigade was down to a few companies. A smile, even if a haggard one, greeted one everywhere. If my own attempts to be cheerful were any indication, it was only the purchase-money of other people's cheer. ' I smile at you, and you smile at me because I'm needing it damn badly,' would have about expressed my feelings, did I know I had any.

The doctor had probably returned ere this to his aid post. Anyway I missed him and set out on my lonely tramp back through the avenue of the silent dead. Half a mile of it

plodding slowly - haste became an [unseemin] thing, no one even walked fast, there was plenty of time to be killed - and some Tommies footsteps, so I carried on. Ordinarily one did not talk to stray Tommies. They didn't understand it. And this was not the time to begin, lonely as I was. It would look like wind-up. One of them after a time began to whistle, imitating the sound of coming shells. I cringed once or twice, and then turned around and damned him. The poor fellow hadn't realised what he was doing. I found others had the same hatred of whistling. A few days afterwards the Colonel damned me for doing the same thing quite unconsciously.

I called in to brigade H. Q. with my German papers. They gave some little information about the Germans opposite. Colonel Geddes was there of the Buffs, wonderfully spick and span considering that he had been commanding the famous Geddes contingent in the woods beyond St. Julien for over ten days open fighting. General Hall asked me to remain to grub, but I was afraid I might be needed at the aid-post.
(above written opposite page 48)

Next morning the gunner pointed [me]out to the left a dark column advancing in the distance. 'French' said he, 'and we've got no orders to open fire yet.' He got down from the skylight and started in to worry his C.R.A. over the field telephone. In his rough way he wasn't an educated fellow, he said some hefty things to his chief, while his corporal, an Oxford M.A., a most silent respectful fellow, looked on unsmiling. This latter must have been a study - unfortunately, in my rattled state, I had no time for idle curiosity. It was interesting to watch them march up - it was the first time I had seen French in action. They advanced, dressed in the old dark blue coat to the knees, with red trousers, marching in column of route. They were about half a mile to my left, and they had a mile and a half to go to the enemy trenches. Meantime every kind of shell poured down on them, high explosive blew them into the air, and shrapnel crashed on them from above. It was thrilling - they just marched right on. They didn't deploy, they didn't scatter or pause, they didn't even get into artillery formation. In a dense column of fours or eights I didn't notice which, they moved on like an inexorable fate. I couldn't see that even a stretcher bearer fell out to succour the wounded.

Then the French seventy-fives opened out. For a small gun, only three inch bore they seemed to do tremendous execution on the German trenches. The puffs of our field-guns were as nothing beside them, though I couldn't get our own gunners ever to admit the superiority of the seventy-five. The infantry thought otherwise. In half an hour or so we saw the French deploy, and we wished them all the fun of the fair. Our attention at the moment was distracted by a few shells falling near. 'They see us' said the doctor. 'Damn' said the gunner, 'I hope not. This place suits me.' With that some shrapnel burst through the slates, and just as we fell on top of one another down the stairs a high explosive burst in the loft we had just left. When the smoke and dust had cleared away I sought out the fuse of that shell. Shells bursting in enclosed places usually kill all the enclosed, so I put it in my pocket as a souvenir. The saddest thing about it was the loss of a priceless pound of butter the doctor's servant had brought up with the rations that morning. A section of the ceiling had fallen on it and crushed its young life out. 'If it had only been the padre' said the doctor. But we felt it was no time for jokes; three days with dry bread and black tea, and then comes this heaven-sent grease. The joy was as much as we could bear. We told others of it, and asked them to come along to tea. They

said ‘You don’t say so. Splendid, of course we shall come.’ And they did and accused us of having eaten the damn thing. We showed them the holes in the cottage, and the debris, but as there was nothing remarkable about that, they didn’t believe us, and went away angry. Thus was our cup of bitterness full. The doctor said that if he ever got home again he would buy a hat-full of butter, and eat it by himself straight out of the paper or whatever they sold it in. Even still I can’t look at butter without wanting to pile it on inches thick before the house falls on it.

Ryan called in for a few minutes to tell us what a terrible war it was and all the escapes he had. Our sad history of the butter he dismissed as beneath notice. Several shells had missed him by inches, and someone had stolen his hairbrush. He was very annoyed about it. There had been some shelling that morning, the place he was in seemed more unsafe than places he wasn’t in, and he decided to remove himself. Then he missed the brush. After much questioning of others who were sheltering in the house, one man admitted to having a brush he [did] not have before. He said he didn’t think it was any good. ‘I told him’ said Ryan, ‘that it was an awful thing to see him stand there and tell lies, when he might be at the judgement seat of God in a few moments; that it was a grace that he wasn’t among the killed downstairs, stolen brush and all, and I frightened him said Ryan. ‘I complained [about] him to his officer for his impudence. He told me first he didn’t think anybody would want it, above all an officer, as it was so dirty. Then he said he didn’t think it could have been mine as I had no hair.’ Luckily an orderly came up with the compliments of the general commanding the thirteenth brigade, asking me to come and see him. It appeared that Colonel Geddes of the Buffs had been killed by the shelling that had agitated Ryan. Geddes had just finished luncheon with the General, and had walked into another room to put on his equipment when a shell, a 5-9, came smack through the end wall and killed him and a sergeant-major, and wounded a few others. I buried the sergeant-major straight away behind the schoolhouse. The general wanted me to bury Geddes and two other senior officers of his staff that evening. They were all Church of England, but the general said he preferred that I should do it. I thought it my duty to get a Protestant chaplain, if possible. We arranged that if one did not turn up before ten, I should take the funerals.

When I got back I found some coloured troops moving in and out of our little cottage. They were the signal section of the Surbind Brigade, Lahore Division. Some of the Ghurkas were there too with their famous kukris at their belts. Of all the Indian troops I met these were the only ones that looked at home in this rotten climate. Hardly little savages, nothing seemed to worry them. A doctor told me a story of one of them who was a patient in his hospital. He refused to be parted from his kit, it seemed to be part of his religion, so they respected his wishes. It is the one thing they are respectful [of], these English, any kind of strange religion. They washed him, they disinfected him, they perfumed him. And after days of washing and perfuming he only smelled the more. They had a consultation which nearly resulted in a new disease being discovered, severities or something. They told an Indian officer of it. He came with them with a brisk and ready step until he arrived where the smell dwelt in splendid isolation with its supposed father, and then he faltered. The smell was all they had said it was and more also. ‘Take the beggar's kit and burn it’ said he. It is probably some blasted souvenir the savage has got hold of.’ Relays of orderlies removed the Ghurka’s pack and discovered one blood-stained shirt, some needles and thread, a pair of socks and the putrescent head

of one German. They buried the trophy, and scrapped the report on the new disease.

Their ways were not our ways. The French Senegalese and Turco troops took equally kindly to these intimate souvenirs of their enemies. Webb and myself were passing one day up from Vlamertinghe when a French regiment crossed out in front. I was interested in the tiny carbine the poilus carried, a single-round affair about the size of a Daisy air-rifle. One of them told me it was quite efficient, and anyway, their seventy-fives did all that kind of work. I expect these were 'troupes de choc,' who go in with bayonet and knife to attack. Webb asked me afterwards if I had seen the Belgian kiddies scrambling for 'souvenirs.' It is their eternal [….] and no one heeds them. This big good humoured Turco, however, obligingly dived into the leg of his loose trousers and tossed them a handful. The dust immediately rose high over the melee of little curio-hunters. When it subsided Webb saw the kids looking with horror at what they had been scrambling for. Each kid held up to his own amazed eyes a German thumb. The big Turco passed on well content that he should have been able to bring such happiness to suffering and orphaned children. He clapped himself on the back and thought he would do it often.

That night the G.O.C. 13th Brigade sent for me. No other chaplain had arrived, so I had to do my best with a free English translation of our burial service. We laid poor Geddes and the others under the sod in the garden on the Ypres side. The big guns boomed sadly away, and even the big 'Murphies', the 17 inch Empress, hurtled overhead on its fifteen mile journey to the martyr city. Just then all this sacrifice and heroism and suffering seemed very futile. We chatted for a few moments down in the cellar, sampling some Grand Marnier with the general, while he talk of Geddes' death. 'There was a priceless padre here' he continued, 'a most fearless fellow.

When Geddes and the others were laid out by a couple of shells this man was kicking up a most stinking row about an old hairbrush he missed. A little bald chap with glasses and rather fussy.' 'There is only one of him,' I said, 'and his name is Ryan.' 'Anyway', said the general, 'he said he wouldn't wait to be killed with a lot of thieves and robbers, so he left us.' 'I bet he's in some cushy spot by this telling of his hairbreadth escapes and calling the XIIIth Brigade all sorts of names,' said another. 'He might have got a D.S.O., Sir' said a young staff captain, 'if you hadn't stolen his hair brush.' Well, he was certainly plucky' said the general, 'it takes cheek to think of a hairbrush when shells are dropping.' 'Not for Ryan, Sir' said I, 'Good night, Sir' 'Good night, Padre, and thank you very much. It's been awfully good of you.'

The doc. was pleased to hear all I told him of these strange officers' talk, new guns that had come up to the banks of the canal, and new stink shells the Huns were sending over. These created a pink haze, and made one violently sick. 'I don't want to be any sicker' said the old doc. 'but at present I have nothing to throw up.' I told him about the Grand Marnier. 'couldn't you make some excuse to go back there and bring me with you,' suggested the doc. 'perhaps you didn't bury them right or something.' There are times when idle suggestions only emphasise the absence of human joys, so I was rough with him.

However the gunner had a trump hand in his pocket in the shape of a tin of delicious margarine. The gods were smiling again. A pioneer had even stolen somewhere for us

half a tin of condensed milk. We felt that it was not lucky to be so fortunate. Something was bound to happen. We had just got through a modest feed when a wallop came to the door. The gunner went over, thinking it was a message from his guns. 'I'm afraid you're wanted padre' he called to me, looking serious. I tightened my belt and stepped to the door. There were a couple of my pioneers, I didn't understand them at first. 'Come in' I said to them, 'excuse us for a moment' to the others. They went through some genuflections and the gunner burst out laughing. The poor fellows were about half tight, and while assuring me 'that the wather was damn bad around here' they were placing half a dozen bottles of wine on the floor. With a supreme effort I managed to tell them that I would take their advice and avoid as long as possible drinking any of the 'wather.' 'There's more, father, where that came from.' One man endeavouring to salute, blessed himself instead, both marched solidly to the door, saluted again, and wended their way back to the comrades to tell them, as the rotten doc. suggested, that 'the priest was all right and wouldn't tell on them.' When the door was safely shut, the fat doc, the gnarled colonial and the grey stooped-ex-pedagogue danced a solemn stately measure around the bottles. There was more of Pavlova in it than Ethel Levey, more of the thoughtful Kyashti than of the abandon of Kellog. Our movements, sinuous and graceful as they were, and not the finicky perfections of the Russian ballet, but all that Pavlova ever expressed or Modkin ever expressed in poetic motion, we meant. The morning stars when they sang together were not more sincere than we. With no greater thanksgiving did the great constellations tread their nightly minuet through the hosts of heaven. Suddenly, though the warp and woof of these high thoughts, another thought, an anguished one, struck me. What if they should share the fate of our late lamented half-pound of fresh butter! The others were sobered in a moment. And not until we had each tightened our belts over a good bottle of claret did we feel that our cup of happiness (cracked enamel) was not to be dashed from our lips. The doc., in a voice that was a cross between a hand-saw and a choked drain, obliged us with a stave of his hymn of late 'A little grey home in the West' and curling up upon the floor, we slumbered.

It was still dark when I woke. I felt a shock or two and some of the ceiling descended on me. There was a rush of feet, the impact of some soft substance like a nose on the half open door, and sulphurous mutterings that died away on the night air. Before sleeping, feeling that this war was not such a bad war after all, I had trustingly removed my boots and leggings. They had had to be prised off. And now with the place being shelled, and the other two cleared out before me, I couldn't get them. I had to risk a match, picked up some boots, and dived across the street. Two blinding shrapnel shells burst a few yards over my head on the left and rattled viciously on the road to the right. My feet picked up some glass and sharp pieces of shell. But I reached the shelter of the baker's oven, and in a few minutes was asleep again. The gunner was very sick that night. Someone at his battery had persuaded him to take a tot of rum. He wasn't used to it, world-traveller as he was, veteran of the Boxer rising and of the U.S. army, so with the claret, and perhaps the rude awakening in the night, his old tum was not all it should be. It was a strange war and a new one. Homer never told us that Achilles was ever bilious, or that Hercules, in some crises of his life, had also bowel trouble. If he had, one would have been prepared. As it was, we felt it was something un-heroic. And when he apologised, we warned him not to do it again. It made us think of leave and made us homesick.

During the day he had told us of an incident which could have had nothing to do with his indisposition, though as a tale it was sickening enough. For a day or so some of his Canadian Infantry, holding trenches over on the left had to watch some of their captured comrades swinging from willow trees over the German lines. It was an easy way of getting the Canadians to come forward to the slaughter, but the officers would not let them budge. However in the confusion of the big French attack about fifty of them went forward, took the Germans unexpectedly, slaughtered many of them and made thirty or forty prisoners. When they arrived in the German trenches, they forgot about their pals hanging in the trees. They saw worse. One Canadian sergeant still alive, was spread-eagled on the floor of the trench with bayonets through his hands and feet. Further on they found another, crucified as they called it. Quietly they took their prisoners, stood them against the entanglements and painfully bombed them to death. In those days we had not yet the Mills bomb. Our affairs were homemade, mostly in jam tins. Often they failed to explode, and often when they did, the damage was slight. So the execution in its lingering cruelty had a kind of poetic justice about it. It was impossible to feel sorry for the swine who could crucify unarmed combatants. In fact the performance left a decidedly good taste in our mouths.

A sample of Kultur something like this was told me by a Capt. Bell, R.F.A., and twice on the casualty list. It was on the advance, and they entered a town as the Germans left. He had asked permission to let his men sleep in the church for the night, and left a squad there to put things in order. The church was a little dark. Somewhere in it something was screaming in a blood curdling way. As he moved up, it rose again, just by him. He looked, and there on the big cross, from which the figure of Christ had been broken off, a cat was crucified with bayonets. Bell was only able to point it out to the sergeant, run to the door and get violently sick. When he pulled himself together and entered the church again, his men were practically wiped out. One of the bayonets pinning the cat to the cross, had been attached to a large bomb or mine.

It is only a sample, but when the Canadian had told his story, it was with reason, if not charity, we replied ‘Jolly good thing. Good old Canada.’

Next morning as I opened my eyes, the sun was shining on the apple and pear blossoms in the orchard. But they were not responsible for the smell. A few doses of shrapnel, while serving me as an alarm clock, also served to liberate the gases that were ballooning some five or six dead horses under the trees. One filled one’s lungs with it, there was nothing else to fill them with, it surged up and down one’s bronchial tubes, one ate it and drank it, everything tasted of it, and pear-blossoms to me smell of it yet. It seemed even to get into one’s head. And if one showed any symptoms of getting used to it, it forthwith bucked up and got worse. The sun shone gently on the fresh green of field and forest by Potije. At home one would have said ‘Thank God, a lovely spring day.’ Here the smell jaundiced the fair works of nature. It even turned the sun yellow.

More plum and apple and black tea, and I hastened across to the [G. Pip] His guns were shooting away to the left still, so we had very little view of the Lahore attack. Hall told me afterwards he had met Campbell going up with his Balucchis, with his whiskers off! The Sarhind Brigade signalling division were busy laying field telephone wires between their headquarters and the point of attack. Their ‘Signal’ headquarters were evidently to

be in a few houses almost under us. A number of white officers had gone in there and several men. Without warning almost six shells landed together on it, and the place went up in dust and flames. Men came running out, some carrying signal equipment. And a major, a staff-officer, came last walking slowly. Shrapnel and high explosive were bursting all about, but he turned back to the farm again. We climbed down out of the way; the shelling was uncomfortably close. A few minutes later the major strolled in, looking like death, and passed out on the street. His sergeant-major, a Hindoo, had got caught under a falling beam, the roof practically was on his chest; his beard was on fire; and he had begged of the major to shoot him. The major refused. He had to leave the man to look after his command, and carry on elsewhere. But the thought of the man's agony made him return. It was the lesser of two evils, he decided. So he shot him.

Used as we were to death in all its forms, this seemed the hardest thing of all. Russell asked my opinion about the morality of it. There was only one opinion about the morality of it, but I would never have uttered it in the presence of that officer. He was a brave man, and did a hard, hateful thing to an old friend because he thought it best.

The shelling on Ypres and the St Jean road became pretty heavy. [The ammunition columns] had a sporting time of it. It was positively thrilling. They were great fellows. Every hour or so a couple or more ammunition limbers would walk or trot gently to where under Potije the road swings from under the trees into the open. Then two things happened simultaneously. Up went whips, the teams sprang forward madly, and the big shells whooped down all over them. A couple of hundred yards of road, and the limbers take the ditch. Then follows a race for the woods. The ground spouts up about them, bang over the heads of the maddened horses goes the shrapnel, and still on they go, sweeping round fresh shell holes, driving practically through some while actually bursting, until by some miracle they pull up in the comparative shelter of the wood. It was most dramatic looking but a very ordinary piece of business for those concerned. Once when I arrived at the trenches on the Yser Canal, McCreary and the others told me what an exciting ride I had just had, what a horseman I was, and how anxiously they had watched me. I had trotted gently along by Brielen just looking forward to a good gallop on the track from Reigersburg Chateau, where the 10th Brigade H. Q. was in dugouts, to the canal, when heavy shelling opened. I reached the track and stuck my spurs in. A few big ones fell behind. There was nothing to do but carry on. Usually it was the safest thing to do. Besides if the ineffable Hun was shelling the Brigade H. Q., he ought to stick to it. The Brigade had good dugouts, and all my sympathy was for myself. By this I was bending low over a frightened horse going like Jehu the son of Nimishi. It occurred to me that the gunner who would so far miss the chateau as to hit me deserved a horrible death for his carelessness. And then I was promptly bracketed. Another big one burst in front. Bits were singing everywhere. One of them smacked gently on the mare's tail-bone. She bolted for some barbed wire entanglement and it took a wicked use of spurs and riding crop to convince her that she was still in the same capable kindly hands. I pulled up by the aid post on the road, handed her over to some stretcher-bearers, and walked across to the dugouts. McCreary and some of the young officers were quite solemn about it. I suppose, from the shelter of a dugout, a fellow in the open on a horse is an object of pity. The next half-hour was quite a different affair. A regular bombardment began, and we sat on the floor, well back into the side of the canal. With thankfulness I watched my recent tracks being obliterated - while I was no

longer in them.

One never got tired of looking at these Canadian artillery fellows. They got every time all the Hun could give them, and as regularly came back for more. Once, they had pulled up on the wood after their usual exciting race, I noticed an instance of my theory as to the safe game in this war. It had been borne in upon me that on an average it was risky to run; one ran to the wrong places, and into things; and it looked bad. Dodging about was equally futile. One dodged a shell that was not going to hit one, in order to dodge into a shell that was. Besides, one always dodged too late. The simplest safest thing was to go right on, prayerfully and carefully. Now this man, when I observed him first, was all on his lonesome, walking in the open carrying a stretcher upright in front of him. This was not right, the stretcher ought to have been over his shoulder, and secondly, it was foolish to carry it in front of him, as he was walking from the Hun. A shell landed behind him, to bear me out. Then he started to run. With that another shell passed almost between the upright handles of the stretcher, and I thought [if] this was not giving the man a lesson; it was washing him out. But he got up again, and started back at an angle. Again a shell burst in front of him. Other shells, of course, were bursting here and there, which might have proved several other theories, or even disproved mine. But I was watching this man and nothing else. When a man, perfectly innocent and doing no harm, is badgered about like this, two things are open to him. One is to get indignant and go off his head. The other is to pull himself together. My friend did the latter. He got up, pulled his tunic down at the back, shouldered his stretcher, marked time for a moment, and then stepped out stoutly with the left foot. I was content. It was the safest thing to do. And if one was to be hit, one's dignity at best was safe.

We had no news yet of the Lahore divisional attack. Our hopes were not brilliant. Blessed are they that expect not, for they shall not be disappointed. Something in the cut of a Hindoo's tunic reminded me of a Burberry I had left in one of the broken houses while attending wounded. I sought it out, but it was fled. I asked a couple of 6th London pioneers if they had seen such a thing, of cavalry shape, and of most colours of mud. One man said his master, the doctor, had taken a loan of it last night. 'You were lucky not to have been in it, Sir. He was blown to pieces.' I wondered what Ryan would have said, would he have refused him Christian burial? The attack came to nothing except slaughter of the poor Hindoos. Some white regiments must have gone into the same attack, for I had a busy evening. Men were being carried away in everything. And the shelling everywhere became as intense as on the first day. One gunner galloping with a message towards the cross-roads at the church rode into a whirlwind of them. He pushed gamely on, but the horse got out of hand, bucked, plunged and finally came down in the centre of the cross-roads, spilling the gunner. The gunner dashed for shelter and the horse disappeared somewhere. The ration-limbers had a thin time of it too. Some of them gave up the journey as impossible. One lot dashed up at a gallop with the Brigade H. Q. rations while I was at the Brigade. Horses and men were panting and covered with sweat and dust. When they halted by me, the two limber men were stone dead.

That night the advanced post of the 12th Field Ambulance got orders to get back behind Ypres. On our side of the town there was no spot of even comparative safety where the

wounded might be safely attended in any numbers. I expect it was really a sign that we were to make no more big attacks for the moment. Anyhow it gave a point to all the rumours we had heard of the Germans closing in on the salient. We had practically no artillery, and a shortage of shells. The Germans pooped at us from all sides. Absolutely at right angles to me right and left were two German batteries, whose work seemed to concentrate on St. Jean. In the evenings their flashes were plainly visible. The flare-lights seemed to make almost a circle around us. It was no wonder that officers told me to be ready, that the retirement would be a dreadful experience, and the devil take the hindmost. One had cheerful pictures of struggling swearing Tommies crowding the road in the dark, decimated by high exposure and shrapnel, with Uhlans giving their quietus to the stragglers and the wounded. It put the tin hat on everything. It was our job to wait until the Dublins came through, if they ever did. In the meantime one had better have some sleep.

The pity of it was that I had been looking forward to that sleep. I had had a present during the day of a perfectly sound blanket. Three-quarters of it was a brown caked bloodstain which prevented it from lying in to one's figure. But then nothing is perfect in this world. In it sound sleep was possible. And whether in a greasy service cap, with the odour of the unburied dead around one, or in a crown on a bed of roses (who the devil wants to sleep in a crown on a bed of roses, give me a stiff nightcap, and a feather tick!) - anyway, sleep can be nothing but sleep; the best of all things. One was so tired that one wondered if death would not mean peace too. And then I remembered the missioners that had preached on hell and judgement, and the abomination of desolation and the worm that never dies. Weakly I cursed everything. There was no peace in life or death. I dug my sore bearded face into the gritty mattress and counted sheep going through a gap. The doctor was not snoring. His sleep was restless. Often he grabbed me by the arm to tell me they were on us. He was dreaming of the horrors of the retirement. So was the gunner. Several times he called out 'I'm sticking fast, you go, boys. I'm sticking it. I'm sticking fast.' It wasn't cheerful. But finally, I too slept and dreamed of unspeakable Uhlans chasing me through the night.

The morning would have been beautiful if it had not been for several things. As it was the sun only served to liven up the smell, and make the desolation more complete. I wandered over to the sergeant-major. Nothing ever seemed to daunt him. He never took shelter, and the wickedest efforts of the Hun never seemed to disturb him from his quiet capable ways. The doctor had been collecting bicycles, and we laughed over it. He passed by for a moment to tell us that a motor-cyclist had been killed on the road, and that he intended to take over the motor-bike. He went away as abruptly as he had come. It seemed to amuse Hatt. We talked about the Boer war. Hatt, who had both medals, described it as a cross between a mother's meeting and a picnic with the grub left out. 'By the way, Father' he remarked, 'what kind of breakfast did you have?' 'None' said I, 'Would you like some bacon and eggs?' said he. He laughed at the expression on my face. Bacon and eggs. There weren't ever such things; they were merely the stuff that dreams were made of! However, he pulled back the slides of a machine-gun ammunition box and discovered to my view some good-looking eggs and some sound bacon. I talked incoherently of Boer wars, bicycles with spasms, of England home and beauty, while a pioneer did his best to hurry up with the cooking. The priest was starved. The pioneer did not let the grass grow under his feet. For one glorious moment

I gloated over my one breakfast of these days, and then I put it out of sight, where a shell could only get at it over my dead body.

It may have been that my earthly tabernacle was not yet subject to a spirit of complete detachment from mundane delights, or it may have been the unconscious associations of ideas that put good cheer and cheerfulness in allied categories, but after that breakfast the ills of this world seemed more tolerable. The persistent hum of vigorously [putrednessing] horse grew more mellow. Even the infernal racket of the eighteen-pounders right behind us no longer made one's head sing. One was able to sit up and take notice.

For some time I had been noticing that some of our shells made a peculiar sound as they travelled at a low elevation overhead. I called the sergeant-major's attention to it as we were sheltering against a brick wall from some German shrapnel. He attributed it to loose driving-bands. With that one of our own shells took some bits away about ten feet over our heads, and then with a vicious spit and a roar another struck the wall not a foot from either of us and broke! It was an extraordinary thing. When the fuse and piston affair attached had stopped spinning I kicked them before me into shelter. We thought it very careless of the Canadians to treat us like this, and said so luridly to the gunner when I carried around the fuse, still hot, to him. 'You idiot,' he yelled 'don't come near me with that damn thing.' Gently I laid it down and side-stepped away. At a safe distance he hinted that there was enough fulminate in that fuse to blow my blinking head through my hat. My alarm at the thought of so much beauty being lost to the world did not prevent me from conveying to him politely my opinion that his gunners were cross-eyed. And then the waters rose and swept me away. He called upon the Gods of high Pekin to sit up and hearken to him. In one grand malediction, the cream of a cosmopolitan vocabulary, he embraced everything British, including the 'uncircumcised crackers of your unshriven and fatherless munitioneers send my ruddy fellows up to commit suicide with.' 'And then' he concluded, 'if the b-German isn't enough I have a mad British padre chasing me round with a blasted British fuse to blow my b-head off.' It was enough. A few light shells, little willies, had been putting in the exclamation marks, but at the climax of his discourse a perfect salvo arrived. We dived off the street. One shell struck the over-ripe remains of a mule, and with the smell peace descended on us.

When the worst of the shelling was over, we found that one of the shells had killed General Hasler of the 12th Brigade, about fifty yards down the road. He had just gone out of his dugout, and was standing on the stone steps of the house, when a little willie struck the steps and blew him to rags. Anyway it confirmed the report that the 12th Brigade was due to arrive. Every new battalion in the salient made safer the men who were already there. Besides there were chances that by now we might be relieved. Our men were worn out, a mere handful left of the old lot, and the new drafts, naturally, in spite of their courage, without that close discipline that would make them something more than cannon-fodder. Above all, we looked forward, if the Lord would spare us, to a more suitable and more favourable opportunity of doing unto the Hun all he did unto us and more also. And perhaps we might get a little spot of leave, to see our various wives and things.

These thoughts were all the more insistent in as much as the Canadians and their guns were to be relieved that night. As a matter of fact, they were, and I didn't even get a chance to bid good-bye to my stout gunner friend. The full identity of men whose names began with 'Mac' must ever be in jeopardy in a short life where Macs are many. And so he passed from my ken as he came into it - when I was asleep.

The 12th Brigade passed up that night, the Royal Irish at their head. Kelly, our signaller, was doing guide for them. He called in for a moment to get any news. Bergin, the doctor's servant brought my shaving kit up with the rations. A tin of butter and a pot of marmalade made us feel as if we had hung up our stockings. He had a tin of sweets for the sergeant-major. The R.S.M. didn't smoke, and he didn't drink; he didn't even swear, but the stern fellow was a pig for sweets.

I persuaded the old doc. not to wolf all the marmalade. I had visions of topping off with it after another visit on the morrow to the S. M's ammunition box. I should [have] had a hefty breakfast before removing my week-old whiskers. Some real handkerchiefs were also a luxury. A few days before, what with the rain and the gas, my handkerchiefs, the few I had in my haversack, had given out; I mentioned it to the doc. Grandiosely and importantly he led me forth and into a battered room. 'Don't tell anybody' said he. He opened a press in the wall, and disclosed to view some neatly folded female garments. The doctor tore a leg off and handed it to me. One hopes that in the next war they will wear finer linen. My nose has never been the same since.

(April 29th 1915)

General Notes

Victoria Station at leave-taking - leaving home. Breaking journeys to fool oneself. The perpetual process of deadening memory and imagination.

Difficulties of getting out to France. Discoma… general. Many put off. Withdrew names in disgust. No foresight shown by Cardinal Browne's officials. Too busy being important about it. Result - Catholic soldiers ninety priests short in France.

Q. M. Sgt Boon walking with rum into Germans at Morval.

Dec. 2nd 1914 King's inspector at Armentieres. The doctor 'What about votes for women, your Majesty?' St Patrick's at Armentieres during battle of Neuve Chapelle.

Ulster Tommy with hen in Auchionnvillers trenches.

Glycerine and Vaseline at 4th Div. 'Follies' at Armentieres, 1914.

Div. cyclists at Pont de Nieffe. Allen or melodeon. Anti-aircraft battery wires.

Postscript (separate item - loose sheets, not bound into the diary)

Nov 11th 1934

Twenty years ago I was 'called to the colours.' A telegram, a hasty visit to Dublin to get my kit, a day at home in my weirdly new uniform, a mighty send off from the wildly enthusiastic neighbours, and within a week on my way to the firing line.

And after the send-off, a rather lonely time trying to get somewhere. The drums and the cheers lay far behind, one's sole effort was to get away from the cheerless, listless base areas to some home or other and to some kind of work. It only lasted a few days, but it was enough. Others have stressed the comic or the tragic side of this ante-room to the slaughter-yard. I hadn't the mind or the time for it. The French soldiers that one saw were weird creatures - the people dull and listless. The retreat and the advance had come to an end, and either defeat or victory seemed remote as the stars - emotion seem[ed] to have been exhausted, and people had not yet got[ten] their second breath. Still it was better than the stale neutrality of home-life, when the fate of civilization hung in the balance.

Twenty years ago I was a civilian and a soldier within the week. I am a civilian now, and I have forgotten whatever blessings peace was supposed to have brought me. I am away from the only comrades I ever had, the only people who shared those great days with me. My life is passed with strangers, men with whom I have never shared danger, and with whom I share no memories. But over the air I am in touch with them again, their memory of the dead, the old stones and the old songs. It makes me lonely. They were great wide days. Perhaps I didn't deserve them and now I am come down to this sordid existence in an uneasy upstart country.

They had their great gathering in the Albert Hall, had my comrades. I would have had friends among then. From the Prince down I would have seen again the old faces. If they were only in khaki one would have looked among them for the ghosts of those that gave their lives in Flanders and on the Somme. It was very lonely - sitting here thinking of the dead, and of the living, spending my Armistice Day as I always spend it, thinking of them and praying for them - alone with my ghosts.

And in Dublin's fair city, the medals, won at such cost were being snatched at, and poppies torn away! Luckily the ex-service men are not all disabled, and can take care of their hooligan fellow Irishmen. Perhaps I am bitter - but it is a land and a people in which I see little to boast of. We have changed masters, and gaining the name of Freedom we have lost all else, generosity, humour and fraternal charity. I have little use for alien occupation, but I envied that gathering in London, and the moving and mighty Remembrance of their dead. And I envied them their anthem when they prayed the King of Kings to preserve their King - while our gangsters and hooligans commemorate the glories and the virtues of old Erin as epitomised in their own valorous finalities 'Soldiers are we.' God save Ireland.

It is a poor spirit that hasn't much to be grateful for. It is a good thing for a man to know what he has to be grateful for, and to feel it. It is also probably a good thing to bring out

into the light of day the things that rankle and fester that we may feel them less. These things no less than the others are the elements with which we build. And good and evil are so inextricably mingled in our lives that often what we call evil is most productive of what has real value.

The handicaps of life in an unusually lonely spot are real enough. The complete absence of any society, of human companionship, is, according to both saints and sinners, unnatural. Even the occasional gatherings of one's colleagues only prove how little we mean to one another. Out of touch with every movement around me, national, social, religious, I am as one buried or in prison. Such a one, the saints observe, becomes either a saint or a devil. I am, for all I can tell, becoming a monster, I know that sanctity is far from me.

Sordid little things can sometimes take the courage out of a man. Houses without a suitable room for study, cold, damp, cramped, houses without a bathroom, where it is a continual fight to keep clean and lively. And poverty, of the anxious shabby-genteel kind!

The danger is that of trying to forget my present world, and trying to find companions that I miss - in novels, and dreaming my life away. And that must cease.

I am fifty now and the past fifteen years have held for me neither work nor play. And apart from some great spiritual effort on my own, it is unlikely that the next fifteen will be any different; the same backwoods posts, the same poverty and consequent imprisonment in my place of habitation, the same impossibility of either work or play.

For it is certain that there is no help from outside. With more pains, sympathy of a sort, and I suppose ability, the peoples I have lived amongst have shown their appreciation almost exclusively in a spiritual way. The more sympathy I show them, the more I help them, the more sure they are that, without reproach from me, they can keep in their pockets what ordinarily should go to my support. It may be a lack of some quality in me, I cannot tell. Nor do I want other people's money, but I do want to be able to pay my very modest household expenses.

Nor, on the other hand, do I seem to possess that ecclesiastical quality which might endear me to the powers that be. I do not know that I would appreciate that esteem, were it offered. Doubtless they see many real faults in me. It is also possible that they take a pious pleasure in seeing the mighty humbled. I am afraid that when the shoe was on the other foot, I was rather off-hand. Of course I was in the army and therefore a book of plain reading on spiritual things suitable for a country people might not be 'de trop', and would certainly be worth trying.

About other things - I have often been asked, during the war and since, why I do not write my reminiscences. I am afraid I cannot tell. Perhaps it is laziness, perhaps the fear of hurting those who might recognise themselves. Perhaps it is that I am afraid it might look like making too much of the little thing that I am. The memoirs I have read have not impressed me even when well written, and I fail to see what experiences I have had that could interest, apart from mere curiosity, my fellow countrymen. If I were in an

English parish, the thought would scarcely occur to me. Here where my great days are ignored and forgotten, there is a temptation to put those days on record. I certainly could have done worse with my wasted days, and for my own amusement I may do so yet. I should prefer, though, that it should be free from the taint of my present inferiority. It might show certain ugly qualities of bitterness and vainglory that it would be best without.

A novel: I have read no words about Ireland, except 'My New Curate' that I care to think of. The atmosphere is not conducive to the dramatic. There is plenty of the sordidly realistic, but we must leave that to laymen. I am not sure that I possess the qualities of a storyteller, and the story is what matters.

Short stories; I have tried them, but I have failed to interest myself in them. It is a poor excuse for I am told that ninety per cent of them, as of other forms of literature come from external pressure and not from inspiration. But this form of entertainment is nearly dated. Cinemas and the wireless leave no time for anything except the best if even for that.

These two are the profitable forms of literature, and I do not seem to have any very definite taste for them. Surely if I had, it would have shown itself before this.

Verse, at any one time, seemed to me a likely, if difficult mode of expression. I am hard to please in the things I do myself, and I am lazy. Therein lies the deadlock. A certain facility is necessary, and then the thoughts may be clothed with the fitting words. But I think I ought to practise more, in spite of the terrible discouragement one gets from reading so much mediocre verse.

Sketches, essays, word-pictures I must get on with, if only to provide some balance to my reading, and a still more necessary balance to my mind. Information, learning of a sort, impressions, view-points, [mediation] all have a fashion of becoming jumbled together in an incoherent undigested mass where there is no adequate expression. It is what Dimnet means by 'reading actively' and adequate expression must set its materials in order, logical, appealing, and urgent.

For the present, at any rate, it remains for me to make the best of my poor circumstances. When I had great opportunities, I ignored them, criminally, I now think. Now that there is not a gleam on the horizon I must use my days as fruitfully as I can, reading only the best, thinking out this squarely, and giving them expression in such form as suits them best. And this I must do in perfect acceptance of my circumstances, using them as the basis, the terra firma on which I may build, taking life as I find it, and myself as I find myself (a much more unsatisfactory element than the other).

Here in this dip between the hills, where people but for their dress might be Patagonians, so little do they care for the abstract or the beautiful, where literature, music or any of the arts are unknown, where there is not a soul I can exchange an idea with, and there is no one to whom I can bring a difficulty - not even a serious craftsman lives here, or perhaps could live here - here in these sparsely populated hills, then, I must carry on, crippled by lack of guidance, emulation, and even any practical hope.

There is no choice in the matter. It is sink or swim, though the land of promise be far away.

A programme of some sort is necessary. The hours of the day seem all too short. There never seems to be time enough to do anything well. And yet anyone would imagine that I have all the time there is. I have no frequent services, no social duties or pleasures, no work to do except what I lay out for myself - and yet, or should I say, therefore I accomplish nothing. How many would be glad of only a tithe of my free time!

I must be honest. It is true that I try to read seriously, to study everything that may explain the enigmas in the world about me. I go from one subject to another, German, Greek, the Psalms, the New Testament, Philosophy, Psychology, Astronomy, Ornithology, Botany, Modern History, Modern and Ancient Letters, Sociology, Bolshevism, Hitlerism, Fascism, Travel, Theology and Gardening. I try to impress on myself the salient points of these studies by taking notes (perhaps I should take the notes, and expand the ideas as I go along, instead of giving each book its own paragraphs or pages in the notebook). I hold that alternation of studies is recreation enough for me. And in spite of all this, and in some way because of it, very often I waste my time for days and weeks on the lighter books, very often I waste whole days on trivialities, hopelessly fooling with a motor car, or carpentry or doing gardening that any manual labourer could do better.

In a life like this, one cannot have a hard and fast system, but I think the forenoons and, in general, the evenings could very simply be devoted to genuine hard work.

How is one to know that one is working hard? It is a comparative expression. I suppose if I labour at the subject I have mapped out for myself for the time I decide upon, it will justify itself in the end. It is the great difficulty of keeping to fixed hours that wastes my time and fills me with despair. Wasted days, Saturdays and Sundays, days when the morning goes - and the Savour of the day goes with it - attending the sick; offices, funerals, though thank God, they are few enough. I do not deliberately set out to waste time - if I did it occasionally, I might waste less.

It should be possible to map out a certain amount of work per week, to allow for accidents and even for deliberate wastage, and still have something to show.

I have then, just now, three alternatives before me. <u>One,</u> to lead a more public existence, and be of some value in the eyes of others; bear with the solemn emptiness of the more dignified brethren and imitate them in order to, if I may say it modestly, excel them.

I have a low opinion of myself, but not that low.

<u>Two,</u> I could go away. Men would look with suspicion on a man of fifty throwing up his own diocese. The church looks with suspicion on the restless. It turned no very kindly eye on the army chaplains. It loves its children to stay put, and advance in all the good nursery virtues. If I get the chance, I shall take it; sometimes I feel I shall have to make it. I have been told so often that I am a square man in a round hole, that I almost believe it.

Three, I can make the best of life where I am, and as I am. It will need heroic effort, and the life of a monk imposed on myself by myself, by a weak superior on a rebellious and slack inferior. I have failed to do it up to this. What hope have I now that the years are piling their burden up, and the promise of life is growing faint? The problem remains, and must be solved. Are the years to come to be as empty as those that have gone? Is all my future behind me, and none of the things I gave augury of to be fulfilled?

Something must be done. But what? And how? Without discipline everything will be as it was before. And, if anything, I must do my proper work even better.

A more individual interest in my people will only be recreation for me. Visiting, in a place like this, is a great waste of time, and has no bearing on anything spiritual. I could concentrate a little more on the schools.

My professional studies leave much to be desired. They are all still in an elementary stage. Of most things I have merely the inglorious 'gentleman's' knowledge. I have not either time, patience nor application to get to the root of anything, and work is unsatisfactory unless one can. It is too late to hope for any results from specialisation. I should have specialised years ago. I can at least make up my New Testament Greek, and do a translation of St. Jerome's Psalms 'Juxta Hebraeos.' I should have to get a few books, written in St. Jerome's day, to get the precise nuances of the language he employed. Bernard Alio's 'Apocalypse' ought to be read this winter, and a good deal of Henri Bremond's 'Histoire Littéraire.' Anything more might overlap itself.

Leaving aside all pretensions to enact science in anything, theology, philosophy, sociology, economics, classics, mathematics, enegesis, all of which I have had some little success in, I still must do some creative work. There are many men, and women who have no time, and perhaps less taste for spiritual things. It may be that out of my own weaknesses and difficulties I have developed a sympathy and a sympathetic treatment of these things that might appeal to them. Many times I have found my own discoveries, if I may call them that, applauded in others. I have been told by those who ought to be sick of me that they would like to have my talks in print to read over and over again. Others say that my unusual way of putting things grips them hard and fast, even without any emotional appeal. I do not know how much or how little there may be in these things, but they at least point out a scope for my activities. A little under suspicion. And I got high promotion, and it is up to them to prove, as I believe they hinted, how much more promotion they would have got had they not been too patriotic, too intensely national to minister to Irish soldiers on the French battlefields.

It shows me where I stand. Without some great unaided effort, handicapped by the absence of social or intellectual companionship, my future will be as the past, unfruitful and unbeautiful. I shall not even, as I see it, take my turn when something better should be offered to men of my age. In these peaceful days of dry rot and respectability, as I see them to be, I can expect as little from authority as I get from my people - and that is less than anyone else would get.

I suppose I could do something about it - as I have been reproached for not doing. But

there is something too calculated and even mercenary in advertising my wares, in what people call ‘taking my place’ and while the flesh may be willing, the spirit is weak where that is concerned. With success I would have broader and more congenial activities, greater possibilities of doing something worth doing, and perhaps making it easier for myself to give better service to God. But even with such a good object in view it is too late in life for me to become that form of pushful homuncubus, and I am afraid the object does not take away my repulsion [of] the means. I end where I began - with myself. With all my faults - and I hope I am expiating them here - with all my weaknesses, I have only myself to look to. There is no hope anywhere else, and little in myself. I can only keep on fighting, doing the best I know with such poor means as I possess.

It has often struck me that to get away from this petty atmosphere in which I am so little at home, that I should offer myself for work in England or America. I have asked about it more than once, and was discouraged. Dr. McDonald urged me not to leave my diocese. Fr. Kearney of Maiden Lane wouldn’t recommend it; others thought an Irish curate had all the plums. I saw how little value, and how parochial, their views were, but the definite objective urge that made me fight to go to France was absent. And yet that lack or urge has given me fifteen years that have robbed me of anything I ever had. It is surely little things that decide our lives. If a suitable opportunity had presented itself, I know I should have taken advantage of it. But a man can create his opportunities - when he has the sinews of war and these have been sadly lacking.

What kind of a mess would I make now of an active life in some English city? What good would I be to raise money for church and schools? Administration and priestly work I should not be afraid of, but gathering money! It brings out all the things I least desire to see in my fellow men. My present loneliness might be no worse than the continued lack of privacy, forever in a house with immature juniors - and young priests are particularly thorny stable-companions. I know what I was myself. And then, am I too old to be transplanted, as someone remarked? Others may think so, but I imagine I could prove that they are wrong. A catchword like ‘transplant’ solves nothing. A lonely backwater takes more getting used to than would civilisation, and I see nothing before me but a succession of them. And, in this country, bad as they are, they are preferable to the measly little towns and villages. Anyplace would be home to me compared to them.