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T W O M E N

*A MEMOIR*

OXFORD

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To H. E. E. H.

*The Cloisters,  
Eton College,  
Windsor.*

MY DEAR HUGH,

I am very glad I asked you to let me see the proofs again, for the sight has made it clear to me that a formal preface from a respectable Head Master would be something of an outrage. I can't imagine anything more alien from the spirit of the New House than a solemn 'appreciation', and no one could know better than Southwell and White how repugnant I should find the task.

On the other hand, they could not mind my writing you a letter about them: if there is one thing which this book makes plain it is that in a letter there is nothing which may not be fitly said when one is sure of one's correspondent, and they would, I think, appreciate the fiction by which I am supposed to disclose to you a lot of things about them which you know already far better than I.

For the characteristic which stands out in my mind is the amazing power which both of them had of 'making believe'—or rather of making words and events and books and circumstances generally serve their own particular mood. The language which they imposed on the New House is an illustration of it, and Southwell's power of

giving an air of momentous gravity to the most trivial occasions is impossible to forget. No Masters' meeting can ever be quite the same to me when he isn't there to address us on one of the subjects which he made his own, though his harangue used (you will remember) to begin with a confession that he was not quite sure on which side it was that he felt so strongly. The importance of trifles, the stores of humour to be unearthed from the common-places of life, the infinite issues depending on a word or a phrase, until it was displaced from its undeserved pre-eminence by another equally unexpected, these are some of the lessons which their daily life displayed. They had, in a word, the truly 'poetic' faculty, though it did not find expression in the consecrated form of verse. Southwell's lines on page 69 and his astonishing achievement in making his form into a nursery of English versifiers show, perhaps, what he might have done, and of course I have no means of knowing what secrets White told to his violin; but however it may have been expressed, the power was there: and if any critical reader complains that the instances I have given suggest rather the fancifulness of children than the inspiration of the author, I should answer that poets and children have the greatest qualities in common, and that when to their common powers of imagination they add the grace of humility they form the chosen citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Any one who happened to read this letter without the book which it introduces might fancy that they dominated



our Society at Shrewsbury by sheer force of personality and insistence on their own lines of thought ; but to read their letters is assuredly to realize that we loved them for those very qualities of humility and unselfishness which shone out so supremely in the end. And here I touch on things too sacred for speech: I can only say in all sincerity that I know of none among all my friends to whom the sacrifice was greater or by whom it was made in a more noble spirit.

They would resent any attempt to draw a moral, but I think they would not mind my saying that their lives and death brought additional honour to one of the noblest of professions, for they loved the life and work of a schoolmaster as only born schoolmasters can. And there is one thing I know they would wish me to say, and that is that the life of our Society from which they went was for those few years as nearly that of a happy family as any which the whole annals of schoolmastering can show. The New House, the Staircase, the Rehoboamite Meetings, Kitch's room with its interminable discussions and uncovenanted meals,—these are things which can never be forgotten while one of us remains to bless the name of Shrewsbury: it never can happen again, but let us thank Heaven for the happiness we knew and for the friends from whom we learnt so much.

Yours ever,

C. A. ALINGTON.

*E. H. L. S.*

Born—March 19, 1886. Eton: King's Scholar—January, 1899. Magdalen College, Oxford: Demy—1904. 1st class in Moderations—1906. 2nd class in Literae Humaniores—1908. Stroke of College Eight: Head of the River—1905 and 1906. Stroke of College Four: Head of the River—1905. O. U. B. C. Trials—1905 and 1906. University Crew—1907 and 1908. Stewards' Challenge Cup—1907. Leander Crew—1908. Spare Man for Olympic Crew—1908. Assistant Master at Shrewsbury School—1910.

*M. G. W.*

Born—January 24, 1887. Birkenhead School—1898. King's College, Cambridge—1905. Voluntary member of King's College Choir—1905 to 1909. Captain of College Boat—1909. Assistant Master at King's College Choir School—1908. Abroad in Berlin and Rouen—1909. Assistant Master at Marlborough College—1910. Assistant Master at Shrewsbury School—1910.



# CHAPTER I

## SHREWSBURY

SEPTEMBER 1910 TO MARCH 1915

EVELYN SOUTHWELL and MALCOLM WHITE came together as masters to Shrewsbury in 1910; they left together in 1915; and they both were killed in the battle of the Somme. For those who knew them both it is impossible to consider them apart; the memory of them is single. To their contemporaries and to each other they were known as 'the Men'. 'Man, it's time to go into school.' 'Yes, Man.' And so, in this account of their Shrewsbury life, they will be spoken of as 'the Men'.

The following is an account of their first four terms, written by one who lived with them during that time:—

It is interesting to recall the impressions which they made on their arrival. White had visited Shrewsbury before; he came with experience of teaching at King's College Choir School and afterwards at Marlborough College, and with a reputation as a singer and violin-player: a reputation which was entirely justified by his performances. At first he made no very distinct impression, probably because of his shyness, and he did not seem at once to take very kindly to Shrewsbury: he was constantly recalling with regret the time he had spent at Marlborough,



but this phase did not last long: Shrewsbury soon became to him the object of reverence which it remained until the end. But several terms passed before he was valued at his true worth, partly owing to his shyness and partly owing to his modesty; the latter quality remained to the end as one of his most striking characteristics; it was so perfectly genuine. He was an excellent violinist, and he must have known it, and the same may be said of his powers as a singer, yet his skill in these directions was never obtruded, nor concealed by any false modesty. If asked to play, he would play, and his 'That's rather jolly, isn't it?' at the end of the piece suggested that, quite unaffectedly, he considered that the gratitude of the listeners was due entirely to the composer; in fact he seemed to join in the gratitude and to regard himself as one of the listeners.

His keen sense of humour did not appear at once. It was of the 'modern' type which is best illustrated in literature by the work of 'A. A. M.' in *Punch*; though in some respects perhaps R. L. Stevenson was the forerunner of the type. At any rate, White's love for *The Wrong Box* was infectious, and quotations from that classic constantly accompanied our meals.

Southwell's arrival was somewhat different; before his coming in May 1910 he was known to no one in Shrewsbury—apart from the Head Master—except as a first-class oarsman. He arrived almost straight from a long visit to Paris, and seemed at first very French; his love of French literature and the French nation ('those adorable people' he called them in at least one letter from the Front) remained constantly with him. He came about eight o'clock in the evening of the day before school work began, and when some of the arrangements were being explained to him that night he caused some surprise by inquiring about trains to



Liverpool; he wanted to go to see an Oxford friend who was leaving for America.

On his first morning the news arrived of King Edward's death. 'Southwell, the King is dead!' greeted him through his bedroom door, before he was up. 'No, really?' came back the answer, in a tone of complete and absolute boredom and lack of interest, soon followed by remarks of interest and real concern. 'No, really?' spoken in a non-committal tone of voice, was often his answer to a remark, either when the subject did not interest him or when he was really thinking of something else; in the latter case he generally shewed his interest very soon after.

On another occasion, after being very late on Saturday night, he went to bed at a quarter to eleven on Sunday night; by a quarter-past eleven he was sound asleep and was awakened by, 'Southwell, the fire-engine is coming over Kingsland Bridge; shall we go up to the school to see if any of the boys are burning?' 'No,' he answered; but within a few seconds he had collected himself, and five minutes later was round at the School House, where there was a fire, happily a small one.

At Shrewsbury he had his first experience of teaching, and his enthusiasm was extraordinary. Few meals passed without his explaining exactly what he had been teaching and how, and who had done well and who badly; this soon became a source of amusement, in which he fully shared.

Another fact that is worth mentioning is the way in which a remarkable friendship grew up between these two men. It was not entirely due to common interests in life or a similar outlook; it seems rather to have grown gradually, each man finding that the tastes of the other interested him and were worth acquiring. For instance,



Southwell's idea of music at the time was musical comedy ; White introduced him to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, and there was an amusing discussion one night when Southwell complained bitterly that 'no one had told him of these men before', whilst he was wasting his time at Oxford with musical comedy music. But with his extraordinary powers he went into the subject thoroughly, as his notes on the *St. Matthew Passion* shew ; and incidentally his piano-playing improved in the most remarkable way.

Both men had one characteristic in common—absolute thoroughness in whatever they undertook ; though it was shewn in different ways. When a new subject, or duty, arose about which they were ignorant, if it were unimportant and uninteresting they probably would have nothing to do with it. But if it were interesting and important (or even interesting without being important) then there was no stopping until it was completely understood. With White this would mean a kind of nervous restlessness, asking questions, diffidence in his own powers of comprehension and execution. Southwell, on the other hand, was very quiet, mastered the facts, would never say that he understood anything until he had completely mastered it ; in this way, to those who did not know him, he might sometimes seem slow ; when suddenly he would shew that he had grasped the whole thing and understood every point. But in either case, if either of them undertook to do a thing which seemed to them of any importance, it would certainly be well done.

What follows is an account of their life from September 1911 onwards :—

Their first home was a house called 'Broadlands' ; an



untidy, comfortable place high above the river, with a view of the twin spires and Haughmond in the distance; and there were days when you smelt the autumn mist that rose from the Severn and lay wreathed about the town and the four poplars, so that—as White said—one longed for Corot to have painted it. The ramshackle state of the house and garden, which was given over as a jungle to the cat, was a perpetual source of satisfaction to the Men. And there was the conservatory which had no flowers and the lift which sank monthly to the basement with a shattered freight of crockery, and Southwell would say, 'We shall have to have a man up about it'. The house was never taken seriously; during one argumentative meal White—unable to make himself heard—wrote up on the wall of the dining-room in chalk, 'You owe me £2: 2: 6', and the inscription remained till we left the house.

It was a home of many interests, some fleeting, others permanent. The life of the school was always of absorbing interest to both, but never incompatible with astounding activities at home. 'Some Iambic composition is indicated,' Southwell said (both men adored *The Wrong Box*); and he sat up into the small hours wrestling with a voluntary copy, which for a week on end remained the central fact of his leisure hours. Or the household would be compelled to read Racine aloud, though Southwell alone would fully understand it. He had been for some months at the Sorbonne, and returned with a passion for all things French, so that for a time *Phèdre* and *The Beloved Vagabond* alone would satisfy him. White was for ever full of musical schemes and tunes; he was discovered alone in his room, with a full score of the Fifth Symphony on the mantelpiece, conducting with the poker an imaginary orchestra, which was reproduced by every manner of sound.



On Saturday evenings he played sonatas on the violin, at which he was expert, Southwell accompanying him on the piano; Bach, Beethoven, and Corelli would usurp meal-times; and on Sunday afternoons the folding-doors between a sitting-room and the dining-room were opened, and on one occasion as many as forty boys came to tea, and lay about the floor reading or listening to sonatas and a string quartet. The cat was an intimate member of the household and from Southwell's unswerving devotion to it was known as 'The Groove'; when the first kittens arrived, White burst into school and announced to Southwell in a whisper, 'Man, the worst has occurred: there is more than one cat in the house'.

Both men were expert oars; Southwell had rowed twice for Oxford and coached the School Eight for their first appearance at Henley, in 1913. It was typical of the amazing contrasts in his character that, immersed in a fugue of Bach, he should discover that he was overdue for the river, and after an hour's absorption in the science of rowing, return immediately with zest to the piano. In both their minds there was a strain of science as well as art. White was a clear teacher of Geography and Tactics; and there was one Sunday when, in a six-hour discussion on the nature of the Universe, Southwell illustrated metaphysical arguments by diagrammatic arrangement of the fire-irons. It was long after midnight when the discussion ended, and no one was satisfied with the result. And there was a day when Southwell, having invited a guest to lunch at one, arrived from his form-room at three, having wrestled since 12.30 with a geometrical problem of which the preliminary data were erroneous. It was characteristic of him that this was a voluntary labour, entirely outside the range of his work, undertaken for his own amusement.



Both men held strongly the affection and respect of the school. White had that perfect control of boys which enabled him to bring the atmosphere of a Christmas party into form; he would teach sitting among the boys or standing on the window-sill and swinging from a cord; his persistent good temper made him see the humour of all that occurred; he could race a boy into school without loss of dignity; yet no member of the staff was more laboriously conscientious over the preparation of his work; and he undervalued neither critical power nor imagination, neither science nor poetry. Southwell was unique as a teacher; his own accounts of his work were so self-depreciatory, and often so comic, that we never really knew what went on; but no boy who had been in his form ever forgot it. He probably spoke more freely and naturally to his form even than to his friends. He read poetry to them, which few can do with success; and there was no doubt of his success here. It was this that indirectly inspired the poems which were written for him every week, some of which were eventually published under the title of 'V. B' when he was in France. Few of those who have read the book will deny that it is a remarkable result; for the poems were written by average boys of sixteen, and his detailed criticism was small; they were the indirect outcome of his enthusiasm. Of his own delight in his boys' work his own words from the preface of the book are witness:—

'There are going to be lines in your book<sup>1</sup> which have meant more to me than their writers ever knew—though Heaven knows I used to express my gratitude heatedly enough. I forget how much I told you about the beginning of the thing. It all started two years ago with those three terrific poets, who set a fashion bound to be followed, and

<sup>1</sup> The book was edited for him by a friend.



without whom my little snowball could never have come together. Sometimes I longed to print every line in my album; but that was absurd, and surely the poets whom want of space excludes from print will not think themselves or their works excluded from my memory.'

Sunday mornings were great days, for then the poems arrived, and he would read them aloud to us, rejoicing in the poetry and revelling in the comic or grotesque; 'side-stepping literature' he would say of grisly passages that made you shrink. He was a great phrasemaker and a master of improbable quotations; a passage from *Three Men in a Boat* might illustrate a point in Virgil or Xenophon: he had the humorous appreciation of a scholar for irrelevant detail; 'Aeneas is fourth cousin three times removed to Agamemnon; I think it is important' was a note sent round to us one morning from his form-room. All his scholarship took a picturesque form; problems of grammar he illustrated by diagrams on the blackboard, and it has been hard for some of us to avoid plagiarism. But of the spirit of the form his own pupils alone can adequately speak; the fourth Eclogue is still remembered by the gestures with which he declaimed it; for he would read it to his form whenever Christmas drew near with the enthusiasm of a religious rite; and when one of his boys was asked about the form, he said: 'Mr. Southwell walks round the room reading Homer to us with tears in his eyes.' And that he was himself a scholar, is seen from this translation of Canon Beeching's poem, 'Prayers':—

God who created me  
 Nimble and light of limb,  
 In three elements free,  
 To run, to ride, to swim:



Not when the sense is dim,  
 But now from the heart of joy,  
 I would remember Him :  
 Take the thanks of a boy.

Ταῦθ' ὁ θεὸς τρί' ἔδωκε κρατεῖν γόνυ χλωρὸν ἔχοντι—  
 ἄερ' ὄχῳ, γαῖαν ποσσί, νέοντί θ' ὕδωρ.  
 καὶ θεῶ ἀγλαΐσας πελάσω νόον, οὐπω ἀμαυρόν,  
 τῆσδε χάριν θέμενος παῖς ἔτ' εὐφροσύνης.

Both men had keen athletic interests. Southwell had charge of the school rowing for four years, and it made great progress under his coaching. He was also an energetic fives-player, though the following correspondence from their form-rooms seems to tell another tale :—

‘What you want, you know, is to play after 12. Then I should (*Deducta est. . .*) play too : (*līnĕă clāră dīŭ*) (in te).  
 ‘Do play after 12.

‘M. G. W.’

‘No Courts, and less of it altogether, please.

‘E. H. L. S.’

White was very versatile; besides his work and his music, he found time for football, cricket, fives, and rowing; few things gave him such pleasure as the occasion when a house-four which he had coached won the ‘challenge oars’ in the Lent term of 1914; their fate had exercised him for days and nights beforehand and threw him wholly into the atmosphere of the Cambridge races. There was no game or sport that he touched in which he did not shine, if not brilliantly, at least successfully. He was an efficient officer in the O.T.C. He was a keen fisherman and skater, and from the days when, as an undergraduate, he performed

incredible feats of roof-climbing over his college, a daring cragsman.

They used their holidays characteristically. Southwell was generally at home, content with books and music. These are extracts from his letters and postcards. The first was written at a time when he was leaving his home at Newcastle for Worcester:—

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Bishop Jacob Hostel—*

*Newcastle-upon-Tyne.*

*Dec. 23, 1911.*

I've been lying a good deal here about the sadness of leaving N/C, but often with my tongue in my cheek as if it would push through to the outside; the change after all is more to, than from, the land of my nativity. As a matter of fact we shall miss the liveliness of this place somewhat, but then it's always just when you're getting to like a place that—— (Bromide; thank you). *Sic itur ad Worstra.* (Oh, very bad.)

I am taking the liberty of sending along with this one of the E. V. L. books as some token of the ardour with which we await, Sir, your esteemed commands; I hope very much it's as good as the last one I read, which was *The Friendly Town*; he is usually, I think, the most comfortable author in Europe, A. C. B. a good second: ἡ οὐκ οἶει;

I hope the Man arrived safe. Needless to say I have a fearful cold, which may decide to be a chill any moment. Otherwise I have nothing to complain of beyond the need of sending by post what I would rather deliver in person, my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



To H. E. E. HOWSON.

Bishop Jacob Hostel—

Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Jan. 5, 1912.

That by the book having been read which that man had sent he himself, as by an incredible certain pleasure he was affected nor not, as the Greeks said, wonderfully how rejoiced, so for so great a gift to have as greatest thanks to be compelled he seemed.

*The Path* (for surely it is worthy of this abbreviation-badge of admission to the Broadlands classics) only arrived from Messrs. Bowes this morning, and I have now read some 130 pages; and it is really *magnificent*. I have just reached the 'Praise of Windows', a very comforting performance.

Otherwise nothing very much has happened to delight or bore me particularly: I have gone within three plays of finishing Racine, and shall no doubt do them before long—though not of course with any attempt at thoroughness. The last took about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours, so you can see it is no very studious perusal. But it gets over the ground and promotes that hateful something that the Man would denote 'atmosphere', which is all to the good. Also hardly less than three hours per diem over the piano, especially the Liszt. It's far beyond me, but I can get over the timber to some slight extent now. Dances are practically at a premium, one only so far: *ich grolle nicht*.

The Man's letter contains, I am persuaded, sufficient marks of virility to justify its enclosure.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

Worcester.

(A postcard.)

*Guy Mannering*, vol. ii, ch. 16.

'And a' the bairns ran to saddle Duple' (D. Dinmont, his pony).—It has just struck me that this is among the

more Epic things in W. Scott, and I do not think I should leave you unadvised of the matter.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Worcester.*

*(A postcard.)*

New Book by A. C. B.:

Hero confronted with farmer wearing 'serviceable brown suit and leggings'. Now that 's what I call beautiful.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*College—Worcester.*

*Jan. 3, 1913.*

Look here, I don't think you're being very good. However, we'll try you once more.

This comes from an old house up river where I stayed last night for a dance.

### RUNE OF HOSPITALITY

(from the Gaelic)

I saw a stranger yestreen;  
 I put food in the eating place,  
 Drink in the drinking place,  
 Music in the listening place,  
 In the Sacred Name of the Triune  
 He blessed myself and my house,  
 My cattle and my dear ones.  
 And the lark sang in her song—  
 Often, often, often  
 Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise;  
 Often, often, often  
 Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*College—Worcester.*

*Dec. 23.*

The Mozart is great fun, but though I played him practically all the first two days, he has to retire for the moment. I am having lessons from Ivor Atkins. He was splendid. After being in the house five minutes he said,



‘Now how much can you practise? Three hours, I suppose?’ So I said I would and he would hear of nothing but Bach’s forty-eight preludes and fugues, and started me on one of the few that have five parts. His playing of a prelude I had ground away at was a perfect marvel. And here am I booked for Thursday with that fugue, which I haven’t yet touched, and a prelude going across country, ‘for technique’ as he calmly put it—which I can nearly play badly after some hours. A remarkable man, of whom I stand greatly in awe.

TO H. E. WALKER.

College—Worcester.

Dec. 28, 1913.

I began *Pickwick* again for the I-don’t-know-how-many-eth time yesterday, so you may take it I’m fairly happy! I started it in bed as usual—an evil habit, they say, but I don’t find I read more than a few minutes, so it doesn’t grow into a nuisance. Don’t get choked with it if you’re reading other things; chapter 27 is about half-way, and I often recommend people to go there and continue next term—they don’t often stop there for good! You’ll like it all right, or you wouldn’t be no friend of mine!

---

Mr. Ivor Atkins has written what follows about him:—

‘It was in the summer of 1912 that I first met Evelyn Southwell, and well I remember the impression he made upon me. He had already about him a certain quiet strength and a seriousness and a sincerity which to a great extent made it easier to bridge over the years which lay between us. However this may be, there quickly sprang up a complete sympathy in musical matters, and his visits to Worcester from that time were welcomed by me for the opportunities they gave of coming into contact with one who



had a deep and abiding enthusiasm for music. In these all-too-few visits there was always much to talk of. He must have shewn a missionary's zeal in making good music known to the boys of Shrewsbury School, for he brought me glowing accounts, from time to time, of the success which came to those who co-operated with him in the work of introducing chamber music to them. The steady growth in attendance of the boys at these little music-meetings was a joy to him, and the fact that the best music easily won a way to their hearts was to him a sufficient reward.

‘His enthusiasm for music, and, perhaps, especially his measureless admiration for Bach, made him very attractive to me, and this attractiveness was only heightened by his quietness and modesty. He was at the time studying the piano, in which I was able to give him some help, and it was a great delight to me to watch him working at the forty-eight preludes and fugues. Though his playing was wanting on the technical side he more than made up for it by his insight and sense of interpretation; and in discussing them with me I was very early struck by his knowledge, and by the clearness of his musical faculties.

‘It was his habit to find his way to the organ-loft at Worcester soon after his arrival in vacation time, and I found increasing pleasure in these visits. His coming was always the occasion for some of the greatest of Bach's organ works to be drawn upon, and though, as I have said, he had a considerable knowledge of Bach, he had had few opportunities up to this time, I should imagine, of hearing the larger organ works. This was especially true of the Choral Preludes. His joy in a great work was splendid, and I shall never forget his reception of the *Fuga sopra Magnificat*. He shared with another, whose ties to the Cathedral were similar to his own, and who, too, has made



the great sacrifice, a power of appreciation which was nothing less than an inspiration to others. It was a privilege to have known Evelyn Southwell, and though he came into our musical life in Worcester for but a short time, in that time he brought into it sympathy and a high-souled appreciation, which were of more value than he probably knew, and he leaves a memory which I, for one, shall long cherish.'

Such is a picture of Southwell's holidays. White went farther afield ; to the Nant Ffrancon pass in North Wales, which was a second home to him ; to Scotland for fishing ; even to the Alps, for skating and skiing : and there were stories of how he travelled in a domino mask, or played Dvořák on his violin to a ring of open-mouthed peasants, in a station restaurant on the Swiss frontier. And beyond all this, there was the military training demanded of him as an officer. Some of his letters follow :—

To H. E. E. HOWSON. *Inkerman Barracks—Woking.*

*April 22, 1912.*

Good mornin'. What? These infantry 'talions, what? Cimabue, for brown photograph of picture by, many thanks. I was so glad to hear from you. That may be a bromide—but no it can't be, as it was true. We have had a very good and profitable time. We both know all about everything and have seen some very interesting fightin'.

To H. E. E. HOWSON. <sup>1</sup> *Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*Sunday, August 11, 1912.*

Hasn't he really? Probably, I think. Certainly. No, I don't. I don't see what you mean by that. Yes, of

<sup>1</sup> His home.

course. Exactly. Not at all. Have you? No, nothing else. Yes, Yes. Yes, quite. Rather.

Meaning of above :—

I don't teach him anything. But I know everything you wish to know. You couldn't have come to a better person. I have the whole of the organisation of the IVth form at my finger-tips. This, added to extraordinary brilliancy, political acumen, and an intuitive appreciation of the interests of the boy, make me at once the model and despair of every schoolmaster throughout the breadth of the land.

I too have been having a lazy time. Reading, trios, quartets, lunching, dining, smoking. I have bought Bach's Sonatas for violin and piano.



But see here. I have taken the bull between the teeth with both hands and have bought a present for Kittermaster for 25/-. It is a Medici copy of Leo. da Vinci's 'Last Supper'. I dare say you think I ought to be exiled to Boulogne, Assisi, and Florence<sup>1</sup> after that, but I spent a whole morning trying to think of anything else. Will it do?

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*September 10.*

I wired, because Mrs. Lloyd, answering a post card of mine asking for trousers, said :

'No trousers here, van (*sic*) I send Mr. Howson.' So thought that might mean that you had them. I think now that 'van' should be 'can', = can I send Mr. Howson ('s {so Schrumfkk Coll. Ed. Syr. Byz.}). All of which

<sup>1</sup> *The Path to Rome: page 305.*



means that she probably proposes to send me yours. Anyhow I am sick of that subject, except that some sort of Man must have a pair of trousers of mine.

Did you go to the Passion Music yesterday? We played Schubert and Beethoven string 4tets yesterday, Beethoven and St. Saens trios in evening, Schumann and Dohnányi pfte. quintets this morning.

In the excitement of many wires coming and going, I set off for the dentist's carrying a large blue and white Italian vase which I happened to have in my hands when Mrs. L.'s wire arrived.

You know my opinion about *The Ring and the Book*. But it improves for me as I get to Caponsacchi and Pompilia. I know I shan't finish my reading now, as I'm beginning to fuss about Geography for next term.

That Man of ours has been very silent these holidays.

Next term! Hah!

TO H. E. E. HOWSON,<sup>1</sup>

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*Dec. 20, 1912.*

Caesar, his packing being finished in one night, when he had placed a Man over the slaves and baggage animals, which he had left as a garrison at Broadlands, having set out thence about the fourth watch, went into winter quarters at the above address. This having been done, he sent letters: that he himself had slept a great deal; that he had spent some time in the toy department of a large and neighbouring emporium on that morning; that he had bought for a distant, small, and hitherto unknown cousin, two charming clockwork FIGHTING MEN; that it was in mind to him not to send these FIGHTING MEN to his

<sup>1</sup> With a party of boys at Lake Ogwen in Wales.

cousin but to keep them for himself; for he liked them; that he hoped that they were having fun; let them in climbing the same virtue, liberality, moderation, goodness, genius, which always before in other matters, now use. Carry my love to the ledge on the North Buttress.

TO E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

*Argentières—France.*

January 4, 1913.

All right—we won't play the Grieg. I believe your criticism of Hungarian and Scandinavian finds all that there is of most vulnerable in them, but I like them. I have it (the Grieg) here in any case. I have been playing it and other things with a French lady here who is rather good. There is quite a good piano here for a mountain place.

This is a wonderful valley. Mont Blanc is 'the highest mountain in Europe'. Mont Blanc is 'the most beautiful mountain in Europe'. We have wonderful *crème de menthe* looking glaciers at our door.

This place is packed with French people, all very charming and *amusant*. *On entend de la langue très liquide*.

Well, please order for me the Mozart Sonatas, and let us do Nos. I, XV, and the one with two movements, one of which is a slow rondo.

Yes, I know about those Bach Sonatas; we must do them.

TO E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

Look here—less of it. What the dickens is the matter? I have received the following telegrams.

(1) 'Luggage not advanced price impossible! (The exclamation mark is *ours* ['*ours*' you know].) Is it soon enough I meet what train Monday (How does any one know I am going through Shrewsbury at all on Monday?)



with it or must it go.' A weak finish, that. No signature.

Then at 3.0 I get a wire, 'Did you address, etc. . . . Address Eversley. Mar' (*sic* [ ' *sic* ' you know]). Still thinking you at Eversley, I wonder who Mar is (I see him as a lean spare man with a cast in his eye [in his eye? {hah}]).

Lastly I appeal to you, apart from practical considerations, to give this letter your closest study, as I feel that it has considerable literary merit.

A very weak Man.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*Friday, April 17.*

It has been a business.<sup>1</sup> Fearful reaction to-day, presents lying about, and workmen taking things to pieces all over the place and whistling in hard sunshine, if you see what I mean.

By Gad, we'll walk the Shropshire hills next term.

Our dog was delving in the earth the other day, which reminded me that I should like to go to Delft. I suggested the same to my father. We are therefore going to Delft.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*Apr. 1913.*

A good modern history is *Outlines of Modern History*, by Grant. I've discovered how the Roman Empire becomes the Austrian Empire. I've also made a discovery about the English aristocracy on the way back from church, which, I hope, will turn out well on consideration. I've also carried my godson right round the garden, where there is a sight of blue Welsh hills, nodding daffodils, and a west wind full of wallflower smell, all of which is none so bad.

<sup>1</sup> Written after a family wedding.

TO E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

*Lochshiel Hotel—*

*Acharacle—Argyllshire.*

*Aug. 24.*

I have caught no fish but I have read and nearly finished W. James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which is good. I am glad you had a fine day for the F. Show. F. Show looks like a shopman's name in a country town.

That's mysticism.

Next term will be good. Think of those early morning mists and 'porridge and turns mixed'.

Well, I apologise for the entire above.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Lochshiel Hotel—*

*Acharacle—Argyllshire.*

*Sept. 3.*

Oh a very great place, I think. And I have seen Skye, away in the distance, the Coolins sticking up all needly into the air—and Rum, Eigg, and Muck lying so blue and nice. And the ζόφος, oh! the ζόφος. And the fish. They don't rise a bit. I have caught just about three really respectable ones.

A nice strange hostelry this. Various tides of visitors have ebbed and flowed over us.

We all talk about flies, and the badness of the fishing, and the fishing we once had in South Uist.

I go to the Chantry next Monday. Bach (*St. Matt. Passion*) and Brahms' *Requiem*. Think of it.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Acharacle.*

I am ordering the book on Philosophy by this post, though I have *the Ring, the Book, the Camel, and the Needle's Eye*, by Browning, and Ponsonby, here with me.

I hope to finish W. James this evening.

<sup>1</sup> Marginal note by E. H. L. S.



To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.**Dec. 28, 1913.*

I am rather flat, and start to-morrow for Hotel Meyerhof, Hospenthal, and you will write to me there, and have you left Cambridge, and did you get the harmony book, and I have made some progress with a new one of my own, and I have a superb nephew, and all sorts of nice people send me Christmas cards, and some had holly berries on them, and some had just sprigs, yes sprigs, and you will write, won't you, to a Man?

The last page of this is like certain forms of poetry with a point at the end of each rather formless stanza. Is it not modern? Is it not art?

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Hospenthal—Switzerland.**Jan. 1914.*

We are entirely alone here, in a hotel of a tolerable size, with the usual lounge, etc. There was a man here for a bit, whose presence seemed entirely unreasonable, and just about the time of his departure we were in danger of being kept awake by the band whose sole audience we were—were we—whose sole audience—I shall never make a success of that sentence. This place is kept by the family Meyer, who have lived in this valley for centuries; rather interesting. Tribal stage of society—liberalism—totemism—morality.

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In May 1913 we left Broadlands. Among later memories of the place stands out the occasion when one member of the house became a temporary invalid through concussion after skating, and the advent of a nurse caused so much rearrangement of rooms and furniture, and such confusion and laughter of the Men, that a misfortune was turned into

a picnic; or a night at the end of a winter term, when examination papers were corrected far into the night, with intervals for biscuits and cocoa. George Fletcher<sup>1</sup> left us at 3 a.m. and went to his house across the river shouting the *Meistersinger*; and there were some of the party who were still found working by the dawn. It was something of a tragedy to leave Broadlands and all that 'human disorder and organic comfort which makes a man's house like a bear's fur for him'; but it was a change to civilisation, and we became respectable householders. The new home was a house recently built for masters nearer to the boys' houses; from the first it was known as the 'New House', and when a definite name became necessary this clung to it. It was a larger house than Broadlands, with a wide view to Wenlock and the Stretton hills; R. F. Bailey joined us, and—for a term—George Fletcher, till he went to Eton. The garden shewed promise of more civilised tastes, and many of the designs, both inside and outside the house, were chosen by the Men themselves. These letters from Southwell are relics of a fevered holiday preceding the change:—

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Eversley—Kingsland—  
Shrewsbury.*

*April 1913.*

Proposal B.

1. *Your* carpet now in dining-room to new dining-room.
2. *Your* carpet now in your sitting-room to your new sitting-room.

<sup>1</sup> An assistant master at Shrewsbury from Sept. 1911 to July 1913, and after that at Eton. He served as an officer in the Intelligence Corps throughout the Great Retreat, was then attached to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, and was killed in action on March 20, 1915.



3. My sitting-room carpet to my bed-room.

Disadvantages: (a) Your sitting-room carpet is very bad; Mrs. Lloyd says it will burst in holes when taken up, if not carefully done: this suggests bed-room not sitting-room. (b) My sitting-room carpet in my bed-room seems wasteful. But, advantage for *you*:—

House buys *your* carpet instead of mine.

There you have the whole situation mapped out at great expense of thought.

If you'll think hard, I think you'll see what all this tabulated rhetoric means.

G. M. R. says this is like *The Wrong Box*, and I partly believe it.

TO M. G. WHITE AND H. E. E. HOWSON.

College—Worcester.

Apr. 14, 1913.

I've said 'Seed grass not turf'. He<sup>1</sup> pointed out that it would mean no games for three months, but that even so when the weather was dry we *could* walk on it if necessary. On the other hand the grass is a *κτ. ἐς ἀεί* and all that, and he argued in Demosthenic wise that it would be very bad for the sake *τῆς παρατιχ' ἡδονῆς* to have the thing turfed and necessarily full of weed seeds, and coarser. This I hope you'll agree with. If you agree as clearly as I do with him on the point we won't waste time by writing all round the quintet. I was disappointed, but we can still have some fun there and we have prospects of *our* subsequent summers and *τῶν μεθυστέρων* to take care of.

We had a long talk as to continuing hedge on mound

<sup>1</sup> The gardener.

right round, but there were various reasons against that, which we can talk of when we meet. It took  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours to hatch this idea. I also said he might put in one long flower-bed at end of garden; he urged that it would be rather dull otherwise.

Personally I would as soon have had lawn right up, but I believe one has a claim made on one by flowers rather, and it will do us no harm to have some at the end there to play with. I'm awfully stupid *re* flowers and I think it's a little absurd.

Interlude; I'm sick of this.

Ivor Atkins at supper said he played a big Bach Choral Prelude to-night thinking I should be there.

Boy I told you of sang Passion Music better than any one I. A. has heard. Heart-breaking we missed it. Look here; choir returns April 22. *Do* come on way back and hear him and stay a day or two.

This was Southwell's attitude to the New House. White regretted the absence of machinery in the hall; the sort with a leathern, undulating belt that whirrs ceaselessly and goes 'p-lonk', as he said. Both men always regarded engineering as a sorrowful mystery. The new house soon became a home, and they became intimate with new surroundings.

Men with such a feeling for words and phrases were clearly enamoured of books. Neither was in a true sense 'widely read' perhaps; but both had the rarer gift of remembering intimately and in detail the books of which they were fond; and when once an author, were he Shakespeare or Jerome K. Jerome, was admitted a classic of the house, quotations from him were permanent. Southwell's shelves in parti-



cular comprised a strange medley, *Atalanta in Calydon* living neighbour to a volume on the *Golf Courses of the British Isles*. But there were favourites in common to both; *Richard II*, *Orthodoxy*, *The Four Men*, Ronsard's poems, *The Pickwick Papers* (on which Southwell was almost infallible), the Song of Taliesin from the *Mabinogion*, *The Babe B.A.*, *Salt-Water Ballads*, and *A Shropshire Lad*; Lamb's *Essays* were especially dear to White, and Southwell read *The Pirate* every Christmas. Perhaps the most quoted and best-loved book of all was *The Path to Rome*: Charles Amieson Blake was an accepted member of the household, as was Michael Finsbury. Of the Classics, Virgil was the special favourite. On the whole, White had the better memory for subject-matter, Southwell for detail: but this is not to limit an exclusive province for either. For both quoted freely: 'Not what I need (said the Babe) but what I want;' 'Why, then, I will have some of that excellent beer;' 'Positively the last appearance of the Great Vance' (the latter Southwell would quote to his form on the final exit, it may be, of Polyphemus). These are phrases that recur to the memory; and of other literature:—

To-day the Roman and his trouble  
Are ashes under Uricon,

or

Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen  
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.

They both spoke strongly in approval or disapproval of books that they liked or disliked, with feats of exaggeration that were humorous, but never intolerant. For all that, Southwell, who had an infinite patience with tiresome conversationalists and was generous to a fault, could be impatient with a tiresome author. He forgave men more



readily than books; yet even in his literary antipathies he never lost balance: whatever is meant by the 'Artistic Temperament', creative or critical, it shone clear in him; so clear, indeed, that his obvious sanity over all things vital and human was the more remarkable. Though his preference was for imaginative writing, he shewed remarkable grip of an argument, for all his pretence that he could not follow the plot of *Kidnapped*. His standard in grasping the meaning of an author was so high that, where others might claim to have arrived, he seemed to himself hardly to have set foot upon the way. Once fascinated by an author, he was only content when he had searched for his innermost meaning and thrown light on every obscurity. He would evolve long genealogies to clear up a point, but he was never a pedant. Though he was, by his own confession, an amateur in music, his detailed analysis of parts of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* is thronged with ideas; and there was one Saturday in term time when we had a breakdown after motoring to a point twelve miles from Shrewsbury and six from any station; after six hours' unavailing effort, we accepted the inevitable at midnight; and at 1.30 Southwell was still reading himself to sleep, on the floor of an inn-parlour, with an article on harmony in an encyclopaedia chosen at random from the shelves. He was seldom heard to talk of politics, and—strangely enough—with few exceptions, such as the 'Mona Lisa', pictures had little interest for him; characteristically he devoted his time almost exclusively to other forms of art which appealed to him more. White said of him that, had he not been a schoolmaster, he would have been known as a critic; and it is probably true. Yet imagination was the reigning quality even of his criticism; that is clearly seen from these notes of his, taken from his copy of the *Aeneid*:



Book 2. 1-13.

These are lines whose appeal is not all Virgil's own, and yet I read them almost kneeling. For in them is shewn a glimpse of the whole conscious soul of the Epic. It is not often that we catch the Epic Muse introspective. Yet here, I think, if anywhere, she sits pondering in sad triumph with all the cities of antiquity broidered on her robe, and nursing nearest her heart all that they have best of prowess and of pain. Great sieges and long endurance, patient wanderings and the enmity of Heaven—all these arise to meet the vision of the greatest city of all time, whose foundations were laid in song. And more, there clings round those lines some of the strange morning-wonder of the Middle Age—her lawns afire with minstrels and her colleges dreaming in stone, and the long memory of the dear company of scholars, our kin, who in ways forgotten of wisdom and of folly have gloried or blundered over the tale. Let us go gently and remember our fathers, as befits men approaching a great mountain Valhalla of the praises and pains of famous men.—Lie quiet, Dido: it is the last hour of Troy.

Book 2. 223.<sup>1</sup>

Simile, short. But this point has to be considered; I am not yet sure if I think a simile *must* be long to be among the best. The end of the *Scholar-Gipsy*, of course, and some of Homer's and Virgil's; I think I like the long ones best.

Book 6. 58.<sup>2</sup>

I correct my version of the *Isles of Greece* with 'obeuntia'.

<sup>1</sup> Qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
Taurus et incertam excussit cervice securim.

<sup>2</sup> magnas obeuntia terras  
Tot maria intravi duce te.

I don't think 'mulcentia' will do: too much of it altogether.

Book 6. 203.<sup>1</sup>

'Gemina', if right, is one of the 'lonely words'. It is right for four reasons, which I know.

Book 6. 314.

'Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore.' The definition, I think, of Poetry.

Book 8. 242.<sup>2</sup>

C. thinks 'regia' is in mockery: it will not do. For (1) the whole passage is stately, (2) Virgil has not much sense of humour.

Book 9. 92.

'Prosit nostris in montibus ortas.' I will have some fun somewhere with this line.

White had Southwell's love of imaginative writing. If he had not himself so marked a gift of self-expression the power was not wanting. His interests were varied; he was fond of idealistic discussions on religion, history, and politics, and could read a text-book on 'Insanity' without a trace of morbid interest, with profit, and with appreciation of the humour of such an action. He was interested in problems of the day, but impatient of catchwords, and—like Southwell—fully aware of how much was needed before he could claim understanding of a subject. He was fond of pictures, particularly of the English water-colour school and the landscapes of David Cox; with the realism of the

<sup>1</sup> Sedibus optatis gemina super arbore sidunt (columbae).

<sup>2</sup> At specus et Caci detecta apparuit ingens  
Regia.



Dutch painters, too, he had great sympathy. Though he said himself that, had he had the power, he would gladly have devoted his life to poetry and criticism of poetry, it is with music that he is more especially associated. He felt the debt which he owed to Southwell for literary interest, and Southwell was as grateful to him for what he had learnt of music. It was the claims of the Cambridge Musical Club which, as he said with amused regret, left him at the end of a Cambridge term with nothing but an undigested speech of Cicero to his credit. Yet he was far from blind to the beauty of the Classics, and had been one of many who were alive to the inspiration of Walter Headlam. At King's he was a voluntary member of the choir for several years. Till Shrewsbury won the first place in his heart, Cambridge was to him the home of all that made life best worth living. He left it with a knowledge of men, and a mind awake to innumerable interests. Not least of its gifts to him was the power to take part in a string quartet, often at first sight, with confidence and skill. He had a great memory for tunes, and could remember without hesitation a passage which he had only once heard, and that some years before. Many will remember his solo from the *Meistersinger*, sung at a school concert, followed soon afterwards by a difficult sonata of Beethoven for the violin. He was devoted to Purcell and the English composers of Madrigals; and perhaps his greatest musical achievement was that, largely through his connexion with the Workers' Educational Association, he organised forty people from the town, whom he conducted once a week in madrigals and folk-songs for a concert which was only prevented by the outbreak of war. 'Such as found out musical tunes and recited verses in writing.' The words seem vividly to recall them both.



At the New House the time slipped happily by: there was the work of school hours every day, of living interest to both, and in the evening we would 'sit round' (to use Southwell's phrase) and (with Southwell himself often asleep in a chair) discuss books, theories, or the day's events; or there would be boys to tea, and one would look into Southwell's room and find a silent ring engrossed in books before a winter fire; there was the famous night on which a dog barked persistently in a garden along the road, and George Fletcher, exasperated, ventured out in pyjamas at three in the morning, and cried emphatically at the offender's gate: 'Take in your dog, sir! Take in your dog;' the house was tenanted, as was discovered later, by three maiden ladies.

On November 5 White annually let off five fireworks in the garden dressed in a scholastic gown and broad-brimmed felt hat, looking for all the world like 'Tall Agrippa' come to life: and there was a lazy summer afternoon when Southwell in a fit of boredom suddenly announced 'A ride in a cab is required'; and within the hour we were wandering sleepily round Shropshire lanes in an open victoria, whose driver had orders to stop at every bridge, where he received a cigarette while we watched the stream under the willows; and so home, when Southwell fled to the river to coach the Henley Eight, or played the 17th Fugue of Bach, which he called 'The Foundations of the Earth'. Meals were necessarily spasmodic, and White would heighten their irregularity by presenting arms from 'The Port', or giving a detailed rendering of the 'Eroica symphony', or imitating a puma in its cage at the Zoo. On winter evenings we would find exercise by running in the dark; and on Thursday mornings, having no early school, Southwell practised this



alone before breakfast, recalling the days of Putney. And on summer afternoons there was cricket to watch, or we sat in the garden by the half-grown privet hedge; 'and if it doesn't grow quickly', Southwell would say, 'we shall be overlooked by a long-necked man in a straw hat.'

Expeditions were frequent; sometimes 'up river'; sometimes (in winter) to the town, from which Southwell would return with twenty collar-studs and an early edition of *Ossian*; sometimes, too, farther afield, often in company with boys, to the Breidden hills or Ludlow or Church Stretton, to climb Caradoc. Southwell often went by himself on the spur of the moment, and visited the Long Mynd or lost himself on the uplands of Clun Forest. Or White would be taken in George Fletcher's side-car, and together they would scramble on the rocks of the Stiper-stones. To both Southwell and White the procession of the seasons was a pageant; the winter term was always the most welcome, but all times of year had their glamour and mystery. They appreciated the fireside and the hills alike, the 'Friendly Town' and the 'Open Road', November winds and days of heat in summer when it was almost too hot to row; and all with an affection that was far stronger than mere liking.

'How well I know what I mean to do  
When the long dark autumn-evenings come,'

White quoted in a letter; and it was a happiness common to them both.

Behind all their tastes and interests, Shrewsbury was the dominant fact; to the school they were devoted with a rare measure of unselfishness. To strangers they were reserved, and however freely they might speak to friends, this reserve was a permanent feature of their characters. Words meant much to them, nor did they laugh freely at a



joke unless they were amused; their reticence never made others feel awkward, yet their approval was a compliment. Unreal enthusiasm and bad taste made them unhappy, and they coined a new word, 'spinal',<sup>1</sup> for the feeling, yet their sense of humour invariably prevailed, and left them generous and kindly. They were readily adaptable to new places and surroundings, though the power of self-adaptation came to White by effort and to Southwell by nature; but there was no circle which after a month did not receive both with open arms. White felt himself a stranger for a time at Shrewsbury; he was drawn by so many incentives, and was the slave of so many visions, that the settled habit of surrender to its atmosphere came slowly, and he was beset with doubts as to his ultimate work. These uncertainties gradually faded, and—by the time that he left—the place and its life lay close to the centre of his affections; he felt happy in his work, and one of his colleagues dared call him 'the ideal schoolmaster'. It was high praise, but at least shews that White was not far from finding his life's work. Southwell, with equal humility, was yet fond of Shrewsbury from the day of his arrival, and his happiness was infectious. Throughout, it was the one real pivot of his interests. Religion was to both a thing of wonder, not to be expressed in direct speech, defying analysis, but vital. Life remained to them a mysterious web, shot with tears and folly and that laughter which marks a 'gross cousinship with the most high, and feeds a spring of merriment in the soul of a sane man'. Their

<sup>1</sup> This word, which occurs frequently in their letters, was a word used in the household to express the uncomfortable feeling in the small of the back, produced by embarrassing recitations, etc. But its context in each case will best explain its meaning.



humour was of that rich sort which does not paraphrase itself, but confidently assumes its equivalent in others; yet it was never cynical, and never far removed from sympathy. It is for these, among other gifts, that their memory is treasured.

At the beginning of August 1914 the Shrewsbury Corps went to camp as usual, and White was with the contingent. On the outbreak of war camp was broken up, and for a time it seemed possible that he might be called up as a Territorial Officer. But in the course of a few weeks it was decided by the War Office that only such officers of the O.T.C. as could be spared from the schools were to go; and White was needed at Shrewsbury. In view of the courage with which he faced all risks later on, it is perhaps not unfair to quote from one of his letters words which show his first, instinctive attitude to foreign service; indeed they emphasise the high quality of the courage which could overcome his doubts, and enable him to say later, 'The only thing I am really afraid of, is that I shall be afraid'.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*The Hill-Top—  
Radlett—Hertfordshire.  
August 1914.*

I came down here yesterday to stay with my sister at a charming little house. I've still had no news as to what is being done with O.T.C. officers.

I'm feeling very cowardly about it all; doing nothing, and not a bit keen about volunteering for foreign service, and wretched with myself for not being keen to do so.

These are further letters of his written at the same time :—

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*The Hill-Top—Radlett.*

*Aug. 19, 1914.*

[On a picture post card, shewing a photograph of a house ; he had marked one of the windows with a cross.]

This is not my bedroom. In fact, I don't know who does live in that house ; nobody that I know.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*The Hill-Top—Radlett.*

*August 26, 1914.*

At present I'm just sitting. The food and the beds are good. I have two beds. And I've read N. Angell on *Balkan Wars and Peace*, very good ; *Jane Eyre* ; *Stalky & Co.* ; *The Simpkins Plot* ; *New Arabian Nights* again (*Providence and the Guitar* is the best short story ever written. 'The great thing about the stars is that they belong to everybody in particular.' 'Art is Art,' he repeated sadly. 'It is not Watercolour Sketches nor practising on a piano. It is a life to be lived.')

all Synge's *Plays* ; Marshall's *Economics*, a little ; *Enoch Arden* ; *The Musketry Vade Mecum* ; Galsworthy's *A Country House*, a bad moral, but good as a series of turns and smart set conversation.

I've done a good deal of Harmony and am beginning the exercises on the diminished 7th. Brahms' Symphony in F is good, and so is the Schumann Pff<sup>tte</sup>. Concerto. Heard both last week. We are going to a Beethoven and Bach programme on Friday. You would come too if you were in town, but I suppose you won't be. Ring up if you are (Radlett 56).

By Gad, I am hating this war. I hope things will go



better soon. I wish we hadn't got a week's extra holiday. The Man keeps ringing me up at home, in spite of the fact that I'm away.

I've been bitten by a fly in the leg, and can't walk—there!

---

In September, with another Shrewsbury officer, he helped with the training of a battalion of the K.S.L.I. at Blackdown, having charge of a Company of 280 recruits, and stayed there till the beginning of October, when term began at Shrewsbury.

We were all of us glad to be back to definite work after the suspense and inactivity of the long holiday. That Michaelmas term there was much to be done, for while work and games continued unaltered, except in quantity, there was a whole new province of military work; new lectures to be given, field-days to be planned, and squads of senior boys to be trained for service. Several masters left the school at the start, to join battalions. White was left in command of a Company, and Southwell, who had hitherto had no connexion with the Corps, joined as a private. In many ways the life of the household was unchanged, but what had before been leisure hours were largely given over to military work, and the days were seldom long enough for all that had to be done. Southwell found ceaseless amusement in the thought of himself in this new part, and was for ever drawing ludicrous pictures of the character of the 'practical man', and pretending that military science was beyond his grasp. Towards the end of the term he strained himself on a field-day, and an operation was necessary. He put up with this cheerfully, and shewed amazing equanimity, and afterwards looked back almost with pleasure on the time spent in the nursing-



home. When he was convalescent many fictitious or neglected bottles of medicine were sent down to him from the New House; for it had always been his habit to forget his tonics for a week, and make up for his omission by a comprehensive dose at the end. His cheerfulness was so infectious that his visitors became hilarious and almost endangered the speed of his recovery. The Christmas holidays were spent by him in convalescence, while White at home helped with the training of Bantam battalions, with intervals of relaxation, as on the occasion when—dressed in full uniform—he met a visitor on Birkenhead platform with a demand to pull a Christmas cracker on the spot.

During the Lent term—their last at Shrewsbury—came the news of George Fletcher's death in the trenches. In his own words from an inscription, he was still 'Novae Domus socius'. And though for some terms he had been at Eton and then at the Front, it was impossible not to think of him as a member of the household. This is part of a letter written by him from the Front shortly before his death:—

'I have now had dinner—Irish Stew, Beer, Sardines on Toast, Marmalade. Also the sun is streaming in with some real warmth and I am feeling hearty. I will therefore make some general remarks on the subject of War.

'There may be some excitement in it, but that takes the form of a fearful strain on the nerves without any of the exhilaration one usually associates with danger. Perhaps a day attack can be exhilarating: in fact the only time I have been pleasurablely excited was when the enemy attacked us by day and we knocked them down. Our attack is yet to come. The fact remains that war is a bore and we are all fed up with it.

'Death; one becomes a fatalist on this subject and looks forward resignedly to the prospect of extinction: "That



moving Finger writes, and having writ, Moves on . . .”  
And again another poet saith,

*Διὸς γὰρ δυσπαραίτητοι φρένες.*

And there are several other writers whose remarks are to the point on the subject, not the least being those of the Labour Party of Galilee.

‘Fear and Courage; I think it was a man called Socrates who said that Courage was a right knowledge of such things as are to be feared: and to a considerable extent, he was right. When you know how little damage a high explosive shell does to you compared with the noise it makes, you don’t fear him so much. But Socrates is only partly right. I know what a fool a shell is and what a fool a bullet is, and yet I am terrified of both. But a more insinuating and demoralising fear which seizes man is an entirely illogical unreasoning fear of the enemy as such; imagining him to possess superhuman qualities when he knows he is very human. Hence the great thing is, and will be, to make men realise that the enemy is much more afraid of you than you are of him.

‘Hate; is non-existent—at all events on our side, I think on the enemy’s too. He too is capable of being jovial in his enmity towards us, and will signal misses or bull’s-eyes when we plug his loop-holes.

‘Atrocities; I haven’t seen any. All first-hand evidence—even that gained on the Retreat—goes to prove that the German soldier as a whole is capable of gentlemanly and chivalrous behaviour, and of this he has given numerous examples.

‘The Future; in front of us there is a ridge on which we can see three rows of trenches, barbed, barricaded, and cunningly dug. These we shall have to deal with after his



first line. They probably have several hundreds of these behind those we see. In October the Germans, with unheard-of courage, determination, and force, tried to break through a single line of ours and failed.—Well, what abaht it?’

At the end of the letter was a passage exhorting both the Men to join Battalions. Southwell himself said later that it was George Fletcher’s death as much as anything which prevailed upon him to go; and White shews his feeling in this letter:—

To C. R. L. FLETCHER.

*The New House.*

*Mar. 26, 1915.*

The news which you sent us on Wednesday was to me the most terrible blow the War has sent me. George was absolutely the most splendid character I know; such a perfect honesty and directness in conversation, such a fresh and genuine temperament, made him the companion one would have chosen for any circumstances. I am telling you things you already know, but I can’t help trying to put him into words, in every sense of his loss and our great sorrow. It was a great day in our life here when he joined us at the New House. That was my happiest term here. His personality lies stamped on all the little institutions of our life, and his name is mentioned almost every time we sit down together. He was and is our d’Artagnan. As I say that, it strikes me what a long way that comparison will go. . . .

I am leaving to take a regular commission this term. If I go out to Flanders, I hope I may catch some of his spirit and shew one hundredth part of his courage.

March was spent in doubts and questionings; South-



well first decided, then White. There were many characteristic details towards the end. On his return from a visit to the War Office, White—a lover of ‘A. A. M.’—telegraphed from Birmingham station: ‘People here live extreme simplicity chiefly upon products of farms.’ One night, too, following upon a long field-day spent in command of his Company, he proposed and carried in the School Debating Society a motion that ‘The Classics are the invention of Dr. Kennedy’, with its corollary that all archaeological remains were the work of a tourist agency. By a brilliant speech he made his argument plausible to almost the entire house.

At the end there was a reminiscence of the earliest days at Broadlands on an evening (described by one of the performers in the following letter afterwards) when quartets were played in the Abbey Church:—

‘White is simply splendid—he fairly revelled in the Tschaikowsky Trio. The last time he played with us, the string Quartets, Dvořák in C flat and Schumann in A, were done in the Abbey here—and no concert room could compete with that building. We finished up at my house with the Dohnányi P. F. Quintet and the big posthumous D mi. String Quartet of Schubert’s—the room was hot, we played in shirt-sleeves, and the small audience sat chiefly on the floor. We have nothing now but the recollection, but that is great.’

And so they left Shrewsbury, leaving a gap that was felt by masters and boys alike. After White’s death, one of his friends at Shrewsbury wrote of him:—

‘Malcolm was quite by himself, the most lovable and sympathetic and splendid of men, and he seemed to combine so many of the good points one has known in other friends,



in a wonderful way, which one feels would make it impossible for anyone else to be to his friends what he has been. When I think that he may be dead, it depresses me dreadfully, for he was the one person to whom one always felt one could talk about important things that matter and find a sympathetic hearer, just in the same way as he was the best possible of people with whom to enjoy all the trivial moments of life.'

And another said:—

'I think you know what he was to us—his music and his turns, and behind all that his wonderful unselfishness and idealism which seemed to grow every day, and always seemed to me to account for his humility and nervousness about whether he would do what was best.'

This is part of a letter written to White from Shrewsbury during the Summer term of 1915:—

'I miss you and the other Man very much this term. One misses all that sitting round in Phiz's room with the other Man sitting deep in a chair, and alternating between sleep and fits of exploding and unrestrained laughter over his form or "the use of the globes" or something like that, and terrific arguments going on. I wish you were both here. The other Man seems to be very happy with the 13th R.B. I had a letter from him this morning enclosing one about the Bedford race. He has got an amazing faculty of being tremendously engrossed in one thing at a time,—a most enviable quality I think; and he writes as if he'd never done anything or liked anything better than bivouacking on Salisbury Plain. It is very wonderful.'

And, after Southwell's death, one of his former pupils said in a letter:—

'Unfortunately I was never in his form, but he took me



for a term in French, and I can only say that those French hours were the most delightful hours I have ever spent in study. I liked them to such an extent that I often used to count the number of hours until the next one. I fear I am not a lover of books, and it was simply the personality of your son which made those hours so delightful. I don't think I have ever got to like a master in so short a time as when I began to know your son. I think his poems were very characteristic of him, and the book he arranged, "V. B", is one of the gems of my bookcase.'

## CHAPTER II

E. H. L. S.

APRIL TO OCTOBER 1915

IT was an unkind stroke of luck that prevented the two Men from joining the same Battalion. They made efforts to do so, but there was not room. White had a trying period of waiting before he could find work ; but it was not long before Southwell was gazetted. On April 24 he joined the 13th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade at Perham Down. There was one memorable week of Brigade training, recorded in his diary. Then, for more than two months, in the course of which White and he were at Shrewsbury together for one week-end (July 10-12), he was at work at Windmill Hill Camp, near Ludgershall. He was happy in his work. One of his former pupils, later an officer in the Rifle Brigade, says in a letter : ' I suppose we can't drag Mr. Southwell away from his military duties, which he seems to love. I can just see him stretching out his arm quite straight and stiff, palm of the hand turned upwards, fingers pointing up, so as to make a cup of his hand, saying " It's *that*, it's *that*. Very fine man " ; or, when some unhappy private drops his rifle, " Oh, not a good man. You stand there with a face like a plate of whoggy porridge, like some great owl. " . . . A pleasant reminiscence of V. B.

On July 29 his Division left for France, but he was left behind as ' O.C. Details ', since his training had been



shorter than that of the other officers in his Battalion. On August 16 he was transferred to the 15th Battalion at Belhus Park, Purfleet; and on September 19 there was a reunion there of the Broadlands household for a few hours, to which White alludes in his letters. On September 20 Southwell moved to South Camp, Seaford; but he was not there for long, for while on leave at Worcester on September 30 he was ordered to the Front, and left on the following day.

These are extracts from his letters and diary, written during this time:—

## LETTERS

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TO HIS FATHER.

*Shrewsbury.*

*March 1915.*

You will have read the news of Fletcher's death. I think you will agree with me that the matter is now closed. I must go and take his place.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Worcester.*

*April 14, 1915.*

A most lovely map-carrying engine arrived safely two days ago (I've been half-imbedded with one of my monthly chills), with straps and harness and buckles and squares ruled on it and the dear knows who I'll marry. Thank you very much indeed.

TO J. F. C. RICHARDS.

*College—Worcester.*

*April 22, 1915.*

I knew the writing on your welcome letter at once; and you may imagine the delightful wonder with which, while still in bed and half asleep (in justice to myself I shall add —'and preparing to go for an appallingly hearty run before breakfast'), I opened the parcel that came with it. It is

intended, you say, for fun, and it really does succeed in being most frightful fun: I am delighted with it: thank you ever so much. If I ever dine in Magdalen after the War, I shall spend half the evening (on second thoughts, no; two-thirds: they feed you rather well there) eating, and the rest whipping out your 'kindness'<sup>1</sup> and saying 'Ah, yes; the year of the War, you know, the year of the War: a great friend: and the Magdalen arms too, you see', over and over again. I will indeed.

To R. A. KNOX. *Windmill Hill Camp—Ludgershall.*  
*April 29, 1915.*

This is a letter I began quite three weeks ago and never finished, about things for next term.<sup>2</sup> I do hope you'll be happy there with my children: I've no doubt you will.

To C. A. ALINGTON. *Windmill Hill Camp.*  
*May 9, 1915.*

We are having a great time here: there is as far as I can see nothing to complain of except dust, than which I have never seen any thicker in midsummer. It rises in almost solid clouds from a string of thirty or forty motor lorries, such as one meets constantly; while the smallest party of infantry raise enough to make them very unpleasant to follow. But one feels, especially when choked with dust for the first time, that one has really got into the summer, and that this kind of show is the only really delightful way in which to meet it.

I have a feeling that some of the poems in that book of

<sup>1</sup> A Winchester 'notion'.

<sup>2</sup> R. A. Knox succeeded him for five terms as form-master of V. B.



mine ought to be published in proof of the proposition that boys are not Philistines: do you think it a good idea? I thought some of the best ones might be strung up in a volume of 'Poets of the Fifth Form' or something of the kind. There is no reason why I should have anything to do with it beyond suggesting the poems.

At present I am in charge of a platoon in a very attractive Company (not Sir Foster Cunliffe's; but the obvious place for me, in the Coy. of one of our Governors, was full already).

TO C. R. L. FLETCHER.

*Windmill Hill—Ludgershall.*

*May 9, 1915.*

This letter is one you should have received long ago; it was begun at Shrewsbury, and it is not forgetfulness on my part that has made it so slow. For though, I suppose, no one but myself and you (now) will ever know it, I quite literally never entered the New House, after the news about George arrived, without thinking of him. . . . I doubt if any handful of men in any English house ever had from their friend a better lead than we. . . . I suppose it must be some consolation, that unshakable conviction that people like George and Regie were not really wasted. Thus, when I told my form of George's death and of his last feat, their answer was—what else would you have?—a loud burst of clapping. Surely he would have been no less proud of this tribute from babes and sucklings, whom he had roused to a frenzy by his example, than of the French flag he risked his life to save. And of men there is a countless number, I know, who thank God every day that the road ahead has been marked by so unforgettable a sign.

TO T. E. BARTLEET. *Windmill Hill Camp—Andover.*

*June 3, 1915.*

One does begin to regard this place as 'home' after some weeks; and I have got very definitely fond of the two clumps of trees on the top of our 'Windmill Hill', which one sights from a distance on returning from a long march. It is perfectly gorgeous here; everything is looking splendid; the week's billeting tour we did in North Wilts a fortnight ago was certainly one of the best I have ever had anywhere; for when you *do* run into a valley with a river at the bottom of it in Wiltshire, as I know of old, the result is as good as anything I know; partly because the Plain as a whole is so dry.

There is no call yet, so I will risk another sheet. And indeed I would not let sheet No. 1 go by itself, talking about my own doings all the time and not saying a word of your very fine poem. Yes, I like it very much; it is most successfully 'creepy', surely, and I think I could have named the author if it had been unsigned: it is characteristic. I am sending it away to put in a little volume of loose-sheet poems where I keep the 'posthumous' works of my poets.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Windmill Hill Camp.*

*June 10, 1915.*

The Man sent me from home that June was with her glancing grasses;<sup>1</sup> to which I replied that they didn't *really* know except in (two places I now think; I said here only before). One is the route we used to go with all the Men and Hôj<sup>2</sup> when we went to see the 'battalions' on a

<sup>1</sup> Walter Headlam's Poems; 'June.'

<sup>2</sup> George Fletcher.—There was a field near the Schools, where we used to visit the 'battalions' of corn.



Sunday afternoon. The other is the fringe of Salisbury Plain, where the ground comes down with a shout, one almost feels, to meet the water. For, as you no doubt know, the Plain is like South Africa in summer, rather, and the streams are almost dried up. Still we do keep a strip of green in a valley one mile off with one inch exactly of brook in the middle of it, which is enough to throw up the colour of the foot of the valley for a long way against the brown grass all round. This morning we went and dug trenches in it, which was rather a desecration and frightfully foolish, for of course we struck water two feet down, and the digging was much harder than even our ordinary chalk digging, and that is no joke. We dug—well, it's not a very interesting game.

But the bivouac, oh Man, you would like that. Especially our last Brigade trip. We've had three now since I've been here. The first was the Hungerford—Pewsey trip on which I either did or did not expatiate at length to you, but at any rate I did to some Man or other. The next was a week ago; we marched about a dozen miles and bivouacked in a glorious old park.

If you please, we did Right Flank Guard through a very thick wood to half the Brigade on the road, and having been on protective duty by day (and rather stiff at that) we were let off again. So you can guess if we strolled round that field pretty pleased with life after a vast dinner listening to the Brigade full-fed.

Since writing the above, as Belloc would say, I've been to Marlborough, yesterday. The chapel was, I thought, frightfully good, and, Man, there were boys about. It was perfectly incredible. . . .

Yes, but I must shut up this show now. This is a very wonderful place.



To M. G. WHITE.

*Windmill Hill Camp.**June 12, 1915.*

*Marlborough.* I went over there yesterday afternoon, and there were *boys* there. I looked at them for ages; the whole thing seemed incredible, and I must be dreaming; but there they were, priceless. We lay about and watched a cricket match, but I spent still more time on that steep bank nearest the College with my back to the match, watching the smaller people careering about on bicycles and shouting: that was very good. It looked very beautiful, the whole place, and I liked the chapel and the Master's garden, and the whole visit was good.

Yes, Man, Uricon<sup>1</sup> and June, and

Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet  
Centurion and signifer.<sup>2</sup>

Good Man.

Good Lord, no, I'm not efficient yet: but one can, I think, teach oneself a certain amount, as we get a very fair lot of time after work's over. I have an idea the men want less work now: Musketry Tests and that kind of thing in the sun in the afternoon, even for an hour or two, make them very slack when they've quite probably done a long march and bivouacked the night before. But the men are *good*, definitely: and altogether it's a good business.

To R. A. KNOX.

*Windmill Hill Camp.**June 27, 1915.*

Dear Super-Man,

Well, I sent a reply to you in rather a wild rush: unredeemed as far as I remember by the least touch of cheerfulness, but I happened to have been made rather

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*—'On Wenlock Edge.'

<sup>2</sup> John Masefield, *Salt-Water Ballads*—'On Malvern Hill.'



particularly nostalgic by a recent visit to Marlborough and your documents on the top of it, and I can only say that the lines were as sincere as I could make them and did not feel 'written to order'!

This statement of mine reads rather like that of the cook in *Vice Versa*, all from my own point of view.

Give all the men my love, and Whitfield *shall* have a letter, and V. B are very fine fellows, and so are K.'s Army, only they're rather tired just now, and so am not I, for keeping going is only very easy when you haven't left large portions of you in other places! I believe that is rather rot, and it would read just as well with the negative out! It won't do, anyway, to consider the point.

To C. E. N. SURRIDGE.<sup>1</sup>

*Windmill Hill Camp.*

*June 30, 1915.*

This is splendid of you: I was tremendously pleased to see your handwriting the other day (too long ago, I'm afraid you're thinking) when I came into the Mess. I had, of course, received a large batch of documents from Mr. Knox, which I read very carefully; but the worst of it was that he demanded a reply<sup>2</sup> in the same language. This may be all very well, but my ideas have been rather narrowed down to unskilful manœuvres with my platoon; and the state of mind described in the song—"What's the next word of command?" said the Colonel' (and how I'm to know, if he didn't, I can't think), is not very good for sending messages in a foreign language. However, I happened to be feeling rather particularly lonely that evening, so I sat down and scrawled a rather solitary little

<sup>1</sup> Formerly in V. B.

<sup>2</sup> Page 66.

message, which at any rate I meant rather dreadfully in earnest. I only hope some of it scanned!

I see the poets are still going strong: Mr. Knox sent me one of the 'works' of a new poet the other day. Crosfield's *White House* looks well in print, but I would rather have my own copy in the author's handwriting, any day.

We had our inspection by the King about a week ago; and it was rather impressive, naturally. About 15,000 men on a square mile or two make a sight well worth seeing. Of course I thought of my poets when the cavalry, with their distinctive (rather a good word, that; it *looks* as if I could tell any cavalry from infantry by their dust, like the Boers!) and rather thrilling dust-cloud, came swinging round the corner, a mile or two away from our position on the left of the line. John Masefield,<sup>1</sup> I mean, and the remarkable poems about 'The Procession' they<sup>2</sup> wrote, and all that.

Well, you all seem to be going very strong there. I suppose you do all exist really; but sometimes I have to think horribly hard, to believe it. As I told somebody the other day, I believed it hard all one afternoon when I went over to Marlborough; but of course the letters which reach me with the Shrewsbury post-mark, though I must say people are awfully good to me and I greet their letters with *terrific* delight, do sometimes seem to come from another world altogether!

Now then, we can't have this sort of thing. If I'm going to get gloomy, I'd better shut up at once, and I will. Thank you a thousand times for your splendid letter, and *please* do it again!

<sup>1</sup> *Salt-Water Ballads*—'Cavalier.'

<sup>2</sup> The Members of V. B.



To R. F. BAILEY.

*Windmill Hill Camp.*

July 1, 1915.

To-day has been rather fun in a lazy way. I took on the Orderly Office job for some one who wanted a Sunday off, so I was stuck in camp, first boiling in the biggest heat we've had, and then getting thoroughly wet all of a sudden while dismissing the Old Guard. It is rather good fun after a hard week, a week-end in camp, and I've put in all of them up to date except one, when I ran over to near Salisbury once. Good place, that; and I must try and see the town itself quietly one day.

I am becoming rather like a cabbage here. One goes on very happily, living a healthy animal existence, and the importance attached to one's food on bivouacs after a long march is rather scandalous.

I could make a good range-card of priceless memories on this landscape between lines N.W. and N.E. S.W. lies the sweating march to Bulford Range, and S. is Perham Downs Camp, which is all huts and therefore a beastly insult to the country-side. But I cannot think of what I regard as 'My Section' of our prospect without a thrill.

It is now Sunday afternoon, July 3rd; not very good therefore, for you should have had this before. Tell Kitch I couldn't by any device reach Henley yesterday; and I don't even now know the result of the race.<sup>1</sup> For the first time, and, I suppose, the only time I wanted one, no Sunday paper is procurable.

To M. G. WHITE.

*Windmill Hill Camp.*

Man,

July 24, 1915.

Emotional Indigestion. Ah yes, Man: statement. Frightfully true, that. Yes, of course what you say about

<sup>1</sup> Against Eton.

poetry is in my experience too. Equally of course I refer facts to poetry rather than the other way. This is obscure and I will explain. Now R. L. S. in a lovely, lovely passage ('Apology for Idlers' in *Virginibus puerisque*—you gave it me, you remember) says: 'Books are all very well in their way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life.' Now if I believe that, it is because I have seen it in a book; and that I think is rather my attitude to pretty well everything. So that so far from agreeing with R. L. S. I seem more than ever in a position to contradict him. Man, that is *rather* where we do come in, you know: I believe that everybody, who has his little finger in this pie, really is in a position to dictate to his favourite poets. Not bad. No.

## MANIFESTO

by 2nd Lieut. E. H. L. S.

Commdg. Details, 13th Bn. R.B.

1. *Situation.* It's all right—I happened to see two lines of The Poet in a magazine, after 3 months.
2. *Statement.* When I read Homer I gesticulate; over VIRGIL I kneel.

E. H. L. S.

2nd Lieut.

*Windmill Hill.*

2. 8. 15.

Copy No. 1 to Lt. Whitfield.

„ „ 2 to Lt. White.

„ „ 3 to Lt. Howson.



To C. A. ALINGTON.

*Belhus Park—Purfleet.*Aug.<sup>1</sup> 18, 1915.

Out of the eight or so they had to pick one to wind up camp, return tents, receive hospital-discharged men, finish up accounts, and generally run a fatigue party to clean up the place and pass an 'exam.' by the Sanitary Inspector—we did this with some success—and I was picked for the job. So long as it hasn't thrown me back more than a fortnight or so I shan't mind so much—though as you can guess it wasn't exactly funny to see the tail of the Division disappear, on the day of embarkation, round the corner to the station—because I've learnt more about the administration of the Army in two weeks than in all the preceding months. This is some consolation, and as a matter of fact I can't pretend in the least that I didn't rather enjoy the fortnight in which I was in sole command of about twenty-five men—a small handful, but an independent show. The worst days I ever knew were *before* that, when (after being told within a month of joining, and again later, that I was going out) I just heard that it was all what the Army calls a 'wash-out', and so I'd got to stay behind.

There is still a great deal to do (I've just started learning German—rather late, but I'm getting on), so I must wind up this lengthy explanation of my very curious *movements*.

I suppose it is needless to repeat to you what I said in a letter to Shrewsbury not so long ago, that I have for all these months seen *everything* in terms of Shrewsbury. I have seen a hill, perhaps; and I reflect that it would not do for the folk around the Wrekin, even though it did have a Roman Camp at the top. Or a path from the bed of the Avon, up towards Sidbury, and I remember that the track

<sup>1</sup> The 13th Battalion Rifle Brigade left for France on July 29.

from the boat-house to the schools has a better curve upon it, and the feet of more adorable people.

Or I have been with 'B' Company on Church Parade every Sunday for months, and the wrench was an almost physical one with which I had to tear myself away from the belief that I was in Chapel, and had been there every minute of the service.

Or lastly, there was that last Sunday night of the term. You were going, and my Battalion were going, in the same week. I started for a rather lonely walk, therefore, and the farther I went the more the 37th Division shouted. They shouted for three hours pretty well each night for the last week.

This time they just sang the simple refrain which goes

Here we are ! here we are ! here we are again ! (*bis*)

Hullo ! Hullo !

Hullo ! Hullo ! Hulloh-oh ! (*Repeat.*)

This song went for just  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours without change : it went on louder and louder, like a plot to break the hearts of the 'stay-behinds'. It was about the time when you would be giving your final address,<sup>1</sup> probably an extra good one (I was not disappointed : but how you could read the poem through without a break I cannot imagine : I would not trust myself with a recitation of that beautiful thing in public for a fortune per line).

So I went on, not sorry on the whole to be alone, and blundered along towards the Artillery Camp, until finally you came out of Chapel, and I came back over the hill.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Elm and the River' : published in *Shrewsbury Fables*.



TO J. F. C. RICHARDS.

15th R.B.

Aug. 19, 1915.

Look here, I've only got five minutes, and your letter was so splendid that I hardly know which part of it to be most grateful for. I seize this moment as the only possible chance I'll get for days, probably. But I mustn't omit to say you shall have a photograph if I ever get one, and I must have one of you. And also J. M.'s 'Smoke-stack' poem: try Mr. Whitfield with it. Yes, I agree with you; it's priceless. Lutener's society is a *magnificent* scheme;<sup>1</sup> one of the best things I've heard of.

This is a rotten letter, probably the worst and the most illegible of all I've sent from the R.B.; and that's saying a terrific big deal. You must forgive it, for the rush is rather awful. One's got a terrible lot to learn, and not long to learn it in. You're a very fine correspondent indeed, and a very excellent person, and I wish I could see you, and anyway you must *write* like the devil, if you will pardon the expression. Not good: please make the necessary excuses for me to yourself.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

Belhus Park.

Aug. 26, 1915.

I was very sorry to hear from Jack the news about his brother<sup>2</sup> in Gallipoli. It seems to be a standing order in the R.B. that no officer's mess shall contain any writing-paper when most needed except reams of the black-edged variety; but somehow I cannot bring myself to feel that a

<sup>1</sup> 'Poetry and prose distributing agency,' started at Shrewsbury.

<sup>2</sup> 2nd Lieut. G. H. Whitfield, 14th Sikhs; killed in Gallipoli on August 8, 1915.



letter such as this, from the meanest of your son's brother-officers, should be written on that. If anything, I would have it gilt-edged. I suppose when the War is over it will be known better what extraordinary things that peninsula has seen done by those very brave men. Meanwhile, even without knowing your son, I was more moved than I could ever say by Jack's beautiful suggestion that he remembered his School's motto.<sup>1</sup> Indeed we later comers have a terribly high standard to follow.

TO CANON WILSON.

*September, 1915.*

I heard from my father this morning the news which, I suppose, is sure to bring you many letters from people far more worthy to send them than I. And yet somehow I feel that being the most insignificant of his brother-officers does give me the right to ask if I may just add a short message of sincerest sympathy. I don't know whether it is very sentimental and foolish or not; perhaps it is, but I never can rid myself, when I hear such news as that of Hugh's death in action, of the strange desire, not only to sympathise with those he leaves behind, but to get up and cheer! Was it really ill-timed, I was asking only last week-end, in my organist colleague at Shrewsbury to play no less a thing, when Lord Roberts died, than the 'Hallelujah Chorus'? Certainly I feel myself that the thing was rightly looked at then, and I have never doubted it since. It is a terrible thing, and also a very glorious one, for later comers to see the 'monumentum aere perennius' of their friends' examples grow higher and more inimitable day after day: one feels one would like to button-hole them, where they watch their successors, and plead 'Don't forget the standard is a little higher, since you went away'.

<sup>1</sup> 'Deo dante dedi.'



To C. A. ALINGTON.

*South Camp—Seaford.**Sept. 22, 1915.*

Well, this camp is magnificent for everybody. The men are all in huts, splendidly fed, waterproofed overhead (unlike so many Battalions last winter), near the sea air and the chance of a bathe, near a town which ought not to be bad for them if they behave, and best of all near the Downs: these I hailed with tremendous delight, for I had felt rather stifled in the close country on the Essex flats after an incredible summer on the Plain. Do you know Alfriston, I wonder, its church and 'clergy house' and its inns? We walked there yesterday evening and fell much in love with it.

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## DIARY

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### THE FIRST PARADE.

*April 24, Saturday.*

Ceremonial, as usual on Saturday morning. A fairly easy job for the platoon commander, as he has practically nothing to do. Indeed I wonder whether I gave a command per hour beyond an occasional 'Make Way' when we turned about, delivered probably in the half-gruff, half-deprecating voice of the new subaltern. We did not carry swords; in fact, hardly any of us possess such things; so that even that was an ordeal saved, for we have no idea yet of the salute with the sword. It resolved itself for me into a kind of painless nightmare of shouting.

I pass on now to the ceremonial of the following Saturday; for though it has no terrors, the keenest barrack-square enthusiast would hardly think it a very thrilling subject on which to stay for long. The main points of interest were few and obvious. First, I suppose, comes the realisation which one gets, and which one would hardly believe till

got in such a peaceful performance, that this sort of drill is a tremendous test of tired men. At this date the men were undoubtedly getting a bit stale, and I hope before we go out they will get a good rest: boasting little or no knowledge of soldiering, I claim a little competence in the art of recognising a tired man.

It is, however, all very well to run down the men who run these things, but there's a something about them . . . , as William Bent Pitman would say. I agree with A.C.P.M. that the bugles immediately behind one (where I seldom get them) are apt to be rather tiresome, but they do help to pull a tired crowd together. . . . No, I will hear nothing against the bugles; it is so easy to read them in terms of Simonides!

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PERHAM.

*Sunday, April 25. 5 a.m.*

They do not tell you things in the Army. This I had (not from the prince of Pheneon under the seven towers, nor even the tribesman of Vectis, as W. A. F. B.<sup>1</sup> said in his poem on 'Rome') from Milo M. Cudmore, the gallant artillery soldier, a month before joining, and from many other sources. This was my first real proof of it.

*Bulford Ranges.* The days we spent here were rather ordinary; a certain amount of monotony was inevitable, but no one could pretend we had a hard time. Later we became rather mechanical about the whole thing: but the morning marches, in the early days of the dust, when its taste meant summer and the months had not tired any one of it; the various ways by which we went in and out among the slopes of Windmill, Pickpit, and Clarendon Hills (I don't think the problem was ever proved to be solved); the halt under the trees past Tidworth, up the hill and before the farm: these are things I just find it worth while

<sup>1</sup> Formerly a member of V. B.



remembering. Otherwise, as I say, we were machines, either marking in the Butts, or hanging about waiting to fire our courses.

It was not really amusing, though I used to get very angry at the thought arising in anybody's head that we had struck the hard life *yet!* So I will not, I think, write of it any more.

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### A BRIGADE TRAINING WEEK.

*May 10-15.*

I look back on the middle of this week as one of the happiest I have ever known. And I think it is only times like that one that a diary should be allowed to recall, so I must not let that week go.

*Monday therefore.* Parade at 8.30, Field Service Order. It rained all day, and we marched in Burberry outside uniform and pack outside that. I found the pack very comfortable, rather surprisingly so. Not much of that march sticks in my memory except the valley of *Shalbourne*, which I was sure would on a fine day be perfectly lovely, and rather definitely vowed to visit later. It lies on the right of the N. road to Hungerford, rather as the hollow below the Castle at Edinburgh follows Prince's Street (though why the two should be compared is past wondering!).

We got in about 5, and after some delay found our billets. 'C' were in a barn and got drenched to the skin. 'B' were in a school—'The Ebenezer,' it was called, a sort of chapel-school building on the R. of a road L. from main street going down. I very luckily got for myself a gloriously comfortable room—double four-poster bed and all, in a little pub. (it was no more) opposite the rest of the Company. Their feeding was rather troublesome, for they had to trek off to the hotel for their meals. But I think they slept more or less comfortably; at least they were dry.



*Tuesday.* This day was a blank. . . . The afternoon being blank again the men were allowed to stroll about, though I am glad to think some of my men got a little sleep, as I recommended. As for me, I made myself scandalously fresh for the night's march by going straight to bed and sleeping for two hours. Following that came a stroll with Fraser, and this was one of the great scenes.

*Hungerford Church* is right on the edge of the Kennet and Avon Canal; and its perpendicular tower rising over the green with the water beyond, and west of that the setting sun, and an old lock or two farther on E., and finally the bridge, made pictures which I could hardly leave. This was one scene, and yet it was to be equalled again and again before the Wonderful Week was over.

11.0. *The Night March.* The R.B. was to go on ahead and 'B' Coy. to piquet the village of Froxfield. This we made rather a mess of, and I leave it. We then proceeded to march rather wearily for some miles, mainly uphill, towards Savernake Forest. We did not go through much of it, and there followed an attack through the Forest, which I would not put down at all (obeying my own rule) it the miserable futility of that one hour was not rather amusing when seen through the glorious haze of the following forty-eight hours.

We formed close column of platoons, I remember, and blundered along through the wood at about 3.0, when it was dark; and finally, after hearing various shots put round us with great equanimity, we were halted and lay down in a frost-covered opening while the dawn came. After a long time we moved off, and it was not, I think, until this point that I began to feel intolerably well and hearty. We came quickly through the rest of the wood, and only then



I realised, looking under the trees across the harebells, that Oberon had been there all night.

*Wilcot Vicarage.* This was where I was billeted. All this period found me with nothing but a tremendous sense of relief, partly at the end of the march and partly at hearing I was well billeted, no doubt. And so I was feeling very well all the time. Then the food for the men was very late in arriving; and in fact this food question spoilt the week rather for the men, I fear. I procured a few biscuits for some of my men, which was all I could find in the village at the time, and those few of them seemed grateful; but it was rather maddening to feel that nothing could be done for the men for so long while my own future existence for twenty-four hours (as we then thought) was so scandalously assured of comfort. Finally, after lying about in the meadow beyond the farm for some time with some of the men, all of us being by now rather calmer, I cleared off to my Vicarage and had a large breakfast. Mr. and Mrs. Hoyland were extraordinarily good to us—Mackworth, Bamford, and me—the whole time. The morning was naturally blank, but I shall not easily forget the sudden transition from the long march to the garden behind the Vicarage, where we lay about under the hedge and looked sleepily over the long, low water-meadows, and watched the consoling English mist wrapping itself round the English trees. No soldiering ever troubled the serenity of that little landscape, nor the old church tower behind; for the whole of that valley has just accepted very quietly the memory of the men who died for it in year after year before we ever saw it, and every one, I felt, was another perfectly present, and therefore entirely hidden and unsuspected, guarantee of that incredible peace.

It is so hard to choose one's pictures; I have written



ten pages already in this hour, which is half a dozen too many at least. Anyhow I *must* omit our Outpost Scheme for Officers in the afternoon, where we went and planted imaginary piquets along the canal for miles, and where I enlarged a map of our little section of the bridge.

Tea in the Vicarage garden, and then a vast letter to Maurice Brown, followed by a mild ecclesiastical talk with the Vicar. All this was good, and so was the evening. . . . So next day we said good-bye effusively on leaving for our rearguard action towards Manningford Bruce. And then came another great moment; when we had been gone an hour we heard that we should not bivouac that night but *return to billets*. . . . I suppose there have been more delighted men than we three for the following minutes; but I should like to have met them. The rearguard action that day was followed by a discourse from the Brigadier, and in the calm of the Vicar's study—we returned to his arms in the garden almost with a shout of delight—I noted various lessons we were told to ponder. Nothing shall induce me to rewrite them here. But the 'Wood Bridge' over the Avon, which flies past as usual, waving its reeds like tongues of fire, was defended by No. 7 platoon with remarkable placidity; and it would be rash to forget the hour or so which we spent there.

It was during this evening that I walked part of the way with Leggatt towards his (D) billets at Sharlcott, and so back over the fields: and it was there that I went with opening eyes down an English lane. . . .

The next day was what Belloc would call 'A day without salt—a trudge'. The attack done between Pewsey and Ludgershall did not find us in the fight at all, and we did not get instruction on it with maps as I should have liked (and hoped for daily, on such occasions); but none of us will



soon forget the trudge up the big Pewsey hill : how the men did growl ! The whole day was very hot, and the bugles finished us off by bringing us one mile into camp full tilt from the Collingbourne Road.

But it is not of these happenings that I want to write, only my pen is so cursedly obstinate. It is of those few memories that I want reminding—the Savernake wood country at dawn, the stars over the night march, the water of the Avon, the church by the canal, the five minutes in the lane, the dear Vicar and our return to his home, the bugles as we entered Pewsey from Wilcot on the last morning, the morning in the ‘Ebenezer’ school,—Wilcot above all, above all Wilcot: those are the things which mark the Wonderful Week, and which in any future inconveniences (such as I must be excused for expecting) I hope and pray for courage to remember.

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#### AN EVENING IN EARLY MAY.

This evening I strolled into the church at Ludgershall, the little church that lies over the way from my first billet, beyond the railway bridge. On entering I was immediately confronted with a coat of arms on the north wall. I take no omens whatever in this little business, which is perhaps curious. So it was only with a certain rather numbed calmness that I read its Motto,

‘*Moriendo Vivo*’,

and turned round saying to myself, ‘That, no doubt, will do very well’: and then opposite me on the south wall from another coat came out the promise,

‘*Resurgam*’.

‘And that too’, I said, ‘will suit me admirably.’

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## SIDBURY CAMP.

*Thursday evening, May 27.*

It was a rather easy day, and therefore it was that I took it upon myself to walk and run to the top of Sidbury Hill. It is not easy to pass the smallest bridge, I think, in any country; but I resisted the temptation to stay on the little bridge over the Bourne, with the whitest may-blossom in all England at its side, and two long strips of the deepest green along its banks, the envy of the brown thirsty Plain for miles around. . . .

Well, I might have known they would have been there. Of course they had struggled to the top,

The Roman line, the Roman order,  
of whom John Masefield sang on Malvern Hill. From nowhere else would they sooner catch sight of my ancestors panting in skins and strange dyes across the plain; and here if anywhere they seem to have decided to do the thing well. For the ditch (*it is theirs*, I suppose) is very deep and regular, and I for one was glad I had not to attack over it. But I was not really thinking war that evening, for my head was full of memories of the Shropshire hills, and of those other Romans who with all their troubles

Are ashes under Uricon.

And so with reverence upon my head I clambered down into the lowest part of the fosse, and reminding myself 'This is a matter which demands a "certain precision"', I straightened my cap, put on my gloves, and found from the sun a line as nearly S.E. as I could make it; and so facing Italy, our new ally, and standing strictly at attention, I saluted the Roman Soldier.

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E. H. L. S.

"O. C. Details." Salisbury Plain

August, 1915





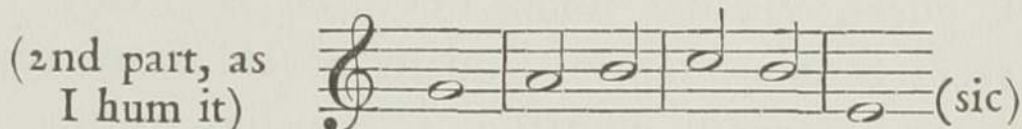
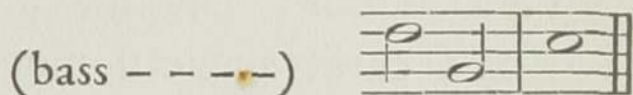
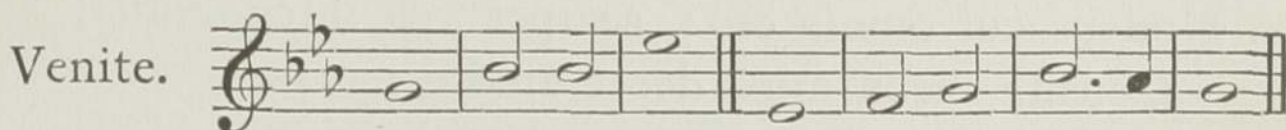
## ANY CHURCH PARADE.

(As seen by me between Apr. 23 and June 27, the first Sunday, bar two inoculation days, when I was absent.)

'The Batt. will parade for Divine Service to-morrow at 9.30 a.m. South of the lines of the 10th R. Fus.

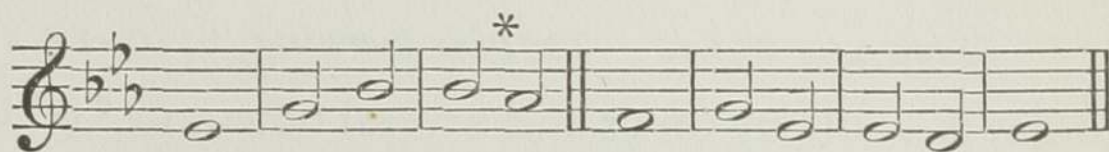
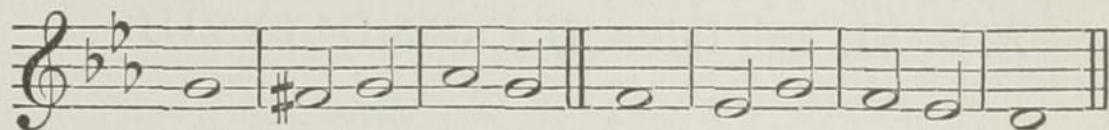
Markers will be on the ground at 9.45 a.m. and should know about what frontage the Batt. will take up.'

The chants were foolishly changed for unknown ones, once; but otherwise we have stuck to the same chants. Here of course every man must have his own great memories: I can do no more than jot down a few of mine.



a leap from the tenor part which for some reason gives me great satisfaction in the early verses.

The Benedictus has less appeal anyhow, but I may as well remember its chant:



\* Here, E ♮ I would hum: it is a simple pleasure!

## SOME LATIN VERSES.

The little poem which follows was sent to V. B through R. A. K., June 23rd. He had got them all to send me a Latin letter, and invited a reply. I little guessed that within

a fortnight I should be standing actually before them once more and reading, on that Sunday afternoon, with intolerable audacity surely, some of these notes from my diary. About the versification it is not for me to guess, but God knows those lines were written *con amore*.

And they went, as I should say to them were I reading them out, like this :

*ἄειμνήμων.*

Seu per amica traham Gallorum gramina cursum,  
 Sive agar optatos visere Dardanidas,  
 Non procul omnis ero: semper vos inter, amici,  
 Consita mens miro ducet amore moras.  
 Vera loquor: nec me ulla premunt fastidia Martis,  
 Sed caret aspectu mens, domus alma, tuo!  
 Cum, pueri, via dat nobis nocturna laborem,  
 Vestra tenet—memini—quam procul astra sopor!  
 Me licet hortentur comitum tria milia cantu,  
 Cum cadit in carmen pulverulenta dies,  
 At procul est facies—di! quam dilecta—meorum,  
 Solus et in tenebris, ei mihi, solus eo.

Dabam in castris apud Ventosae Mulae Collem, Et Supra,  
 A. D. XI. Kal. Iul. A. U. C. MMDCLXVIII.

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*June 29, 1915. Tuesday morning, 8.30—11.15.*

To-day is a holiday for us and several others in 'B' Coy., by intimation of De Laessoe, while various odd jobs are being done; but I must not go right away.

So I take the glorious opportunity to go for a solitary walk and think over the memories of my Bapton week-end. Up the crunching gravel and chalk, therefore, right on the back of the swooping road to Collingbourne Ducis—'in



bounds' again to-day (after a short attack of measles or something), obviously for my most particular consolation. First to the right at the cross-roads, to the Hungerford Road: a direct inspiration in itself surely, for it is the road to the Wonderful Week, and recalls the first Day of the Pack. But I stop on the railway bridge, for that line goes off, round the corner to the right, to Marlborough and another memory. A mysterious engine is puffing up the line round the corner, as they used to when I watched their dreadfully enchanting advance from Warminster to the Bapton level crossing. Ah, there over my left shoulder comes the 10th R.F., with full band. All's well; they are going straight down to Collingbourne. . . . They have stopped playing now, precisely at the fourth telegraph post from the cross-roads; but their voices come up the hill; they are good men, the 10th. . . . So I go on up the hill. Here is the top; and I wish I could go on along it for miles, but this is not Shropshire, and the road dips to the right as fast as it climbed. To my left front four two-horse ploughs cross and recross the field; again this is not Shropshire, for they thread the valley instead of marking the skyline. The rain has washed the country into green and white and gold; it has rained slightly for three days, for the first time since May 11th, and the piles of thick dust are quiet at last: I had thought the thing impossible. . . . 'Remember now,' I found myself now singing; I do not precisely know why. . . .

But I have reached the bottom of the valley now, and turned to the left down the road to N. Collingbourne Ducis; and I have been here before. For it was here that I came weeks ago, one great evening when I cut my dinner to walk from Collingbourne Wood to C. Ducis, when I had lain on the eastern edge of the valley and looked up



towards N.W. and the Shropshire hills. That was also my first entry into C. D. church, where I hung for long, buried deep with it behind the chestnuts. . . .

Voices from the houses at the edge of the village, fifty yards away at the bend in the road. Just here I smelt wet hay, and like the elder blossom beyond the hill it sent me for a moment back to Lichfield. So I passed down the village from the N. and into the church again. There are no services on week-days here, for I made a scandalous inquiry in the registry in the vestry. But I stayed there a long time. . . . This was what I have wanted for weeks, 'An hour for peace and for forgetting', and I found it. I do not remember anything quite so definite since the days of Lichfield Chapel,<sup>1</sup> when I was hardly less old at 11 than I am now. Of course I took the Notre-Dame Seat, half-way up on the right and against a pillar; but hardly in Paris, I think, was it that so greatly

The deep peace burned by me alive.

It was St. Peter's Day, by the way, and the lessons were, to say the least, not insignificant.

Well, 'out of the little chapel I burst', as they say, and found it raining steadily but almost invisibly. Sidbury Camp through a Scotch mist was really rather more fun than I had bargained for; so I have seen Holyrood Palace, almost completely hidden in August at a few hundred yards. And so home, and this walk has been a great cure for anything like depression, which I was faintly beginning to feel before I went away on Friday. Now I am, I believe, completely recovered.

But not a word of Bapton Manor;<sup>2</sup> and that was what I

<sup>1</sup> The Chapel of the Theological College (his former home).

<sup>2</sup> His mother's home.



had it in mind to set down, when I sprang up the chalk and flint of the early journey, driven and drawn along its veins by the inconceivable power of the long, throbbing Plain.

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*July 3, 1915.*

Like to some niggard drowsy cupbearer  
 Slighting a wither'd queen in Babylon,  
 Some proud, lost love of Asia, lonelier  
 Than his lone lord, she falsely lean'd upon:  
 And oh! her cheek is hollow, and her eyes  
 Watch him, yet hope no favour from his turning:—  
 So Death, appriz'd of our young treacheries,  
 Shall hold his glass from old lips palely burning.  
 Then let me taste in time his golden stream,  
 Not idly traffic with lean years to be;  
 And out beyond the banquet, I shall see  
 Where led my chosen journey, and my star's gleam,  
 And know, who set no limit to my dream,  
 No House of Doubt in my Astrology.

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THE HUNGERFORD ROAD—COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS ROUND,  
 AGAIN.

This has become my most usual haunt; and in many, many journeys I have come to perceive a certain glorious sureness about this scene.

I have seen that road, or the right edge of it rather, from the top of Windmill Hill at 7.30 in the morning, when I have been up there to look at the Plain before a long day; and I have noticed the curious differences of light on a road at different hours. Am I wrong, or is the white road only white when you stand between it and the sun?

Then there was that long day of rain, when the Brigade

Sports were ruined, and when I had been rather faithfully reprimanded at Orderly Room in the morning. It was quite worth while going my round, that evening, all alone in the downpour and a leaking Burberry. Quite worth while clambering up that slope, though for some reason I was so occupied with cacophonous encores of

Who so beset him round

(we had it at Shrewsbury the previous Sunday) that for a mile or so I hardly realised where I was. Then suddenly I became aware of the top of the hill, and began to make phrases, as I watched it in the wind, about the sheepish, irresolute demeanour of the stripling corn. It was on that evening, too, that I got into the hollow to the east of C. D. and excited myself to a great state of delight by loud and much-varied declamations of John Masefield's 'Sea-Fever' ('I must down').

I suppose it was two days later that I discovered the dingle which leads through the corn to C. D. from the hill, a shorter and equally delightful way; marked, and I think wrote to Ross about the blue flints on the black plough, like cut glass on a marble table—they are to be seen on the right as you descend that lane; saw the wind playing at hill-country with the grass at the top of the road—it is only in real hill-country that the short grass pulls like a dog on a leash; and finally, after watching the moon fall like a rocket behind Windmill Hill, slept gloriously outside my tent under the stars.

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MORE OF 'MY SUNDAY AT HOME'.

It is 11.0 on a boiling July Sunday morning, and I am Orderly Officer. The view of my duties I take at this moment leads me to plant a chair just outside the Mess Tent, facing north-west, and to take in a little of my sur-



roundings. A good chance: everything is standing still for my admiration. The horses of the 10th R.F. are motionless, as usual, on the side of the hill; they hardly flick their tails, those lean, wooden Sabbatarians. Nobody troubles his head now about the dreary bayonet-gibbets on the left skyline near the wood, nor about the rather silly-looking wire entanglements to their right. Except perhaps the sentry over what I keep calling the Water-Tower:<sup>1</sup> I dare say he holds strong views on other men's Sundays; at any rate the flash of his bayonet this morning (during the 'Benedictus', I remember), when he turned his corner, looked as if he had decided to tolerate no competition.

Not much movement in our lines, nor from the 10th and 13th facing me; and I expect the 60th are equally sleepy in the hollow. An occasional car strolls over the green; and as I write some easy cricketers saunter out to their game. On the near brow of the hill across the road a few sheep proclaim the Downs; to their right is the Everley Road, so easy of marching; and I can just see the cross-roads, where the N. Road runs up towards Collingbourne, shaking our little worries off its heels. . . .

And so the time passes, until I go my rounds in half an hour. A lazy transport wagon rolls by; a dazed-looking passenger train puffs up the line; the green flags wave sleepily in the cooling breeze which is just arriving from the South; the great slopes ahead of me call 'N. West, N. West' through the blue; and all around me rises the slow incense of the Downs, to remind me with a choke in the throat of the stillness that is only a few miles away on two sides, at the very foot of the adorable vale.

*(Read to V.B. on my week-end visit to Shrewsbury, Sunday, July 11th; with a change in the last two lines.)*

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<sup>1</sup> A reminiscence of Shrewsbury.



July 25.

We have just come back from what is almost certainly the last Church Parade in England of the 111th Brigade. There was a Celebration this morning, in the big C. E. tent for the first time, at which I dare say sixty attended. The week before in the little tent there were six. The 10.0 service was not quite the best, as we had not the brass band of the 10th but only their fifes; and these, besides sounding a little shrill and unstately, played far too slowly.

However, there we stood, singing the same chants, making what we could of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' and 'Fight the good Fight' and 'Praise to the Holiest'. It was not well done, but it did not really matter. I had only to look round, and the Plain at any rate was in Sunday mood. All as before; the old hill, and the Water-Tower, and the still sentry watching over it; over the 10th's tents hung the memory of the Northern Vale, and to the south-east the grey summer over Kimpton and Cholderton; and, to our left, the great white clouds came tramping up like all the armies of heaven in palpable dust, swooping up with a cry of triumph, over our old familiar hill from the little, loved western river.

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#### THE LAST SUNDAY OF TERM.

It was about 9.0, or a little sooner, that I started out for a lonely walk to the hill on the Hungerford Road. It would be about the time of C. A. A.'s final address in Chapel, and I thought it would be very probably an unusually good one. And when I saw it in *The Salopian*, as I wrote to him later, I was not disappointed.

They would be nearly at its beginning when I turned back and made across the open field to the foot of Sidbury and the slow, sad camp-songs of our galloping artillery;



and I sat there with them to listen, and the hills and the songs faded quite away. There were some scores of eyes that were none too dry in that Chapel, and I remembered that they must not be stared at while they came down the aisle. And yet there would not be much real unhappiness there; for there is a kind of sadness that reaches higher than joy. So we listened, all together, until finally the thing was finished and we rose; and as I said in my letter to C. A. A., at last 'you came out of Chapel, and I came back over the hill'.

Well, I will not pretend I returned in what the sentries call a very 'riflemanlike manner'. And yet I do not know. I am ready to believe that between the hours of 'Rouse' and 'Retreat' a man should be about his business and not twitch so much as the corner of his mouth, for all his longing. But I think if ever there comes a time when a British officer may be allowed to be a little more thoughtful than usual, a little dimmer of eye, it is on such a night as this; a night, in two of his soul's homes, of sad endings and glorious beginnings, very long after 'Last Post', when the day's lonely, lonely play-acting is over.

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#### THE LAST NIGHT OF THE BATTALION IN ENGLAND.

*Wednesday, July 28.*

The 37th Division had shouted itself hoarse for days, and was not going to stop now. The 10th R.F. seemed especially hearty, but all did well, as the saying is. And let no man dare to say he knows of what songs the British soldier is really tired. In ordinary moments he will give you 'Here we are again!' 'Who were you with last night?' 'The old garden wall', and lately the almost national 'Keep the home-fires burning', 'When this bloody war is over', and



the rest. Indeed we had them all to-night from regiment after regiment on the Plain. But, as I said before, I hold it truth that in this war the British soldier, *when really moved*, will surely give you

‘Tipperary’.

Well, naturally I paid a visit to the guardian hill of the Division under a marvellous moon. Some strange, watchful planet stood over us to the east of the moon, and Cassiopeia—surely the lady was on her knees! Ah well, even if one lives very far up there among the everlasting stars, one does not see a sight like this every night: one does not indeed.

The tumult and the shouting were dead when I reached the top, and the silence was extraordinary while I stood, disbelieving the possibility of that moon-landscape, like streaks on a madman’s canvas, or renewing old friendships among the obscurer stars. All in fact was silent save one dog, who, I swear, barked from Hougoumont Farm, over a mile away, and was plainly audible. Magic fires climbed the darkness in the hollow; the white tents pointed upwards like the soul of all Arabia; and so I stood, first towards Shrewsbury, then towards the outgoing Division, like some bewildered prophet whom a curiously doubtfully-minded parent has temporarily disinherited. So I stood on the hill; and after that I came back to my own, through deep lanes in the tents which might have been cloven by the hoofs of a Titan. It is very cold, and I think my feelings are a little numbed with work: but I shall be alone to-morrow and after, and when my rushed period is over I shall know that the Battalion is gone, and that I am left alone with their memory and nothing but the will to say ‘God bless them’.

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*Sunday, Aug. 1.*

We have had two or three (I almost forget which) strenuous days. One thing is impressed on me which I shall never, on evacuating any other camp, be likely to forget; and that is that the whole Battalion must be turned on to fatigue duty just before going. An hour's hard work with 1,000 men—I can hardly imagine the glory of it without emotion! Why, they would have left the whole place as clean as a board. As it is, I should never have got through without help.

Well, but I am going too fast, for I forgot to mention my flying visit to the station on Thursday, which was all I had time for. The first half, B & C, went off from here at 6.20; rather typically early, for the train did not go till 8.20. I, expecting to be back by 7.0, marched with Bamford at the head of No. 8 and saw them into the train; but though I stayed long enough to shake them all by the hand, I could not wait to see them off.

When I did get back I found D & A just ready to march off to the station. The Division was still shouting, as it had done for a week; and the colossal enthusiasm all round was rather in strong contrast to the mechanical, dumb content into which, after a few hours of really hard labour, I soon found myself dropping. For nearly forty-eight hours I hardly realised that I was going to be left almost alone with the Plain, while my Battalion were whirled away to Flanders. Indeed, till this morning I have hardly remembered that there is a war over the water: for I have seen no paper till to-day since Wednesday; and I now find that Warsaw is about to fall. . . . There is food for thought in that. . . .

Some of the small incidents that followed I described in a letter to Bamford covering the razors for No. 8 platoon.



We were a happy party in our way, I said, though horribly lonely; and I must not forget to repeat solemnly here what I said about the value of a good N.C.O.; it is only in cases like this that one *really* learns what he is worth, in England.

(*Later.*) I rummaged out of a tent *The English Review*, with F. Harrison's article on translating Virgil (of which more, shortly), and read some of it outside.

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In the matter of Virgil. This is not the place to remind myself of what I think of him; though I did send a manifesto to M. G. W., J. O. W., H. E. E. H. that I read Homer with gesticulation, while over Virgil I kneel. All I want now is just to write down the two adorable lines that sang through the misty sunrise on that summer morning. See the 'lonely word' . . .!

Quisque suos patimur Manes: exinde per amplum  
Mittimur Elysium, et pauci laeta arva tenemus . . .

Thank you: I can carry on now *very* well with A. F.  
91033.

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*Sunday, August 15.*

'God hummed a tune and made the Wiltshire Downs,' as I thought on that day when I walked to C. D. to breakfast. To-day I went to the 8.30 Celebration at Ludgershall, and later to C. D. at 11. This was my last visit to that village. . . . The harvest, then, was nearly reaped, but 'not all', I reflected,

'Not all is reap'd, and they wait awhile  
The Reaper's coming with patient smile';  
I watched their myriad order, and knew  
That sigh to the Plain where their brothers grew.  
'Eodem cogimur, dears,' I said;  
And they so tenderly bowed their head



That I cheered them and waved, with my heart a-breaking  
To see such a gallant show a-making.  
And they waved me back, with their long necks swaying,  
'Twas easy to read what they'd be saying:  
'We're happy enough,' they made reply,  
'Too happy'—and so by God am I!

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15TH R.B.; BELHUS PARK, PURFLEET.

Thursday, Aug. 19. (*Arrived 16th.*)

I hardly know how to write of this camp yet, for I do not seem to have arrived here quite completely. As usual, I have left a large—*lieber Gott*, how large!—part of myself behind upon the Plain. Time is probably short; and that is why I have not the time to linger and dream over that adorable country. But I will give myself just five minutes very occasionally; and those will be the times when I will remember the two home-signals of the tree clumps on Windmill Hill; and the finest and first and most alive Downs-Road in all the world which leads from its foot; and the Very British Village to which that dear road flies; and the Very Roman Guard that is kept at the top of Sidbury; and the little church spire of Chute, little known and never visited, though there was that supper in the house of the old lady, of Wiltshire, one night very late in my stay; and the night of bivouac at Fenner's Firs; and *Wilcot*—but I should be a fool to trespass on that sacred ground; and Ludgershall Church and village, and my first billet there; and Salisbury Close, peaceful beyond all bearing; and Church Parade under Our Hill; and for love of that country I will even include Bulford Ranges (though I cannot go so far as Perham Down, its huts and its trenches); and the most glorious College of Marlborough must find a memory; and the Andover Road, which found me so



strong (!) amidst the 'fall-outs', though so powerless to help them; and the slopes that used to call me, day after day, I well knew where, I well know where; and my own, my very own Details, whom I see, thank God, with a wistful and most worshipping affection day by day, the remnants of the 13th, ah yes! the 13th R.B. in a very strange land.

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#### THE OLD SHIP AT PURFLEET.

It was from the top of the dyke that I saw her, that long high dyke which marks the Essex marshes. Immediately below me the tide seemed on the ebb; and that was why I knew, after a glance at the angles of the river, that the real tide was flooding in, far out in mid-stream.

Clough would have had some pretty things to say about that; but I had other business on hand. It was not those half-dozen fishing boats that caught my eye, though they looked happy enough as they drifted in with the tide, too sleepy to care whether the wind would help them along. Nor the strange, dark promise of the great city, proclaimed by the clustering chimneys a little further to the north-west. Nor did I linger very long over the prospect of the other bank; though I did not forget that Wrotham and Sheerness,<sup>1</sup> with their memories of two remarkable men, lay only a few miles from where I stood, lonely and dreaming as usual, an object of some suspicion to the sentry farther along the dyke.

It was the old ship to my left that made me stand still and remember my country; for every mast and yard upon her seemed an unforgetful signal to all who fought under her ensign. I do not know her name; it is probable that even

<sup>1</sup> He had stayed at Wrotham in Oxford days with C. R. Cudmore. White at this time was at Sheerness.



the ancient mariners, who of a certainty were not far from her that evening, are too busy in this glorious time of trouble to remember for very long what strange harbours they visited on board her, or what famous days are entered in her log.

But I liked the way she stood motionless beside the drifting craft out there in the river. I left it to the poet to imagine her

Queen of the strange shipping,

for that was not how her image came to me. As for me, I thought of some old, old servant, whose years were many and her faithfulness unshakable. And there, I think, she watched with an indulgent smile the young seagods, the children of her ancient lords, as they came crowding in all together, chin high on the homing tide, very dear and very eager, to see the Port of London.

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ALFRISTON.

*Sunday, Sept. 26.*

It was not without reason, then, that the 'Nunc Dimittis' was read twice that evening in the hollow of the Downs; or that the preacher made a thrilling sermon out of Caleb and the Harder Thing.

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WORCESTER.

*Sept. 30, 1915; midnight.*

'As one that findeth great spoils.' Things have not gone very well: I have plenty to do, plenty to get, matters to settle with 'Details', and my week's final leave to whistle for. Yet that phrase sprang, I do not quite know whence, to my lips this morning and rang through my head all the day. For after breakfast I heard I was for the Front at once; and, as the Psalmist said, 'I was glad'.

## CHAPTER III

M. G. W.

APRIL TO OCTOBER 1915

WHEN Southwell first went to the Plain, White was still at home, impatient for definite work. For two months he made efforts in many quarters to find the place which he wanted and which was due to him in view of his experience in the O.T.C. On May 31 he eventually joined the 6th Battalion (Special Reserve) of the Rifle Brigade at Sheerness, with Lieutenant's rank. Though he found it harder than Southwell to adapt himself without regrets to the new life, his influence was great, as his fellow-officers well knew. His sense of humour won him friends, and he was always human. But he did not surrender the many interests that had been his before he entered the Regiment. He could stock the shelves of his Mess with volumes of Tolstoy and Galsworthy, yet no one resented this as academic; it was accepted as natural and won him respect. One of the officers said of him later: 'I can imagine no one who was better form, better company, or better anything, than White.' And another of his friends there writes of him: 'What everybody liked about him so much was that, although he was considerably older than many of us, he was always free and easy with us.' At one time he was imitating the Battalion Sergt.-Major, at another the Paddington Express entering Birmingham Station. He would leap the settees in the Mess; and his adventures on his motor-bicycle,



which (for the first time in his life) he had just bought, delighted every one. 'He knew nothing about the bike,' the letter goes on, 'and I think rather prided himself on the fact. If ever, when we were out together, something happened and "the thing" wouldn't go, we could only push it along the road—I've done several miles with him!—or fling it into the nearest ditch. . . . He was so wonderfully simple in his tastes. He used to find endless enjoyment in going over to Hollingbourne of a Sunday, having a good lunch with excellent beer, and a walk after with his "pijp"<sup>1</sup> in his mouth.—I remember, when I took him to the Sheerness Theatre, how he was bored to tears. He said what he really enjoyed was a good blood and thunder drama. So when *The Rosary* came down I took him again. He was highly delighted with parts of it, because the tragic acting was so ludicrous. Of course his violin-playing was ripping. The fellow next door to us had a gramophone, and he had Bach's Concerto for two violins. The Man would tune his violin carefully and play to the gramophone.' Another friend of his says: 'Do you know that from the day I arrived to the day he went to France he gave up almost everything to make things pleasant for me? He had been in the Battalion then for a good many months and had a lot of friends, and yet he always was ready to go for walks or bicycle-rides or anything with me. I know that he was fond of me, but above and beyond that lay his inherent unselfishness to please others.'

The rest of the story of his life there follows in his own words.

<sup>1</sup> On the analogy of 'Mijn' for 'Mine', used of the Dutch forces in the game of L'attaque.

## LETTERS

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.**April 12, 1915.*

*Thank you awfully.* It's a haversack, and a beautiful one as you say.<sup>1</sup> *Thank you awfully.* (This in the Psalms commentaries would be called poetry, because of repetition of the sentence above.)

With regard to the War and me, things are proceeding slowly.

I *am* having a slack time. Sleep isn't the word for it, nor eating neither.

TO HIS SISTER, MRS. REID.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.**April 26, 1915.*

I got an awful shock to see Frank Chubb's death in *The Times* to-day; also Rupert Brooke. There are no words for this news.

(With reference to your tea-party of babies) I never can understand the idea of massing babies. Surely babies are only nice when taken separately? It's absurd to suppose they appreciate one another.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Radlett.**May 5, 1915.*

Man, it's a mistake to let the War divert one from the good things. One ought to be reading poetry and studying music and all the other things with more stimulus than in peace time. What I mean is that there is a tendency for 'us who sit at home' to say, 'Well, we're not fighting and we can't realise the War, but let's sit as motionless as possible and try to imagine it'. An attitude of

<sup>1</sup> As Humpty Dumpty said of his cravat.



M. G. W. May 1915

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forced and 'appropriate' sympathy, in fact. In so far as O.T.C. will allow of it, I think there ought to be more art and thought at Shrewsbury than ever.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

*Mere Cottage—Oxton.*

*May 17, 1915.*

I think very longingly of Shrewsbury now that term has started again. I do hope I shall have a chance to come down, some time this term.

Yours ever,

MALCOLM WHITE,

Capt. S.S.O.T.C.

Lieut. 13th R.B.

Lieut. 6th R.B.

2nd Lt. 12th Manchesters.

2nd Lt. K.S.L.I.

'and many, many others, he added with drunken solemnity'.

(I signed myself thus <sup>1</sup> to a man at the W.O. recently, and I hope it has now been filed.)

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Oxton.*

*May 19, 1915.*

I'm getting very depressed with all this waiting—can't read even, though I'm trifling with *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*. Also feeling unfit now, and altogether I have a premonition that something will prevent me ever going into any Regiment.

<sup>1</sup> The letter was written at a time when his future Regiment was still unknown.

TO HIS FATHER.

*Sheerness.**June 1, 1915.*

It has been a gorgeous day here. This afternoon West and I walked along the sea front watching the destroyers darting in and out across the blue.

Militarily I have done very little work,—taken a remnant of a Company for one hour's route march, inspected the lines, signed a number of cheques, and spent a fearful hour with the Quartermaster-Sergeant over a Pay and Mess book, the figures of which I don't understand and never shall. Fortunately the Company accounts are only closed once a month, and a month hence I shall either know something about it, or I shall be doing different work.

Drafts left for the Front at 4.0 this morning, from the 5th and 6th, each with a different band to play them off—so with that and the Zeppelins and animals (sheep, cocks, horses, and larks) who woke with the dawn, I did not sleep as well as I shall to-night. The Mess-room is very nice, also inhabitants, and, in this fine weather, the camp (about 10 mins. away). No news. I think this is going to be good.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.**June 2, 1915.*

I will tell you all about this place in another letter when I have time to describe things as they deserve. I am moderately happy. I feel young for my duties and old for my fellow-officers. I am in charge of a Company of 240 invalided men (mostly), back from the Front.

We have a very prosperous Mess at the Sheerness Conservative Club, which is like a good many Conservative Clubs, I should think. Large and 'beefy' pictures of Lord



Roberts and Buller and a large and rich saloon bar below our Mess-room suggest the soundest political views of the members in peace time.

I should like a *Salopian*.

TO HIS SISTER.

*Sheerness.*

*June 5, 1915.*

My Company have nearly all been to the Front and wounded, and are now convalescent and doing light duty. I feel almost ashamed to pretend to command men who have been at the Front, but of course we do very little work and my chief job is signing cheques and passes, and paying the men, and general administration, at which I'm very bad.

I feel like that, having not long awakened from three hours' deep sleep, having had the same number of hours last night, owing to having to walk round visiting the guards 1.0 to 3.0, the farthest limit of which was a coast-guard overlooking the sea from cliffs. It was mysterious coming suddenly on a view of the sea, grey and vague in an uncertain dawn.

This isn't really at all a bad place, but the Isle of Sheppey is rather smelly and low-lying at times (well, it's always low-lying). I hope to get out for a walk in mid Kent when I get a little time. The sea front and the destroyers are fun.

I had to go to Church Parade this morning at 9.20. It was good having the free use of one's lungs in the hymns; the men make a terrific noise. We had the band to play us there and back with musical comedy and the regimental march, a splendid thing, which I've known for a long time. The band is quite good. It's glorious weather here, and I am sunburnt and fit.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.**June 9, 1915.*

All about myself. I came here ten days ago and am moderately happy. I am in command of a convalescent Company, men back from the 3rd and 4th Bns. There is little work connected with it, as the men are on light duty. The work is all that of administration, signing cheques, failing to understand documents and signing them etc., and condemning men to various punishments at 9.0 a.m. in my Company office. I am beginning to understand a little about this very slowly. The N.C.O.'s are inaudible and allusive in connection with everything I don't understand. (Do you know, a luggage label is A. F. 1205—a fact.) I am bullied by my C.S.M. and C.Q.M.S. and hopelessly in their power. West is my only subaltern. I've been orderly officer and am at present Captain of the week—rather strenuous, especially as the guards we provide, find, or furnish, are all over the island of Sheppey, and inspecting them at night means a cool walk of two hours, 1.0 to 3.0 a.m.

I don't suppose I shall get to the Front for a long time. One has to go through a good deal first—e.g. I have to do a fortnight's musketry, firing chiefly myself, when the Range-Finder course is over. Seems rather absurd. Then I expect I shall go over to Queenboro' for definite Field Training, when a Captain is available to command my 'F' Coy. The N.C.O.'s here are very fine and give me an idea of the greatness of the R.B.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.**June 9, 1915.*

I am getting to know really all about the Infantry No. 2 Range-Finders—the first mechanical toy I've ever



appreciated. I am *nearly* going to get a motor-bike and a cigarette case.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*June 16, 1915.*

Your wire tore me into two or more parts: 'The perturbed mind flies hither and thither through all parts' (Virgil). I do want to see the Corps drill awfully badly; I thought it would be very fine. But do you really think it would be sound for me to come on Speech Day? Think of me wanting to see Men and boys and to hear turns, in the middle of Speech Day, with everybody taken up with parents, etc. Am I not right in this really? But how am I to see the Corps drill? Can't you have a parade on Saturday instead of Tuesday or Friday when I come? Can't it be worked somehow?

It's possible I may be shunted from here on a special job of very especial interest, about which I expect I oughtn't to talk. I am again in two minds about this. I can give Virgil points in this respect after the experience of the last four months.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*June 23, 1915.*

I am now cricket officer for the Battalion (i.e. I was present by chance when the Colonel was discussing cricket for the men. I am a cricket expert). We want *bats, pads, etc.*, and all the panoply of cricket.

Oh! and I want my *Chaucer*. Man, I'm sorry to be such a nuisance.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.**June 27, 1915.*

I've left my invalid Company as an invalid Captain has now turned up to take them, and I've gone over to a more active Company, which is good, or will be when this shooting is over. It is a funny business here. I command Platoons, Companies, and this morning I took Church Parade and yelled 'Stand to your front,—'Talion', in the middle of the Sheerness traffic, and had a large and rich band in front of me.

Chaucer a good man, especially after open air fatigue. On Thursday a west wind blew all the good smells of England in June on to this blasted island, and I went a glorious walk on the Kent Downs.

TO HIS SISTER.

*Shrewsbury.**July 11, 1915.*

Oh! the joy of this visit! To look out of the window at Wellington for the Shropshire hills, blue and beautiful in the late evening as I arrived, and to reach the School gates just as the boys were streaming clamorously out of Top Schools, and to haul oneself into the middle of masters and boys, young, kind, brilliant, and apparently glad to see one again. Southwell arrived on Saturday morning. He has written some lovely stuff, prose and verse, in the intervals of militarism on Salisbury Plain, and he is in good form. So is every one, considering all things. The Corps mightily efficient. The Head in great humour, and Knox and Bainbrigge being incredibly brilliant.

Oh! It *is* a place. And I return on Tuesday, and to-morrow I shall have to say 'I leave to-morrow'. However, I've nearly 48 hours yet, and only have to catch the 7.45 from Victoria.



TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

*Sheerness.*

*July 15, 1915.*

*(By telegram.)*

Have left bats autostrop-strop and soul at Shrewsbury please send all if possible. Prose<sup>1</sup> follows to-day.

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

*Eastchurch Camp.*

*July, 1915.*

I have no matter for a letter, and yet I want to send you a line before term ends. It is strange, but I don't think I ever felt the end of a term so keenly before; perhaps because I have no nightmare of exam. papers and marks to put away from me, but chiefly because Shrewsbury, alive and 'carrying on', has been such a comforting and solid fact to an exile, and it has been pleasant to picture the place at various routine times. And holidays mean the breaking up of all that, and the central fact of my life partially collapses for a time. *Nostrum est interim mentem erigere.*

I am, happily, temporarily (military spelling; e.g. rotary for rotatory, systemically for systematically—so simple) six miles from Sheerness, in a really charming spot. My Company dig trenches all day, and I watch them. It is more tiring than it sounds. Are you going to be in Kent these holidays? I ask because you were in the Easter holidays, and I think I am going to get a motor-bicycle. That is the result of continuous militarism.

<sup>1</sup> For the Fourth Form.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Eastchurch.**Sunday, July 25, 1915.*

I wonder if, even now (4.30 p.m.), Men are taking a last look for this year at the Battalion. Oh Man, I wonder too if you know how I felt, when you saw me off a fortnight ago, and you and the blue hills and Shrewsbury were drawn swiftly away and then finally blotted out by the Wrekin. ('I never liked that Wrekin' mightn't your nurse have said?—and I like him now less for his insolence and relentlessness that evening.) I was somewhat comforted by the dinner at which I was your grateful guest, but I was horribly conscious of the increasing absence of the host.

I am rather dismal about the end of term. Isn't that odd? But I like to feel that Men (and boys) are there and that the place is solid, and exists for me to picture at any moment I like. The end of term causes it to lose something of its existence for me.

I've had a wonderful letter from the Man to-day. I wish we were together—it is really a tragedy. He is lonely, and so am I very often.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

*Eastchurch.**Aug. 3, 1915.*

I am hoping we shall get some Salopians here.

It was good to get last week's *Salopian* and to read 'The Elm and the River',<sup>1</sup> which I loved.

Will you forgive this pencil? My fountain pen is lost, and there is no ink nearer than my Quartermaster-Sergeant's tent, and, 'if I may say so', I'm more frightened of him than of you.

<sup>1</sup> An address by the Head Master, given in Chapel: published in *Shrewsbury Fables*.



To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Capel Curig.*

*Sept. 11-14, 1915.*

Just to tell you that to-day I've been over Pen Helig, past Craig yr Ysfa, Carnedd Llewelyn, Carnedd Dafydd, and remembered our walk. It was a similar day, and very wonderful,—in and out of the clouds. But the Berwyns, Arenig, and all those were there.

Kitch will tell you of our regimental sports and the clowns who are always hired on such occasions to be funny during the High Jump and Putting the Weight—the Auto-Spinal. When at a loss they knocked each other over with incredible violence from behind. Think of it and shudder at it.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*Sept. 1915.*

That was all very, very good: the Thames on Saturday night, the house, the books, the hope of seeing great men. And wasn't it good seeing the Man and hearing the combined laughter of Three Men again?<sup>1</sup>

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*Sept. 24, 1915.*

There is a new list up (liable for the front soon). I am not on it. But two of my real friends here, Buxton and Russell-Smith, are. Rotten; no, very annoying. The Adjutant has just told me that the Colonel wants me here for the present, being so short of senior officers at the moment.

I never pretend that I *want* the trenches; but one part of myself says to the other part—'This war is an ordeal which I dare you to face; I don't believe you can,' and the other part replies—'Lord, then I suppose I must try.'

<sup>1</sup> At Purfleet, on Sept. 19.



I enclose three copies of those notes you asked for, and I hope they will be useful in the O.T.C. I must try and come for a field day etc. some time this term.

I am really beginning to understand the Machine Gun. It is an intricate machine, but fascinating, rather. I've spent about two hours a day this week at it.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

*Sheerness.*

*Sunday, September 26, 1915.*

Please forgive me for so late a reply to your so welcome letter. I am so glad you are all back again. I said in a letter to H. E. E. H. yesterday that I felt as if my component parts had been fitted together again.

I biked out to a good place on the Pilgrim's Way to-day, to see what Autumn was being like. I imagine it at Shrewsbury a cobwebby dew in the mornings, a few brown leaves disturbed by brand-new football boots, and every one feeling amazingly vigorous and wonderfully virtuous. I always feel I could do anything at the beginning of a Winter term. Browning's

How well I know what I mean to do  
When the long dark autumn-evenings come

enters into the feeling too, and means a lot. Oh yes! it is a very good season.

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## DIARY

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*June 29, 1916.*

This little diary is really the result of a desire to express myself to my friends. There are so many impressions which I have had and so many emotions which I have felt, that the first instinct was to get them down on paper. If any one reads this, they will take it as an attempt at talk,



when there were not people to express oneself to who would have been likely to respond. But, though the War has brought me many impressions and made me want to talk to some one, it has made me incapable of expression, and sometimes, in this diary, what was really emotion may be taken for sentiment. Well, it is not. Still—you will all understand.

(My servant is waiting to pack this up.)

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*Sunday, July 18, 1915.*

Moved to Eastchurch for digging, in command of 'H' Coy. This is a good place, after Sheerness. Feel as if I was in England. The camp is high up, and there are big trees, a bit of friendly sloping down, and a church clock close by. No compulsion to belong to any organised Mess, and if I cooked my own food over a fire near my tent, I don't think any one would object. Also a large and wonderful Tudor House with a story about Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn connected with it. Here lie the 5th R.B. I think I shall like this.

*Monday, July 19.*

Entrenching all day, 9.0 to 5.0, with great swinging views out to sea and across the flats to the Kentish Downs. I didn't know so fine a place existed on the Island.

*Tuesday, July 20.*

At the trenches, Adam and I had dinner from the cook-house instead of beastly sandwiches. A discovery—draught beer out of a bottle is a poor drink. This is a good village. There is an old church, and a very old man, a great noise in the evening, and a Post Office selling everything—alarm clocks, indiarubber balls, and all things to eat—and smelling of everything. A pleasing event was the pursuit

by a small boy, with a live frog in each hand, of all his small sisters. I watched it with much joy, especially the appearance of the mother of the party, serious but relieved that 'it was no worse', and shouting cautions in no way connected with the frogs. I sympathise with A. C. Benson in his absorption in small things of that kind. I fancy it's the kind of thing that inspired the Dutch *genre* painters. They must have felt a lot more than they put on canvas.

Remark by my servant who served in U.S.A. army in Mexico: 'The late President of Mexico was the greatest scoundrel under *the canopy of heaven*.'

*Wednesday, July 21.*

West, Townshend, and Middlebrook visited us from Sheerness this evening. It was good of them, and very pleasant. Had an hour's loneliness and depression, partly due to the bad news from Russia. Also wanted to talk to some one about everything. All very well saying there is no 'class' in England, or that it is not advisable to try and remove class distinction, when I feel that the Tommies under me are an entirely different kind of beings. . . . I read *Shropshire Lad* and Browning's *Last Duchess*, that amazing thing. I find I have a kind of emotional indigestion these days, when I read poetry. Every word has such terrific force and is so overloaded with meaning that I can hardly get on.

*Thursday, July 22.*

Rained and we returned to camp early. Read a very good 'After the War' pamphlet, *Chariots of Fire*.

*Friday, July 23.*

'A day without salt.'



*Sunday, July 25.*

Church Parade and Bathing Parade with the tide full up and sandy beach at Leysdown—very good. On return found a lot of letters for me, including one from A. E. K. about Shrewsbury people for the R.B. being booked for the 5th Batt. I got excited and more fussy than I've been since I began the military life, and dashed off to Minster to see a Captain of the 5th Batt., and then to Sheerness to see Col. Dawson, and dined there and wrote scores of letters, most of them excited and illegible. Biked back and got to Eastchurch about 1.0 a.m.

*Monday, July 26.*

A gorgeous clear day, still and hot, suggestive of August, and made one regret the passing of the real summer, which is June. At sunset a cloud to the north-west looked like a blue hill against the gold light, and in an instant I was many miles away—cool night air, the trees shivering in the middle of the Common,<sup>1</sup> and the Stiper-stones.

*Tuesday, July 27.*

Have just been to a camp concert. There was a one-stringed violin with a trumpet attached, a very funny rifleman comedian, and a lady-reciter—a typical reciter, with a pale ivory complexion, dark eyebrows, rather tired look, and a clear-cut dental enunciation. It was rather good to feel spinal again. There is so little room for spinal in the Army. Still the lady was rather relentless—five recitations in two appearances, and we missed having the funny rifleman again. One rifleman sang a rather doleful and unintelligible song with a rousing chorus to the words 'And a little child shall lead them'! This merged without any

<sup>1</sup> The playing-fields at Shrewsbury.

break into a series of ragtimes which he accompanied extremely skilfully on the bones.

*Wednesday, July 28.*

Term ended at Shrewsbury to-day—always, or nearly always, rather a sad event for me, and more so this term. For Shrewsbury alive and always to be pictured at certain hours has been a very solid fact in my life since I came here. Also there is a kind of strength in the knowledge of a number of friends congregated like that. So I feel the end of term almost as keenly as I have felt it when one woke early in the morning of First Day, tired and aching, after a week of late nights over papers, to hear the clamorous procession of cabs, the slamming of doors, and the jettison of portmanteaux.

A wonderfully bright and very hot day. I dined at Sheerness Mess and rode a bicycle back in the moonlight, towed half-way by a friendly motor-bicycle.

*August 6.*

Like all diaries I ever commenced, this has already begun to fail. Last week-end, at the Wests', lots of singing and playing which was very good. This week has been chiefly remarkable for my début as a motor cyclist. I have been trying a ramshackle thing with a view to purchase, but I've now ordered a new one from London. I'm already over the novelty of it, and I expect I shall hate it before long, but it seems a very useful thing here.

1. What is madness? 'Faddist?' 'Crank?'
2. Must progress be slow?
3. What is real courage?
4. Anything can succeed if men will only let it,



*Friday, Sept. 10.*

After regimental sports, started for Capel Curig by night. One of the attractions of night-journeys is that it is a kind of secret, even though the people at the other end know one is coming. I had to change at Crewe, which was bad, one of the essential features of a night-journey being an important-looking through train.

*Sunday, Sept. 12.*

I slept at the Terrace, the same as ever, and all things as if there was never a war in the world; the clock an hour fast, the chairs in their old places, and in the bed-room the print of the COMMON SEAGULL framed with sea-shells, the unexplainable and faded photos of two fine alpine glaciers, the black-framed memorial of Mr. Harry Roberts, and a huge coloured picture of Moses, bearded and sandalled, shading his eyes, with an enormous curve of the wrist, towards the Promised Land. The same grateful-sounding creak of the garden gate bringing memories of the patter of summer rain outside the window.

On Monday a great walk over Pen Helig and the Carneddys. There are many things which make the Carneddys almost the best range in Wales,—the steep view down on to the plain of Anglesey, the changing outline of Tryfaen and the Glyders and the endless ranges of hills to the south, where a straight curtain of cloud so often hangs, touching the summits and making one think that by stooping down one might see more underneath. If I was a painter I should do that very well.

*Sunday, Sept. 19.*

Chiefly remarkable for a meeting of Men. We found E. H. L. S. and dined with him at Purfleet. Where dinner, turns, and the collective laughter of Men again—oh! very good.

## CHAPTER IV

E. H. L. S.

OCTOBER 1915 TO FEBRUARY 1916

SOUTHWELL joined the 9th Battalion in France at the beginning of October, 1915. The first day that he went up with the Battalion to the trenches was October 13. These trenches were in front of Ypres, and it was in this district that he remained, whether in trenches, in reserve, or in billets, until February. On November 20 he caught a chill on a frosty night, while on duty in the trenches; as a result, he was in hospital until December 8. He was, however, in the trenches once more on December 9. During this month there were rumours that his Battalion was to be transferred from France to the East, but on December 26 he wrote that this was cancelled.

He had a narrow escape on the night of January 5, 1916, while wiring in front of the line. His Company commander heard the click of a German machine-gun, and warned him—just in time to save his life. From January 19 to 26 he was home on leave, and was at Shrewsbury on the 22nd. White met him in London on his return to France. At the beginning of February he had temporary command of his Company, during its commander's absence on leave; and it was soon after this that White first came to France.



## LETTERS

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*On the train ;  
Worcester to Paddington.  
Oct. 1, 1915. 6 p.m.*

I write these lines by the courtesy of Professor Moriarty, as it were. So they mustn't be very lengthy.

They don't give much notice, of course ; in fact we were clear within a short time of receiving the W.O. message from the Adjutant. I don't a bit know where I'm going, though I suppose the 13th as likely as anything. But they may not have been in this last scrap.

So I didn't require *The Open Road* after all, and must write to tell them to return it (if it's there) to Worcester.

I wired the Man at Sheerness and I've just a hope he may be in town when I get there. Incredibly good, if true.

Good-bye, Man. Oh pretty good, I do think.

To R. F. BAILEY.

*On train ;  
Worcester to Paddington.  
Oct. 1, 1915.*

Yes, I'm off to the Front early to-morrow morning : don't know where, but I suppose there's room in plenty of places for even the likes of me after these few days. I shall post this when I get in ; it can only be a short scrawl, to send my love.

Terrific success over gum-architect this morning ; had wisdom tooth out without any pain whatever—marvellous ; he jammed cocaine on it or something. Felt frightfully virtuous after it, too. Good business.

The Man's here!<sup>1</sup> Not too bad.

<sup>1</sup> White met him in London.

TO HIS MOTHER.

*On the train.*

Oct. 2, 1915.

We got off with everything quite correct, and it was delightful to have White there to meet me.

When the grandson of Mr. Gladstone wrote to his mother from France, he said 'It is not the length of a life-time that counts, but what is achieved in it'. I thought that these were very true words, and it will surely be enough for me if I could be worthy of them.

I don't think I can write any more now. All's well; I most deeply believe that. Pray that I may not doubt it afterwards, and never mind the rest.

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

Oct. 12, 1915.

I was pretty sleepy last night, and I slept without a break for eleven hours here, but in camp. Oh! but the Dawn over Flanders, and the booming of a big bombardment farther away, in a different direction, and the glorious sort of war-wind with just the right amount of suggested pestilence in it that blew over the fields as the sun rose, and reminded one that one was in a big show; and right below one the wood, huge on the map, ten short stumps on the field; and the city of Ypres with not a house standing entire; and the terribly sad view of glorious churches, battered to blazes, seen as the mist cleared in the morning, weeping to break one's heart across the desolate plain.

Oh! if I could always be as happy as I was during that trial trip, I should not have much to complain of! And then the men were so *glorious*. They'd been in the trenches continuously for many, many days, begrimed from head to



foot, their eyes heavy with want of solid sleep, and their whole appearance quite different from that of men who've not been up. It was a very, very young Corporal, and there was a deuce of a bombardment on, and the Sergt.-Major met him: 'What are you doing?' 'Oh! just issuing rations, Sergt.-Major.' That is not particularly remarkable, no doubt, and that is just why it is worth quoting, as being so frightfully typical. Well, there wasn't any risk as far as I was concerned on that occasion, and it was only when we got back that somebody said, 'By Gad, we've been under fire; what fun!'

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.    *9th Battalion Rifle Brigade, B.E.F.*  
Oct. 12, 1915.

That afternoon two of us got one and a half hours' notice to get up to the trenches 'for instruction' with another Battalion: and actually during those one and a half hours in came your parcel!

We had a glorious time there; we were heavily shelled, coupled with almost complete safety; and what more interesting experience could you wish? Safety, because our front line was too close to theirs to be aimed at, but our support trenches (and in fact the back of my dug-out, only—by fragments—occasionally, in the front line) got hit. Yet only one casualty, as their shells mostly fell between us and them. It went on for two hours and was called 'fairly intense', i.e. nothing like that before an attack. Digging a new trench at sixty yards from the Bosches under flares and (bad) rifle shots was less of an arm-chair show, rather!

I would like you to think that my thirty-six hours there are a good omen, for they were absolutely the best I ever knew. I loved everything; at every step, even in the



‘horrible mire and clay’, I seemed so much the more admitted right into the Great Show. But I am getting foolish and must stop. It is because I am very, very happy.

To J. O. WHITFIELD.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

October 12, 1915.

I believe rather firmly that there is No Spinality in War. But you must go to the front line trenches to prove that, or the conditions are hardly fulfilled. What the support line may be like I do not know, for during a recent bombardment I gallantly turned my back on it; since the front line, let me add, was only forty yards from the Bosches and their artillery couldn't very well go for us there. But I confess to-day to experiencing once a very uncomfortable sensation, in reserve. ‘That’, I said to myself, ‘seems to me spinal, and therefore I must have left the War behind.’

And indeed I had. The inconceivable prospect of a wooden-lined dug-out, in reserve, with the yellow leaves and the October term, and nothing but the shells, still bullying the battered remains of *the* city a couple of hundred yards away, to remind one of realities—this was indeed a change. We weren't idle: six hours' digging per day keeps one fit all right. But this sort of digging is not like making a new trench at fifty yards, and there is time (when the three aeroplane whistles go, and work and staring upwards are forbidden) to look over one's shoulder and watch the crumbled houses and ruined towers. ‘Hate the business?’ Why, there is not a blade of grass or a broken brick which does not remind one that no one ever had such a time in his life as this of mine, nor ever will again! Oh yes, I am in



a *colossally* good temper. But then I have had nothing to go through yet, like those others.

Good night : all 's well.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Oct. 16, 1915.

Well! here we are in good, though not very sweet, dwellings beneath the Earth. It is strange how perfectly natural it is to me now, already, to go to 'bed' underground and sleep like a tired child. It feels more as if one was in a low wee room.

Yes, I cannot fail to know that I am being prayed for by the dear people I leave behind. I hope you saw my long letter about my 'instructional trip' in the other Battalion's trenches. I might have been being *tangibly* supported, so tremendously assured in that period did I feel of the help I needed.

It is a strange life, and yet I feel as if I had always lived in a cave. It is so natural! I do need the help I receive, God knows how much!

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

October, 1915.

Oh Man, Man! but what *would* you say if, somewhere in the most glorious place in Flanders, deep buried beside what I doubt not is a looted 'bed' in a dug-out behind the line (we came out of four days in the trenches, very, very good, but not very eventful, a day or two ago) you found, gloriously thumbed and torn, a terrific illustrated edition of the

*Chanson de Roland!*

Also, Man, it is the October term. The evenings begin

at 4.30, and however bored one may be at the invitation to 'Stand to' at that hour in the trenches, one makes up by some very fine thinking of home when one comes out. All of which, however, you shall see in a better letter than this which I propose sending Phiz, to whom I owe one. Man, 'you should eat less and write more'. It is a fine world.

To J. O. WHITFIELD.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

October 24, 1915.

Wonderful, perfectly wonderful, that Lendrum version of W. W.<sup>1</sup> And I can imagine you reading every word of it with a sort of triumph, for it is indeed wonderfully fitting, from first to last . . . εὖ κοιμᾶται—μεγαλωστὶ πεσών—ἐν προμάχοις—is it not? It must be something to know how he fell,<sup>2</sup> and that he almost certainly suffered nothing.

Ah yes, the end of *The Republic*. Double-marked in my Adam edition, I think. Oh yes, εὖ πράξομεν, beyond a doubt, if we are for the χιλιέτης πορεία. I am not ungrateful for the quotation, any more than I was for the close of your first letter, written so long ago!

Well, there it is. All is quiet here, behind the line: it seems monstrously luxurious, really. The three best days I ever had, I think, were when we had just come out of trenches, and lived in dug-outs on the edge of the ruined city. We dug furiously, and slept like logs, while in reserve: it seemed the only thing to do. No one shelled *us* or worried *us*, though they did not spare the city.

<sup>1</sup> William Watson: 'Well he slumbers, greatly slain.' Translated into Greek Elegiacs by W. T. Lendrum.

<sup>2</sup> 2nd Lieut. G. H. Whitfield.



To C. A. ALINGTON.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

October 25, 1915.

Thank you very much for your letter and the 'Broad-sheet'.<sup>1</sup> I've only seen one or two of them, and they do make a pleasant change from C. 2121—the message form which comes clumping down from H.Q. and was about all the literature we got in the trenches. 'It may be all very well to run down the men who make these things,' but there's a something. . . .

Our time in the trenches was short, a bare four days, and fairly uneventful. I laugh to think of our exit, though. It must have been a comic sight to see me hopping along the parapet (we were *well* behind the front trenches, of course!) and shouting 'All those who don't want to be shelled at daybreak must get a move on!' There was really a very good chance we'd be spotted, but no one, bar a few snipers, seemed to notice our absurd line. But they fairly hobbled along after that, and we got out with no casualties once more, and waddled home to dug-outs in reserve, a most ludicrous spectacle, at dawn. Yet at the time there was something rather thrilling about it; not because there was any real risk—I wanted to frighten them, rather than anything else, so as not to come in all anyhow—but a procession of men as near 'done' as no matter is not an easy thing to contemplate quite unmoved. But it is all such very small beer, all this business, and I feel half ashamed of describing it, as I did after writing to Kitch. As I told them next day, if it had been Mons, they'd have had all

<sup>1</sup> One of the 'Times Broadsheets'.

that sleeplessness, plus twenty-five miles' march, plus fighting pursuing Germans!

Well, we are in reserve behind the line now, and everything is very peaceful. Hence the opportunity to write this rather absurd rigmarole. One gets rather garrulous, I suppose, over the small escapades: and looking back on some of those days, they were really uncommonly good fun. I enjoyed every minute of them—with a few small exceptions only.

I see from *The Salopian* that our casualties have risen enormously in the holidays. One would not have it otherwise, no doubt; but the thing seems likely to go on.—Pupils of my own are beginning to appear in increasing numbers, and I can't be philosophical, *then*; though one reads the other daily casualty lists with a fortunate callousness.

TO M. G. WHITE.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

October 26, 1915.

It is borne in upon me that I have been particularly blasted. Here am I safely packed off with all belongings, very largely due to you, and not a word sent back. I haven't written much yet to anybody but my people; but I wrote a goodish letter to Kitch and C. A. A. in answer to theirs yesterday, and now that we are back in reserve it is not to be tolerated that I shouldn't send some statement to *you*. The crossing over was quite calm, though people seemed rather cold and silent. In fact the change, from the actual departure day or days, to the glorious time we've had since, was past believing. The most priceless ten days in my life, I think, were those that wound up with reserve dug-outs outside *the* ruined city.



TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

October 26, 1915.

I had a letter from Jack two days ago, arriving with yours, curiously enough. He told me you had had the best news you could hope for; it is indeed good to hear the end came at once, and in such a way. At least I can imagine it must be a very great consolation, though somehow I don't feel that anybody, but those who have the real right to, should intrude any philosophy of that kind: those who loved him will probably employ it themselves, and if not, no infliction of it by others seems tolerable.

You will be surprised at my enjoying the comparative luxury of a pen and ink (and a table and all sorts of conveniences, for that matter): we have come right out now and are behind the line altogether for a time.

We are billeted in a lovely farm: it means scandalous prosperity for officers, for we have a real roof and a bed, more than I ever had in England since April except on about five nights; but the men have to sleep in barns. Still, I would have given worlds for an exchange into a barn from trenches, so I suppose they are *fairly* happy. It is the only army in history, I suppose, which doesn't go hungry every now and then, thanks to the A.S.C.; so that is something.

TO T. E. BARTLEET.

B.E.F.

November 1, 1915.

Well, the great thing at present is of course the publication of V.B's Poems. At least, I suppose you know all about the idea, which I think has gone some way towards execution: if not, there's no harm in telling *you*, of all people, though if it is not common news, I dare say not too much should be said about it just yet. But in any case let me

get said early enough, what I have felt all along, that to you and the other forefathers of the race of V.B poets neither I nor they can ever be too grateful. Things like that have only to be started, and they will go: but they could never have been started by harangues from me, and it needed the actual poets to set the ball rolling. I wrote to Lutener recently; to him too, of course, we owe a terrific big lot.

I remember shewing — the book<sup>1</sup> (*the book*) once, a year ago or so, and receiving some rather clever criticisms on the poems from him. His main contention was that they were all rather 'pink'. I know what he meant, and so of course will you. Well, it is better than having them *grey*. And yet *red* would not be a bad description of some of them: what about the Blakeway poems, especially those in the Kipling manner? Kipling surely is a brilliant scarlet at times.

Meanwhile what poems have you written lately? I am quite sure I have detected your hand in *The Salopian* during the last few months. One poet did me the honour of sending me a copy of one of his works, and very fine it was: if you want to please me enormously, you might do the same.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

9th R.B.—B.E.F.

November 4, 1915.

I had a letter from Shrewsbury to-day, and the postmark has reminded me that you are probably there, or recently returned. I hope you enjoyed going there: it is a glorious place, when all is said.

Did I tell you that we are really rather spoilt here at

<sup>1</sup> Containing poems by members of V. B, written in their own handwriting.



nights? We actually sleep in beds: the thing is rather ridiculous, and I feel an awful fraud, especially when I remember that kind people at home probably think we are suffering all kinds of unknown hardships, and are being sympathetic. However, we'll try and do what we can to be uncomfortable next time we go up to the trenches: something of the kind is really due to you, I feel! We *didn't* find beds up there, and yet I shall never forget my first real sleep of four or five hours in a dug-out after two or three days up there, and how delightful they were beyond anything a bed ever produced.

I am becoming a fair navvy. I have been on an R.E. 'course' and am absurdly supposed to know all about trenches and wire and sand-bags; but I am really beginning to think digging is in my line.

The great joy of our servants, who use the kitchen next door (and think they can't be heard), is to yell ridiculous broken English to the small children of the farm. It is going on now, and the extraordinary thing is that they seem to make themselves understood. The children worship them, of course. So do I, for that matter: my boy (he is no more, really) is *too* perfect a servant and fellow generally to be believed.

Well, here is the gentleman in question wanting the table for dinner, so I must close this rather absurd rigmarole. I wonder whether you have heaps of Shrewsbury news for me: I shall look forward, as I always do, immensely to your next letter.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

B.E.F.

November 11, 1915.

I read, with great interest and a curious sense of pride, the information you have been able to glean: he seems to

have fallen quickly and quietly, like so many of the best men, in the front of it all, and with that natural inevitableness which seems to leave survivors without surprise or even any detailed story to tell.

I am glad you enjoyed your visit to the centre of the universe: they *are* good men, are they not?

To R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

November 14, 1915.

In the present situation I can't feel I deserve the goodness of people at home in the least. So it is without any feelings of regret that I hear, not to put it too plainly, that the situation is liable to a change<sup>1</sup> before any very long period has elapsed. When we are in the trenches again I will announce the fact, but at present we are saying very little and trying to feel very secretive, an easy task when there is no knowledge of any particular definiteness to betray. The time here has really been more like training in England than anything else: we run, slowly and ponderously after my manner, before breakfast, then parade with smoke-helmets, inspect men for absurd deficiencies, shoot a little, drill, do musketry, digging, wiring, make speeches (very rarely; I've made two on 'trench duties' to the Company on wet days, mainly because I swore when in the trenches that I would get about thirty points really hammered into them in a lump, instead of having to strafe a man here and there in each of twenty-one bays); and so forth. Even football has found its way in; and our Coy. is as pleased as any school ever was over coming out top in that.

It is all very different from the trenches; sleeping in a

<sup>1</sup> There was a rumour at this time that the Battalion was to go to the East.



bed seems absurd luxury, especially a bed like mine; one hopes this period will not convert us all into soft jellies again. However, no doubt things will seem more straightforward when we do go in, as one can't help picking up a little sense in even so short a visit as our last.

My O.C. Coy. has been laid up for a week, so I ride his horse with immense satisfaction; it is a very great thing to ride horses, surely. When I say I ride, I mean that the horse and I (in that order of seniority) go together, and have so far—when on the march—made a dead heat of it.

Well, I must say good night. My love to the Men and V. B., of course.

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

November 14, 1915.

Mum asks whether the Army has aged me, and the answer is, not an hour; in fact the whole situation tends the other way, for, ever since I joined, I have constantly been in a subordinate position to people years younger than myself. Not here so much, for I am getting older again; but in the 13th there were lots of men junior to me, and I felt like 19 instead of 29, and a very good thing too!

But I am quite ready to believe that being in a *really* thick business ages people sometimes. But H. G. Wells is talking through his hat, I think, when he says that being 'sheltered from thought' ages one; surely too much thinking is just what *does* age one!

TO R. F. BAILEY.

B.E.F.

November 15, 1915.

At this point I turn out your other letter (undated, as Cox & Co. always used to say in reply to mine: but I'm



better now in those matters) and I find some very nice things in it. Oh yes, I know that smell of damp leaves. There would be lots of those here too, with 'Michaelmas Term, 1915' stamped in unmistakable letters upon every one. In fact, ever since I came out, it has been only in some foolish delusion that I have not been with you all the time. 'Stand to' before dawn has, in addition to the glorious fact that the night is coming to an end, the invariable accompaniment of the very academic mist of the plain, to make me remember things. And it is the same before sunset, when you are coming home from the wet leaves and the 'tang' of November air, and are preparing, like Arthur Benson, to pull the chairs round and sit down to tea. And that reminds me that I am now exactly midway between Jekyll and Hyde, if you understand me. When I was in England I would look quite often at the Army, and the adorable Plain in particular, from outside: I was always a civilian off (my critics would say 'and on') parade. But yesterday an A/Cpl. came in with a letter saying his mother was not expected to live, and could his place on the leave roster be altered? To which I listened without a trace of emotion, while the O.C. Coy. (who said afterwards that this was what he could bear less than any amount of calamities to the Company *militarily*) said that he was afraid nothing could be done, as the C.O. had—under orders—given out that in cases exactly of this kind the leave roster *must* be rigid or it would never work. And the moment he left the room I turned the corner, with an entirely physical sense of altered perspective, and realised I was in the presence of a great tragedy. You see, things happen, and go. Very rarely I try to stop them, feeling 'This will be good to remember', 'That is better than Daudet'; but I have to climb up behind my telescope to focus them, and it is too







In the Headmaster's Garden, Shrewsbury

July, 1915



tiring. So I shall be duller than ever, after the War, you see. Ah, well.

I wrote to the Man about a fortnight ago; I fear it was something in the nature of a statement, but whether he sent it on I don't know. I will now go into an enormous bed, and thank you for getting so far in what seems a most egotistical tirade. Good night, those Men.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

November 15, 1915.

Man, I think you ought to be encouraged in your kind proposal to send *The Path* and *The Men*<sup>1</sup> out here, because I've already talked dimly about them to the men with whom I live, and as they are exceedingly good men they should be taught better ways. Merewether (he's my O.C. Coy., a 2/Lt. like me and most of us) is an old B.N.C. man of about thirty-four, and very adorable. The small editions would be the things, as we can't carry much weight of course.

I wish you could find out from the Man something he would like before he comes out. He was always a good man, of course; but he insisted on giving me things when I came out, and generally filled me with such a sense of unworthiness that I do not even now know which way to look or what to say: and I would like if possible to find something useful to sling back at him, by way of shewing I've not forgotten his existence altogether. It reminds me, by the way, that your map-case invariably accompanies me on all marches, as it used to in England. In fact, I found there that my constant wearing of it produced an impression

<sup>1</sup> Hilaire Belloc's *The Path to Rome* and *The Four Men*.

that I was a bit of a man with maps, and so I decided the illusion must be kept up! You will picture me, please, on a route march here, astride M.'s horse (he being ill), with the thing on my knee, feeling very cunning and pioneerish. Also I wish to draw attention to the slight flavour of Central Europe of which I am unable to free myself, while riding slowly through the small towns at the head of the Company.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Nov. 20, 1915.

This is a glorious chance for anybody who can keep really cheerful; and if you wonder what sort of fairy boon I would like, it would be that I should not really fail there. At present all's very well; here I am, with very wet feet indeed, but well fed and reasonably warm. Later, I shall probably have to be with the wet platoon pretty well all night.

Well, that's what I really need, please! It is very good, you know: it is a job, and I *do* wish to make it a good one.

TO HIS SISTER.

No. 12 Casualty Clearing Station—

B.E.F.

Nov. 27, 1915.

I feel better this morning, and this evening's rise in temperature is very usual after all. No symptoms, hardly even a head-ache, except at times to-day. ('1812' on a gramophone: I must stop to listen: six months ago I should have said I was tired of it, but when you've heard almost *no* music since, your heart goes out to it!) In fact, if it were not for the fact that one can't forget one's friends are still up yonder, and that one wonders what they're up to, and how long one



will be before getting going again—apart from that, as I say, I'm not so badly off.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

No. 12 C.C.S.—

B.E.F.

November 29, 1915.

Men, [send on to the Man of the Island,<sup>1</sup> please.]

Lying here this morning with a fairly thick head and a temperature just high enough to convince me I'm *not* the most frightful skrimshanker in France (it takes some persuasion, that, when one feels well enough to read, and is in a warm bed, and it freezes outside, and the proper place for one, the trenches, *must* be less comfortable!)—lying here, as I said, I've been through all your lovely letters and concluded once again that you were (this is a joke entirely of Whitfield's, but I think it is rather a good one) of the quality stated in the margin. So I said to myself, 'I shall write to those Men'.

I can't pretend that I'm not comfortable, because one's looked after in the most magnificent way here; but I feel very annoyed and, to be quite candid, a bit ashamed at going down in this way. It would weigh less heavily on one, if it weren't that the people in the trenches must be having as beastly a time at least as I had a week ago; for it's freezing, and perhaps worse, and meanwhile one lies in bed.—Oh well, I suppose I'll be out soon. Besides, it's not as if one mattered at all except for the look of the thing; one feels somehow that a sick officer is always something in the nature of a set-back.

This drivelling soliloquy—to which I hadn't meant to

<sup>1</sup> The Isle of Sheppey.



treat you—is the sort of thing I have thought to myself for the past 168 hours, when not better employed: but I confess that I've rather seized the opportunity to read a bit while here. Partly about my job, but partly not; and the latter has been particularly good fun, for it's almost the first time since April! Quite certainly what reminded me, though, that there were Men about, was yesterday evening, when I took up a book at about four o'clock, and found that it was November, and lamp-lighting time; time to read, as it might be at home, to the accompaniment of *bells* beyond my window, and falling snow, and shadows on the wall. You would have liked those. Good-bye, Men. Tell C. A. A. my news. I'm writing too, but don't think I'll repeat this tiresome rigmarole again.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

Wed., Dec. 8, 1915.

I have this moment been 'returned to duty' from hospital, where they treated me wonderfully well and I had altogether too prosperous a time. I was in bed rather a long time before my temperature would go down, so I'm not feeling frightfully strong; however, we don't go into the trenches till to-morrow night, by which time I ought to be all right.

Well, but what I was going to say was that on returning I found *The Path* awaiting me, and shouted for joy. Thank you for a good man.

Well, there's no news, of course, as I've been away from things. They've been strafing a bit though, I hear, and I am very unhappy about my servant, an awfully nice youth, who was killed by a whizz-bang while I was in hospital. Love to all the Men.



To M. G. WHITE.<sup>1</sup>

B.E.F.

Thursday, Dec. 9, 1915.

We go to trenches again in 2 hours, so I can do no more than acknowledge receipt of 2 letters.

I wonder where you'll come, Man.

Now I take your train letter. Oh Man, those hills!

Yes, Man, I know.

*Cough Mixture Joke.*<sup>2</sup> Lack of sympathy.

*Arthur Benson's Essays.* No joking matter.

*Pragmatism.* Ah: I'd forgotten. I've lost all my brains, if I had any, so long now.

*Book.* Man, you're too good. I can't *think* at all now, but I will. And you, Man: *I want very much to find something for your kit.* Write at once, Man, and say what you'd like. Knobkerry (beastly but useful), compasses, map-case? Tell me. Awful rush, Man.

Love.

Man.

To J. F. C. RICHARDS.

Thursday, Dec. 9, 1915.

Two *Salopians* arrived to-day, from you and A. E. K.; but I was much interested to get your Commentary on the same, shewing the various authors. I liked your editorial very much. Oh yes, *The Salopian* is a link; it is indeed! 'The sterner claims of war' take some forgetting at the moment, for it is pouring in torrents and we go to the trenches in three hours (get there about 11.0 p.m.) after our three days in reserve huts, under which we have to-day

<sup>1</sup> The style of this letter is so typical of its author, that (despite its almost complete unintelligibility) its inclusion will perhaps be forgiven.

<sup>2</sup> See page 36.

been wonderfully comfortable, rain it never so violently outside.

As I say, it takes some forgetting; but *The Salopian* and your letter (and those of some other friends) have done it. The Headmaster's 'Dream'<sup>1</sup> I was very glad to read; I quite agree, the poem especially is *splendid*. Oh, Burge's poem! It is adorable, my dear, *adorable*. I love the metre, too; it is so unusual and so enormously alive. Do tell him I think it is quite definitely a thing that has pleased me more than any poem I've read for ages and ages. Bailey's 'Rome' is an old friend: I thought (and think) it is enormously good, too.

I thought the Sussex poem would be Routh's. I was there, you know, at Seaford, and Heaven knows how I thought of *the* hills every time the Downs tried to capture me—though I could not have written down my constant thoughts so well! I liked the 'Vale', too, very much. I think Sir J. M. Barrie would have had something to say, if he had seen that. Thomson is rather good at that sort of 'Jubilee Cup' game. I've a poem of his, rather on the same lines, in my book. Please tell Sanger I loved his poem, too. You know, the fact is, you've produced a very, very remarkable number, and I humbly offer my congratulations!

No time for a line more, but thanks a thousand times.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Dec. 11, 1915.

You see I can do you no melodrama; for a little, little while I have had what I think the greatest privilege one

<sup>1</sup> 'The Draft': published in *Shrewsbury Fables*.





TO R. F. BAILEY.

B.E.F.

*Boxing Day, 1915.*

Christmas was a great day. We were serenaded, of course, and we serenaded the C.O. in revenge. He was delighted and made a speech in pyjamas on his doorstep, and we killed a pig for the Company and ordered up certain barrels and smokes which livened up things considerably, especially during a terrific concert we had later. There was, as far as I could hear, practically no firing on Christmas Day. I think the Hun is rather susceptible there, very rightly.

What a dull letter, though! Sorry. It's the gas attack which has caused it all.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

*Dec. 27, 1915.*

Ah yes, the end of term. I know when you go, too, you know. I too have my End-of-Term Thinking. Last time it was on the Plain; now it is here. It is not I who could forget those things.

Man, as a lover of Ian Hay I thought you might like *First 100,000* and hope it's all right. I've sent it along.

Not *Four Men* this time (as I read it recently), I think, though it is very fine of you to offer it, and it would have done me grandly otherwise. Something small: I don't know what. *The Path* is going magnificently. *Bible in Spain* or something of that kind perhaps, Man, since you are being so good.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

*New Year's Eve, 1915.*

It is the last night of a very memorable old year, and I must not miss the chance of wishing you all a glorious new



one. I suppose it is a dreadfully selfish outlook on things which makes me look on this as a happy one; but although for so many it is necessarily an 'annus odiosus', I can't bring myself quite to see the necessity of those people regarding it as such, who have such good reasons for looking back on it with gratitude!

I'm very glad my little messages and cards reached you on the day. Ah yes, Pearsall's 'In dulci iubilo'; the most memorable thing about any Service in Worcester Cathedral, I think, when I first heard it three years ago. You can guess whether I and another lover of it have hummed it a good deal at the time.

To R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

*New Year's Eve, 1915.*

The Man sent me a copy of Virgil yesterday, and I could read the 4th Eclogue within the Octave.

I was glad about that.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

*January 6, 1916.*

The dear old *Four Men* has arrived, and I've already got to the Fugue.<sup>1</sup> Oh yes, but I was *jolly* glad to get it, in spite of saying that I thought I'd prefer something else. It's a great book, but I agree now *The Path* is even better. (Kitch sent me the *W.B.*<sup>2</sup> and I believe at last I understand the final adjustment; I used to find it very obscure.) Thank you, Man, very much.

Wiring at fifteen yards in front of Bosches last night, M.G. opened on us several times; none hit. My O.C.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Fugue on the Inns of the World.'

<sup>2</sup> *The Wrong Box.*

Coy. saved my life and that of party by hearing the click of M.G. just as they loaded, and he got us all in just as the flare went up and they fired. Good.

TO R. F. BAILEY.

B.E.F.

Jan. 9, 1916.

Oh, Phiz, but I do like your book<sup>1</sup> enormously. It came as the most comforting thing in the world to read this dear man's letters. As I dare say you've gathered from my frantic scrawl the other day, and from H. E. E. H., if you got a hint of a narrow shave I had which I described in a note to him, I think I may *really* say we've had a taste of the big game this time. The trenches we were wiring don't really bear talking about. I doubt if anything quite like it exists, now; Bosches all round, and behind, at bombing range in places; my escape was at fifteen yards, one of half a dozen shaves with their M.G.'s. Next night ten bombs (from crawlers) within as many yards of me. Well, well, but Hôj sat in such places for 66 days out of 76, I remember—perhaps here, for all I know; and here are we having four days' rest alternately.

Yes, but it's the book that matters, and it is a glorious antidote. I like the bit about the Personality of Railway Stations; the Man of Sheerness would like that, and if any one wanted to do me a favour, he would relieve my Alpine<sup>2</sup> excitement by sending the Man a copy at once; I should be happier.

<sup>1</sup> *The Corner of Harley Street; being some familiar correspondence of Peter Harding, M.D.*

<sup>2</sup> A word used by White in the sense that he had seen or discovered something by himself, which he wanted to share with others.



It will be an awful scandal if they deplete the staffs of all the schools; the thought of any one more going from Shrewsbury makes me rather angry; I know it's rather selfish, having escaped myself.

It would be different if the Hun wasn't in the *same* trench with us quite so much in this region,—but I suppose our attractions for him are very great.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Jan. 11, 1916.

The lines we actually are to hold in our Coy. are more tolerable, but if you could see some of those who came out of another Coy., holding what will be our right, you would realise that the horrors were not all confined to 1914, though I comfort myself day and night with the thought that my betters went through far worse in most places last year. But about me you must not be anxious, only continue as I know you are: there is need. . . . Hymn 278,<sup>1</sup> isn't it?

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

January 11, 1916.

Man, if all 's well, I'll be on leave *Thursday week*. Please find from Phiz whether he got my letter about trenches—there seems to be doubt if it was posted. I described vaguely the evilness of the trenches we're in:—you might, if you think it worth while, tell him how we were nearly done in; I told him about the next night, when I had ten bombs within ten yards. Good. A shell-hole is a very good place,

<sup>1</sup> 'O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though press'd by many a foe.'





TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Worcester.**January 25, 1916.*

*Marpessa.*<sup>1</sup> I suppose there is a flaw somewhere, too much of what H. B.<sup>2</sup> might call 'agglutinative': I mean that he seems to rake in with both hands all the first loves of the second-rate enthusiast in the way of poetical beauties from all authors and languages, and pile them up with a sort of 'There! that's your idea, and now it's all on paper' to the open-mouthed reader.

That may be all excellently well, as Simon Hartley said: but years ago I climbed a passionate heap<sup>3</sup> over this thing, and this morning I have done it again. It is right you should know.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

*On the train (returning from leave).**January 26, 1916.*

May I hope two things? One, that the little coat may arrive—it has been so welcome. But far more important—that you will go on writing. I don't deserve much, I know, but you cannot imagine how I welcome your letters when they arrive. This is quite literally true. I myself should not have thought it *possible* that one could be so helped along by any letters as I have been by yours; and this you must please believe.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

*B.E.F. again, and a dug-out,  
rather a good one.**January 29, 1916.*

As you can imagine, Worcester, that quiet old Cathedral City, seemed rather an incredible change from the trenches;

<sup>1</sup> By Stephen Phillips.<sup>2</sup> Hilaire Belloc.<sup>3</sup> The Men used often to speak of 'climbing a mudheap' over a thing about which they were enthusiastic.

and yet not nearly so much so—and this applies to Shrewsbury too—as it did when I took 48 hours' leave just before coming out. I suppose one deadens fancies out here.

However, this is business, and I must get to it. No heart-aches will keep my dear friend the Hun at arm's length, and the sooner they are dropped the better (which is very easily said!).

Well, well . . .

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## DIARY

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November 2, 1915.

It was time I went. The rain splashed gloriously in my face as I came out of our little farm at dusk, where a few minutes ago we had actually dared to be grumbling. 'Now,' I said, clenching my fists and gesticulating with bitten lip, 'Now that is all over, and things are going to happen.' . . . 'Orate pro anima mea,' I said: 'Orate pro anima mea . . . and particularly Hôj,' I added, for I suppose the meanest soldier God ever made has some ideal leader of his own. So I went on in the pouring rain and the mud. It was quite obvious which turning I should take at the corner of the lane that leads from our home, and within a few minutes I was in the village and at its farther end. The white face of the church clock stared at me with a strange surprise as I strode past. 'That', I answered, 'only shews again that you do not quite understand. It will be all right, but there are things to be done first.' So I passed from the village, and the slow, limping piquet was soon left far behind. It was now but a few hundred yards to the end of my pilgrimage, which as you may guess was obviously the frontier. It seemed a pity to have to strafe the sentry for being too easily content at a great distance with my mono-



syllabic reply to his challenge. Did they mind, Those Others? I wondered if each nudged his neighbour—‘See how one is angry because they receive so easily, on this Night of all others, his Voice from the night, claiming that he is a friend!’ But I left that business, for I had arrived. Here was my goal, and here I halted on the little bridge over the tiny border stream, and fingering the German New Testament in my pocket I remembered many countries. ‘It is all right now,’ I said: ‘all the corners of the earth . . . Ah yes,’ I added, disdaining all mild faithless subjunctives, ‘to-night, I most deeply believe, *Omnis Spiritus Laudat Dominum.*’ Back, then, from the frontier; back to France and the little village church; and this time with a haste, as though to make amends, I went in. It was absolutely dark, except for one tiny candle by the altar at the far end; and I was not sorry when the end of my stumbling came and I reached my goal, especially when the door opened and closed when I had gone half-way. ‘Never mind,’ I thought: ‘it might be Hôj, come in reply to my greeting.’ So I arrived, having stepped on all the happier for that. And there at last I came; and there, while the door opened and shut again and again with the most encouraging persistence, remembered Them and their Deeds and my own endless needs, in the language that for hundreds and hundreds of years has fought to obliterate all the frontiers and all the doubt, the most holy language of Rome.

It is very late now, beloved Men.<sup>1</sup> Since writing that, I have gone to the window and looked into the night; I have seen the distant star-shells and heard the distant guns.

‘Ruht in Frieden,’ I murmured, ‘and forget the strafing: it is All Souls’ Day.’

Good night, the Men. It is a Magnificent World.

<sup>1</sup> What is written above was sent by him to the New House.



November 18, 1915.

*The Walk to Potyze.* It was pelting with rain when I started at about 3.0 or so. As I got on I soon became quite happy, as is one's way in a deluge when moving and dressed for the part; and I do not think the guide minded, as much as some would have, the fact of his being pulled out of his dug-out on such a day. We came across the fields half-right, as the cross-road was marked not to be used, by the Artillery, I think, who as usual do not want any flat-footed Infantry paddling round their war-hives. At the edge of the wood I let my guide go home; and passing many dozen bottoms of shell-cases, I got an Artillery-man to take me to the 11th Essex H.Q., where a couple of officers from their M.G. section offered to shew me where the E. Yorks were. It is curious, how I am beginning to think I enjoyed that afternoon; the idea is obviously absurd—ὡς ἡδύ τοι σωθέντα μεμνήσθαι πόνων, I suppose; still it had enough of the ridiculous in it to make it just worth remembering.

*The Plaintive Gunner.* Were I ten times more than a mere subaltern I do not think I should have the impudence to strafe the gunners; but here was an R.F.A. subaltern to-night getting quite heated on the subject of Infantry and Artillery. What he objects to most seems to be the shyness with which certain Battalions in part of Hill 60, where he is, view an occasional short-bursting shell, as judged by the language in which they protest against it. Probably the best thing to have done would have been to agree that the Infantry should welcome an occasional surprise of this kind, on the ground that it is all healthy experiment with a view to strafing the Hun. But unluckily some of us tried argument: 'Would he not be very indignant if the short shell were *not* announced to the gunners?' Like the don confronted with



the goat, he was 'bound to admit that it was so'; but I doubt if it really soothed him. The result in his battery is that they never fire at the Hun first line at all, as they reckon it is not worth while risking the inevitable accidents from wrong fuses and wet ammunition.

Well, I am glad to think I've never complained, not having had a short shell down my neck; but I can sympathise with both parties.

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Dec. 1915.

*More of No. 12 C.C.S.* It was rather interesting, as there were always officers from different stations coming in. The authorities were very generous, I must say; we were excellently fed, and night after night there would be red and white wine, whisky and brandy, on the table. No great inroads however were ever made on these, as no one felt up to it. One night I played Auction (with the usual fool's success) with two very nice R.A.M.C. men and a man from the Oxfords. I once redoubled three Royals and made them.

I read *The Fair Maid of Perth* there. I also read Barrie's book which contained the original story of Peter Pan, from which the play grew. I suppose no one ever understood children like that: the guessed success of the bachelor with children without their parents standing by, the terrific solemnity of small boys in great coats—these are grandly done.

Bells, always bells, from the big church over the way. It was not very far from home being there. Bells of Lichfield, Eton, Newcastle, Oxford, Shrewsbury, Worcester; the little bells of the Plain; all these could be heard clearly as I lay listening to their tale.

Strange how soon one gets back at least some strength.

My first walk of one mile at H. was very exhausting; I sat on a road-side seat half blind! Within two or three days I was in the lines, walking all day.

*The December Afternoons.* There were those at H.; when one looked at the Xmas toy-shop and the dolls' tea-sets (I remembered with a curious rush the way the little cups would fit into the cardboard, years ago), and the evening came over the shops, and the lights, and me, and it was time to come in to tea like a good boy.

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*Jan. 3, 1916.*

This morning there is nothing doing but cleaning, and we shall have an inspection in an hour or so. But what I wanted to say was:—

Why have I not discovered a lovely thing by R. L. S. before? It is in *The Open Road* (page 242); 'In the Highlands.' I have it on the table now.

But oh, the military mind! I had read through once, *delighted*, and half-way through again, when for no reason I murmured to Winkley, 'You know the way to inspect Tube Helmets is to have them in here man by man, and avoid waiting and exposure in the air!'

And this, although, so far from being tempted by *indifference* to think of other things, I was definitely excited about the poem. We are a strange people.

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*Two Heavy Pages.*

*Jan. 12, 1916.*

Books, during all this period,—*Wrong Box* and a thing called *Edwards*, by Barry Pain, a book about a London gardener, painting him in none too honest colours, and coloured for me throughout by trenches and knife-rests, as is the way of printed matter to men in a grave situation.



Who, that has ever been through anything, even the hours before an unimportant race, does not know how he reads, not the pages before him, but something he dislikes the prospect of, *across* them all? Of course this prospect business is played out fairly soon, I hope and believe, and am beginning to find; but knife-rests, due same evening at 15 and 25 yds. from the Hun in biggish numbers (a dozen or so), do come into one's mind when they shouldn't; and this would not be an honest entry if it tried to drown the fact in any heroics!

Before dismissing the subject of this idle contemplation of danger it would be rash not to remember two things it, I think, begets; one is a quite physical emotion towards, and almost clinging to, inanimate objects; the other is the passionate acquiescence in low countries. Whether this latter be due to the fact that the eye gulps greedily at large vistas of scenes it may possibly be like to lose, I do not know; but I can understand quite well now, from its complete absence when at rest among the lowlands, how the contrary is true of mountains, and how dread is said to lurk in high places. Yes! I suppose we have had a taste of what Belloc calls 'the great emotions'. But I am at last quite conscious of what really happens; one introduces an almost palpable *slur*. The great-hearted ones probably do not do this: they pull out their skeleton and defy him, and rather look forward than otherwise to explorations among his uncharted bones. For myself I am perfectly clear; I do not exactly reverse my chair, and I pray devoutly I may not want to leave his company. But I think he is just left out, not even waved aside—I am a total stranger to any melodramatic 'steeling', and all the rest of the room grows more and more adorable in detail just because he too is there. It is a curious world.



Well, but I am coming to the *Nox Mirabilis*,<sup>1</sup> Wednesday, Jan. 5. And I do not think I need describe it here. The pose of the 'strong silent man' (which I and J. P. D. have decided is the one to gull the gaping civilian!) may be all very well, but I hardly expect the story of this night will go altogether unremembered or unrepeated. Besides, it is J. A. M.,<sup>2</sup> not I, who is the hero of the piece.

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*Wed., Jan. 19.—3.30 p.m. precisely.*

An entirely idle, and I am afraid grossly lovable, day, on which my memory will dwell with what is known, I believe, as loving particularity. To be exact, I am sitting on a rather hard concern of boards, thinly disguised in a layer of water-proof sheet, and many sand-bags underneath me; another sheet excludes the sunlight, all but a couple of long beams down which play a remarkable assortment of smoke wreaths. For in my mouth is an enormous cigar, the gift of J. P. D., of terrific prosperity; round my shoulders is my British Warm; I am well shaved, I think, but otherwise content to be in a comfortable assurance of the need of the soon expected bath. Over my right shoulder protrudes from the wall of the dug-out a stick supporting a candle; aeroplanes buzz overhead, and two or three silly nations are squandering ammunition by the ton upon them; the Hun furiously strafes the French support lines, and our guns reply occasionally. Every now and then a M.G. wakes up and pushes in half a belt, as our M.G. Officer has it; and in an hour the three aforesaid foolish nations will have their front lines 'standing to'. I am quite

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the night when he had a narrow escape from a German machine-gun.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Merewether, his Company Commander.



warm for once. I think I am making my entry with a rare amount of detailed precision; it is unlikely that for some time 'I shall be removed'; and I am going on leave (with Chester as companion, too) precisely at 4.30 a.m. to-morrow.

Leave! I am heartily glad I took the steps I did about it; for anyhow I am afraid the standard required for it is *not* reached (!), nor approached, even in these four days. Terribly 'deteriora sequor'; but better, even so, than cease even 'videre meliora'. Anyhow, I am going, and for the present it is delightful to promise great things; especially those great things which have absolutely no objective importance, perhaps. Thus, should I 'get my civvy clothes on'? I think yes! It is a sort of proud little prerogative of people back from the Front especially, though it is often done at home by some, but not by me till we came out. I think yes; it should make more of a real holiday, and though Heaven knows I've done nothing, I can do with a change perhaps. 'Spats, too,' as Michael said. And evening dress, no doubt. And games of cards in the evening; and then probably a smoke with father and a talk over Big Things. Exercise—I must have that; I am still not quite strong after my chill; perhaps I shall run down to the Lock and back as of old. And not too much to eat, while not so active, and in a house.

Books too; imagine if I could really do something to clear the air in *The Large Matter* in a week! The life of a student, when alone; shall I go back to that for an hour or two, with pens and paper and volumes round me? This could only be very early and very late, of course, with the old Cathedral to point the way. But though it is good fun to put these little more material matters first, there remains Home, and that is where I go. Home, and to my ain



folk, whom I seem to know now better than ever before. . . .  
And about that I do not think I should write profanely.

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*Wed., Feb. 2.*

*Elverdinghe Farm.* Let us begin with the last good thing, which was any time after 10.0 a.m. to-day. As usual, I took my short airing down the road past the French, saluting and nodding like fun; there is not enough of that business. It has never failed to be *the* adorable time of the day, but to-day, after a certain amount of fairly real misery (in F 30<sup>1</sup> [real F]), I strode down that road inhaling the air of the universe, and even I counted my breaths, fifteen yards at a time!

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*Feb. 3, 1916.*

The afternoon was peaceful again, and thank God I have heard the sad songs of the British infantry proceeding from the barn, betokening that my much over-worked men are happy. They have had the devil of a time, and no sympathy from H.Q., for they are put on working parties at once.

At about 3.30 I began writing, and continued till after 5.30. First orders for relief came along, and I spent time drawing a plan of the front line and Canal Bank.

7.30 p.m. Glorious chorus of 'Good-bye, Virginia' from room of officers' servants next door; it must be the young Davis (it was), who delighted me so enormously on Xmas Day at Houtkerque. I can't stop myself from wanting to listen. . . . Very excellent indeed; it has made a great difference, thank you!

The three following nights were remarkable for the colossal work put in by D Coy. I shall never forget the

<sup>1</sup> A trench.



vigour they put into the work on the night of the 6th from 10.30 to 12.30. We should have begun at 9.0, but the sand-bags and shovels were late in arriving from R.E. or wherever it was; and I had told them, the harder they worked, the sooner the second relief would get home. Result—35 men filled about 500 sand-bags in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours and laid several hundred of them. They worked like fiends. It takes men with the real thing in them, to work for their *successors* like that; and, please God, that is going to be true of all our work in those trenches! This is a fact that must not be forgotten. It had the real unselfish ring about it.

*Afternoon.* The gramophone in the barn with the Company; an idea of mine which pleased them a bit, I think. We sat listening to the Plantation Medleys and H. Lauder songs, etc., while the shells strafed the village, and the blue sky pierced through the roof. It was worth doing.

## CHAPTER V

M. G. W.

OCTOBER 1915 TO FEBRUARY 1916

DURING this time White was still at work with his Battalion at Sheerness, often in command of a Company. His spare hours he gave to music, reading, and the organisation of games and entertainments for the men. He was away on leave from time to time; on December 2 he came to spend a long week-end at Shrewsbury. Southwell and he met once (for a few hours) in London, but that was all.

He was on leave at Radlett with his sister, when the telegram came ordering him to France. And on the following day (February 7) he went to Southampton. This is what he wrote during this period:—

### DIARY

October 14, 1915.

Hollingbourne with Buxton and Russell-Smith. A wonderful day of Autumn. There was a forge at Hollingbourne, and the sparks flew upwards. In the train on the way home I read the two greatest short poems in the language (steady!); the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and the *Ode to Autumn*.

Jan. 26, 1916.

Met the Man in London on the way back to the Front after leave. He had wanted me to go to meet him at Shrewsbury, but I said I could not go there at present, for (1) practical reasons, (2) psychological reasons; as I had decided not to go again till I had been out.



## LETTERS

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

*Radlett.*

October 2, 1915.

I have to report that I saw the Man off from Charing Cross this morning in good health and good spirits, and gloriously himself.

Read, please, *Boon*, by 'Reginald Bliss' (H. G. Wells), for turns and deep thinking mixed (Virgil).

Oh, Man! Wales was good.

I've just been talking to a remarkably clever man. He came from the Man's Battalion, and the Man wired to me this: 'Make early acquaintance of latest arrival from here very delightful sadly<sup>1</sup> anti-Bensonian.'

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

*Radlett.*

October 2, 1915.

I spent last night with Southwell, and saw him off this morning early from Charing Cross, just too early for him to receive the poems,<sup>2</sup> which I found on returning to the Hotel at 11.0.

He was very much himself and awfully concerned as to the items of kit which he ought to take, and wishing there was an order to take no kit. We spent an hour in chemists' shops last evening, while Southwell examined the chemists about anti-vermin powders, believing all their very various suggestions and acting on most of them.

Finally it required three taxis to get to Charing Cross, not due to the size of his luggage but to a general lack of organisation in the departure.

<sup>1</sup> Southwell was fond of A. C. Benson's books.

<sup>2</sup> 'V. B.'

It is not fair that I should have to see him off and not go with him.

I think I told you that the Colonel is not letting me go out just yet, by reason of my more advanced age, and the shortage in our Battalion of officers over twenty years. It is a nuisance. I'm all for the Front, now Southwell has gone, and also kindred spirits at Sheerness are going.

TO A. E. KITCHIN.

*The Hill-top—Radlett.*

*Oct. 2, 1915.*

See my remarks about the Man to C. A. A. He *was* worried about his kit. How many Morphia tablets should he take? If they were so useful, why not hundreds of them? Whether sulphur was really any good against lice? Wouldn't it fall off the clothes as soon as it was put on? Etc. etc. He couldn't think of much else.

I told him about those steel plate mirrors—you know the things—and we discussed their efficacy against glancing bullets, etc.; and finally, when I asked him if he wanted me to send anything out to him, he seemed to think these were good things (though he'd be quite content, if some one ordered him not to have them). Anyhow, he said I might as well send him out four.

TO CANON SOUTHWELL.

*Sheerness.*

*October 10, 1915.*

I must write a line in answer to the very kind letters which you and Mrs. Southwell have written to me.

As you will easily realise, there has been no departure for the Front which I have felt so keenly as Evelyn's. I always think (and sometimes say) that there has never been anything quite like the life which our common household



has lived at Shrewsbury these five years, with its intimacies, enthusiasms, and mutual appreciations. Whitfield was saying the other day, what has been thought by so many who knew him, that Evelyn's soldiering is one of the finest sacrifices of this war, undertaken in spite of his characteristic distaste for all, or a great deal, that it involves.

. . . . .

I hope to hear good news of him very soon.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

October 1915.

Autumn is being good in Kent, when I see it.

TO R. F. BAILEY.

*Sheerness.*

October 21, 1915.

I feel education must be an interesting business now. E. g. Democracy, Freedom of Press, Empire, etc. etc.

I am worried about the *size* of the world. A Rhodesian started talking about South Africa last evening, and I thought, 'Good God! South Africa has never come into my vision at all. I've always rather regretted all those colonial places. But they have to be considered too. It's awful!'

Schoolmasters are always either trying to make aesthetes out of Philistines (the Adjutant has just come in and said that three were to go 'out' now, and those three include two of the best people here—damn!) or Philistines out of Prigs. The Prig so often has the root of goodness in him, and we deal with it so unsympathetically! (This is not a sermon to you; only, being now  $\frac{1}{8}$  a soldier, I speak dogmatically.) I should have been so much better a person, if my seventeen-year-old aestheticism had been kindlier dealt with; if I had been shewn why it was wrong, i. e. because it

was not *real*, not because it was not manly or some such thing; if I had been shewn where my violin practice lay in the scheme of things; how it was good and therefore most necessary to look at it in the right perspective.

TO A. E. KITCHIN.

*Sheerness.*

Oct. 25, 1915.

I've just put up on the Mess Notice Board the following:

LOST

Who has borrowed from an Alldays Allon Motor Cycle a pump?

Please fill in.

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ Captain

\_\_\_\_\_ Lieut.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2nd Lieut.

M. G. W.

'It is calculated to afford the very highest amusement.'

We are playing Rugger amid general enthusiasm at present. We beat 5th K.R.R. to-day fairly easily. I couldn't play, as I twisted my ankle in a game yesterday. I'm in rather good form this year.

I've heard some great music at week-ends lately at Queen's Hall.

Kent was very lovely when I visited it last on various occasions with Russell-Smith, Buxton, and West.

*Thought.* I've read some poetry; good old things like Keats' Odes, etc. I've been arguing against pure Conservatism with the Adjutant and Captain Edwards, and have given the latter Galsworthy's *Strife*, *Silver Box*, etc. to read.

I'm also getting them to read Lowes Dickinson's *After the War*. As to the WAR, I've been so taken up with the



problems of its direction, that I've hardly thought about its essential justice. I'm just where I am.

I think perhaps that you base your own undoubtedly powerful arguments for Christianity and Peace too much on the hopelessly compromising and inconsistently weak attitude of most parsons, and that you do not work enough on *a priori* reasoning. I don't think you've ever really refuted the man who says 'Yes, but we are improving slowly'. You have only proved the Unchristianity in him. I am always hovering round the opinion that there is a World-Mind gradually growing stronger and more reasonable *through and in spite of* its various forms of commerce, armaments, competition, etc.; and that a sudden violent renunciation (as suggested by 'literal' Christianity) would be an aberration of that Mind, just as the War is an aberration.

[Read *Boon* by R. Bliss. (Really H. G. Wells.)]

Of course that is not Christianity, at least I'm afraid not. No—damn it! It isn't.

Many thanks again for sending *The Salopian*, always very welcome; it arrived to-day.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.<sup>1</sup> *Sheerness.*

October 26, 1915.

I'm sorry to note that we're no better than we used to be.

— JERSEYS —

A Man.

TO A. E. KITCHIN.

6th R.B.—*Sheerness.*

Nov. 9, 1915.

Just a line. Thanks very much for *The Salopian*. It is very good of you to send it; *continuez donc*. I was at

<sup>1</sup> Following a neglected appeal for football jerseys.

Repton last Saturday with a 6th R.B. XI—hopelessly beaten. I did a thorough subaltern turn in town on the way up with the rest of this party. Dinner at the Elysée, followed by *The Only Girl*. I enjoyed the whole expedition moderately only, with the exception of *The Only Girl*, which I liked very much.

Saturday night and Sunday I was at the Musical Club. Sunday—Temple Church, stroll round the Temple, Fleet Street, Cheshire Cheese, and Russian concert at Albert Hall.

I hope to be on the list<sup>1</sup> soon, and when I am, I shall get long leave and put in a night or two at Shrewsbury.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*November 15, 1915.*

Yes, I will come soon, but not this week-end. Also I am quite ready to exclude Advent Sunday, the 27th, but I wish you hadn't mentioned the fact that it was Advent Sunday. I thought of muddy roads, darkening chapel windows, the fire-side, and 'For behold, Darkness'. Man, I got strumming that lovely Bach Sonata last night, the one in which the piano starts steadily and expectantly:—



<sup>1</sup> Of Officers liable to be sent to the Front at short notice.



and the violin :—



You know. To-day I've found a pianist and we are going to play it to-night. Yes, there is a good deal to attract me to S. on Advent Sunday; good hymns too, probably, in Chapel. However, I'll come later, perhaps, if it suits you better. Anyhow I'm going to get up on Thursday and come for a Field Day. If I did come for the 27th, I should have to apply this Wednesday, anyhow. (I'm using the word 'anyhow' a lot.)

I'm glad you've been to Rome<sup>1</sup> again, Man. That is good. I shall hover round the Jura when I come, I make no doubt.

Oh! look. A son of Prof. Sorley, who was at K.C.<sup>2</sup> Choir School under me, was killed recently in France; he had left Marlborough last summer, and seems to have developed into a remarkable person. I have got hold of three poems of his. I haven't time to write it all out, so on second thoughts I'll bring them to Shrewsbury some day.

When I come, please have the Field Day *west* or south of Shrewsbury. One of the good old spots, like Betton, Sharpstones, or Stretton, or Upper Edgebold—I mean **UPPER EDGEBOLD**.<sup>3</sup>

I must write again to the Man. I *am* bad about writing to France.

<sup>1</sup> By reading *The Path to Rome*.

<sup>2</sup> King's College, Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> As the names of places are written in military reports.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

Radlett.

Dec. 18, 1915.

This is not very good about my :—

- i. Captain Comfy pipe,
- ii. Haversack,
- iii. *Kitch Snapshots*; <sup>1</sup>

because they absolutely must (with possible exception of i. [Why do you use phrases like 'the possible exception', 'mot cliché', and all that?]) be in the house somewhere.

i and ii are part of my kit, and iii is moral kit. The appeal *ad misericordiam*. But, I repeat, that stuff is in the New House somewhere.

I have written the outline of a melodrama about the Kaiser imprisoned on the island of Sheppey six months after the War, guarded by 6th R.B. It will be performed in the S. Hippodrome on Christmas Day; topical, and 'depends largely for its success upon facial expression'. The N.C.O.'s and riflemen comedians, who are acting, file in with turns of their own, which are clever, but also noisy and spinal, and there is a good deal of wedding guest about the whole thing, on my part.

You had a sing-song last night, I make no doubt. Also you are correcting papers and drinking soups with A. E. K. at 2.10 a.m.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

Sheerness.

December 23, 1915.

Man—my love, and a reminder of the singing of 'The Holly and the Ivy' in the Man's cold room<sup>2</sup> that time.

A happy Christmas.

<sup>1</sup> Photographs taken by A. E. K. of the School Corps on Caradoc at Church Stretton.

<sup>2</sup> Just after the end of one Winter term, before Christmas.



To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

December 27, 1915.

I had the strangest Christmas Day. Most of it spent in the Sheerness Hippodrome, where I was part author and stage manager of:—

A GRAND REVUE

B I F F AND B A F F

with a chorus of

COMPANY COMEDIENNES

(thus the poster);

which we rehearsed all day for an evening's entertainment to the Battalion and their billet landladies. Some good comic men in the Battalion last evening.

I went to the dock-yard church with Routh, and we had *Adeste Fideles*, but in English.

Steuart Wilson and I went to hear Sapellnikoff yesterday in that same Hippodrome, and a woman sang the worst songs in Europe.

‘Once in an *old-world* English country town,

‘I met a maid

‘Gowned in brown;

‘It quite *enhanced* her loveliness.’

The notes were rather worse than the words, but it ended with a change of key and on a top A, so we all applauded loudly and shivered, and I took in my Sam Browne belt *one*.

I am well into *War and Peace* (L. Tolstoy)—it was very heavy going at first, but I am now excited about it.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Sheerness.*

*January 21, 1916.*

Route march this morning. At the head of the column I with a heavy pack argued solidly all the way round about respectability and Christianity and church-going, and what a gentleman is, etc. etc.

Thank Kitch for his letter. Of course I have read all Barry.<sup>1</sup> It is a wonderful book.

TO HIS SISTER AND BROTHER-IN-LAW.

*Sheerness.*

*January 24,<sup>2</sup> 1916.*

Thank you both very much for your greetings to-day. Yes, I've had a good day, thank you; listened to the band all morning, and chose and criticised pieces for performance at Mess to-night, was a hare in a paper-chase this afternoon, was caught by a swift sergeant after plunging through dyke after dyke, had a good hot bath afterwards, and am feeling fit, and propose (war or no war) to depart from my usual abstention and drink intoxicating liquor at dinner.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and the War*, by the Rev. F. R. Barry.

<sup>2</sup> His birthday.



## CHAPTER VI

E. H. L. S.

FEBRUARY TO JULY 1916

SOON after returning from leave, and on the day after White reached France, Southwell was transferred from D Company to take command of C Company. This was on February 10, and on the 20th the Battalion moved south from Belgium into France, moving by train to Halloy (where Southwell speaks of a great ride to get a football for his men), and then, by Occoches and Grand Rullecourt, to Sombrin and Simencourt, where he was again in the trenches. During this journey south he met White near Canaples.

On March 21 a senior officer, Capt. Barclay, took over the command of C Company, though not for long. On April 11 Southwell started for England, but on reaching Boulogne found that all leave was cancelled, and had to return. On April 20 he regained the command of his Company, as Capt. Barclay was transferred to the 1st Battalion; and it was about this time that Southwell was gazetted Captain.

On May 4 he was home on leave, and spent a day at Shrewsbury. This is taken from a letter written about him after his death:

‘He was (as if by intuition) a “discerner of spirits”. But (most impressive of all) he was strictly impartial. He never allowed one love to interfere with the claims of

another. An instance of this occurred during his last leave. He left his parents during what might (and actually did) prove to be his last leave, in order that he might go to Shrewsbury and see young Blakeway, who was ill. It was the same during the months of his training on Salisbury Plain. He was always going somewhere to see some one (often at a great distance), who he thought would wish to see him.'

After his leave he returned to the same part of the line, where he mentions little of military interest except a gas alarm, on May 20. From this time onwards his letters and diaries are full of the coming of Summer. On June 11 Capt. H. W. Garton, a fellow Etonian, with whose brother he had rowed at Oxford, rejoined the Battalion, and again Southwell lost the command of the Company to a senior officer. For a time he was at the 14th Divisional School of Instruction at Hauteville, and then returned to the Battalion.

On July 1 White was killed in an attack before Mailly-Maillet.

The story continues in Southwell's own words :

## DIARY

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*Sombrin.*

*Tuesday, Feb. 29.*

We found we had quite a good Mess room in one house, with a kitchen on right ; beyond that, barn, with Officers' servants and some A.S.C. L. of that, bed-room used as sitting-room by A.S.C. and Officers' servants by day.

L., black wood mantelpiece, plates, crucifix, and scent-bottles. Beneath it, recess for a stove, but no fire there ; still, it was not cold. Opposite the usual bisected stable door, light wood side-board ; placard 'Fête Nationale de



Jeanne d'Arc' (when is that?), copy of the 'Angelus'; left of that, big coloured plate of French uniforms, surmounted by France in chariot with two lions—'Triomphe de la Rép: Française'. R. of that, barometer. L. Centre, table, spotlessly clean, and with the inevitable oil-cloth. R. wall, dresser with our gramophone; 'Souvenir de la Mission de 1912' (obscure, these missions).

That afternoon we had a very successful outing; the only Company that went out, I think. At three I marched and doubled them out of the village; up the hill; round an oblong field on right; easy; into next field. Short speech on fitness by me in three lines; physical exercises; doubled that field also. Rapid march down road  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile more and back pretty smartly (about 142).

In the evening, entered Lewis gunners on Company Roll and wrote to them.

After that we listened to our gramophone and records we borrow from Irving. The chief features I have already mentioned; but to my huge delight Polgreen (B), who messed with us, brought his album with *Schubert's Unfinished quartet*, and I remembered the *Quinby*<sup>1</sup> evenings and my *Men*. That was very good.

---

*Sombrin.*

*Wed., March 1, 1916.*

Procession of boats<sup>2</sup> to-day, I wonder? It is fifteen years since I took part in my first, and a few things have happened since then.

This was one of the mornings when the C.S.M. and I agreed that after the War there would be a few funny

<sup>1</sup> A friend with whom there used to be Chamber-Music at Shrewsbury on Saturday nights, White taking part.

<sup>2</sup> At Eton.

things to look back upon. There was a lot of shuffling about of 'B' and 'C' on the road, to the side of our real road, but the one on which we were drawn up waiting to join the column. We went down it some way, and helped, and turned about. Then 'B' came, of course through thousands of lorries, all anyhow. So we had to shift down. Too far. Back. Not far enough. Back. About turn. Found old 'B' with its 'second front section of fours marking time like good 'uns, and nobody else giving a damn', as I observed to the C.S.M.

However, we did get going then, and had a pretty good march. Very cold, but fresh, and no one was very tired. It reminds me that one does not ordinarily remain as strong as one was before coming out—or so it seems to me. I may be wrong, but I should say that I felt an eight miles' march more than I used to on the Plain. Of course, though, I have been ill since then, and also probably smoked too much; and I expect one is really no weaker in oneself.

As I was saying, I am afraid one becomes rather a beast of burden on these treks. I was absolutely happy, I think, on the whole of them, or nearly so; but just now the certain glory of the earth is not exactly unremarked, but it is 'noted' like a message from H.Q., and I am not content with that.

---

*Simencourt.*

*Mar. 18.*

*The Reformed Church of France at Achicourt.*

It was a pretty little chapel from the outside, that stood next door to my H.Q. Inside it was terribly 'reformed', for there was not a vestige of an altar of any kind; only a huge pulpit with a canopy stood against the farther wall,



and beneath that a lectern. Both places, and the gallery at what I will call the west end, had numerous service books, and books of other men's sermons, some of them old eighteenth-century tomes. There were also a great number of their 'Cantiques', which were printed as though every one knew all about them and their origin, which I certainly do not. They are a kind of potted Psalms in verse.

Thus, appropriately,

Ps. 2. D'où vient ce bruit parmi les nations ?

E. g. f./E. D. A quoi porte leur impuissante haine ?

Peuples, pourquoi dans vos illusions

g. b. a. g./F. Vous flattez-vous d'une espérance vaine ?

Je vois ligüés les princes de la terre

Dans leurs conseils ; les grands ont présumé

D'être assez forts de déclarer la guerre

A l'Eternel, à son Oint bien aimé.

And Ps. 1, with its so typical inversions :—

Heureux celui qui fuit des vicieux

Et le commerce et l'exemple odieux :

Qui des pécheurs hait la triompheuse voie

Et des moqueurs la criminelle joie,

Qui, invoquant Dieu, ne se plaît qu'en sa loi,

Et nuit et jour la médite avec foi.

(Fin.)

It is full of 'Peuples, venez . . .', and the whole thing is obviously faithfully portrayed in *Athalie*. But I must only quote one more. After passing an ominous

Mon Dieu, quelle guerre cruelle !

(not from a Psalm, I think), I came to—

*Luther's Hymn, to the usual tune; thus:—*

C'est un rempart que notre Dieu,  
Si l'on nous fait injure;  
Son bras puissant nous tiendra lieu  
Et de fort et d'armure.  
L'ennemi contre nous  
Redouble de courroux,  
Vaine colère!—Que pourrait l'Adversaire?—  
L'Eternel détonne ses coups.

(Fin.)

But I cannot let Haessler's tune go (not a Passion hymn this tune; it is called Cant: 49, but it is not from a Psalm):—

Jamais Dieu ne délaisse  
Qui se confie en lui,  
Si le monde m'opresse,  
Jésu est mon appui.  
Ce Dieu bon et fidèle  
Garde en sa paix les siens  
Pour la vie éternelle,  
Et les comble de biens.

It is easily believed, as I write (on this gorgeous Spring morning) chez Briache, Arras, March 18.

(The Book was published '63 and I must quote the end of the Avant-Propos.

'Puisse . . . ce livre d'orgue contribuer puissamment . . . à relever le goût du chant sacré dans les assemblées de fidèles et dans les familles, et seconder fructueusement l'organiste dans sa belle et sainte mission.')

*The Cathedral.*

Mar. 17, 1916.

So before breakfast I had found my way, though not too easily. Some cathedrals are easier to find than others;



their towers still stand to shew the way. Here it was not incongruous that the entry to the Cathedral was by the ruins of the Musée. I might have thought I had come straight on the east end, for before me lay a large altar with long rails. So true is it that men find themselves in the Sanctuary unawares. But it was the south transept, so, as in duty bound, I made my way back to the left and found the west door. It is all very Byzantine, of course, and the resemblance to St. Paul's was increased by the ring of houses below the high steps. But I have known good hours in St. Paul's, and anyhow the church is in ruins. . . . Yes, it has paid in full, as no doubt has many a penitent, who has stood wonderingly by the ruined confessionals which line the aisle. That aisle is not so ruined as the northern, and thus it came that the inscriptions on the Stations of the Cross, though not the carving, still remained; and selecting the one which bore the number of my Regiment, I stood over against it by the pillar to look towards the chancel. I do not know whether it was tower or dome that lay in ruins a little farther east; but though it was gone, the four central arches, with the deep blue of the spring sky for their only burden, still stood to their post for the glory of God. Only one pigeon strutted past me as I went; but perhaps he felt his responsibilities, for the lonely solemnity of his walk was like the memory of a thousand vergers. It might indeed have been his little protest when, later, a little piece of roof fell at my feet; for he passed me flying on his way to the arches a moment before it came. But I was now at the Chancel steps, and before me lay the altar, with its image and inscription

‘Ave Regina Caeli’

in gold on blue. No wonder if Our Lady of Lourdes

veiled her head beneath a huge canvas sheet, for it was too much of an irony that she should look for ever towards a desolate altar with the legend

‘Autel Privilégié à Perpétuité’.

But it was not really to end sadly, my little visit; for something like a triumphant cry from the ruins awaited me at the door as I went out. For there, on the battered wall, stood out this rudely scratched memorial, which as I read, I remembered the glorious endurances of this adorable people, and I thought with envy of the heroes who had perhaps this for their only commemoration, and for type the four unbroken arches of the nave, that reached up towards the Spring to bear hope on their shoulders:—

‘Honneur aux

Braves Poilus du —ème qui ont fait tout leur devoir.’

---

March 20.

11 a.m. Down the street past H.Q. murmuring

‘As long as they let me move about . . .’

4 p.m. Robert Radford singing *Nazareth* (actually as I write, in our sitting-room chez Briache) on gramophone. I heard him at Hereford Festival, from The Chantry with C. A. A.

‘Though poor be the chamber. . . .’

---

We go in to-night.

March 21.

At this moment *me voilà de retour* from the little church of Achicourt. I went on the H.Q. orderly’s cycle to return the *Livre d’Orgue* I took away to copy those hymns from. So I returned that book, and I stayed for a few moments in that little gallery. ‘The Lord of



Hosts is with us', and thrice, 'Underneath *are* the everlasting arms'. I know now what Odysseus meant by his action on returning:—

κύσε δὲ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν.

Or, rather, I have known it before, as long ago as Houtkerque.

I was not altogether dry of eye, though, before ever I started. For I had been reading C. A. A.'s letter about both of us trying to build the New Jerusalem: 'and though neither your trenches: . . . may be very showy bricks, let's hope they'll be used in the basement.' I read that out at tea to C Company officers, and they applauded it not a little, and I found myself to my amazement nearly choking.

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*Monday, April 3, 1916.*

'There is an officer<sup>1</sup> coming to see your trenches,' said the Adjutant on the 'phone. 'I want you to hand over the Company to him.—No end of a man,' he went on; 'Military Cross, Captain 1st R.B., and all that.'

That was a bit sudden, but obviously for the enormous advantage of the Company; and as I said in my letter home, this war is not being run entirely to gratify the ambitions of fourth-rate and unimportant subalterns! . . . So that's that, and now behold me once more a subaltern, under authority better than any I ever exercised, and likely to have yet another chance of learning my job! Perhaps I may be a soldier yet if the war lasts long enough. . . .

To-day's gossip is rather fun. It appears some Frenchman has prophesied that the war will be over in 96 *hours* from this morning! The offensive at Verdun is to break down then, and that means the end. So that was

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Barclay.

why the men in the butts to-day might have been heard quite solemnly (bless their simple souls!) saying, 'Yes, I got that at two this afternoon; so we won't be long in the trenches this next trip!'

Some one should really write a book on war rumours and gossip; it would be quite as entertaining as the real history.

---

*Wednesday, April 5.*

I biked on ahead during the afternoon to 'take over', as I generally do. I took, it being day, the usual longer route behind the hills:—Simencourt—Berneville—Warlus—Dainville—Achicourt. But this time I had to push my machine down railway for  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, the last bit of road being closed by day, and I was pretty hot when I arrived at the little chapel. For as usual I did not forget to stop there. I have come to love that little village behind the line, as indeed so many other places out here; and it will, I hope, be long before I forget it and the quaint little Reformed Church of France in which, on more than one occasion now, I have found peacefulness and sanctuary.

---

*Wednesday, April 12.*

A very delightful and easy morning. Trayler had the gramophone, and again we had, of course, Kirkby Lunn singing 'O Lovely Night', and a Miss Allen singing 'Who'll buy my strawberries?' After tea we caught two motor lorries which took us to St. Pol, twenty miles away. This was a great run; it poured with rain, but the run did me good and I thought with enthusiasm of many places. . . . It was glorious to have Merry with me all the time.

St. Pol was exciting because it held shops and lit windows; and I delighted myself in gazing, with eyes glued to these, at anything, however garish, exposed in the



window. I bought several post-cards and an Easter card or two. One, like my old Houtkerque, was entitled

‘Until to End’,

and lacked something in the way of Idiom.

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*Wednesday to Thursday, April 12-13.*

The train<sup>1</sup> left at 12.30; therefore we boarded at 10.30, and slept fairly well. Very uncomfortable, as there were too few Firsts, but we did not mind when eventually we *did* get to Boulogne. Dawn came cold, but by 9.0 or so it was warm and fine, and things were looking very rosy indeed as we marched out of the train towards our big breakfast at the usual buffet at the station.

At 2.30 in came an officer of the Cheshires:—‘All Leave cancelled: notice up at A.M.C.O.’s office.’ A joke, we thought; but no.

Well, off I went to the Quai, and there it was: ‘All officers and men on leave *will require*’ (silly idiom that!) ‘to return to their units. Those proceeding on duty to England will continue journey. Further announcements later.’ ‘Oh, so that’s it, is it?’ we thought. Explanation obvious; Ypres, Verdun, and Arras all taken, London in flames, fleet at the bottom of Channel, entire B.E.F. on verge of extermination. At least what I really thought was not quite that: I thought probably the Hun had made a bit of a success of some attack on Verdun, and got near enough to make it advisable for everybody to ‘stand by’. That doesn’t seem to be the case; at least I’ve not read of such a thing. One explanation is that it is a traffic matter in England merely; but in any case I needn’t waste time (and carbon) by more guesses, as

<sup>1</sup> The Leave-train.

we simply don't know at all. Nor do we know if and when leave will re-open; some are *quite* optimistic, others think it may be long.

Well, that *was* a dreary afternoon for many an expectant son of a family. I did the best thing for myself by sleeping two hours in the hotel.

---

*April 16.*

But all was not black for another reason. Three men of 13th Battalion happened to be returning from Leave that night, so I was able to see them, and talk of old days.

There was Mackworth of Magdalen, now attached to Div. H.Q. ('Q. branch' I think he said), and Jackson, now Captain and Adjutant; also Pugh. We sat round talking Masonry with Mackworth for a long time, and what he told us, more than anything I had heard before, was rather thrilling. The search for the Name of God sounded a fairy tale, and it is amazing how far they all seem to believe in it. I ought to be a parson, certainly—who knows?

Breakfast next day at the Officers' Club at Boulogne; very convenient place, and one well worth knowing for the next occasion, if it comes—or when, for I am still optimistic. Followed by a long sleep, which lasted till Amiens, where we got out. Here came the unique odour of France straight to me as I came out of the station with Merry, and I was in a great state of delight. We went to look at the Cathedral, and I found there everything that my wildest dreams of Gothic had hoped for. It was a Spring morning; and there was the Cathedral of Amiens, and I hoped that it marked the dawn to a new age.

'Une nouvelle inspiration tous les jours'

I found myself asking for (quite unconscious that, as often, I was praying in French) by the west door.



*Monday, April 17, 1916.*

A day more absolutely devoid of salt I do not wish to see. It poured, and as usual in this rather beloved spot, in Spring, I resent it furiously.

The touch of light came in my short visit to the Cathedral, where I ceremoniously set a statue on its feet, and after encouraging a poor headless divine in the vestry, passed on to the Holy Chapel.

Fury again at night, getting split up in the wire coming home over a 'short cut'.

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*Thursday, April 20.*

It is not for every one to stand on the summit of a Cathedral Tower from the inside, but that was my experience this morning; I having gone there before breakfast. For the first time this week I saw sunshine and blue sky, and it was worth seeing, after this miserable week, how the white clouds came across the blue over the broken church like vengeance towards the Hun lines. Opening the Breviary (bought at Hazebrouck in December) at Jeudi Saint, I found

'Zelus domus tuae comedit me'.

My father's favourite psalm, by the way, is 122, and it was here that two or three days ago I murmured it through entirely to the 'Beethoven' chant. At Home Farm (by Bivelen Château) in February it used to be 57, with good reason, in the evening.

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*Rest of tour till May 4, my Leave day.*

The outstanding feature was the *route march* on what I take to be Wednesday. It was to be eight miles, and I found a way that made what I calculated to be 13,600

yards, and perfectly glorious. The route is on my 1/40,000 map at the top, and mainly remarkable for the fact that it had a most glorious halt right on a hill overlooking village after village of this beautiful plain. Also it was on high ground nearly all the way, and the men thoroughly enjoyed it, I think, though it was quite hot (after my liking this): I gave them twenty minutes' halt at that place, which pleased them, I think. We want lots more of this hot weather to sweat the damp and rheumatism out of our old bones.

‘Le temps a laissé son manteau’<sup>1</sup>

wrote M. G. W. to me at this period; and I replied on C. 2121:—‘Ref: *manteau*. Yes, Man; and *Rupert Brooke* would have liked the *lilac* that grows outside my window.’

*O.C. Coy. again.* It seemed strange to be this again, walking about this delightful village, where three weeks ago I had just been deprived of the post by friend Barclay and was not feeling in at all good spirits. Also it was almost Summer now, and then there was frost; and our billet was far better, and there was a suggestion of *the Plain*; and the lilac and chestnut are right out, and I was going on Leave, and ready to see my people, and England.

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*Bapton Manor.* (Written while on Leave.)

It is wonderful moonlight over the Wylve Valley and I am at the window of my childhood's bed-room. My pencil is in my hand, but I could not reach my only remedy in expression—not, I was going to say, if I sat for ten years; but that would be even more hopeless—I should have to live twenty-five years backwards. For as I sit here there

<sup>1</sup> Charles d'Orléans: *Rondeau*. . . . See pages 183 and 241.



rushes in upon me the inconceivable throng with which I have for twenty-five years peopled this country—all the men and women of my reading, and of my dreams. One day I will take ink and paper and I will try and set some of them down; at present I content myself with saluting the old cedar-tree under whose arbour Tracy T. kissed the spinster aunt, and the old lady's promenade to it from the house. But it is all Dingley Dell, and I am not here to annotate *Pickwick*.

Ho! the malady from which I suffer is the memory of the water-meadows, so old and so young: and I cannot think how I shall ever deliver my soul of it. Of course, I know every inch of them through and through, from here to Fisherton de la Mere. The old gate I used to swing on, that is gone: but the bridges remain, and the swaying weeds, and the still fishes, and the little hatches, and the incredible, deep unapproachableness of the river—'deep water and don't you go too close'—and the bare possibility of being drawn into the mill; the smell of the mill, and of the wet meadows; the strange ventures of my thrown sticks and boats beneath the bridges; the river over which the garden leans, and the ditch along the garden towards it—ah, Wilcot, where are you? Somewhere jealous and beyond the Downs? Ah, but I am sprung from this valley; there is no drop of water in the myriad streams but has its kin in my veins.

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*The Gas Alarm.*

*Saturday and Sunday.*

*May 20-21, 1916.*

It seems rather humorous this lovely morning, as I write in Elliott's quiet room, but it did not at the time. As it happened I was very much awake, having spent many hours in collecting standing orders from old Battalion Orders for



some months back, and indexing them, and altogether having rather an efficient and amusing game by myself. So when I heard Ping! Ping!! on the horn, I thought 'No, that can't be the harmonium in the Chapel next door; it is Gas this time'. So I started no end of a fanfaronade on my whistle; and judging from impressions left on some of the men, this part of the show at least seems to have been rather a success. I was alluded to several times as 'they', with 'their whistles'; and my orderly thought—there were ten men blowing!

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*14th Divisional School of Instruction.*  
*June, 1916.*

*Some Recollections of Several Fine People.*

*8th K.R.R.C. Rogers.* This was a magnificent thing of a man in his way: huge deep voice and command like a bull: knew Irving and Fairbairn and Day in the Artists, from which, I think, he has recently got his commission. He was the hero of our little cricket-match. I shall never forget him dancing round, hanging on to the roof the while, to the tune of 'Oh etc., etc.', in the 'bus coming back from the Sniping School. He would be a dark man with what would go for a firm chin and a decided personality, and the words of his mouth were powerful hearing.

*9th R. B. E. H. L. S.* Not very good.

*Capt. Benskin, R.E., D.S.O.* He and the Colonel and I had a terrific argument over education one night; he was all for modern things, and of course French and I were very much on opposite sides, and I didn't get very far, though he was quite delighted with my 'V.B' which I shewed him. Curiously enough, letter from Ronnie next day quoting a remark of K.<sup>1</sup> that Latin

<sup>1</sup> Lord Kitchener.



Prose taught him more than anything else: but Benskin merely argued that *he* would have thriven on any fare.

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*Sunday, June 18.*

On this day I had a very wonderful walk in the morning, starting soon after breakfast, alone. Throughout all this trip there was a lot of excitement over Keats' *Nightingale*, though I did not fail to realise at the time that it would not do to soak too much in it, in view of the circumstances of the reader out here! I knew with a quite physical realisation what he meant by: '*Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget*' . . . that morning. It was at the corner between the cover and the wood; and there the road comes swooping round as though it knew the arms of all the fairies were opening in the wood below. . . .

To get to the village I made across  $\frac{1}{2}$  R. and then turned sharp left down the road. Perhaps the village was more adorable than anything I have seen since Houtkerque, and it would be absurd to deny that in itself it is much more beautiful. The road through the village climbs slowly up the hill like a pilgrim to the church on the hill-top; and it seemed in most English wise that it loitered by pools and official house corners as it rose. Finally the church reminded me tremendously of some little church on the *Plain*; with its avenue of chestnuts diagonally leading to the little door, and its little cemetery, and the big trees and *curé's* house around.

In the evening Hall and I went to Noyelle *again*, this time making for the next village beyond it. Hall, by the way, is one of the privileged people to whom I have lent *The Path to Rome*. The others, I think, I have noted in the book.

## LETTERS

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F. *The Farm.*

Feb. 2, 1916.

We came out absolutely 'flat-out' into the farm last night, the men quite exhausted after a bad time. I am tremendously happy to be here at rest for two or three days; so are the men. It was grand to see how they *loved* a rest in the mud of the road coming down last night, falling asleep constantly in some cases. It is rather fun when it's over; the mere physical delight of a chair when you are pretty well exhausted, the walk in the air (fresh and not foul) before a very late breakfast back here, the comparative silence; the chance of writing a letter, of reading a book, of hearing the dear old sad songs of the British Infantry, which thrill me whenever I hear them, because I know the men, poor hardly-used creatures, are happy after a bad time. They have had an exhausting week.

Yes, one does come into one's own with the Psalms. One of the wisest remarks of Hilaire Belloc in *The Four Men* is where he curses a certain poet for his 'dreadful innocence of the great emotions'. I do not see how these *can* be suffered and enjoyed except in war. (And of course your 122 is the pick. How often have my thoughts gone back 'turribus tuis',<sup>1</sup> with a murmur of 'Rogate quae ad pacem sunt Jerusalem'!) He did know what it was to be alternately in dangerous places and out of them!

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

Feb. 10, 1916.

'Will I please', says the Adjutant, 'take over command of C Company from now?'

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 122. 'I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord.'



The O.C. C Company (Roberts, a great Cambridge cricketer, I think) was killed in what would have been probably his *very last* tour of inspection of his trenches, the foulest, most unspeakable and battle-scarred, I suppose, in the world: it is there that—oh well, I mustn't put in horrors. This was two nights ago, and for thirty-six hours I have been in his shoes, with a feeling of something like remorse at the dreadful noiseless continuity, so typical of the Army, with which the place he leaves is (nominally) filled. Companies are so scattered here that we see little of each other, and I knew him only slightly; but he was much liked and is terribly hard to follow.

It would be silly to pretend that I am not pleased with this very unexpected lift up, however irreverent I may feel to my predecessor's memory. It is a big opportunity, in its way, after all, and I only wish I were more equal to it. This is rather a heavy letter, I am afraid; having got what I often wanted, but saw no likelihood of getting, I can't help feeling rather a worm! In fact, I need a pastoral epistle rather badly, for many reasons, and would be grateful if I could have it, from you.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

Feb. 12, 1916.

I write this right back out—we've trained and marched back to within a mile of our month's rest billets. That's the news as far as it goes, and I suppose it will allay anxiety for the present. I wrote a letter in the trenches to an old Salopian on his entering the sector to relieve us, in which I said quite truthfully that (though I was perhaps foolishly sentimental, and partly lying) I couldn't leave that sector *quite* without a pang. After all there is nothing like it on earth nor, I suppose, ever will be. It's not a bed of roses



exactly—see the casualty lists recently and those to come—but I would not have missed being there for worlds.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Feb. 14, 1916.

I'm so sorry to hear you're *hors de combat* with a cold. I remember rather enjoying the game called Bronchial Catarrh at Eton, where you had to stay in bed for fear it should become pneumonia, and yet felt quite well and read like anything. I read *Lorna Doone* under those conditions and loved it. This matter of novel-reading was presented to me as a duty (!) at Shrewsbury.

I have lately come to believe, as A. C. Benson would say, that there's a lot in this, and that the busier I am (and of course I am far more so now as O.C. Coy.), the more necessary it is that I should try and get this bit of reading; provided, of course, that I don't let it get to *more* than a bit!

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Feb. 17, 1916.

The arrival of Sir D. Haig down the road was rather picturesque. Unfortunately I had, like all O.'s C. Coys., to give out that men *must* look straight to their front and not follow him with their heads, and therefore I had to keep my own straight. So it came about that I saw literally nothing except the great man himself when on the ground. But coming down the road, as I said, it was picturesque; the C.-in-C. and the Army Commander and their staff (or rather half a dozen of them) and six Lancers and the Corporal carrying the Union Jack, behind; it was this very mediaeval procession, trotting down the road a quarter of a mile from the field, that we could all have a look at and which was very striking. When he came on we had the usual business; the bugle sounded and we gave the General Salute by



Battalions. Then he rode down past each Battalion, when I could have had a good look at everybody if it would have done: and as you may guess, I swivelled my eyes round a bit, only taking care to keep my head straight. However, the effect was that it was not until I found him bending down from his horse and asking me how long I'd been out, and 'had I been quite fit all the time?' that I realised he was upon me. I don't know at how many Company Commanders he stopped; quite likely at all, though I don't think he did. It was unfortunate that of two remarks, with which I have favoured the C.-in-C., one was a lie! But the alternatives were:—(1) 'Yes, Sir.' (2) 'Well, Sir, now you come to mention it, I *did* catch a slight chill in the lines, and had a short spell in hospital at Hazebrouck; you know the place, perhaps, Sir: very nice people they were indeed.' So rather than hold up the great man and the Army Commander and other brass-hatted gentry and the whole Brigade with these truthful particulars, I chose (1), and I hope the Recording Angel realised that I was only doing what any but the very coolest of soldiers could very well presume to do.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Feb. 22, 1916.

You would all adore this place, but you couldn't have anything like the huge joy with which I regard every inch of it; you want  $4\frac{1}{2}$  months in the flats to get the best out of the Downs. That is what they are. I couldn't think, for a moment, to-day why I felt *Bapton* when the train went by, till I realised that it made precisely the same noise under the big Downs as the G.W. trains there. Then for Mum there would be a waterfall, with a big mill-wheel turning and pounding away by the side.



And to-day the Company couldn't get a football; so I rode off to a town (not the big one, but it had lots of shops, and I had hopes) three miles off: no good: three more in a different direction to a small village, where the town man said there was a 'fabriquant de ballons' (glorious phrase!), and in doing so I got up about 600 feet, I suppose, and beheld the earth and it was a good place: (I got the football, old but passable; his last). I write in bed (absurd luxury), rather uneasily in this position, but anyhow I could not add much of value to this description of a very happy day.

TO R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

Feb. 22, 1916.

It is terribly late, but after all we are in billets, miles and miles from the old district, and comparatively luxurious ones, so I could have no excuse for not writing (in bed too: absurd prosperity!).

So you have taken a leaf out of my history, have you? I was a little taken aback on hearing I had to have the operation, but it was explained next day that since about the nineties the operation is about the simplest going. 'This may be all very well,' as the Rev. Mr. Rolles said; 'it may be excellently well': but that can't prevent my being awfully sorry to hear about it all.

I can only hope everything will go as well with you as it did with me, and that you'll enjoy the convalescent period as much and as soon. Being a lazy individual, and very tired for some reason at that period of the term, I had a glorious time in bed reading books; C. A. A. gave me *Tante*, I remember, to my great delight, and I waded through practically all Shaw's plays and prefaces again: and the Man sent me Synge, and I got excited again about Deirdre and Emain. And there was the great morning



when I felt practically *well* so long as I kept still, and after waking up turned over and lit a candle very early, and reflected that I had the whole day to read, if I liked, and that it was all rather fun. All this unholy glee in complete idleness may not come your way so fully, but I hope some of it may. Meanwhile the Man is within one mile of me as I sit, and I am just going over to tea there with him. It is strange. A cathedral town is within a dozen miles of us; not the one where he lived years back, but a good place. I hope to get there.

——, from which you will infer this is the next day. I am now at tea with the Man, who will add a statement. Good-bye for the present and good luck.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

Feb. 27, 1916.

To-day was Sunday. And there was Celebration in the school here, and we knelt at the familiar desks in the familiar room all hung with maps, and I remembered that I was a schoolmaster too: and I saw the familiar blackboard; also I reflected that I could not write on it so beautifully as the (doubtless) dear old painstaking master of the little village. And I thought of you all, and wondered whether you knew I was doing so. Only last night one of my officers produced the *Golden Treasury*, and I turned up 'The Blessed Damozel' of Rossetti, and came at once across the passage where the two are praying, widely separated, as we are:—

Are not two prayers a perfect strength?

And shall I feel afraid?

And I said 'Thank you', and I closed the book, and I thought of my home.



To C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

Feb. 27, 1916.

We had two or three days of great peacefulness *several* miles behind our old line; then travelled northwards to some most adorable country very like English Downs: I scoured fifteen miles of them one glorious morning in search of a football on my pony (and got it) for the Company; a funny thing it was too, but it did all right.

Two days there was all we got, but oh! the incredible old ladies of my billet. One was 93 and the other 70, I suppose; a mother and daughter. The latter was ill and rheumatic, and the mother followed her every motion with the eyes of one looking after a child. Yes, and when one of my officers went in to find billets, she caught him affectionately by the arm and said 'Remember '70'. . . . It is so far better than Alphonse Daudet! Since leaving there we have marched a couple of days, sideways with regard to the line, in snow; bitterly cold weather and miserable billets—for the men, I fear: the officers managed better; we had a house of *some* kind and could keep out of the cold, which pierced the barns where the Company was. But it's not easy to be quite happy with the knowledge that one is probably one of perhaps four or five who aren't pretty miserable—or at least so one would think: but they are very wonderful with it all.

Many thanks for your letter, which I was delighted to get. I'm still awaiting the epistle for which I asked, and hope to get it soon (our letters crossed). Not that I'm unhappy at all; but I'm just getting a touch of the 'fed-upness' which seems to come on some people who've been out some time, and it's much too early. Besides, I'm not really fed up; only one easily gets rather to lose sight of one's ideals and lie about, so to speak; and having just got my Company



this won't do. Can you understand? I expect you can. And the Communion Service to-day was in a schoolroom, and I felt rather less contemptible than usual.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

*Situation unchanged.*

*March 11, 1916.*

The only curious thing is the discovery of a way to get into the ruined Protestant Church next my billet; not badly ruined, but with broken windows and a few stones shelled loose through the roof (never hit *directly*, I should say, but shaken). So to-morrow the Padre (who lives and will live for the next week with us) will celebrate there, among the ruins. Rather sadder, I can't help feeling, these villages which have not really been deserted altogether, and whose Church shows signs of a very recent Service—more so, I feel, than a Church like Ypres, completely ruined and abandoned ages since; for the tragedy is still breathing.

TO R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

*March 11, 1916.*

I am glad you're going on so fast. Yes, you've beaten me in some ways; but I'm not so sure about the morphia. There the advantage lies, I feel, with me. I remember being a little proud of that episode: it is not for everybody to feel the mild suggestion of devilry incident to it—as though one had a little secret which only needed advertisement to make (as Walter de la Mare has it) 'Cold voices whisper and say'—*He has taken Morphia.*

I'm Town Major of somewhere: isn't it fun? This distinguished honour is however to be wrested from me, when we move in two days, by the Company Commander

who takes over my billets: still, to be addressed as 'M. le Major' even for a few days is something. It means busy times, however, so I must let this short scrawl go.

TO R. F. BAILEY.

B.E.F.

Mar. 1916.

What about that Polonius<sup>1</sup> scene, by the way?

Men, it's not such fun being a Company Commander as it might seem, if you're incompetent. Tell Kitch; and that I really will write when I can. Tell J. O. W. ditto, and thank him very much for lovely book,<sup>2</sup> which I've just had time to open for the first time almost (except the Rupert Brooke sonnet, which I read at once). I wish I was not such a fool, Men, by God I do.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

March 15, 1916.

Here again we are now in a good house, belonging to the owner of the big factory over the way (which, by the way, is a useful buffer for shells when they come over, and the Bosche has not been altogether asleep lately). What I cannot bring myself to grasp is the situation about all these empty houses, evidently left in a hurry and full to the brim with books and property. Empty ruined houses I think I may claim to have some experience of, after Ypres: but here somehow the pathos of the thing is all alive; every house seems only just left, and more sadly. Yet why one should be more moved by one deserted boudoir (to which the owner will perhaps return) than by ten thousand homes desolated beyond all hope of repair, that is a question I cannot answer.

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written from near Arras.

<sup>2</sup> *At the Front: a pocket book of Verse.*



To J. O. WHITFIELD.

March 17, 1915.\*

(\**sic.* Come, come, my man—after  $2\frac{1}{2}$  months. . .)

Wash out apologies and let me get on. They're so badly due that they'd fill all my letter. Yours was a very fine letter and I loved getting it. Yes, the little book<sup>1</sup> is delightful. I agree about Rupert Brooke and Julian Grenfell, and I suppose about Newbolt, but I'm not sure. One's values fluctuate so strangely out here. Some things are spinal at home, but bearable and even good out here, because they simply depict what Belloc called 'the great emotions'. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that I have known a poem or a verse, or whatever it may be, to be intolerably spinal in billets, and very near one's heart twenty-four hours later in the line. And though I am now in billets—billets of an incredible kind, too, in a large town within a distance from the Hun that is only measured in thousand yard stretches (incredible how few)—even so I can just summon up enough memories of F 35<sup>2</sup> to make me guess that, given the right conditions, the poem might be an inspiration. In fact, it has been, in its way. Your reply will be that it may be near reality but it is not Art; and I think (for I am in billets) you are right.

Curiously, the Man gave me a copy of the Oxford Pocket Virgil: it arrived at 'A' huts (I don't know why I put that in, except to please myself with memories of that mud-bath; for you don't know where it is, and thank God it's not here, though I love to remember it—now isn't that absurd?)—it arrived, as I say, just after Christmas, and I read the 4th Eclogue again, as you did, I think. It is very good of you to suggest it.—Ah, but this is a lovely place. I've just stuck my head out of the window, to

(A)

<sup>1</sup> *At the Front.*<sup>2</sup> A trench.



send for an orderly to take a message which I've written since point (A). Spring's coming, you know, and there will be Pippa, and blue sky over the cathedral—to substitute for the tower (or dome, was it? Who knows?) that lies now at the foot of the chancel steps, and to be carried by the still standing four great central arches. Steady a minute; I'm going to make a statement now. I was in there this morning and you shall have the benefit (?) of it. I must make a statement in my diary,<sup>1</sup> *now*, and you shall have it in carbon. I am sorry for you, but I am rather excited, and you began it. Excuse me while I get my book. . . .

No—Wash-out. 'Death and the Maiden'<sup>2</sup> on our gramophone!!! By the way, I believe there's a war on: one forgets it here . . . there's the air back again . . . and the . . . Ah well, but that was very, *very* good. The next tune is (I greatly fear) likely to be spinality by Landon Ronald. Well, no, but it's all about a 'bird of love divine'; *tant pis*.

Now then, I will shew you how a man runs upstairs to get his diary. Ach! the spinal applause-catcher, the top note. I'm off.

I think I was saying when that business began—all the fault of that orderly, really—that I was very grateful for your very kind offer of a book; and when people are kind enough to do that sort of thing, it is only a fool who throws away his opportunity! Let me therefore indicate firmly that I do not possess the *Shropshire Lad*, and never did, and that it is rather absurd. The Man used to have a green cloth edition which I have fingered for years; and I believe, if you would be so very kind as to send me one like that, I should be very happy. I should be in easy time

<sup>1</sup> Page 152. *The Cathedral*.

<sup>2</sup> Schubert's *String Quartet in D minor* (2nd movement).



for the 'Cherry'. (There is nothing like asking for things in this world!)

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

March 19, 1916.

It is my birthday, and at midnight exactly I stood in the trenches, and forgot for the moment about the working party I was with, and thought of you all, not forgetting to look carefully in what I took to be the direction of Lichfield, and to think that that was a good place to be born in thirty (!) years ago. 'Please detail officer and forty men of your Company' went the order, to work at trenches and so-and-so. So I thought I could do no better than inaugurate my birthday by a bit of *work*; it might be an omen for a changed future!

So here I am, feeling well and happy, thank you, except that I would like to be spending my birthday with you all instead of here. Still, of all places out here, we've certainly chosen the best to celebrate it in.

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

April 2, 1916.

'Pretending I like it,' you say. Yes, and (though I had evidently a decided fit of the dumps when I last wrote) the pretence is quite convincing, to *me*. I really think that was the only period when I was definitely a little fed up, ever since I joined: and that was probably because we'd been out of the trenches too long, and our 'trek' period, with the constant fuss over billets night after night, was getting tiresomely long. Since then we've been in again, and had the most infernal time I remember from the weather, though the Hun was evidently so equally miserable that the firing was very small.

We are all feeling much better, thank you; for here we are sitting in the open air, and the men are writing home, bless their souls (till we come to the job of censoring this evening), and the sun is glorious, and the snow seems *really* gone this time.

Well, as I was saying, things are pretty well, really; I think I was depressed, when I wrote, to a considerable extent, but your letter cured me at the time. Curiously, when I first read it, I expected more ghostly admonition (and still do, for that matter) and said, 'Yes, but...' and put it in my pocket.

Yet when I remarked to my officers that evening, 'Isn't this rather fine reading?' and proceeded to read a bit of your letter, I found to my amazement (and theirs, if they noticed it; but I doubt if they did, for it was listened to in spell-bound silence, and they were vastly impressed, I know) that I could not quite read the last page with a steady voice. Ah! yes, that was a good letter.

Meanwhile *Pitcairn Jones*<sup>1</sup> is here, and I hailed him with a shout of delight down the trench telephone. It is a very good business, this.

I've not seen White again since our great meeting in the South. But his Battalion's quite near again, and if he's back from leave I hope to see him soon. It was very sad, that sudden news about his father.<sup>2</sup>

I send this to the Chantry, because I like to imagine you're sitting there on another such day as this when you read it, with another Spring coming along, *at last*, in the loveliest country in all England.

<sup>1</sup> A member of the School House at Shrewsbury from September 1910 to July 1915.

<sup>2</sup> White's father had died on February 27.



To J. O. WHITFIELD.

B.E.F.

*April 3, 1916.*

The trenches were long and frightfully boring to patrol, owing to mud and snow and frost and considerable exhaustion—seems incredible now, for to-day it has been *boiling*—and in the long, lonely trudges I might have been observed mooning along by myself and stopping now and then to get a star or two right, and then humming :

Far in a western brookland  
That bred me long ago  
The poplars stand and tremble  
By pools I used to know . . .

and feeling very happy at that business, I would plunge along to the next sentry group.

To C. R. CUDMORE.

B.E.F.

*April 8, 1916. 2.30 a.m.*

I have this moment seen the news<sup>1</sup> in the *M. Post* of April 5th, which I opened by chance after coming off duty ; and before I turn in for an hour or so, I just send a line to say how very, very sorry I am. I suppose few people 'got going' quicker than old Mike in what was after all quite a new job, and one may well ask who ever made a better show in less time.

I won't write a long rigmarole, as I don't expect you could bear to be inflicted with one just now. But I can't help adding I feel it is all rather *splendid*. That may be a bit absurd, but I do feel it. I suppose it is rather a selfish view of things, but I confess the second idea which came into my head was, 'There ; you see *again* how the thing *can* be done'.

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. M. M. Cudmore was killed in April.

And yet, all this infernal philosophy may be very fine, but the fact does remain ; and it is not easy to console oneself when one remembers old times, and how he is the first of a very priceless old crowd to go. Still, he didn't and (after all !) doesn't care, and I'm not sure I wasn't right after all in feeling, not only unhappy, but also grateful for his lead to the dear little sportsman—one of the very best that you or I ever knew, or ever shall know !

Good-bye, old man, and Good luck.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

*April 8, 1916.*

The sun is shining ; it is just after 'stand down' in the morning, when both sides are very happy, in view of probable breakfast partly, and also of the great fact that it is broad day and the night is over—that means a lot more than it does at home. Every one is pleased, firing is very slight at present, and there is not a sound except from crowds of larks, singing some great tale about the Spring as though there never had been one before (and there never was one more desired, I know), in strict and splendid neutrality over No Man's Land.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

*April 9, 1916.*

I'll send the promised description now ; I arranged for it by taking a stroll from Coy. H.Q. to one end of the line yesterday, pencil in hand, during a quiet quarter of an hour, and just jotting down things seen on the way on the back of an envelope. Here it is.

Starting from our dug-out, which is a very different concern from anything 'up yonder', being many feet underground, and approached by a flight of a dozen or more steps,



beautifully boarded in and supported by thick tree trunks, I got into the trench leading to the communication trench that goes to front lines, several score yards up. (The dug-out itself I will describe in another edition.) I had to take the signallers' dug-out on the way, and between here and there I passed various very typical odds and ends—piles of brushes, old haversacks, box of rockets for signalling in case of emergency, old water-bottle, a few jam tins (left by previous occupants—we are being rather good about keeping the place tidy, but I wouldn't swear we *never* leave tins about!), old pack, and finally the signallers' dug-out itself—a quite good concern, though rather crammed, as being a big one it has to hold the C.S.M. (Company Sergeant-Major), officers' servants, and four orderlies, as well as the signallers. Getting rid of my message there for the benefit of an old Salopian, who has just come out to another Company (an excellent fact this; curiously it is the first time I've had one in the same Battalion with me), I was just leaving them when suddenly I saw the trench cat; we often have them here, but, curiously enough, none of the inmates of that dug-out knew she was there, though she sat on top of their 'house'. They're rather a bore really, because they walk about the parapet in the front line, and shew where the posts are by stopping to talk to the men in full view of the Hun. But I hadn't time to wait to see if she would come down.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

April 10, 1916.

It is very wonderful, isn't it? To think that I am again within a few days of seeing you all!

It is getting on for 'stand to' time, though I mustn't be rash enough to indicate the exact hour at which that not

unthrilling event is due. After that I shall be on duty for three to four hours during the night, ending at about 1.0; and as 'stand to' next day is early in the extreme, I shan't get very much sleep. I ought really to be 'down to it' now, but then you mustn't expect *too* much; when did any ordinary child go to sleep on being told he was going to have a holiday? So though I haven't had much sleep, and shall perhaps be strafed by my new friend, the O.C. C Coy., for not taking better care of myself, I can't help just sitting and scrawling away, not to any particular point, but just to shew I am *rather* pleased with things just at the moment!

Well, as I said, it is very wonderful, and I am in good form, as you can imagine.

TO HIS AUNT.

B.E.F.

April 11, 1916.

Before you get this you will probably have been well beaten at Bézique, so I just send it beforehand, to console you by shewing you're not forgotten out here. But if my journey takes too long—and certainly I seem to be going to have a much longer job getting home than before—then you will no doubt have everything ready, please, for your defeat: cards counted, and markers at Zero, especially the red one, for that is the one you prefer. If, on the other hand, I get home first, I will make all arrangements for the first morning session.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

April 18, 1916.

We arrived at the Cathedral City<sup>1</sup> at noon, and found to our great joy that the train did not go till late afternoon. So we went and saw the Cathedral, and as you have gathered I lost my heart to it altogether.

<sup>1</sup> Amiens.



We used to be very easily satisfied in Belgium with the churches there, which, though not great to behold at close quarters, being largely made of brick instead of stone, yet have a pleasant way of rising out of the trees and serving as the only landmarks on the plain. So when I really saw something good, you can imagine my huge delight.

There was an additional excitement because I was able to buy Ruskin's pamphlet on it, extracted from the book and sold at a franc in the shops. This was glorious reading, mainly because he is so tremendously excited about it—'Gothic pure, unsurpassable and unaccusable': 'The Stars in their courses built it, and the nations' . . . and so on. I dare say I ought to have been more excited over the choir-stalls' carving, according to him, but I confess I loved other parts much more.

To J. O. WHITFIELD.

April 18, 1916.

'Aetas parentum peior avis tulit  
nos nequiores, mox daturos  
progeniem vitiosiore.'

'Nos pères étaient plus méchants que nos aïeux; nous sommes plus corrompus que n'étaient nos pères; et bientôt nous laisserons des enfants encore plus vicieux que nous.'

Is it not too priceless, this long tirade? And better, a gem from 'Fons Bandusiae':

'Et venerem et proelia destinat.'

'Il se prépare aux combats et à multiplier le troupeau—le pétulant animal' ('lascivi suboles gregis').

It comes from a translated Anthology (1752), lying about in my billet in the town of —, the home of a prosperous and literary merchant in better days. It was necessary to communicate with you at once.



TO MRS. CASE.

B.E.F.

*Thursday, April 20, 1916.*

Thank you very much indeed. Your delightful parcel has just come in; like the last, it contained specimens of *everything* a soldier likes!

I've rather a good tale for you to-day. A month ago, when we came into this town, I secured, with the Town Major's approval, a very fine house for our officers' billet. We were just taking over, when in came an agitated French Priest, who made a long and moving speech to the effect that it belonged to the *Député*—an important person, of course, and also an officer in the French army: he had several brothers in the service, and generally had great claims to consideration, and (in short) would we be so very good as not to insist on our right to occupy his house? The clergyman had been asked to plead with troops coming in, apparently, and as the French had agreed, I thought I could not (in the interest of the Entente, as well as from natural sympathy) very well do otherwise than clear out. So we took another house, and now, after some more trips to the trenches, we have returned, again not to his house. . . . This afternoon the *Député's* house, not many yards up the street from where I was sitting, was heavily crumped and we were *not* there! Poetic justice, is it not?

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

*Thursday, April 20, 1916.*

As you know, I'm O.C. again, so I've not had to wait long. Since then I've been, or thought myself, fearfully busy trying to keep things going. Quite honestly I am sorry he<sup>1</sup> went so soon, for naturally I don't pretend to the same experience or capacity as his. Of course, as I wrote to him, one does and ought to feel that it is a good game, being a Company Commander; but I do think the Company

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Barclay.



would have benefited by some more of him, and so should I. However, one must just try to carry on. The secret of the whole thing, as he ran it, was not merely being busy himself, but being able to act as a sort of centre of activity and make everything move round him. In fact, I believe many very fine commanders have been successful by doing little themselves and, as it were, sitting in a kind of spider's web and controlling from inside. At present this is a very tempting picture, but I don't know nearly enough yet to be able to indulge in such methods; but one does learn the unimportance of one's own work and inspections and orders, etc., compared with the value of being able to make all the other subordinate officials run their own provinces for all they're worth.

TO M. G. WHITE.

B.E.F.

May 4, 1916.

Ref.: 'Manteau.'<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Man; though if you'd seen our trenches a fortnight ago, you'd have guessed that 'the Mother of Months' had been at it *again*

Filling the shadows and *windy places* (*sic*)

With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.

But I am not being very good. Less of it. Man, Shrewsbury; and I am going there. I start to-day for England, 4th May, and Rupert Brooke would like the lilac outside my window. Ah! yes, Man; it is nearly a year now: and I think of the hollow on the plain, where I was sorry he had gone and lay, not altogether unlike Belloc, when (if you remember) musing on the Nature of Belief.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. G. W. had quoted in a letter to him

'Le temps a laissé son manteau'.

<sup>2</sup> At Undervelier, in *The Path to Rome*.



TO C. A. ALINGTON.

*The Berners Hotel—London.**May 5, 1916.*

It is not for the boys' sake that I am glad the thing is out, but because I do quite honestly believe that the handful of people who will read 'V. B' will enjoy it: it seems like a quite definite opening of a new kind of art gallery and not that loathsome thing, an educational experiment. And if a few people like to wander through it for half an hour or so, then to the devil with the angling, and the glory, and the bait.

TO HIS MOTHER.

*Royal Pavilion Hotel—Folkestone.**May 13, 1916.*

You must imagine me sitting in the train, trying to look as if I were used to it and ready to leave you all and home and dear old England any or every day at a franc a time. And if you had seen the leave-train go, you would have seen many hundreds of men trying to do exactly the same thing, 'which is a thing no one ever succeeded in doing, and in all probability never will'.

Ah well, but we mustn't talk like this. Now, you know, there's nothing I need say. I tried to say what I felt when I first came out, and, thank God, I can just leave it at that still.

And the other bit of philosophy for us both is the matter of seeing the thing in short stages. This, of course, is much easier for me, for I can see the stages more clearly. But I have known what it means (like *everybody* out here, it's forced on one) to be absolutely free from any anxiety, on the strength of the prospect of a twenty-four hours' rest in third-line trenches, coming out of others, in the salient: and if I'd said 'Yes, but in twenty-four more I'll be there again', I'd have been a fool and miserable.



All of which may sound very fine (it is tremendously true, anyway), but I'm here and you're not, and—but we mayn't talk like that, may we? Never mind, all things come to an end, as the Psalmist said; even the War: and as you know, I believe it will be over about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years before the pessimists expect it. And as I said before, I'm glad to be in it, and so are you all; so we're all glad together!

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Royal Pavilion Hotel—*

*Folkestone.*

*May 13, 1916.*

That<sup>1</sup> was very good indeed, though deplorably short. I hope to see the Man before very long, but in the ordinary course of events it will be a fortnight before I get to the billet. Already I've begun to look forward to that time; for the country will, if the weather behaves as it did when I left it, be lovely, and the Man should be within reach.

That is a very good place you are at, Man, and they are good men that live there.

To M. G. WHITE.

*Boulogne (returning from leave).*

*May 13, 1916.*

Those men are good, and they live in a good place. I think they are happy, too, and you will be glad to hear that. Also, Man, one discovers that England is not as other countries are. And, in fact, it differs in so many small ways, that the real difference is not easy to seize. But perhaps I thought more than anything of the manner in which they arrange their fields there. And I thought so much of this little matter, as I travelled across them, that I think you might do worse than agree or otherwise with what I said to myself in the train: and it went somehow like this.

<sup>1</sup> His visit to Shrewsbury on leave.



‘Out there’, I said, ‘the fields lie hedgeless, naked, inviting manœuvre. And coming from the deep, interminable trenches of the south, I am not sure I ask anything better. Certainly I have had glorious days there; and yet, perhaps, never till I came back a few days ago did I know what it really was to worship the secluded valleys and the quiet fences of home. But I am at home now,’ I continued, ‘and my whole soul goes out to clustered counties, where beneath the mother-grey of a summer haze, shoulder to shoulder and safe from the remembered storm, the fields of England lie close.’

There are other differences also, but this will do to go on with. This is a very important matter, and I will thank you for further enlightenment on essential differences.

Meanwhile ‘V.B’ is out, though you were bad and my copy never came, and I had to be given one by C. A. A. ‘King Alexander’ (or ‘Leaves’ rather) is a thing any poet might offer *years* of his life to have written. It is quite too amazing. The author of the good old ‘L. House’<sup>1</sup> is apparently progressing, though he looked naturally weak.

Man, I don’t want the War to stop one bit *now*; but you go to Shrewsbury and see if you can feel that *there*. Oh Man, that *is* a place. . . .

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

May 1916.

I see I’ve been promoted Temp. Capt. whilst commanding a Company: all I felt in England was a certain indignation at not being one; all I feel now is a pretty solid sense of dejection at being so appallingly unfit for the job.

<sup>1</sup> A. A. Blakeway, the author of a poem in ‘V.B’, called ‘The Lighthouse’. He was ill at this time, and Southwell had been to see him.



Well, well, you may tell Mum she may call me Captain if she likes; but really I am not feeling particularly good about it.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

9th R.B.

May 26, 1916.

I have been hoping to get this letter sent ages ago, but, as you know, I waited till I could get in touch with Pitcairn Jones' Company Commander, billeted a long way off; and just after doing so, I am back in the trenches again for one week in. Merewether (that is the O.C. D Company—he saved my life once) was not there when it all happened, but was able to tell me a good deal. Pitcairn Jones was asleep in his dug-out with another officer—it was in the morning—when a shell burst in the doorway, wounding them both; but the other officer only got rather peppered with a lot of little fragments, but poor Pitcairn Jones had the full force of the shell. He was very badly hit in the legs, and suffered, I am afraid, very much while they were getting him up and out of his dug-out and afterwards. Yet he seems, like all these wonderful people, to have been quite marvellous over it all. At least, I don't suppose it *is* so wonderful really, considering where he came from: but somehow I am apt to feel more and not less surprise as time goes on and proof upon proof comes along of what good Salopians really are; somehow one could understand the pioneers behaving so well; but again and again the same old magnificence shews itself, and the ball is kept rolling with just the same old speed—and all this just when one is beginning perhaps to realise what a terrible sorry kind of worm one is, and to feel that the ropes are being worn a bit thin all round, and that Endurance herself is getting sick of the war.—But all this rigmarole proves nothing except one proposition in itself—see four lines above.



I needn't say how much I felt his going—it was the first news which the Quarter-master gave me on my return from leave; I gather he died about two or three days later in hospital, perhaps the very day I looked out of the train to see Shrewsbury getting nearer and thought how he would have liked to be with me. He was the only Salopian I have been with, and I had been greatly excited at meeting him.

Ah yes, those are wonderful people.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

*Coy. H.Q.—B.E.F.*

*May 30–31, 1916.*

This is only a short passage on my signallers, who are great dears, though they regard me as a pencil thief of the deepest dye. (N.B. This is perfectly true.)

At the present moment they are in huge delight over 'Pip'; it seems one has been reading it ('Not Pip Emma<sup>1</sup> by any chance?' said one with a taste for the obvious), and he is giving them a graphic account of the Love-match on the links at the end.

Certainly the present aspect of the War doesn't worry them much; they live through a door in my large H.Q., in a room 15 feet underground in terrible warmth and closeness, with an orderly or two, and the telephone to amuse them when things are dull.

It is very little that I overhear, as a matter of fact because I have much too much to do; and also they are probably well aware they *can* be overheard, if they talk too loud; and thus it is that only fragments reach me.

'12 o'clock: all's well,' calls out one, as I write. Yes. I hope it is. My communication trench is called 'Hope Street', by the way: surely the censor will not delete that comforting little fact.

<sup>1</sup> As 'P' and 'M' are known in the Signalling Service.



To return to the 'signals'; as we've been a bit quieter to-day—(stop that foolishness; what *is* the good of machine-gunning my parapet 15 feet overhead? Doesn't he know I always keep awake at night, even when I am in?)—it is so far true to say that 'All's well': yet one never knows. (What is this talk about a 'Kimōna', bellowed out from next door? 'It's a lady's dressing-gown, isn't it?' Answer, and all the rest of the talk, inaudible.) Nothing much doing: one of my officers (Elliott) has just come off patrol duty in the front trenches—I shall be there myself at 1.0—and while he's stretching his limbs and explaining about the M.G. in No Man's Land, I can still find time to write and to listen to the highly irregular (if we were in billets) humming of my H.Q. sentries overhead and outside and, in fact, to think of many things, Shrewsbury for instance.... Oh Man, Man, shall I throw my pencil away and bury my poor bewildered head in my arms? It came all so suddenly, and I have had, between ourselves, a pretty bad week, and I thought of Shrewsbury and nearly began to weep: never, I think, did I feel quite so much longing

ὥς σεο νῦν ἔραμαι καί με γλυκὺς ἴμερος ἔλκει,

as Paris said, or nearly so.

Ah well, it's all right really: we don't *really* do these melodramatic stunts, you know; in fact, I don't often let myself think of them. Besides, please God, we're to be relieved to-morrow, and by the time we get to billets (they're within easy call of the Hun if they *want* to ring us up, but they don't shell them, or hardly ever)—by that time, Man, it will be JUNE. And so the Man shall have a blade of 'glancing grasses'<sup>1</sup> in a half-sheet of note-paper, with my blessing. (Some people might say this point of view

<sup>1</sup> See page 46.



varied: I dare say my 'listening post' could do without the said grasses in the dew—though they didn't look very unhappy just now, I must say: after all, the Hun is a cad by day, but during these short nights he seldom strafes seriously—for good reasons—except when he's doing, or we're doing, a raid or something beastly, which it must be confessed happens pretty often, it would seem, though not here up to date.)

3.0 a.m.

'Call no man happy,' or whatever it is. It seems almost too strangely ill-timed to be possible; but would you believe that, since writing the above, we have had the heaviest bombardment I have yet experienced!

The trenches are messy this morning, and the wire is tired-looking (I've just been messing about in it in the mist; only it lifted, unluckily), and there is work ahead before we get out to-night—perhaps more strafing; I don't know.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

June 5, 1916.

This time<sup>1</sup> everybody is again so kind and sympathetic that it becomes almost a joke. It will be one of the things that the bulletin from Sir D. Haig ought to report daily, so that everybody may know where we are. 'Capt. S. took over the command of C Coy. 9.2.16.' 'Lt. Southwell handed over. 10.2.16.' 'Capt. S. took over again to-day. 11.2.16.' 'Lt. Southwell handed over again. 12.2.16.' 'Mr. Southwell retired to civilian life in disgust. 13.2.16.' And so on. But, as a matter of fact, it is not as bad as that, and it is perfectly true that my first thought was one of mixed regret and amusement.

<sup>1</sup> He wrote this on handing over his Company again to a senior officer.



TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

*June 6, 1916.*

I and Garton (my new Captain) rode over together to this village, which is a very pretty one indeed, some five miles right back, and peaceful to a degree. The object was that we should be shewn some model trenches dug by the people undergoing training back there; and I must say they were pretty good. Merewether was very amusing over them. He imagined a glorious interview with the R.E. Instructor, wherein he should say, 'Yes, Sir; very nice trenches, very nice indeed. Now if I may venture to ask, they would be dug *by night*, of course, as ours have to be in the line?' 'Well, not exactly,' the R.E. would say; 'in fact they would be dug by day, so that every one could see.' 'Under fire, Sir, of course?' 'Well, I wouldn't quite say that.' 'Great difficulties, no doubt, through lack of engineering materials and skill?' 'Well, no; we arrange all that.' And so on and so on, but of course what really happened was that none of the catechisms were uttered and every one admired—in silence! And, as I say, they certainly were good, and contained several very valuable hints, which I hoped we managed to carry away with us.

And after it was over, we sent our horses away, and walked into the village and had tea, and walked back in the evening, talking about Eton and Magdalen and old times generally.

TO HIS FATHER.

R sector—Coy. H. 2.

*June 9, 1916. 1.30 a.m.*

Before I go any farther, I'd better let loose at once the story of the Captain of the —th, whom we relieved an hour

or two back. It professes to explain why the superstitious believe the War will end on June 17.

It began with an officer on a visit to Cox's. 'You're going to the Front, are you?' said the clerk; 'you'll return wounded in three weeks.' This came off, and the officer's next visit was paid on going out again. 'You'll be wounded again in a month' was the prophecy; 'also the War will be over by June 17, but I shan't live to see it.' The officer was wounded, so runs the tale, and the clerk *is* dead . . . Q.E.D.

Very nice and encouraging, and so we must wait and see. There seems to be no end of a lot of peace talk about just now, but that may too probably be only their fun!

TO HIS MOTHER.

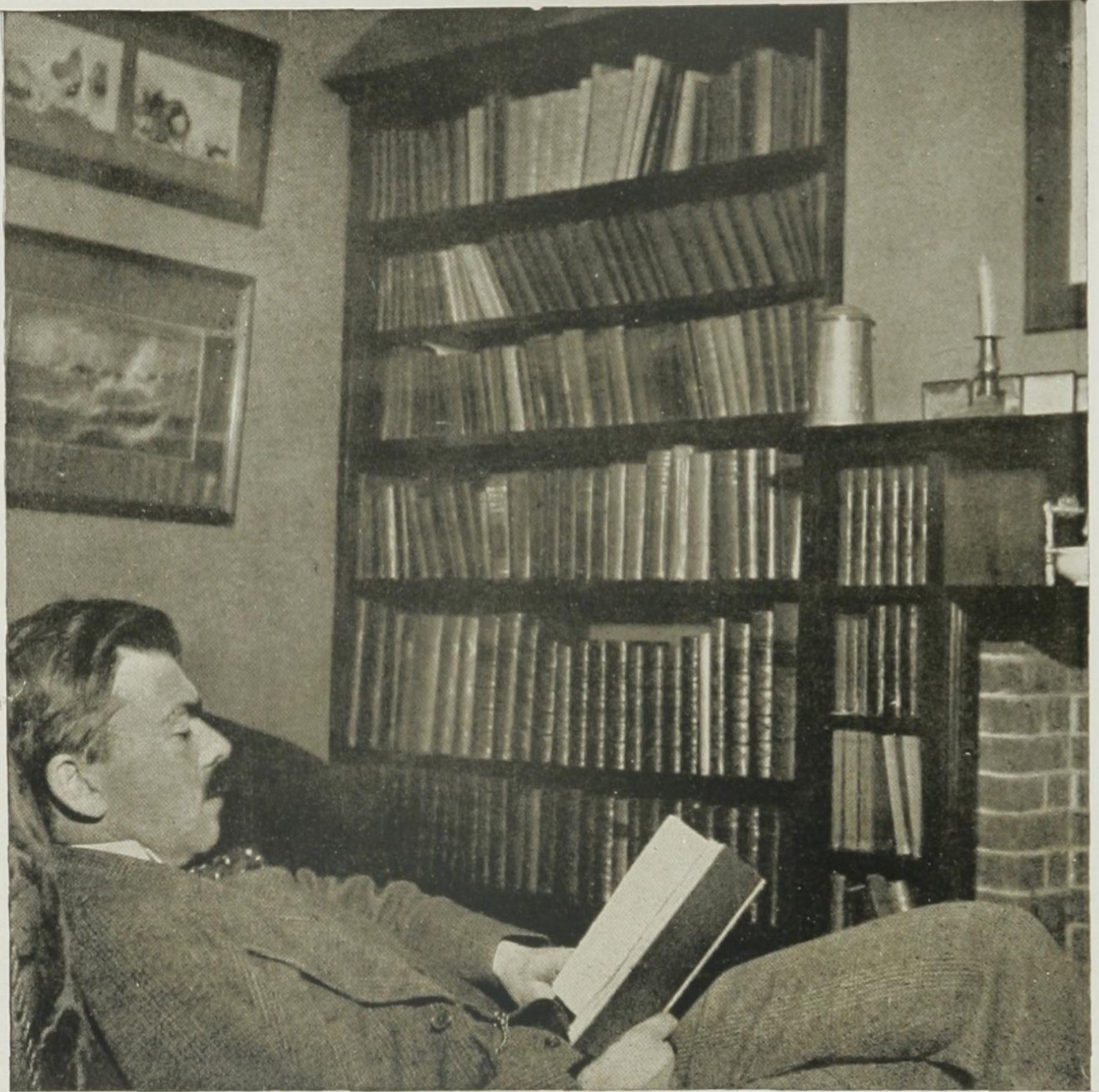
*14th Divisional School of Instruction.*

*June 15, 1916.*

These schools are excellent things; and it ought to do you good, I think, to know that the Army is really using its brains far more than it used to do, in the instruction of its more ignorant members. I suppose I oughtn't to say too much about numbers of schools, even if I have beyond the vaguest guess how many there are. But it is at least fair to say that it is most improbable that in a few more weeks (or say months at most) there will be any officers at all who haven't been sent away to *some* course or other out here, under people with the very latest tips from the Front. If we can be trusted to reproduce in our men (and this is the hard part really, perhaps even harder for many people than for me; for with all my military stupidity, I think, if any one succeeds in teaching me anything, I can make *some* sort of show at teaching others)—if, as I say, we can teach them half what they are all trying their hardest to teach us, we really shall be getting on.







E. H. L. S.

The New House, Shrewsbury

February, 1915



To R. A. KNOX.

14th Divisional School of Instruction—B.E.F.

June 18, 1916.

K. and Latin Prose.<sup>1</sup> Yes, it is very striking. Curiously enough, we had a terrific education argument the very night before your letter came. [I suppose I'd better explain that I'm here (see heading), having again handed over the Company to H. W. Garton, who was in this Battalion a long time ago; and being now free to go on 'courses' again, they've selected me: not too bad; one learns a terrific amount, or I think one does, and gets a complete change from the trenches.] It started between a certain Captain of R.E. (D.S.O. and all that, a terribly efficient man who teaches us what you wouldn't believe a possible amount of facts about field works) and myself, following the discovery that the Colonel (one Swainson, D.S.O., of the Cornwalls) was an old Salopian. We all three got at it hard: the C.O. and I against the Captain and a Lieutenant of the Cyclists, late teacher in a London Polytechnic School. These were all for a turn-out of classics altogether, and it was very difficult going. Why is it that the only thing schoolmasters can't do is to defend themselves? At least I always feel terribly open to attack on these occasions. I rested most of my claim for the average boy (does he exist, by the way? *The Times* thought he did, for months, one year, I remember) on what old Bradley calls exactness of thought; and while not stressing the value of classics for the better people, I thought it best to urge Latin Prose as the most urgent thing. What these people *always* say is, 'Why not do French and German in exactly the same way,

<sup>1</sup> This refers to Lord Kitchener's remark that Latin Prose had taught him more than anything else. See page 162.



then? Then you have your exactness and also a modern language when you've done': to which the only answer I know is that the languages don't admit of it, and that's all about it. I am quite sure that is so. Of course the R.E. man (who is really, as I have said, *terribly* efficient) only said, in reply to your quotation from K., that *he* would have done well on *any* scheme, and it was no proof.

Oh, and he said that, before joining the Army and knowing as much as any man living about gabions (it's not *every one* who can put up a better one than mine, by the way; but let that pass) and cubic feet and expanded metal hurdles, his one ambition was to be an *artist*. It is a strange world. He is very, very capable: he is indeed.

It is too miserable about Woodroffe.<sup>1</sup> It was owing to him, as much as any one, that I joined the R.B. Every one of course says, 'What a wonderful family', and this is perfectly true: but *his* death was not wonderful at all; it was just *the* most miserable piece of bad luck for his Regiment, and that sort of nonsense is no consolation at all for his loss. It does remain true that those three great men made a name in the R.B. which is famous in every one of its Battalions.

TO HIS SISTER.

14th Div. S. of I.—B.E.F.

June 20, 1916.

At last the weather seems to have turned over a new leaf; for this evening, as I write, it is beautiful.

The country is pure Wiltshire. Fisherton almost *stares* at me from the little village on the hill opposite, over the valley, with the spire of the church standing out of the

<sup>1</sup> Captain Leslie Woodroffe, M.C. Died of wounds on June 10. He was an Assistant Master at Shrewsbury from September 1909 to December 1914.





remember 'Remember '70'<sup>1</sup>), would, I think, run this close. But I saw it in snow, and comparisons under these conditions are not easy. But here it is indeed lovely. I think the wood, or small copse rather, within 1,500 yards of which I sit, is the loveliest of its kind I know; you would love it, I know. A real picture from fairy land—like so *many* pictures in war time, do you know; *many*, I say advisedly (if only because the few are so very unlike); and not only out of the trenches either, nor (necessarily) during the quietest times. It all depends on one's state of mind, I suppose, at the time. Certainly my *gloomiest* moments have been in billets; which doesn't mean that during a strafe of any kind one always has a jolly time (because that is only silly!), but that, whatever it may be, it is not usually a *tedious* or depressing affair, but something less passive, as it were, in the way of feelings! This you can well believe.

No news. I am afraid this is a silly letter, all about myself!

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

June 26, 1916.

Back to the Army again, serjeant,  
Back to the Army again,

as Kipling says. Which is to say that I am in the trenches, and also in a house (which might puzzle you a bit, only don't forget the cellar), very much as before as regards situation. The first floor is not, and the roof is one of the never-was-es by all appearances, and the ground. And oh, I saw the *Sussex* at Boulogne, with all her bones stove in, without a trace of emotion. I have seen too many ruins before now in *this* game, and one is very like another; a house that is no house has too often been an everyday

<sup>1</sup> See page 170.



sight. And so, when I came here, I found this billet a shade more demolished than anything I thought possible, the whole air rather more *triste* and sinister; but that was all. I could stand all that, and even the piano (shade of Ivor Atkins!) shattered to bits, and the keys choked with brick-dust; but one thing was just a fraction too much, and when I saw it I confess I caught my breath for a moment; it was a child's marble, chipped, and past all hope of rolling. . . .

They are quaint places, these trenches, that wander in and out of houses, and in a way rather picturesque. Summer fights its way in even here, and you may find your face brushed with a yellow cornflower, sticking out of the side of a field as you plod along through the trench, and remember better days.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

June 29, 1916.

There has been a good deal of what is known to journalists as 'activity', and one begins after a bit to realise that one would not mind being out for a day or two! A Padre of the Brigade gave me a Prayer-Book some weeks back; this morning's psalms are, to say the least, not uncomfoting. See for instance cxxxix. 2.<sup>1</sup> I wonder if it is realised how hard it is to stick to what one knows one does believe, just when one most should! Do not forget this, please.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

June 30, 1916.

Aha! But you did *not* enclose the cutting about 'Kossovo Day'. I never do myself, of course, and it is so nice to see

<sup>1</sup> 'Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways.'

other people do forget occasionally. I'd like to see it, though, for I'm afraid I'm distinctly vague. At this point a brother officer chips in: 'Oh yes, it's a Serbian thing, 1389 (was he right?), when . . . ' and then a lot of names; isn't he wonderful?

I see from the papers there is a great deal of activity about. I'm not betraying any secrets, therefore, when I say that the *noise* has been on the increase, though I must not say where most of it came from.

Please make it clear that I do not want *any* increase *chez vous* of anxiety at all, if possible.

But if *ever* you remembered any one in your prayers in this world, I would like it to be my friend *White*. . . . I know I do not ask in vain.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

B.E.F.

July 3, 1916.

Men, I dare say you know; but if not, I am in great anxiety about our Man; though I can't say where he is or what he is doing.—I had a letter from White two days ago, by the way, mentioning the night before the Challenge Oars.<sup>1</sup> It was a short note, but very wonderful.

Pray God all's well with our Man.

TO R. A. KNOX.

E.F.

July 4, 1916.

Huge delight in H. W. G.'s cellar (which he kindly allows me to share with him, and everybody to feed in; and a fine mess we make of it) at seeing your handwriting; but some indignation in the heart of the Company Commander at the omission of his name. I gave him your letter

<sup>1</sup> A race between House Fours on the river at Shrewsbury. White had coached the winning Four in 1914. See page 256.



to read (with the warning that there was hardly a page he would understand), which consoled him more, probably, than a fictitious message from you. It was a lovely letter, so full of the New House from end to end that the events of the week, which have at times not been pleasant, disappeared from my mind for hours.

'Astinol'<sup>1</sup> of course is too lovely: I hope you're keeping these poems for publication. And so was Newman's 'Harbour'.<sup>2</sup> There was a touch of the real best 'V. B', I thought, in one place, where he speaks of the 'thick soft sand, like sand from Heaven'. It is the sort of phrase which I feel quite typical of boys' imagination: dear me, that's very heavy.

*The Prisoner of Zenda* is good, again; and so is *Rupert*. H. W. G. has them both here.

Good-night, everybody. Pray God all's well with our Man. Love.

TO R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

July 8, 1916.

H. W. G. did me a good turn last night by recalling some of the touch of romance that still hangs about the War. It is a dreadful thing, Ronnie, and there are few people for whom you ought more heartily to pray than those for whom it is a question whether the Romance of War is dying out. Thus, just as we went to bed last night, he said, 'Listen! That is always rather thrilling, the sound of men marching past your billet singing and whistling.' Good, that, because I am afraid my own thought was less

<sup>1</sup> A translation into Latin Elegiacs of an advertisement for 'Astinol', published by R. A. K. in *The Salopian*.

<sup>2</sup> A poem written in form.

interesting, especially as I knew *what* job they were finishing up; and I doubt whether I should have done more than murmur 'Carrying party returned', and turn over to sleep. As it was, I sat up in bed and loudly praised God.

Pray God all's well with the Man, Ronnie. There are rumours of the Battalion rather disquieting. Please cable me the first news you get, good or bad. Yet I hope and believe he may be safe yet.



## CHAPTER VII

M. G. W.

FEBRUARY to JULY 1916

WHITE landed at Le Havre on February 9, and on the 12th he was at a Base camp at Rouen, where he had stayed in 1909. He joined the 1st Battalion on the 18th at Canaples, where for a month it was in reserve, to his disappointment. Three days later he visited Southwell, who was near by.

At the beginning of March he had a chill, and on the 4th he heard the news of his father's death. He came back to England, though not till after the funeral. While at Oxton he found that he could not get rid of his chill, and was forced to get extension of leave, which lasted for nearly a month. He visited Shrewsbury for the night of April 4, and then left once more for France.

On the 8th he found his Battalion in the trenches at Hannescamps, and had his first introduction to trench life. On May 2 his Company Commander went away for a time, and he was left in charge. On the 3rd the Battalion marched from Pommier through Halloy to Beaumetz, for a period of training. A bad week followed for White, for—with characteristic self-criticism—he believed that he was not being as competent as he might have been; but he recovered confidence later.

On May 18 came the first news of the coming attack,

and on the 22nd the Battalion moved to Beaussart, from which White went forward to reconnoitre the ground or direct working-parties. Captain Fraser returned on the 31st, and again took charge of the Company. The same work continued; White was at Mailly-Maillet on June 11. On the 22nd they returned to Beaussart for a rest, and two days later the great bombardment began. On July 1 the Battalion went into action in front of Mailly-Maillet; White was hit in advance of his men; his servant, who had followed him in the attack, reached him, and asked if he was badly wounded. He said, 'I'm all right; go on'. At that moment a shell burst near them. His servant remembers nothing more till the time when he was in hospital. Though there was doubt for a time, it is now certain that White lost his life in the explosion.

These are letters written about him after his death:—

From an officer in his Battalion:—

‘He is acutely missed throughout the Battalion, both as a friend, and as an officer whose keenness and example make his loss a very grave one to the Regiment.

‘You will also be proud to hear that, two nights previous to the attack, he most gallantly conducted a party to search for a fellow-officer who had been caught in heavy machine-gun fire; the officer returned unhurt, but that does not render the act any less gallant.’

From another fellow-officer, who, as a boy, had known him at Shrewsbury:—

‘I have never known such a real Christian. That was a fine letter<sup>1</sup> of his which West shewed me. Fancy Malcolm talking about being selfish. I doubt if he knew what selfishness meant. If he did, it was only the more fully to

<sup>1</sup> His last letter from France, page 357.



understand unselfishness. It was that and his utter sincerity and genuineness which made him what he was. His ideal was always so high, and he was never falling short of it. His ideas were just wonderful, and in the six years that I have known him I have learnt more of what real religion means than anyhow else. He was never tired of trying to put down all bitterness against the Germans, and if he has died, he will have done very much to justify in many people's eyes the ideas which he started in life.'

From a friend, who was also an old Salopian:—

'One always felt that there was about him some indefinable quality, which he expressed perhaps most clearly in his music. When he was playing one of the more ethereal Bach fugues he seemed entirely in keeping with it, and one realised that it was his natural mode of thought. And it was just this that seemed to give him an immense breadth of view, for he lived in a region where small controversial things did not seem to matter. In everything that he talked or wrote about, he expressed views which we instinctively knew were right, and which were the conclusions we should have come to in our highest moments. Only he was always on a plane which we reached at too rare intervals. And yet he was not in the least unsympathetic, for this height and breadth of view only made him the more able to comprehend.

'There sometimes appears to be a region, or state of thought, in which we are no longer troubled by questions of art and morality, of ambition and honour, of personal afflictions and grievances. One felt that he never departed from this region, but made one believe that for the time one was his companion there.

'I do not think that any of his friends will ever forget

him, and one of them will always be entirely grateful that he was allowed to know such a man, to whose inspiration he owes more than he can possibly say or realise.'

These are the last extracts from his writings :—

## DIARY

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*Monday, Feb. 7.* While on leave at Radlett, got a wire telling me to join Expeditionary Force. This is very exciting. Returned to Sheerness in a hurry, packed, and got away again to London.

*Tuesday, Feb. 8.* It was good to get the departure over, though the excitement of the past forty-eight hours has been in a way good, and the goodness of friends is always such a prominent thing in crises of this kind; the wires from Graham and Arnold, and from Shrewsbury, and Edwards, and the coming of those people to see me off. I'm glad Father came, though I had often thought it would be better not to be seen off. It was great of him.

Southampton at 7.0. Innumerable reportings and embarkations, dark offices, jetties, shining patches of water, railway lines leading nowhere, a great heartening dinner at the S.W. Hotel.—Everywhere kit, and officers, and a strange medley of the miraculous and the inevitable. Went on board the Havre boat at 11.15, and gradually to sleep.—The most wonderful day of my life.

*Wednesday, Feb. 9.* Boat started 7 a.m., and I went on deck at 8.0 a.m. as we ran through Spithead with the sun rising behind a bank of smoke and mist which hid Portsmouth and Hayling. Landed at Le Havre at 1 o'clock.



More reportings and eventual arrival at the Base Camp, where life has become more commonplace, and excitement has gone for a time. Which Battalion will it be? The 2nd seems probable from here, but not necessarily.

*Thursday, Feb. 10.* Walked about camp all morning. In the afternoon we all went down to Havre, and I shopped at the Ordnance Stores, dined at the Hôtel de Normandie, and got news by telephone there that I am for the 1st Battalion Depot at Rouen. Life has become dull here, and I keep reminding myself that I am on the way to the Front, that I am in the same country as the enemy, etc., etc.

*Friday, Feb. 11.* A repetition of yesterday. More fat meals in Havre. Orders to move to Rouen, 4th Infantry Base Depot.

*Saturday, Feb. 12.* Rose at 4.30 and, standing upon my bed and wondering miserably how I should ever find and pack anything in the dark, I sang the Volga Boatman Song. The arrival of servants very late only made things more chaotic. After breakfast we set off down to Harfleur Station, down long avenues of poplars which shuddered in the dark. Eventually got into a train and arrived at Rouen about 11 o'clock, and went to report at the camp. Simpson left us to go straight up to the 2nd. It is good to see Rouen again. It fulfilled itself again according to my memory, more completely than I had expected. I went and looked again into the font at St. Ouen, and saw down in the water the reflection of the depths of the church; and I smelt again the *quais*, and the street which leads up to, and frames at the other end, the lonely little church of St. Vincent. We lunched under the Grosse Horloge, and I called at 23 Avenue Mont Riboudet, but the Morels had



removed. However, I went in and reminded myself of the *dictées*, and the dogs, and the discomforts which bind one more closely to a good time past.

In the evening we went to the Folies Bergères and saw a Revue and, what was better, had a fine picture of a French audience. For the lights suddenly went out, after the show had been going about twenty minutes, and for a time the audience took possession of affairs. It was either a Zeppelin alarm or the rehearsal of one. There was no sort of panic, but a terrific hubbub; shouts and suggestions came from the gallery, and the place was soon dimly lit by flickering candles, tied to pillars or leaning dizzily over the edge of balconies. After about three-quarters of an hour, the band got candles, and played an overture to some light opera and 'God save the King'. Then the curtain went up, and the 'management' announced that they were going to continue the performance by candle-light. The leading lady appeared and stood over the footlights, arguing with the conductor and the audience as to the best positions for the candles; and while she gesticulated and appeared to direct operations, various characters of the Revue appeared and dotted the front of the stage with candles, while the gallery shouted its approval and its advice—'Ça va tomber,' etc., etc. Altogether an amazing scene.

*Sunday, Feb. 13.* Discovered the Morels in a new and delightful house terraced on the hill at the back of the town, with a wonderful look down on to the great churches. I was recognized by Isabelle, who opened the door to me, and Madame gradually put the pieces of me together, like a kind of jig-saw in her memory. I stayed to tea. It was all very good, this revisiting, and they were glad to see me. I did not see Monsieur. But one rarely did. The



pensionnaires were an English Army Pay Officer, and three boys (French), one of them a diminutive violinist, very shy. I played on his diminutive violin the Allegro of the Leclair Sonata by request, Madame remembering it from 1909.

*Monday, Feb. 14.* On fatigue near the ship-yards down the Seine. Unhappy day, followed by a tempestuous night, when the men's tents blew down and the corrugated iron was blown about the huts, which rocked like ships. I wonder if I shall dislike the trenches much more than the base.

*Wednesday, Feb. 16.* Parade again. After being detailed by a smart Major on a horse, with thin paper-manipulating fingers and a high voice, we are sent off to a lecture on sketching, in a shelter in the woods. Everything awfully efficient and terrifying till we get to the actual lecture, which I have tried to write out as I remembered it. (The lecturer is a machine-gun officer and not a sketcher; so the fault or the credit is the British Army's and not his.)

*Lecturer (who drawls rather and is really a very amusing fellow):* 'Have any of you got compasses? Only one compass among us? That's serious. Well, I've got to make these few remarks about sketching, so I'd better get it off my chest. Of course, myself, I think sketching's very important—tells you where you are, you know. You often have to relieve a trench, and the other fellow's in such a deuce of a hurry to clear out, you don't really get a chance to find out anything from him, so a sketch is useful if you can get it.'

*(Interruption by smart Major, who rides up and asks what we're doing, and after having the very obvious defects of the shelter pointed out to him, rides off again.) Lecturer*



*continues*: ‘Well, what was the train of thought? Got a match? Thanks—awful, these French matches, aren’t they? I say, we can’t do much without compasses, but as I was saying, it’s a dam’ good thing, a sketch, and every officer ought to be able to do one. Of course we can’t get much done this morning, as we haven’t any compasses.’ (*Referring to Major’s recent visit*) ‘I say, ought one to get up when he comes round like that? I never know. Oh! have you seen these maps they use out here? I’ll pass ’em round. I suppose you all know about this A 23 c 1 business they use for reference?’ (*Explains it rather reluctantly.*) ‘Of course we really ought to go and make a sketch, but it’s not much good without compasses. Now, there’s a good sketch’ (*passing it round*); ‘got all the things in it; sort of lets you know where things are, you know. The great point is to keep it neat; not slobbered over with mud and rain, and a lot of words written all over it. They like it, if you can make a good sketch. . . . I say, I think we’d better go out and do some sketching without the compasses. We must do something. It looks rather like rain now. I say, it *is* raining. Well, I almost think we’ll open the meeting to general discussion, while I slip off and borrow some compasses.’ (*He doesn’t go.*)

‘I say, wouldn’t some one say a few words about something for a few minutes? I mean, the morning goes much quicker that way. We’ve got to be here till 12.0. Well then, do you mind if I talk about Machine Guns for a bit? I’m interested in them. Has anybody done a pukka course in the Lewis gun?’ (*Hands go up. Lecturer talks to me very quietly about the Lewis gun.*)

*Meanwhile conversation has become general and is something like this:—*



*Voices among the Audience.*

‘Is the Corps any good?’

‘Well, there’s that place in Oxford Street.’

‘Oh! the Savoy’s hopeless.’

‘I say, what did our Adjutant say about ——?’

‘Oh! my Burberry keeps it out all right.’

*The Lecturer.*

‘The Corps? Well, they’ve slept in sheets for a year. That’s a fact. You see their Sergt.-Major on the road, a mile behind the line, dressed up to the nines. They’ve got four spanking Daimlers per Company. Well, all I can say is “good luck to ’em”, but they’ve done far less than dam’ all.’

*(Continues about the Machine Gun.)*

*(Overcome by matter of greater interest):—*

‘Oh! Burberrys? Well, look at mine. This thing wets me all here. Won’t some one tell us about mines? Is there a miner here? Tell you a thing you have to be careful of.’ *(Tells a story*

*about a mine which blew up—no apparent bearing on the matter in hand, and contains very little advice as to what we ought to be careful of.)*

‘Well, I think if we all take a walk round those trees and back, it’ll be getting on for 12 o’clock.’

(*Finally we all go home at 11.20.*)

Dined at Rouen, at the Restaurant de la Cathédrale. I wonder if Stevenson meant all he said about ‘great churches being my favourite kind of mountain scenery’. For it is astonishingly true. Rouen Cathedral has that same breath-holding effect upon me as a big mountain has, when one comes suddenly upon it round a corner, and looks up at the pinnacles which look so small and are really so big; the saints in their niches like *gendarmes*, the grey towers by the lower lights of the town at night like hinted snow-fields. The Cathedral, from the left bank of the river, looks over its foot-hills of the *quais* and other buildings just as Tryfaen peeps out over the Gogof, something farther away but bigger and more mysterious.

*Thursday, Feb. 17.* Orders to go up to the 1st R.B. I called on Madame Morel before leaving Rouen at 5.30, when Robertson and I (Kirkland and Billington are to come later) boarded our train, a long string of wagons and trucks and carriages, which bumped slowly along in the dark and finally spent the night in a siding at Abbeville.

*Friday, Feb. 18.* We are there now, and I suppose we shall hear the guns in a few hours. It is difficult to realise all this. We took a cart from the inn, and joined our Regiment. It was good to find oneself among Riflemen, and to find Russell-Smith. Best of all, to find letters from Father, Mary, Arnold, and C. A. A. One feels here in the presence of something quietly efficient.

*Saturday, Feb. 19.* R.-S. says the French are more patriotic than the English. I wonder if ‘Empire-building’



nations are ever really patriotic. Perhaps we have expended our patriotism on imperialism. *Puck of Pook's Hill* and the Sussex enthusiasm of Kipling have always been a surprise to me. Moved to 'A' Company, where people received one with the same silent and detached air of saying, 'This isn't much of a picnic. Take a chair and share our boredom. Carry on.' I heard the guns for the first time. Rumours of the Man's Battalion coming here. That seems too incredible. Got many letters.

*Monday, Feb. 21.* Parades. C.O. came over. It is true about the Man, and I went over to a village 2 Km. away and found him. I was awfully disappointed not to take him more by surprise. An officer gave me away by telling him there was an officer of 1st R.B., a Shrewsbury Master, waiting to see him. The whole incident is much more amazing than I can realise—that's the worst of it.

*Friday, Feb. 25.* Stayed in bed all day till tea-time. Fortunate enough to see a doctor. It is a desperate business being ill now. I am lucky to be in Reserve; otherwise I am feeling very wild about it all. The people of my billet are good people—'des honnêtes gens' (Somerville<sup>1</sup>). I did not really understand that even here we are in Picardy, until the girl of the house said, 'Vous ne comprenez pas le Picard, m'sieur?'

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*Tuesday, April 4.* Went to Shrewsbury to lunch. It was First Day; otherwise I would not have gone, for after my visit last November I have always felt that I mustn't go again till I have faced things at the Front. There are many motives which have driven men to fight in this war; the violation of Belgian neutrality, a very few; more, the

<sup>1</sup> Somerville's *Primer of French Grammar*.



love of country; some, the hatred of militarism: and I think my motives are not uncommon; which are, the feeling that one's friends have been through this test and that I must, and a kind of personal challenge to oneself, which is the strongest thing in my morality and leads so often to irrational results, which says, 'You dare not do this thing; therefore you must'.

*Wednesday, April 5.* Left by the breakfast train, and Mary and Arnold and Ella saw me off. I met West in London and we saw Jerome in hospital after lunch. Reached Southampton at 6.30.

*April 7.* I was set down at 11 p.m. by a motor lorry in a dark and unknown country. I walked to St. Amand and woke up the Transport officer, who found me a bed. On this walk I discovered the War.

*April 8.* After a delightful slack day, in the evening I rode up with the Transport to Battalion H.Q. I wonder if those bored Transport men and that bored Transport officer knew how excited I was. Or the orderly who led me along a deep, star-roofed communication trench, did he know that that walk thrilled me as little else has done?

*April 8, 9, and 10.* I have been introduced to War, and at present I find him a sunshiny old devil by day and a star-spangled old wizard by night, attended by countless elfish little devils who sigh through the air when we stand to arms just before daybreak, and noisy chattering fellows who always try to get in the last word and must all be talking at once, especially when one of them thinks that an aeroplane is flying low enough to be hit.

It is hard to believe, in fine weather, 1200 yards from the Bosches, that all this chattering and banging is anything more than an uncouth game, into which one has



been drawn by curiosity. So strange are the emotions stirred by all the circumstance of this trench-life—the rough awakening after an hour or two of sleep, when one staggers out of a dug-out, chill and sleepy, to hear the monosyllabic rifles and the chattering machine guns, who have, it seems, kept up their palaver during one's period of forgetfulness.

*April 17-22.* A week of rain and mud.

*Easter Day, April 23.* A really beautiful Easter Day. The chaplain came round to our trenches at 6.0 a.m., to hold a Communion Service in a large dug-out. This is a good man and makes me realise what good men Christians are, when they are Christians. There is a good 'influence' from him, of which one is conscious at his first appearance. Not many men could cry out 'A Happy Easter to you', with meaning and without any impediment of self-consciousness or spinality. It makes one rather sad about the slight shyness with which we returned his greetings, the shyness of laymen towards the parson. At 6.30 this wonderful west-wind day had begun, and I went to bed, smoking a pipe and thinking of father and of many things.

*Monday, April 24, and Tuesday, April 25.* A glorious Spring day. 'Le temps a laissé son manteau'; there is a delicate green on the trees, and the swallows are returning to their village, of which the other inhabitants have left the ruins. It must have been a happy place at the Easter of 1914.

On a working party at night.

*Friday, April 28.* Russell-Smith lent me E. F. Benson's new school story. E. F. B. and Ian Hay, etc., represent a kind of breezy school in modern literature, who have the ideas of the last generation and the smart phraseology of



the present. An anthology of their works might be made by E. V. Lucas and called 'In Praise of Public School Men'.

*Tuesday, May 2.* A shell burst on a traverse within twenty yards of me. I was very frightened, and rather proud to have had one really at close quarters. Took over command of Company temporarily, as Fraser went to the Army School.

*Wednesday, May 3.* The Battalion marched through beautiful country. Everywhere Corot Landscapes, and avenues like those of de Hooch, and orchards just beginning to blossom; in one of which we halted.

The first time I have marched as part of a Battalion with Transport, etc. The pleasure of it all was partly spoiled by my regrets at some gross pieces of incompetence on my part.

*Saturday, May 6.* A good village, and the lilacs are out. Billeted at the house of a dressmaker, who

*Sunday, May 7,* has been spending this morning fastening, smoothing, and pinning her small girl, who is to make her first Communion to-day.

*Wednesday, May 10.* Another black day, though it should have been a good one, for I did an interesting Advanced Guard march with the Company and the Company Lewis Gun detachment, which accompanied me for the first time. The country and weather both very beautiful.

*Sunday, May 14.* Things are calming down a bit now, and it has been a beastly week, and I have learnt a good deal. There was a good church parade this morning.

In the afternoon the sports. Wonderful side-shows, Aunt Sallies, etc. A wonderfully organised obstacle race. It is amazing what a Battalion in the field can produce. There was a Rifleman doing clownish side-shows in a



complete evening-dress suit. Nor was a megaphone wanting. The Divisional Band played. (But I hate sports.)

We had a concert in a barn at 8 p.m., at which I played on a very poor violin, which the Quartermaster-Sgt. of 'A' Company carries about with him, though he doesn't play himself.

*Tuesday, May 16.* A big 'extended order' parade over 'champs de manœuvres' belonging to the French Government.

Weather glorious, and oh! this place is beautiful. I long for an idle day to linger under the hawthorn, to be on the red clover just outside the farm gate listening to the cuckoo, and to watch those immaculate magpies stalking coolly in the long grass below the railway cutting.

*Wednesday, May 17.* Battalion parade in the same place. Letters from Shrewsbury. How I want to be there! And the more I feel the glory of this early summer, the more I want it.

Night outposts in a wood.

*Friday, May 19.* The hawthorn is now glorious here, as it surely is round the foot of Caradoc.<sup>1</sup>

*Saturday, May 20.* We move from here at 6 to-morrow morning. I am sorry to leave this place, its duck-pond, orchard, and cider-press; the little boy who leads a different dog every day about on a string, and the other good people of the farm, who can't know about life in towns, whose kingdom is sufficient; the red clover fields, and the orchard where our cooks are quietly busy; the nightingales, and the May blossom.

<sup>1</sup> At Church Stretton, near Shrewsbury.



*Sunday, May 21.* An uneventful and not very restful day. One of the women owning our Mess billet was ready for us on our arrival with a marble chimney-piece lying in the three pieces, 'exactly as it was when we left a week ago'. It was to cost a hundred francs. If she broke this on purpose, she has had a severe loss.

*Monday, May 22.* We marched as a Brigade in great heat, halting for about an hour. At Orville I had a very delightful billet, very clean, with a wallpaper with little flowers on it, and a wash-hand-stand. A real civilised bedroom, in almost the only two-storied house in Orville. A most courteous old lady owned it, and she had at the back of it a very neat kind of garden. The men bathed in the Authie. The people of our Mess billet were also very nice to us, and made us drink a large quantity of their wooden cider when we arrived.

*Tuesday, May 23.* At 6.0 p.m. we started again, a further stage on the road towards the sound of the guns. It was dark most of the way, and as we got within ten miles of the lines, the Very lights began to flicker a kind of welcome at us. Arrived at an unlovable village, at about 11.30. The men's billets bad. When we came to find our Mess, we discovered a very angry, high-screaming woman, pushing our servants out of the door and depositing their rifles and their 'sacs' after them. It appeared that the servants had come in and taken possession in rather a cavalier fashion. Indeed, the lady brought in her husband clad in pants and a shirt, and thus arrayed he gave us a spirited imitation of the exact song and dance which the servants had done, his wife providing the music. I've never heard any one so loud as that woman. I remarked that there were 'des choses de plus mauvaises'.—Q. 'Quoi



donc?'—A. 'Les Allemands.'—'Alors, allez les chasser.' We assured them that, as usual, there would be money for all this. At that the man ceased to dance, but the woman is still shouting,

*Wednesday, May 24,* and has just forbidden us to play with a tennis-ball in the orchard at the back.

In the afternoon Company Commanders went up to the trenches, to see the ground for work.

*Thursday, May 25.* Went up to the ground for work again this morning, with Gracey and Fagan, a weary walk. At night the Company worked in those same trenches from 9.30 to 1.30 in pouring rain. Got back in an 'uneasy dawn' at 3.0 a.m., drenched and muddied. And whereas we officers could change and sleep in something like beds, the men had not a dry stitch save their great-coats in which to lie on the floor of their barns, and I felt ashamed at this unavoidable injustice. With the amount of comfort that an officer has and *must* have, it is easy to love the tiredness for sleep and the hunger for food that are so frequent in this kind of life.

*Friday, May 26.* Slept till late in the morning. In the afternoon rode up to the trenches again with Patterson, and reconnoitred the night's work. Had a fine night and worked from 9.30 to 1.30, and then watched the daylight come as we marched back along Watling Street (so says the map)—Watling Street, which is here undermined with trenches and sometimes swept by machine guns, which leads from the trenches to Radlett, and so to Church Stretton and Wenlock Edge. There was a bombardment of the trench in front (our front line) from 11.0 to 11.15, and we had to stop work.

During this day there were many turns and much glorious

futility, and I realised that I am peculiarly fortunate in my fellow Company-officers.

*Tuesday, May 30.* Made efforts to get in touch with the 2nd Battalion to see Buxton. A very idle day. Read *The Scholar-Gipsy* before going to bed.

*Wednesday, May 31.* I joined the 6th R.B. a year ago to-day. This cannot be celebrated by a dinner, because there is night work to be done. To-morrow, perhaps. Jocelyn Buxton came over.

Fraser returned from 3rd Army School. It was very good to see him. I walked back part of the way with him after dinner.

*Thursday, June 1.* On an all-day working-party, digging cable trenches through the fields.

After haversack lunch I lay in long cool grass and looked through the dog-daisies and buttercups, and remembered that it was June.

We celebrated yesterday. Russell-Smith and Barnes and Johnstone came to dinner. Also the C.Q.M.S. brought me round quite a decent fiddle, which I played for some time.

*Sunday, June 4.* Church parade. Rode over to 2nd Battalion. Saw Buxton and others of the Sheerness people, and also Neale—they were encamped in a place like Sidbury Hill, with a rolling chalk plain all about.

*Tuesday, June 6, and Wednesday, June 7.* Worked at night with forty men on Dog Trench, a grass-grown ruin of a trench, with destroyed dug-outs and the ruins of old bombardments—altogether an unpleasant place. We are to assemble in it on the day. It poured with rain all night.



*Friday, June 9.* Again wet, but a dry night for work, and we deepened Dog undisturbed, though at times I thought the enemy must see us on so clear a night. They did see a party of C Company, and shelled with about ten whizz-bangs rapid. But no casualties. We are told that the enemy have put up a notice in front of their trenches, saying, 'We know you are going to attack here. But you won't do it before Peace.'

*Saturday, June 10.* Rose at 12.45 and had a very idle day. 'L'attaque' and reading. No night working-parties. We leave to-morrow night.

*Monday, June 12, to Friday, June 16.* Working every night on assembly trenches. The first three nights rain poured, and the trenches were in such a state as to make movement very slow.

The number of troops on the SERRE ROAD (Watling Street) at night is very great, and the chaos at trench junctions, when parties are returning at 1.0 a.m. and converge on each other, is almost ludicrous.

Traction engines come through in the night, dragging huge guns and howitzers. Everywhere we see men struggling with boards, hurdles, and all kinds of building materials.

*Thursday, June 15.* After tea we went down the road, and saw a battery of 12-in. howitzers, put in position during the short hours of darkness last night—also their shells!

At night we continued on assembly trenches, camouflaging all the work as before, and grassing over all the earth.

*Friday, June 16.* The weather has cleared again, which is good, though it made the night very clear for work, and the Bosche drove us to ground with 'that' machine gun several times. But I don't think he has seen our work yet.



I am rather liking this life ; at least I hate some of it so much that the good parts are glorious, which is the true kind of enjoyment. I hate starting out at night, with the possibility of casualties and of parties going astray up wrong trenches. But it is grand getting back in the dawn, and sitting down noisily to a sort of meal and a pipe before going to bed. Fraser has gone on leave.

*Monday, June 19.* After my working-party went home at 2.0, I waited for daylight to shew the N.C.O.'s of the Company round our assembly area for the attack. We all trooped home in the sunrise at 5.0 o'clock, and Fagan and I had a very wonderful sort of breakfast.

*Wednesday, June 21.* A real June day ; but I seem to see nothing at present but a feverish and tired phantasmagoria of wagons, sand-bags, 'material', copies of orders, men and horses.

*Thursday, June 22.* The Battalion moved back to Beaussart for a few days' rest. Camp, instead of our old billets ; and the lady, in whose house we were to mess, drove us from the place with hard force of logic and much shouting. We failed to find a place till, at 8.0 in the evening, we borrowed a table and chairs from the Town Major's office, and put them in a disused house.

In the evening the Colonel talked to the Battalion.

There was a wonderful sky in the north-west as I lay down in my valise, and I watched it under the flap of the tent, and I thought of many things that were under it. Country railway-stations, porters, and four-wheeled cabs came into the picture. A strange picture—but there is much of England in those things. And I thought of fields with hedges (the Man made me do that some weeks ago), and of blue hills, and of all those dear people and things



under that sky. Fraser returned while I was looking at these things.

*Friday, June 23.* We had a before-going-into-action parade Service, which Laurie conducted. It was very impressive; so was his short sermon—all of it almost too impressive, and I was most awfully moved by it all.

The guns are getting more active. In the afternoon Fraser, Fagan, and I rode over to Bertrancourt to see a raised relief model of the Divisional attack area.

While we were waiting to start, a most terrific thunderstorm, with violent wind and rain—the sort of thing which they write about in the tropics, and of which there will be a kind of imitation beginning to-morrow.

*Saturday, June 24.* I have just been out at the back of the garden of our Mess billet, watching the horizon jumping into flame with our shells and, I suppose, the German shells too.

The Sucrerie and the trenches beyond are now a new world, no longer the scene of humdrum working-parties drawing tools and looking forward to breakfast on return, but a region transformed by the beginning of the Great Battle. It began this morning early, quite unobtrusively, but very steady and continuous.

There is not much noise here, as none of the batteries are within half a mile, and the Bosche shells are bursting over a mile away. From the south and north there is no sound, but an occasional flash.

A very lazy day for me, and pleasant. I read and wrote and received a fine mail.

*Sunday, June 25.* Read Sorley's poems<sup>1</sup> which Jocelyn Buxton has sent me.

<sup>1</sup> See page 254.



The bombardment has become more noisy. This afternoon three of the German observation balloons have been blown up. I should have seen one of them go, but when a Rifleman told me about it, all I saw was a straight column of smoke. Hell is really let loose to-night. I have been out to the east edge of the village, and looked over the fields at the murky horizon where the bursts of shell go flicker flacker. It is clear that their gun power is nothing to ours now. And knots of foul-mouthed men stand about, men who have sat cowering and incapable of retaliation in the early days of Ypres, and now exult over the merciless hurricane that is raging over the Bosche lines. Officers stand about in their calm way and comment on the play, and a little white terrier brushes its way among the corn, which may and may not be reaped.

Amid this pandemonium it is surprising to see and hear the ordinary circumstance of trench warfare. Occasionally a Very light goes up, scornful and inquiring, and 'that' machine gun gets in a word or two between the bursts.

And I have also been out along the lane to the west side of the village, past the wild roses and the dog-daisies, and looked across the spiky fringe of a battalion of corn at a quiet sunset, with violet clouds that looked like comfortable mountains, and watched a hedgehog trying to heave its way through the undergrowth.

*Monday, June 26.* The Divisional General addressed the Battalion in the morning. In the afternoon I went up to the SUCRERIE to reconnoitre a communication trench for carrying parties. I had a good view of the German lines round BEAUMONT-HAMEL, and the fountains of earth and smoke and ruin which spouted there.

At 10.0 p.m. we moved to a bivouac a mile to the south of



Beaussart, where the ground is shaken by a 15-in. howitzer close by. I begin to have a sort of pre-Bumping-race feeling from time to time. Heavy rain poured at intervals, and the men had no cover.

*Tuesday, June 27.* Rested, while the guns roared round us.

*Wednesday, June 28.* Due to go up to the trenches to-night; but orders came round that we were to stay in bivouac, the attack being postponed a short time. Continuous rain.

*Thursday, June 29.* I scribble my entry for the day, while my servant waits to pack up this little book in my valise. We go up this afternoon, and this book must not go too.

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## LETTERS

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TO J. O. WHITFIELD.

*London.*

*Feb. 8, 1916.*

Just a line in great haste. I'm off this afternoon, I am. For France, I think, but not quite sure. Nothing more committal than Southampton. Your turn in Blower's was lovely.<sup>1</sup> By Gad, it shall be done. You wait. I don't think a full face (do you?) so much as just a touzled head, just peeping out. The Salopians would never know it was a master at the Schools, and they would continue to send their boys as before—and they would be right.

Must stop. This is all very exciting. I wonder how I shall get on.

<sup>1</sup> There was a specimen of a furnished bed-room in a shop-window at Shrewsbury. It was suggested that one might slip in, and be found by passers-by asleep in the bed.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE.

*Southampton.**Feb. 8, 1916.*

It is all very incredible. Here we all sit, packs of officers, dining, drinking, and smoking; and I can't make out if it is the most miraculous, or the most inevitable, thing in the world.

Nothing to make a letter of—only wharves, jetties, vague staff-majors at desks, stretches of water, and the stoic, sardonic, not to say laconic, British officers everywhere.

TO HIS SISTER.

*B.E.F.**Friday, Feb. 18.*

With the use of some carbon paper I am saving time by getting off the same letter to home, Radlett, and Bala. We've been a cool twenty hours so far on this journey from Rouen, which we left at 5.30 yesterday evening. Not quite the old kind of night journey: the engines make a new kind of noise now. I complained about this inartistic innovation to an official, and he said it was a new kind of engine. Still, we've been very comfortable all night.

I think the strings of my violin might be let down a little:

E string 5 tones,

A „ 4 „ „

D „ 2 „ „ ; leaving them tight enough to

keep the bridge up.

TO HIS SISTER.

*1st R.B.—B.E.F.**Feb. 19, 1916.*

I joined my Company yesterday, some miles away from the Battalion H.Q., where I wrote from last. We are billeted in a little typical French village, with hills all round, and a Maire, and a church with bells all Sunday long, and children who say: 'How-do-you-do, Sir: quite well, thank-



you.' It is very cold here, but signs of Spring on the ground; e. g. a general sort of waking up, and those loose blue flowers one finds in woods and thinks are violets at first.

Things here are very smart. I used to think the discipline at home wasn't bad, but here—by Jove! There are four officers in this Company. We have our Mess in a dank back-kitchen sort of place, which isn't any too warm. But I expected to go straight into the flooded trenches, which is a very different matter. The Company Commander is a Scotchman, a Cambridge Rugger Captain and International, and very efficient-seeming. I've got an awfully good servant, who says, 'May I offer a suggestion, Sir?'

To C. A. ALINGTON.

*1st Batt. The Rifle Brigade—  
B.E.F.*

*Feb. 19, 1916.*

Thank you ever so much for your letter, which I found with delight on arrival here last evening, after twenty-four hours' journey from Rouen—not that I am really so far from Rouen as all that, but that the train sat in a siding most of the night. I have been nearly a fortnight in France now. I am glad that most of the delay was at Rouen, which it was very good to revisit. I really think it is one of the cities of the world. Another Special Reservist and I arrived here in a farm cart, for all the world like two *émigrés* making their escape—the Transport officers between them having arranged that we should get out one station too far up the line.

It was really rather funny, our arrival yesterday. I kept leaning out of the carriage window as the train crept along, very excited to hear the first gun, and wondering if I should

be under shell fire in a few hours, etc. etc.; and then, two hours later, I was hiring a cab to take me to my Regiment, where on arrival I was shewn my way to a real bed-room and then began a four-course dinner with oysters. There's a small chance of our being out of the line for three months. That would be awful, to come out to the Front and never see a trench for three months.

I haven't heard from Southwell since I got out. I'm afraid I shall not run up against him here. I can't remember how many booksellers I've told to send me 'V.B'. If they all get here, there will be one for each officer in the Battalion.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

Feb. 20, 1916.

These villages are all similar, each in a little hollow in the hills, each with its Maire and its church. I opened the door and went in, and 'I then saw that what they were at was Vespers'.

Man, I have heard the guns going 'b'm zmph'. It was very exciting, the first hearing. Rather absurd, I expect, that seems; but it was so. It was like seeing great men and saying, 'So *that's* Mr. Asquith'.

TO THE MEN—THE NEW HOUSE. *Somewhere in France.*

Feb. 1916.

Two Men have met, not by arrangement of their own, but by the inscrutable designs of the British Army Staff; not at a Base camp, but in the War Area. This is very amazing and should be reported to the other Men at once.

[<sup>1</sup> In fact, the situation is something you couldn't believe.

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is inserted in E. H. L. S.'s handwriting.



Osbeck,<sup>1</sup> for a week on end, is not at all impossible in the afternoons. The Man is in good form, but leaves something to be desired in the matter of health. He remains, however, a good man.]

The Man, on the other hand, is O.C. Company, and is a BIG MAN. I have heard him giving his routine orders to his Coy. S.M., and it is a very wonderful thing. The Man has secured a bottle of whisky for his Mess, so that's all right.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

Feb. 22, 1916.

Well, what do you think? I met Southwell yesterday—an incredible piece of good luck. I am likely to see him again quite often for some time. It is so extraordinary that it is hard to realise. It seemed quite natural to be sitting round a stove fire in a kind of back-kitchen. I still fancy that I shall wake up soon and find it's a dream, though the cold and wet are real enough. It's been trying to snow to-day.

TO R. A. KNOX.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

Feb. 23, 1916.

And so I said, 'I will write to him too, but in ink. It is time.'

I am reassured about you temporarily by a letter from Chambers,<sup>2</sup> who tells me you had a birthday lately, and of your hopeless omniscience of 'Kennedy'<sup>3</sup>—the only original

<sup>1</sup> Riding on horseback.

<sup>2</sup> In V. B at the time.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy's *Latin Primer*. White had defended in a debate Dr. Kennedy's claims to have invented the Classics. See page 38.

classical work. And here is *The Salopian* just come from that excellent man Kitch, which gives me further news of you.

Of my amazing meeting with the Man there is nothing to say except that, if Tolstoy was writing *War and Peace* now, he would use the incident with great effect to shew that it is not Joffre or Haig, but fate, which orders things. He would also say this for two or three chapters, just as one was getting interested in some charming old people in Moscow. (*Lector.* 'For Heaven's sake.' *Me.* 'Well: I've just finished that work.')

Of myself there is little to say that I have not said in previous letters to Men. I am living a very similar life to the Man's, though he says 'Our tea is better than theirs', but I say 'Look at their fire'.

TO C. R. N. ROUTH.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

Feb. 26, 1916.

It is brought home to me that my last communiqué was from Southampton. Now Southampton is a place, a very distinct place. Situated at the head of two gates to the English Channel, and having two tides a day (see the Venerable Bede on the history of the English Church), it possesses a marine traffic second only to that of London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and many others. But since then I have seen other cities, Havre, Rouen, —, —, —, and —. Do you know Rouen? Very well, we will see it before we walk through Shropshire. Rouen possesses everything—wonderful churches, a fine river, good and imaginative smells (not unconnected with the river), good restaurants,—but also a Base camp for which I was glad

<sup>1</sup> See *The Path to Rome*, passim.



to leave Rouen. I once learnt French at Rouen, and it was good to revisit the people with whom I stayed.

I've been with the Battalion a week now. We are out of the line for a month's rest, which will be over before very long. Rather lucky for me that I did not go up to the trenches straight away, as I got a chill which has developed into modified bronchitis; a distinct bore, as it is awfully difficult to get rid of in damp billets and bad weather. I'm only hoping I shall be really fit to go into the trenches. I have a horror of getting into hospital before I've seen the Huns.

The really notable fact is that I have met Southwell, which was an event.

Rather jolly hill country this, and the villages have all that French villages should have; a Maire, a town crier, large heaps of steaming straw, pigeons, and a grey church in a commanding position. The people of my billet are 'des honnêtes gens', and I am writing this from the stove in their kitchen, which I prefer to our Coy. Mess, which has got a fire at last; but that fire smokes so, that one can't see across the room.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R. B. — B.E.F.

Sat. March 4, 1916.

I haven't written before; but, as you now know, I only heard yesterday.<sup>1</sup> It is so hard to realise it out here. I shall not realise it indeed, I think, until and unless I return to Mere Cottage and find him gone. He has always been such a big living fact in our little lives. There never was a Father in the world before as good and as generous. His happiness consisted chiefly in the happiness of us, as it was

<sup>1</sup> His father had died on February 27.

with Mother. And now it is good to think of those two dear souls continuing a greater life in the same path. I can't help thinking of Dr. Spicer's remark to you and me: 'We think he is a wonderful man.' That was just one of the little reminders of the wonderful attractiveness of his character, which influenced people so very quickly. And now, according to G.'s and A.'s letters, we are hearing of that from the many, many hosts of people who loved him and admired his goodness.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

March 4, 1916.

The chief thing about this crisis for me has been the impossibility of realising out here what has happened, and a feeling of being cut off from the rest of my family by this inaccessibility and the lack of any kind of familiar surroundings. I dare say you won't quite understand me when I say this. I don't understand it myself. The last two days I seem to have been living in a kind of coma.

I am very glad you got to know my father that jolly week last winter at Mere Cottage, and to like him. All did, whoever came across him. He had quite a wonderful attractiveness for people who sometimes had only known him for a few hours even.

He had a very happy life, really; full of poetry—in the sense, I mean, that he loved, and taught me to love, such a lot of those things which you and I agree to be good; mountains and mountain streams, clouds, west winds, good manners and gentleness to humble country people, and good books. In nearly all my 'Alpine'<sup>1</sup> moments, he was not far away.

<sup>1</sup> See page 122.



TO J. D. CHAMBERS.

*1st Battn. Rifle Brigade—  
B.E.F.*

*Sunday, March 5, 1916.*

I have been living quite a normal kind of existence with parades, and buttered eggs, and tooth-paste, and all the usual products of civilisation, including a real good British influenza cold; the sort I used to have in IV. 1 about this time of year, when the windows were kept not too open, and my temper was a little higher than the normal, and my arrivals in 1st Lesson a little later than the normal, and the dust off the blackboard very objectionable—quite an unpleasant experience, which I should be very glad to be going through now.

We are billeted in a village in some hilly country, which is chiefly remarkable for the public way in which they kill their pigs—at the cross-roads, if you please, for all the world to see, weekly on Thursdays at noon. This afternoon they have had a fox hunt, which means digging a trench where you suppose the fox to be, and there a crowd of men and dogs of every species, from Great Danes to Dachshunds, wait for the fox with various weapons.

TO HIS SISTER.

*1st R.B.—B.E.F.*

*Sunday, March 5, 1916.*

It has been quite a fine day, and I've been walking about on 'the hill at the back' and thinking of you all and thinking of Father. (It is natural to think of him among hills, isn't it?) It is sad to me to think how hopelessly I have failed to deserve or make return for all his great love. Sad, too, to have been so cut off from you all, these days, chiefly by time.

But, dearest Mary, your letter is full of hope, and quite rightly. Remember that he almost approached old age without ever being old, and was his lively and devoted self right up to the end. It is good that a good man's life should be like that, even though it ends sooner than we could have expected. Since the War, I have begun to feel more of death as being only a door into some greater life, and familiarity with death makes one feel very close to those who have died.

I had always the regretful feeling that I did nothing for him, and he did everything for me.

TO MRS. WHITFIELD.

*Oxton.*

*March 21, 1916.*

I am so very grateful for your very kind letter. It was very good of you to write. Yes, I feel with you and with Jack that all our losses in the last eighteen months have given us a different view of death; and though I cannot regard it as anything less of a calamity, yet it is easier, through familiarity with it, to view it against a happier background and in a truer perspective.

My father was only ill for a short time, and death found him as we shall always be glad to remember him, lively and full of good work and active generosity.

TO HIS SISTER.

*On the train, returning to London for France.*

*April 6, 1916.*

People (e.g. Graham) have inquired what papers I wanted sending out. I should like the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Literary Supplement of the Times* (1d. fortnightly). And I should also be very grateful for any Press notices which



may appear of 'V.B'. I am enclosing a bit of my diary which I should have left with all the other pages.

Well, it was a fine send-off you gave me, and very good of you all. I hope you were rewarded with a good breakfast as it leaves me at present.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B. Transport,  
2 miles behind the trenches.  
Saturday, April 8, 1916.

I have got my back up against a nice sunny bank, and the sun and violets and cowslips are grand. I've just been watching two huge guns doing this in an orchard close by:—

'Whish', audible for 10 secs.

I'm going up to the trenches to-night. It's a lovely day; altogether, life isn't too bad.

We've had a fine Band playing *Carmen* and *Tipperary* and *Yeomen of the Guard*, and 'all those beautiful things', in front of the church. The guns, going off 200 yards away during the music, suggested a School Sports' Day. We are not very far from the place where we were when the Battalion was in rest. I should like again to emphasise the scrumptiousness of the day.

TO H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.—Trenches.  
Sunday, April 9, 1916.

I tried to find time to send you a line yesterday before coming up, but no. I want to tell you about three things.

(1) A walk, 12 to 1 a.m., on a dark night, when the 4th Division lorry, having brought me up from the rail-head, set me down at a village and said, 'There; now find your Battalion'. Well, my Battalion was in the trenches, as a matter of fact; but I was advised to find the 1st Line

Transport. So I walked several miles over a high, wind-swept plateau, and while I walked I discovered the War. For the ground sloped away on the left, and the sky was being always lit up by star-shells, and the machine guns and rifles and guns went 'tat tat tat' and 'bang' and 'boom' respectively, at two miles away. I've told you about that walk because I think you will understand. There was also, with it all, the uncertainty of my finding any one or any bed that night; but after rousing the watch-dogs and the sentries at the village of —, I woke the Transport officer, who put me to bed.

(2) I then want to tell you about the spring day we had yesterday, at the Transport place two miles back; and how at the same time, within a radius of 200 yards, a Band and a 9.2 battery played together to an audience of Tommies with bow legs leading horses, fluttering pigeons and an austere grey church steeple, and me. Then, in the evening, the Transport officer and I rode up to Battalion Headquarters (dug-outs all along a road, like low shops in a mediaeval town), and an orderly led me out along a lane and a communication trench, under a wonderful sky of stars, to the dug-out where I now am.

(3) Just before lunch, the Huns shelled this trench with five or six rounds, getting a direct hit with one of them and filling up a bit of trench temporarily. They sounded as if they were coming straight for my dug-out, and I was afraid where no fear was. What a wonderful way of putting it. Great man, the Psalms.

It is very hard to believe in the seriousness of all this banging, especially on a gorgeous day like this. One is sort of mesmerised into accepting it as a kind of game.



TO HIS SISTER.

*1st R.B.—Trenches.**Sunday, April 9, 1916.*

After writing to you yesterday, I started out on a nice pony and a beautiful evening, and reached Battalion H.Q. dug-outs at 7.30, and then was guided on my first walk to the trenches—a very thrilling walk down a long and deep communication trench under a roof of brilliant stars. In ten minutes I reached the Company H.Q. dug-out, where I had a cheerful reception from the other officers, who were conveniently at dinner.

To-day has been another lovely day—larks singing and magpies lolloping about over the lines.

The trenches are nothing like what I expected. Shells etc. fly about over us at all angles, on our own and the Germans'.

A wonderful dawn and sunrise this morning. Could you send me some mustard and cress seeds, and any other seeds (flowers or a vegetable due to grow quickly) which you might think suitable? Very little; just enough to make a joke with in the communication trench.

TO A. E. KITCHIN.

*1st R.B.—The trenches.**April 10, 1916.*

I am now sitting in gorgeous sunshine after lunch outside Company H.Q. dug-out, smoking a cigar. The weather is beautiful, there is lots to see, not very much shelling so far, and I am in the midst of a lot of very new and interesting experiences. I am enjoying life very much (as I write now, one of our aeroplanes is right overhead, pursued by little white balls of shrapnel—a wonderful sight in a blue sky like to-day's). Yesterday we were shelled with about six rounds by a howitzer, two of which fell near H.Q. dug-out and filled up the trench for a time. I was quite



frightened by them, as one could hear them coming for some time ahead.

I do wish I could express my whole psychological attitude to all this—some day I shall try. At present I feel it's beyond the powers of psychology and literature—the apparent harmlessness of all this banging and whizzing in such fine weather, making the whole thing seem like a game which one has been prevailed upon to play out of mere compliance with the established order of things; the growing familiarity with the various frequent noises, like the two German machine guns which join in like geese raising an alarm, when an aeroplane is flying low; the different batteries, and all the sounds to which one assumes a kind of personal attitude and well understands why the armies have given names to them like 'Archibald', etc.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

*April 13, 1916.*

It is such a strange sensation, waking after two hours' sleep, during which one has forgotten all about the snapping of rifles and flares and chattering of machine guns, to find that one is at the Front, and to stagger chill and sleepy out of one's dug-out into the middle of it again. Then it is so strange, also, that after Stand-to-arms an hour before daylight, we breakfast at daylight (5.30 or 6.0), and go to bed afterwards. Waking up before lunch is so odd. One has quite forgotten which meal one had last. I was called the other day with the words: 'Lunch is ready, Sir.'

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

*Sunday, April 16.*

This is after lunch in the sun and the orchard at the back of our billets. We had a good Church Parade this morning.



Our Chaplain is certainly a fine man. Afterwards, with two nice fellows who are officers in my Company, I walked to —, and picked cowslips and oxlips in the orchards there. The weather is beautiful to-day—lately it has been very April, snow and hail showers and a cold wind, with moments of brightness. We go back to trenches again to-morrow.

To E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

*April 18, 1916.*

I suppose you have your copy of 'V.B.'? I have two copies out here, owing to a mistaken order to a bookseller. I have given it quite a vulgar puff among booksellers, and I am supposing that it occupies a large position in a Trinity Street Book Shop window at Cambridge. Have you got a Press-cutting agency to send you all notices and reviews of it? ('The practical man'—yes; but you ought to, really, oughtn't you?) Any one will find you a newspaper-cutting agency. I want the names of the authors of 'The weather has thrown off its weeds'—it's very good that, almost as French as the original—and 'The Fairy's Story', please.

I came up to the trenches ten days ago, alone. We've had a few days in billets, and we go up again to-night. I expect I shall discover the real nature of War before long.

Do you know, Man, I have a kind of loyalty to the New House, through all this, which I believe could become positively offensive, if provoked.

With regard to the Press-cutting agency, I intended to remark that 'London must be full of them by all accounts; you have only got to walk along the street till you see a red lamp', or something like it.

To J. M. WEST.

1st R.B.—Trenches.

April 22, 1916.

I'm afraid this isn't really a 'Shell' letter, because so far I haven't had one nearer than 70 yards. However, before I give you any news, I will describe the various shells and my attitude to them:—

(1) The 'Whizz-bang'; which comes from a field-gun, close up to the enemy's front line, and is generally shrapnel. This bursts almost before you know it is coming, so that there is no time to feel frightened, and one says, 'Hallo (hello, halloah, halo, etc. [there are various ways of spelling this]), that was a shell'.

(2) Our own; which one hears whistling through the air all the way, from the report of the gun to the explosion near the enemy's lines. One knows roughly where they are, and there is nothing to excite more than a mild interest.

(3) The enemy's big-gun and howitzer shells. These, especially the latter, can be heard whistling for some time, and one can tell if they are coming in one's direction or not. These have affected me unpleasantly; a series of them came over, and one hit our trench one day. It was not very alarming, because I was in bed in my dug-out at the time. Still, I did just feel as I heard them coming that it *might* be serious, and felt like saying, 'For goodness' sake burst, and tell me where you are'.

Now that, I imagine, is the real shell feeling, which is accentuated in the case of a real bombardment, which I have not experienced.



To J. O. WHITFIELD.

1st R.B.

*April 25, 1916.*

The average letter expressing sympathy is always kind, but often so conventional. I, who have written such, know that only too well. Yours was one of those which I have read and re-read. Your views on death, I am sure, are the right ones, whatever the difficulty in fitting them in with the apparent importance of life. 'An incident in the life of the soul'—that is very good, and really enables one to combine the importance of life with the comparative unimportance of death. I dare say you feel the importance of life much less than I do. I often wish that I regarded it as nothing. It would make it so much easier to face death. Still your phrase, 'Incident in the life of the soul', allows one to keep a philosophy which values life and laughs at death with equal sincerity.

So far, the horrors of war for me have been chiefly the wetness, coldness, and mud of the trenches. The Bosches are over 1,000 yards away from the 800 yards of front held by our Company, and the shelling has not been very serious, and amid much beastly weather there have been sunny days, when the singing of many larks, and the whistling of shells and cracking of rifles and chattering of machine guns, have seemed, all of them, to be elements in a game which might become dangerous, if allowed to go too far.

I do not suppose things will always be as mild as that. And indeed, from a personal point of view, I hope they won't. I want to go through the worst of it, though I don't look forward to it, and am still in great doubt as to what I shall be like.

Meanwhile I am enjoying this life much more than I expected.



I have news of the Man, from a good Captain of this Battalion, who had sojourned with the 9th Battalion for some weeks. He says the Man is always doing everybody's work, if not watched.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.

Tuesday, April 25, 1916.

Do you happen to know if any one has ordered the fortnightly *Literary Supplement of the Times* to be sent to me? It would be nice to see it.

We came out of the trenches on Sunday night, and we are living a sort of semi-trench life in support (i. e. the second line of defence). Our Mess is in a room with a large fireplace and one arm-chair. The four subalterns, we occupy a dug-out constructed out of the remains of a ruined house; most snug, and the beds are grand. I am writing this in shirt-sleeves outside that dug-out. My platoon are billeted in the cellars of the ruined Gendarmerie. In fact, this village is pretty well knocked about; but nothing can spoil the beauty and exhilaration of this Spring day. Just a touch of delicate grey on the trees, and swallows gliding in and out of the ruins. I wonder what they thought of their village the first time they returned since the War.

I've had another letter from Mary Swan, and a book (*Carry On*) which she very kindly sent me. Also, a most amusing letter from R. A. Knox, with a game of L'attaque on paper, which he calls 'Our L'attaque Corner' — 'Huns to play and win in eight moves, à la weekly papers'.



M. G. W. April 1916

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To C. R. N. ROUTH.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

*April 26, 1916.*

At present my Company is in close support; sort of combined billets and dug-outs made out of the ruins of a village, which must have been dear to its inhabitants when they lived here, and still dear to its swallows who have just returned. 'Le temps a laissé son manteau,' and life is really grand.

You will find, probably, as I did, that the noises and circumstance of this trench life will appeal to the imagination very strongly. But, of course, that cannot last. Still, I still take pleasure in an aeroplane in a clear sky, haloed by white compact balls of shrapnel smoke.

To E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

1st R.B.

*April 26, 1916.*

Man,

Le temps a laissé son manteau.<sup>1</sup>

Much love from

A Man.

To R. F. BAILEY.

1st R.B.

*In second line—close support.*

*April 27, 1916.*

I have so far seen little of the horrors of war; and I am divided between extreme satisfaction with this really happy existence, and a desire to go through something really bad before long, for the same psychological reasons that make us all want to fight, and that make it so hard for you to stay at home.

It is very good of you to say 'Do I want anything to read?'—Now I should like to read E. F. Benson's school story, if you would care to send me your copy when you have finished with it.

<sup>1</sup> See page 183.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.—B.E.F.

April 28, 1916.

There are good men here, *εὐτροπικοί*, which means 'amenable to turns', though I am afraid there is a limit to one's liberty to be futile.

You want to know why they say, 'Shakespeare out-tops knowledge'. Well, he does, doesn't he? I thought that was understood. (At this point the Man would say, 'Oh! not a good man'.)

To R. A. KNOX.

1st Rifle Brigade.

May 1, 1916.

It's all right about the Man. At least, I hope it is. For Barclay has returned to this Battalion, leaving the Man his Company, and bringing with him certain observations on the Man which proved his identity (never say 'identity' in the Army any more than you would say 'ignominy'. In fact, it is possible [mind, I don't say it often happens], possible for a man to be discharged with ignominy for losing his identity disc.) {Or is it}.? I never know.}

That'll puzzle you a bit.

The Hun is being rather worriting this afternoon, and as I feel secure, more or less, in this large and rich dug-out, I also feel that I ought to go out and expose myself a little more, just to shew I'm not afraid, which I am.

I am sorry about those peas. Of course I remembered it in the train, on my return that day. Still it is not too late now, is it? I was thinking of having a little garden all my own, outside my dug-out, and have ordered some mustard and cress to start with, from home.



TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, L. J. REID.

B.E.F.

*Tuesday, May 9, 1916.*

It has poured all to-day. We were to have done a Company march, which I had been interesting myself about. But it didn't come off. I have a very excellent billet here, at the house of a dressmaker, who is always sewing and has lay figures standing mutely in various parts of the room. (Why are they called 'lay figures'?) It is more than usually tidy, and though my bed is at an angle of 45 degrees, I am very comfortable there. The lady was very busy on Sunday, with pins in her mouth and a puckered brow, getting her little girl ready for her first Communion.

I've just had a little ride in the rain. Last evening I gave a lecture to my N.C.O.'s in the village school, where I met the Schoolmaster (a war substitute), and I told him I was also 'maître d'école', and we had a little chat about Teaching and the Allies. (That's a lie: but see the *Times Educational Supplement Weekly*.) The school is a single room, decorated with maps, and pictures called 'La Morale par Illustration', in which the various virtues are depicted. A landowner shaking hands with a farmer is 'Cordialité dans les rapports'. A man carrying a child from a burning building is 'Dévouement'. Altogether, it is a most model school, and the key is kept at the Café over the way.

We have a very good room for Company Mess this time; and there is a nice farm-yard, with a large dung-heap on which cocks crow, and a donkey, and a dog-kennel, and in it sometimes a dog and sometimes a child and sometimes both. Beyond the yard is a beautiful orchard.

To-morrow we do a Company March, and I shall have with me the Company, two officers, and machine gun on a cart, and my own pony—a regular army all to myself.



To C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

*May 9, 1916.*

I was awfully glad to get your letter from the Chantry, when we were in the trenches lately. Thank you very much. We are at present right out of the line again, billeted in a charming village, with innumerable farm-yards, dung-heaps, and cocks that crow on them, orchards almost at their best, lilacs, a Maire in a straw hat, and a school, where yesterday I gave my N.C.O.'s a lecture on Advanced Guards and covered myself with chalk at the blackboard and felt sorrowfully reminiscent.

One does appreciate the O.T.C. here, and I don't know what part of its work I could do without. Incidentally, too, I find it is important to be able to ride a horse without falling off or getting up the wrong side.

I suppose the Summer term has started, and that cover-points are shivering amid a wealth of dripping but gorgeously green trees. May is a good month after all. It is lovely here.

A shell fell within twenty yards of me the other day. I tell everybody this, as I'm rather proud of it.

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

*Sunday, May 14, 1916.*

Yesterday we had a very good Church Parade, which I liked very much, with the Divisional Band playing. In the afternoon, regimental sports—with a lot of side-shows like Aunt Sallies etc., and Riflemen got up as showmen, one of them even in a complete evening-dress suit with top-hat. In the evening we had a concert in a barn, with the Divisional Band again. I played Humoreske and Perpetuo Mobile on a very poor fiddle which the Quartermaster-Sergeant of 'A' Company carries about with him.



TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

*Friday, May 19, 1916. 11 p.m.*

Here are nightingales, corncrakes, hawthorn, beautiful weather, and everything rather English, except that the fields are hedgeless and, as Southwell writes, 'inviting manœuvre'.

TO HIS SISTER.

*Sunday, May 21, 1916.*

When we got here this morning, the owner of our Mess billet was ready for us with a marble chimney slab, which she says we broke last week, when we were here. I should think she did it with a sledge-hammer, myself. After a long shrieking argument with her, she getting in ten words to my one, I said I would make myself acquainted with some of the elementary facts of the case. She said that it was a matter of 100 francs. *Je ne pense pas.*

*Madame*: 'Vous êtes justement sortis du village, quand je suis entré dans le garage pour voir s'il y avait du feu ou de telle chose, et — ah! mon Dieu, voilà mon marbre cassé en trois morceaux.'

*M. G. W.*: 'Mais, madame, vous m'avez dit cela trois fois,' etc.

It is awfully hot now. I think we shall be back in the line again in the next few days.

TO R. A. KNOX.

1st R.B.

*May 21, 1916.*

I am feeling rather incapable of writing a decent letter to any one. Life has been very depressing lately, as I've been very incompetent as O.C. Company, and when that happens, the authorities make it their business to make one feel like the boy who goes about perpetually saying, 'What

shall we say, if *he* asks us, Where we've been, What we've been doing, etc.?'

All this, too, in the middle of very hard work and very beautiful country. 'Nor is the sicklewort absent, the green-leaved endive.'

By the way, nightingales—are they really good?

Well (as 'the Men' always say in their letters), please tell those Men I am about to write again very soon, and please write again, and please give my love to all my friends in your form.

TO MRS. HOWSON.

1st Bn. the Rifle Brigade.—

B.E.F.

May 27, 1916.

I have been very busy lately, in temporary command of my Company, and always shadowed by the knowledge that, if I did a thing well, it would be taken for granted, and if I did anything wrong, or if anybody in my Company did anything wrong (which is the same thing), I should most certainly be blamed. All this, at a time when this country has been almost as beautiful as England, gave me much sympathy with the Scout in *Punch*, who was sent out to find the enemy, and returned breathless, saying 'The lilacs are out'. As indeed they are.

I never know what to think about democracy, except that it seems to me the most ideal kind of government, and the only really justifiable one. It is the only system which does ultimately and theoretically lead to freedom. I always feel that it is a system which has never gone right yet, but which it is a duty to make to go right. It produces bad results, but it has got to be made to produce good results, simply because in the world of



idea, and not in the world of fact, it is the right system. I do agree with you most heartily as to the hopelessness of democracy without education. It is terribly unfortunate that the hour-hand of Power should be so far ahead of the minute-hand of Education. But I don't think we can help that, except by putting forward the minute-hand of Education. And, by the way, it is comforting to remember that, with most clocks, the minute-hand also works the hour-hand. At present we seem to be letting Education suffer by the War equally with other things. The saying that 'We don't care about Education in England' seems to be quite true.

But all this does not prove the badness of democracy as an ideal; it only proves its impracticability. And I think the answer to that is that we must make democracy 'work' because it is the right ideal. If democracy without education is hopeless, then we must educate, not give up democracy. There is no ideal in the world that has 'worked' yet. Christianity is still only an ideal, because we don't believe in it enough to make it a fact. Justice and honesty don't really 'pay', because there are not enough people who practise them. There is very little idealism in the world so far. So far, the only thing which really produces idealism is, unfortunately, war, and the thing called patriotism. When a war breaks out, thousands of leisured young men, who have hitherto thought of little but of how to enjoy themselves, who have hitherto turned their backs on all that was unpleasant and all that provoked thought, suddenly discover that, though it was not 'up to them' to live for their country in peace time, yet it is absolutely their duty to die for it in war time, and fling away their lives with heroism. It is, apparently, easier to fight for one's country than to devote one's leisure to



social problems. That is to me the most amazing thing.

So far, with all our civilisation, we have not yet discovered any other way of expressing our idealism than by war. Even the poets, who ought to know better, haven't got much farther. Wordsworth says: 'How ennobling thoughts depart, When men change swords for ledgers'; and Rupert Brooke, in his 1914 sonnets, seemed to welcome the War as a release from materialism. The arts are inspired by war, and in the pulpit it is able to be reconciled with Christianity, because of the great unselfish, non-utilitarian virtues which it produces. But when the world is really democratic, perhaps peace will inspire us in the same way.

What a terrible lecture this is that I am delivering. I hope you will forgive it. I always think that, when a soldier talks politics, it is a very terrible thing. And when the soldier is also a schoolmaster! But this is my share in the very interesting conversation you started; and my interest in the subject must be my apology.

We are not actually in the trenches at present, but we make frequent tedious visits to them to work by day and night, and return to a village and listen to the guns from a respectful distance. It is not so lovely a place as some that I have lately seen, and the inhabitants rather hate us. In fact, the lady of this house wanted to turn us away the first night we arrived, very late after a long march. The good woman still brings us absurd little complaints daily, and my servant, generally the culprit, stands gravely to attention in the doorway, while she delivers them. All of which pleases me hugely, because it reminds me that the English are not the only selfish people.



TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.

*Tuesday, May 30, 1916.*

To-morrow evening I am giving a champagne dinner in honour of the anniversary of my joining the Regiment. Russell-Smith is coming. The only thing is that we are almost certain to have night work to do. So it will have to be a public luncheon. Public lunches are always *to* somebody; so it will have to be *to* me, as well as my being host. We shall have mayonnaise, and I shall make a speech about the Empire afterwards. At least, that's what ought to happen. Only, we are more exercised at present about getting some glasses to drink champagne out of; and a table-cloth.

This billet is of the back-kitchen variety, but we are very comfortable. Oh! did I tell you how, when we arrived late at night, and after some wandering found the billet, we found a very stout and shrieking woman throwing our servants and their packs and rifles out at the door; and how it appeared that the servants had taken possession in rather a noisy fashion, 'déposant leurs sacs et fusils' on the floor, and executing a song and dance at having arrived; and how the song and dance woke up the man of the house, who, in shirt and pants, came in and shouted 'Sortez; sortez', and then proceeded to give a lovely imitation of the song and dance of the servants—to show how angry he was? And we all sat down in corners and on the bed and table, and laughed wearily.

Finally, hearing that there was to be money for this, the host withdrew, but the woman

Marble slab—nothing still shrieks and comes to me further was done about it. with complaints against my servant, whom she calls 'celui-là'.

Celui-là stands gravely to attention the while in the doorway, and I simply expire with laughter.

To C. R. N. ROUTH.

1st R.B.

May 31, 1916.

I'm glad you had a jolly visit to Shrewsbury. I've been in some beautiful places this early summer, but all of the most beautiful have only reminded me of what I missed.

I've just been seeing Buxton on his way back. It is a beautiful night and the trees talking quietly to one another, just as they do in the middle of the Common on evenings in June. And nothing to shew a War, except an occasional boom and a flickering Very light.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.

June 2, 1916.

Last evening we had a dinner to celebrate my centenary of joining the Regiment (21st of May really), and our C.Q.M.S. got me quite a decent violin from another C.S.M., and at midnight. (That isn't a full stop really. The paper people put it there.) I was playing 'con molto sentimento' to the Transport officer, in the hearing of all his horses.

I suppose that those wild roses will be apt to be coming out on those lanes near Upper Edgebold, and that there have been blue-bells in Lyth Wood.

If any Men have come across good reading lately, I should be very grateful for means of sharing it. And, please, a 1/- copy of *The Path* would be awfully acceptable. I've had to scrap my Browning and other books, because of lightening my kit.

I was out on a fatigue party yesterday, and it was June the First and there were glancing grasses.

I have just 1 at 'L'attaque', after a two hours' struggle and some good deception, against a fellow in this Company, who has been beating me rather often and is rather good.

Oh Lord, I wish I was there.

<sup>1</sup> See page 95.



To R. A. KNOX.

1st R.B.

*June 2, 1916.*

I am less depressed than I was, (a) on general grounds, (b) because there is a hutch of tame rabbits in the farmship in which I am living. By the way, have you got your copy of the illustrated catalogue of Academy Pictures for 1916? That is very important. As far as I can see, there are no elands this year; but there are the usual panthers.

I wonder if you have got a lot of my old IV. 1 now? Perhaps some Man will send me a School list.

TO HIS SISTER.

1st R.B.

*June 8, 1916.*

I wish I could just have one evening with you all, to give you the real local colour of all this life; the old woman leading in the cows by the horns, the two tired horses which hang their heads out of their stable windows and kick the doors to be fed or let out or whatever it is they want, the noise a shell makes, and all that.

It is only just over two months since I came out the second time. Serious faults in this country-side are the lack of hedges and the comparative scarcity of wild roses.

OUR SCIENCE CORNER.

Does the air in an air-cushion go bad, if not renewed for a period of weeks?

I gave a most successful dinner to celebrate my regimental birthday, and champagne was procured, and I played the violin till a late hour.

It must be very, very good at T. Bay,<sup>1</sup> looking up towards 'the Roof of Wales', with the clouds messing about it. Well, cheers, everybody. I am awfully fit.

<sup>1</sup> Tre-Arddur Bay.

To E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.<sup>1</sup>

1st R.B.

June 9, 1916.

*No. 1 Statement.*

Oh Man! Yes, indeed.

June.

How splendid of you.

Man.

*No. 2 Statement.*

It is, by the way, very right that you should have sent that glancing grass, because, just about June 6 (the date of yours), I said to myself, 'I must write and tell the Man that there are glancing grasses and that it is June'. And you replied to my thought.

Man.

*No. 3 Statement.*

At the same time, Man, I want a letter from you. Did you get my last, written in some depression (since cleared away)?

Do write (it's your turn, you know), if you can. [I did, thank Heaven, and he got it. E. H. L. S. July 16.] We are a little farther away from you than we were. In billets, working-parties at night, etc. A dirty kind of life.

Love from

A Man.

To A. E. KITCHIN.

*Whit-Sunday, June 11, 1916.*

I am reviving my interest again in the European problem. Do you know, I believe that, if we win, the best solution will be almost the *status quo*, because it would only be the

<sup>1</sup> Who had sent him a 'glancing grass'. See page 46.



*status quo* materially, not spiritually. For the Germans would not be humiliated, and the large better element among them (I don't believe it doesn't exist) would probably '*rapproche*' with the good elements among the Allies, and that would be the basis for a European understanding and a determination on all our parts to behave better in future, seeing how little the War would have brought to all of us. The greatest victory that could be won in this War would be, not the particular gain of one or a few nations, but the tragic realisation by all nations that nobody has gained anything; statement! As for 'The War after the War', and Mr. Hughes, and all that disastrous sort of idea—what *are* we to do about it?

We are still behind the line, but only a short distance away, sleeping and eating in daylight and working in the dark, and generally just get out of the bullet zone as dawn arrives, and the moon and the stars and the star-shells get faint. I have been chiefly engaged in clearing out an old disused trench, all overgrown with grass and marked by shell-holes of some old battle of a year ago, I should think; full of old refuse pits and wet spiders' webs, and generally rather a creepy, unpleasant place. One expects to see the ghosts of French soldiers as one turns a corner. But the star-shells of the Bosches, 200 yards in front, keep one to realities.

I am longing for more news from Shrewsbury.

To H. ST. L. B. MOSS.     *1st Battalion The Rifle Brigade—  
France.*

*Whit-Sunday, June 11, 1916.*

This is, I am rather ashamed to think, an answer to your excellent letter, written to me on March 24, when you



were staying with the Huntingfords near Faringdon. Did I know it, you said? I do—a wonderful country. It is a good country, that. (*June 24.*) And it was something like that that I thought of when I lay down last night, and under the tent flap looked at a wonderful sky in the North-West, and thought of all the dear things and people that are under it.

We had rather an impressive Church Parade Service this morning. I always find Church Parade a very moving affair. At the same time it seems awfully odd, reconciling all this with Christianity; almost using Christianity as a weapon. For while the Church out here, to all appearances, makes an appeal to the individual soul, yet it is felt by all to be an item in the training, and everything is made 'appropriate'; all the most warlike similes of St. Paul are made to apply, and 'Fight the good Fight' is of a certainty this Fight against the Bosches, and little else.

*June 25.* Indeed the most tragic thing about war is that one has to make a new morality, compatible with it, and to alter all standards of right and wrong. And it is a great thing to have instituted the Conscientious Objector. Never mind whether he is of the sincere kind or not. We have, by that clause in the Act, recognised that the individual conscience is supreme. If shirkers have taken shelter under it, I don't worry about them very much.

This morning I have been reading some remarkable poems by C. H. Sorley, who was at the King's Choir School when I was up there, and afterwards at Marlborough, and was killed last Autumn. You ought to see them, published by the Cambridge University Press.

Well, I think I must stop, because (1) you won't be able to read what I have written already, (2) the post goes rather soon, (3) I don't know what I should write about further.



Active service makes me full of ideas, but incapable of expression.

Have you been writing anything, prose or verse, lately? Do carry out the 'Shrewsbury Epic' idea, which you once suggested. The hunger for Shrewsbury this June is almost intolerable.

Now I must say good-bye.

TO J. O. WHITFIELD.

1st R.B.

June 15, 1916.

There is very little to write about. All this news is so hideous from our own personal points of view, but thank Heaven, with it all, we seem to be nearer victory.

Well, Man, I sometimes think of you at 4.0 on Sundays, and there are 'glancing grasses' here, to remind me of Franklin's fields<sup>1</sup> in June.

TO HIS SISTER AND BROTHERS.

1st R.B.

June 27, 1916.

It's possible that mails will be interrupted a bit in the future. So, if you do not hear from me, I want you not to be unnecessarily anxious about me. There is nothing I can tell you, except that I am happy and very fit. The weather is fresh and the wind in the West, and it is beautiful weather, except for camping. For every now and then comes a heavy downpour. But there is much in the freshness of this brushwood patch, where we are bivouacked, to remind me of the hill at the back of the Chapel House,<sup>2</sup> and the Mere Cottage garden, and of your own dear selves. Meanwhile, not far away, a heavy bombardment is going on.

<sup>1</sup> See page 46.

<sup>2</sup> At Capel Curig.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

June 27, 1916.

I have had a good deal of news of the best of places lately. Good news of that glorious Malvern Match, of the Corps Inspection, but also of Leslie Woodroffe's<sup>1</sup> death. I could never have thought that they would send him out again. He was so very much a part of the place, and is still. Do you think that we all continue to have our part in the place after death, even when not remembered? I am very jealous of mine; and though I know such an article of faith is called animism or some such horrible name, yet I cling to the idea of becoming, after death, more completely a part of Shrewsbury than when I was an unworthy, active member of the community; not by what I've done there, but by how much I have loved it.

It is inevitable, just at present, that we should think such things, and impossible, at present, for me to express them legibly or intelligibly. I expect Leslie Woodroffe thought something of the same sort, but I expect also that he met death easily; for I think he trained himself to self-sacrifice.

Oh! I meant to say that there are five officers in this Company, and three of us are quoting *The Wrong Box* pretty frequently, much to the annoyance of the other two.

To E. H. L. SOUTHWELL.

1st R.B.

June 27, 1916.

Oh Man, I can't write now. I am too like a coach before the Bumping Races or Challenge Oars.

So, Man, good luck.

Our NEW HOUSE and Shrewsbury are immortal, which is a great comfort.

<sup>1</sup> See page 194.







M. G. W.  
Ireland  
August, 1911



To H. E. E. HOWSON.

1st R.B.

*June 29, 1916.*

There is a big attack coming off very shortly, and we are in it. And there is just a minute to scribble a line to you, with my love and greeting. We all hope it will be a success, though it will be a difficult business, I am sure. Our job will be to take the front system of trenches in this area.

Man, I can't write a letter. There is much to think, but nothing to *say*, really.

TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

1st R.B.

*June 29, 1916.<sup>1</sup>*

I dare say this will not reach you, but I have asked a friend to send it for me when censorship does not apply any longer. We are taking part in a big attack, and I go up to the trenches this afternoon and shall not be able to write again between now and the beginning of it. All hope that this attack will bring us a little nearer the end of the War. There is little doubt that it will be a difficult business, but we hope for success after the bombardment that is going on. Our business is to take the front system of German trenches in the area we are in.

And now, I just want to say to you all, that, if I don't come through it, you must all be quite cheerful about it. I am quite happy about it, though of course I can't deny that I am very keen to come home again. I look at all this from a very personal point of view, almost a selfish point of view. It seems to me that, if I die in this action, it gives me a great, simple chance of making up for a lot of selfishnesses in the past. And when I want to reconcile myself to the idea of not coming back again, I just think of all those

<sup>1</sup> He was killed two days later.

selfish mistakes I've made, and I am almost glad of the opportunity to put them right. That's my view of it. It is not priggish—I hope it doesn't sound like that.

It is also a great comfort to think of you all going on, living the same happy lives that we have led together, and of the new generation coming into it all.

I can't write more. My dearest love to you all.

I am very fit.



## CHAPTER VIII

E. H. L. S.

JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1916

THOUGH he had been anxious about White for ten days, it was not till July 13 that Southwell heard the news that he was missing. For another fortnight he was in the same part of the line as before, and then, on the 27th, the Battalion left Sombrin, and was at rest behind the line at the beginning of August. For the last three weeks of the month they entered 'the land of the Push', and were engaged in holding on to captured trenches, though they took no part in any organised attack. On September 1 Southwell speaks of the Battalion as back at rest not far from Abbeville; and during this period he was made 'O.C. Entertainments', and organised football for the men.

His Company Commander was away on leave, but returned on September 10. On the 15th the Battalion returned to the line, and took part in a big attack. Southwell was far in advance of his men, when a sniper hit him, near Delville Wood. He was killed instantaneously.

These are letters written about him.

From one who knew him intimately throughout his life:—

'His "philosophy of life" was very real, and profound in its depth. It was characteristically empirical, and not

traditional, in its method. He worked it out for himself. Never would he move a step farther than he could see, in his search after truth. It was always, I believe, theistic. Long before the end it became definitely and deliberately Christian. Both the Chaplains at the Front wrote to say he never missed a Church Parade or Celebration of Holy Communion, unless his military duties made his presence impossible. One of the Chaplains adds that he did this largely for the sake of others, and not merely for his own sake. The same Chaplain states that it was by his influence that his servant was brought to Confirmation. 'Whatever were the fundamental principles of his philosophy of life, one thing is certain; he had caught, as if by intuition, visions which "we are striving all our life to find".'

'His love of Nature was pathetic in its intensity. It was God's world to him. Whenever he went to a new district, he used to explore the locality and "interpret" it in relation (by way of comparison or contrast) to familiar places at home. He drank it all in with his whole soul as a Revelation of life.

'Akin to his love of Nature was his devotion to two forms of art, music and architecture: with regard to the latter, his description of any new billet was always by reference to "the most wonderful Cathedral in France", or "the picturesque little village Church". This form of art, like that of music, seemed to be part of his religious life.

'His unflinching devotion to duty was another marked feature of his character. When once he had made up his mind what it was his duty to do, he did it at whatever cost to himself as well as to others. It was often obvious that, if any such decision hurt others, it hurt him much more.



‘His devotion to others was possibly the most marked trait in his life. He loved them (albeit with a discriminating love) as his own soul, and was delighted, in his simple-minded way, when he saw their hearts’ response to his appeal.

‘Finally, there was his exquisite simplicity. He remained “a child” in temper and spirit to the very end. Of him it could be truly said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile”.’

From an officer of his Company:—

‘While he was with us, he was always cheerful, and a great factor in the happiness of the Battalion. As well, he was a very efficient officer, and shewed great keenness. I really think that he liked soldiering; at any rate, I know he was very happy while he was with us.’

From another fellow-officer:—

‘I have been in your son’s Company since he took over the Company in the beginning of the year, and of course I knew him well in the earlier days after the 25th of September. We all loved him, officers and men, and he was entirely unselfish. The Company, under his command, ran smoothly, and he took an immense amount of trouble over it. The first experience we had of this push, though not so disastrous from the casualty point of view, was far more unpleasant, and all through he was magnificent. If he knew what fear was, he never shewed it. I have already said that everybody loved him—the men would have gone anywhere with him. He was leading them with his usual calmness to the end. I cannot tell you how great the loss is to us, the few of us who are left. Those of us who have been through many things, pleasant and unpleasant, will never forget him.’

From a Tutor of Magdalen :—

‘I can hardly bear to write; yet, in a sense, I have been expecting the news. Do you remember the day, long ago as it seems, when Magdalen lost the Headship, and the crew came back to the barge spiritless and cowed—all but he! Ever since I knew that he had gone out, I have felt that the gallant spirit which refused to accept defeat on the river would carry him fearlessly through this greater struggle, but only too likely to the death that I sometimes fancied he would almost have desired—the death most worthy of him.

‘Nothing, I think, in all my life as a teacher, has given me greater pleasure than to hear from Alington, as I often did, of the great work he was doing at Shrewsbury. Only a few weeks ago he was telling me about it. But I know also, from what he said and partly from a letter he shewed me, that in the trenches he had found himself as perhaps he never had before.

‘I think we must not grieve for him. It was a great life, full of force and vigour and enjoyment, nobly laid down; and the memory of it will remain with some of us to the last.

‘I should not be surprised to know that these last months were to him the happiest of all. But there will be many sore hearts to-day among Magdalen men, and for myself I feel that a light has gone out of my life.’

This poem was first printed in *The Salopian* :—

LAUDATORI OPTIMO.

E. H. L. S.

Players before an empty house  
 October's pageants go,  
 That now no plaudits can arouse  
 From you, who loved them so.



By you unheeded, as of old  
 The tyrant autumn breeze  
 Will strew our pavements with the gold  
 It plunders from the trees:

Unmarked by you the swallows' flights,  
 Cloud-shapes, and chimney tunes,  
 And friendly blaze of schoolroom lights  
 On mist-wreathed afternoons.

There is no light on hill or plain,  
 No sigh of wind or wood,  
 But seems as if it watched in vain  
 To hear your 'Man, that's good!'

But where on some uncharted shore  
 Fearlessly you look down,  
 A nearer pilgrim than before  
 To that Eternal Town,

How you must cry aloud, in praise!  
 God send one echo through,  
 To cheer the dull and dusty days  
 That sunder us from you.

The last letters follow:—

## LETTERS

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TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

July 12, 1916.

White is killed, I suppose. Anyhow, I've a letter from Bailey, of Shrewsbury and the New House, saying, 'You will have heard by now' (I hadn't) 'that the thing . . . has happened'. He goes on to say he *may* be a prisoner; from which I infer he is reported missing, and do not hold any hopes of that kind, for we had heard that his Battalion was

very badly cut up. He was my greatest friend, and loved Shrewsbury. The last letter he wrote me was just before the push, and he said, among other things, 'Anyhow, Shrewsbury and our life at the New House are immortal; that's one comfort.' I dare say it shews terrible selfishness, but I have faced the casualty list daily without a tremor for two years now, and now, when I am hard hit myself, I cry out! Mum, he was *such* a dear; he was so keen on everything, and the most true 'artist', in the full sense, that I have ever known.

This month, or whatever it is (no, it's a bare fortnight, isn't it?), has opened my eyes to the lot of those who sit and wait, as I have been doing since the push started. For goodness' sake, don't let his one case make you think you have *any* more reason than before to be anxious about *my* miserable safety—what difference can *one* example, how ever near home, make to the probabilities of good or evil fortune in one more among millions? But I can sympathise with you, who are good enough (!) to be anxious about me, better now. Yet do please realise that one friend's death does not increase my risk or chances, any more than it diminishes it; you *must* not let it make you worry about it.

But I cannot be very happy, even though I did write, just before he died, to say 'NOTHING matters to you or me; we're both all right, in the right place, and we know it'. I still think I spoke the truth; or pray that I may really believe it. War is a terrible thing, especially lately, as all of us know. . . .

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

July 13, 1916.

So you are at Bapton, are you? I wonder if the weather is what you expected—do you remember, in *Bleak House*,



that terrible bit beginning 'It is raining in the place in Lincolnshire', where you seem to get drenched only to read? One day, perhaps, I'll try and send you the names of some friends there—gates in the meadows, and—ah well, I'll do that later, I hope.

You know I have heard M. White is missing, don't you? It is very, very sad for me, and perhaps even worse for the New House people, still at Shrewsbury, which he loved so tremendously.

TO R. F. BAILEY.

B.E.F.

July 13, 1916.

Thank you very much for what it is only true to call your dear letter. The little message from the Man, as well as some hints of my own, will shew you I knew the possibility of such news was always there—but does that help? Keep his letter, Phiz, after you and the Man have read and re-read the last lines. It belongs to the New House surely, and I might lose it from my luggage. The allusions to a letter of mine I can explain later, if necessary; they refer to an expression of points of view about Summer and War (I think), whose only interest can be that the Man seems to have agreed with them: but his approval seems, somehow, to make them belong to you as well; and one day I shall feel as though disloyal, if I don't repeat them.

Phiz, will you understand, when I say that I am utterly without an *attitude*, about our Man? I mean that, when one writes letters to people who have lost their sons, shall we say, one writes, I think, purely as a civilian, and with a quite honest mingling of congratulation and pride in one's sympathy; and this is not hypocrisy, because one does feel



definitely under an obligation and should be grateful, and one is, I think, a little better in some real sense—

‘Sanguis Martyrum semen Ecclesiae’.

And (you will forgive me for talking so entirely about my own feelings, but what else is there? And you encouraged me, thank God) surely never more than now I should feel that; yet I am not man enough. Nor, I think, am I making a silly mistake in regretting a missing attitude, nor doing anything irrelevant and ‘posing’: for one does wish to *face* some way or other, and not be caught on either flank by the evil days. It is only what poor Wilde said in *De Profundis*, about the trees being all right because they were *finding expression*. Ah yes, Phiz, that is it; and what if you do not grasp anything to express? Am I to go on? Good.

Well, so I tried the other extreme; suggested to myself that, while I could write to other bereaved people, I was this time completely knocked out. But no, Phiz; that is not so either: certainly it must be *No!* (And yet, . . .) Then, I think, I rebounded from that, and thought of many brave men, and said I must be stout-hearted: ‘The Man is dead: carry on.’ At which I merely turned, and laughed aloud at my lonely self for a fool: for that’s all out of a book, and I don’t truly feel it. I did think, however, of just trying to express a little more by saying a little less: suppose I just wrote ‘CREDO’ on a sheet, and posted it to you. Rather a tremendous claim, though, I thought, considering. There will be those (you, I believe, for one) who *could* make it without a tremor: somehow I feel it is too much for me, *on paper*; though I tell myself hourly it is true, alone. Was I not almost passionately invoking Hôj and all the Saints in the calendar aloud, in the trench, just five minutes before your news came? Let us leave it at that. ‘Credo quia



impossibile', sometimes; but 'Credo', notwithstanding! And that, surely, is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pages too much, all about my feelings: and not a word for the New House. But don't think, either you or the Man, that I haven't had you in my mind every moment. That is a great saying of our Man's in the letter he sent me; very typical, because he had such an enormous influence on the New House always, dating from old Broadlands days, and, of all that, he writes as one quite unaware! I doubt whether any man was loved quite in the same sort of way as ours, or had such a colossal effect, with so entire an absence of claiming it, on the people he lived with. That is why I find it so hard to send you and the Man the sort of sympathy I would give years of my life to send: as well argue with the church over the way that, whatever its foundation may now *look* like (!), it is really doing very well.

I will try and write again, and to the Man: forgive this lamest of letters (from 'trenches' theoretically, but—for a bit—reserve Company; so we have more chances of writing and more facilities in many ways), which I fear leads nowhere, but just stumbles about. Tell the Man and yourself that I love you very dearly: it is quite true, *God knows*: I cannot see anything else worth saying: but that, I believe, is; and I think our Man would have wished it: and I think he knows I am not lying!

To R. A. KNOX.

B.E.F.

July 16, 1916.

Thank you ever so much for your wonderfully good letter. It was not till to-day (it came yesterday) that I realised how good it was; at first I read it, like Phiz's, with a sort of blank stupidity, and only after reading them both many, many times did I see how splendid they both were.

Ronnie, it is very terrible; more so, I think, than yesterday. There is a curious method by which one pushes aside some feelings that get in the way (ordinary second-rate sort of aversions, I mean; as to unpleasant sights, for instance) with an almost physical sense of effort which becomes half mechanical; (I say second-rate aversions, for I do not dare to come near saying that I shift heavier visitations in the same way :) and so it was, perhaps, that I got behind that sort of callousness, or tried to, for a few hours. But just as it is a kind of effort, so it lives; especially when one is not moving about and being busy. And I don't know that it is much of a shelter worth trying, anyway. One is alone, terribly alone, without the Man (of whom you, most SURELY...). Yet I find Herbert Garton tremendously comforting: one of the best of men.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

July 16, 1916.

If I could write the sort of letter which I know I ought to try and send you, I should be the happiest man alive, in spite of everything. For it seems, somehow, that you must be in the very centre of the pain that goes with every word of the news; since to be in the New House all the time without our Man... And yet, I don't know; for only to-day I wrote to Ronnie, and wished all the time that I could have the chance of giving all I possessed for one day with you, and Phiz, and him.

Man, he was in very good form, our Man. Look at this.<sup>1</sup> It's in answer to a sheet of C. 2121, with 'Man: (Sender's number) 9/95: JUNE 1916: Man' written on it; enclosed 1 'glancing grass'. I send the answer, or answers: it seems

<sup>1</sup> The letter on page 252.



to have pleased him. Oh yes, he was in very good form ; and it is all the better for the fact that, a month before, he had been a little bit depressed, owing to a (very typical) feeling that he was being less competent than he might. 'Since cleared away,' you see ; that is very good.

I dare say you saw my letter to Phiz. I don't think, Man, that it will be clever to try and belittle the calamity. One wonders, sometimes, whether the 'Loss is common to the race' attitude is any good, and I am pretty sure it isn't. Too many priceless things have happened ever since Broadlands ; and to pretend to drop (even to the small degree which might be possible) this memory, is surely a loss rather than a gain. There was never a man really like ours, and I think the answer must be : 'So much the better for the men that owned him ; still better, the more they remember.'

Oh Man dear, I am sticking down all this philosophy, and I do hope it's all right : I try to offer *something*, for what it's worth, and please don't be angry if the ring is a bit hollow : the tune is a bit shaky, but it *is* the right tune ; of that I am sure. What you want is a great strong man, with a faith like the foundations of all the hills ; and if I, evidently, Heaven knows, am not fit to kiss the feet of such a man as that, much less to be the kind of real support I would give everything to be, yet I thank God all day and every day that, if ever two men answered that description, I believe they are in that house with you now. Do let them talk about the Man, and what they really think is the explanation of it all ; if I were to be shot to-morrow, I would leave you that as my very last message. You mustn't try and carry it off alone : I know what that's like. Dear me, Man, a heavy letter ; I almost wonder if the Man's smiling over my shoulder. So clumsy and so voluble, isn't it ? But not wrong, Man ; no.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

July 20, 1916.

Received the casualty list. Yes, it is M. G. White, I am afraid. I like to think of him, as Browning did of Abt Vogler; say that his million ideas of music, poetry, teaching, friendship are now utterly satisfied: and it seems at least mistaken to grieve for him too much.

Ah me! but I was nearly saying it is a cruel world. What a wonderful thing the faith must be, when it is able to keep one absolutely proof against everything! I sometimes think that, in the Divine Arithmetic, 1 and 1 do not make 2. I mean that one is apt to look at the tragedies of the War, and say 'This, and this, and this—how awful!', while all the while it may not be *more* awful for anybody, God included, for twenty myriads of families to be bereaved than for one; it is at least arguable that no *one* family suffers more, and perhaps, even, it suffers less, by the thought that others too need comfort. I do not know, but I try my little hardest to believe.

It is dark, and 'He is a God that hideth Himself'; but a man may walk, when he cannot see his hand in front of his face—and arrive after all! It is not only in the trenches, I expect, that there is such a thing as the great 'Stand Down' and the Great Dawning!

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

July 25, 1916.

I could not possibly do anything but send him<sup>1</sup> a copy of Rupert Brooke's Poems, called '1914', because there are poems about the soldier which seem to me to hit perhaps

<sup>1</sup> His father.



the very highest note that has ever been struck during the War. No one who has not been here knows, I think, how difficult those *tremendous* ideals are, but is the better, I think, out here for reading them. The only thing I am anxious about is lest I may have given some one a copy before, at home.

You will, in any case, know the one that speaks of his life after death; but I think 'Safety' is *the* greatest thing of the War. I have just been reading it again in Garton's copy, and was enormously impressed.

To J. O. WHITFIELD.

B.E.F.

Aug. 2, 1916.

That was surely a very fine, and if I may say so, a very brave letter. I think you hardly understood what I meant, though. It can best be explained by pointing out that there is a deal of difference between inability to feel one and the other of two propositions—'Carry on'; and 'The Man is dead: Carry on.' The first is being done; the second has a sort of brilliant ring about it which, if attainable, would be rather fun, but happens to be entirely foreign. What I really meant was what I called absence of attitude altogether: one plods along, not particularly hearty and not particularly sensitive; for some at least of one's emotions here die easily: after a month and a half in the line, with a period out in the supports, one becomes rather a low order of being—I mean all but the good men do. We are now no great distance from the Man, if you *understand*; and life above ground has been very good for some days: we are 'seeing the light' (in a sense no Greek ever guessed), and a very delightful change that is. There is actually a bathing-place in this village, and after the enormous heat of the day a bathe is very good.

To C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

Aug. 2, 1916.

Well, we are resting at the moment in a village: and very attractive it is, after several weeks of life in, or just behind, the line. Any more definite allusion to our place is, of course, out of the question, except that M. G. W.'s district is not very far; though I don't really know even now, within many miles, where *that* is. You, no doubt, *understand*?

Meanwhile, everything is very good: we marched a few miles before breakfast, by way of getting a bit of air into our lungs before the heat; then I worked on a machine gun for some hours, and actually had a *bathe* to-night.

And so the term is over, and I know—how well!—what that last week has been like. I suppose they came round, as they always do, to say good-bye, though with more regret than ever—alas!—when they came to you; and there would be the last Sunday evening Chapel, and your address<sup>1</sup> (I await it eagerly); and the almost conscious look of 'Good-bye' on the face of the Breiddens,<sup>2</sup> which (even before I came away) used to send one's heart into one's mouth; and some of us would be thinking how we paced the School Yard, years ago, on just such a Summer night; and the younger amongst us would be wondering how the place could carry on during another year, when this and that place was empty—having not learnt yet from experience that a school is the only immortal thing on earth, and the only thing about which all the platitudes are true and all the longings undying.

It is not like that in the Army—at least, I think, not to the same extent. Not but that the number of adorable days

<sup>1</sup> 'A Conversation': published in *Shrewsbury Fables*.

<sup>2</sup> The Welsh hills nearest to Shrewsbury.



here is not incalculable; but it is not quite the same story. . . .

Well, well, this had better go now. Let me have your address in Chapel, won't you? Later on, perhaps, I will send you some news, should there be any. At present we are happy enough in this existence, wondering a little, but generally too tired and contented for more than wonder; and, perhaps luckily, we are not allowed too much time for that, either. In fact, now I come to think of it, I doubt if I've done any of that for some time now. It seems a trifle futile, considering how very little there is to be wondered at, and how many better men have contrived to get through with no wondering at all. But I would like to see your address, all the same.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

Aug. 6, 1916.

Incredibly good concert in the orchard last night. One Baynes (late C.U.B.C.; he rowed against me) is now our M.O., and very remarkable he is: he is one of those men who sing like birds, and swim, and dive (WITH somersaults), and do a lot of shouting, and are very good, in fine. You should have heard him take 300 men clean off their feet with 'Songs of Araby' last night; an old, old friend, of course, but I never saw it so effective. Nor any one so priceless as the modern R.F.C. man: he is perfectly immaculate, salutes all officers, and drills like a guardsman. He was much in request at the concert.

Oh Man, *The Path* is always in my valise; and I read not only the tale of *The Emilian Way* (I seem to have known one or two such!), but also the story which tells how 'Youth came up that valley at evening, borne upon a southern air'. I know what that means; it seems to make

more frequent visits in these latter days. It is the best book in the world, and has been read by (I think) nine officers, in more than one Battalion, since I got it from you.

I must stop now, Man dear, as time is rather short before parade. You will understand, this leaves me very well, thinking everlastingly of the place we and the Man all loved, praying (as C. A. A. would say) for the peace of our Jerusalem, and in no way so *very* far removed, I think, from our Man himself. Yet not *definitely* very near, either.

TO H. E. WALKER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 8, 1916.

By the way, *The Four Men*, you know! Well, I'm not going to launch forth into a tirade about it; but an officer of the 60th told me yesterday that he liked it enormously, and more than *The Path to Rome*. It is awfully good, but not, I think, quite such a great affair. I mention it, because I have an idea it was about in your time in V. B that the rage for Belloc began—my rage, I mean; for, no doubt, those who knew him found out all about him long ago.

I will not weary you with any laments over Mr. White: you know well enough what it must mean to me and all of us. It was indeed a shock, though, coming so soon after the news of Mr. Woodroffe, who, besides being I suppose one of the best men in all the R.B. and in one of its most celebrated families, was partly responsible for my joining it, and in rather a special way seemed to have an enormous claim on my gratitude.

Meanwhile we are sitting, not actually in the trenches, but 'somewhere', and awaiting orders, behind. The weather is glorious; so is your letter; so are you, and I would give anything to see you; so is France; and so I



think is the whole look of affairs in general (when one is able to look at it in the right way, and not grumble at the price when the casualty lists come out); and in a word, I *am* very happy, and would like you to think so!

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 10, 1916.

Meanwhile, there is your poem. Which, let me say at once, I quite definitely like; it seems to me (1) to be true, which is more than you can say for some poetry. I mean that this is just what right-minded people do, and ought to, feel when (as I at the moment) they are near a river. I think (2) the *metre* is the right length. I mean, it obviously ought to be *short*, as yours is. To write in ten-syllable lines, in the eighteenth-century manner, is to give up the game, or forty points of it, before you start. (3) Rhymes; h'm, well, yes. A pedant would growl over 'cause' and 'yours', because of the 'r'. I know one man who always fumes at that, because he says you are making it 'caur-r-se'. Otherwise they're all right, aren't they? (4) Words; I say, *not* 'gladness and joy', because this  $1 + 1 = 0$ , rather, doesn't it? 'It's all right in the winter time' (as the song doesn't say) in the good old carol, because it's quaint: here it's either nothing, or a quotation; and there, that's pulled the bits of your poem out for inspection, but now comes the re-reading as a complete poem, and that's the real test; and if it *means* the Brook, as do Tennyson's and Kingsley's efforts in the same line, surely it's a poem worth writing. And to me, it *does* mean the Brook, and there you are. This is rather a long criticism: is it the sort of thing you wanted, I wonder? Oh, I say, there's only one more thing, and that is whether you could have made it a little more *just the one brook* you've got your eye on. This covers



all brooks, and perhaps that's better; but my own opinion, if you want it, is that, if you'd pinned it down fast to one brook, with two wee lines, only, to make it stand out, it would have made it even more vivid. Yet, as I've already said, it *does* bring out the brook very, very clearly, even as it is. Dear me, this is too long, and I must get to business.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 11, 1916.

This morning I was alone; so I went along the river bank, and made a *highly important discovery*, which is that the F.S. Post Card makes a capital *boat* in skilful hands like yours or mine. I put one afloat this morning, within twenty yards of a huge artillery camp on the bank, but not in the least abashed by the watchful eyes of one or two inquisitive gunners at their ease on the bank. I put her well out, and with a poke from a stick off she went. All went well (this was a very important voyage, and you must forgive me if I dwell on it rather lengthily) for quite a long time; it was necessary to throw one big stone into a shallow, to prevent her coming to rest much too soon. And there was a certain home-sick look about her (perhaps she caught it from her designer), which was a little too apt to make her aim at unexpected little harbours on the way down. With this exception, however, she did well, and it was no fault of hers that she did go right down to join the — Oh dear, here's the Censor again; one can't even run one's private navigation without being careful. What stopped her, after what would have been at Bapton a very good run of some *hundreds* of feet, was a regular forest of thick weeds on a corner, into which she not only butted, and waited some time, but actually slid right into a little



wave, which opened a passage for her, and closed her in later. And there she lies, and will lie for a long time, as I fully expect. Not a bad trip, though, by any means.

Yes, that is right: *μὴ μεριμνήσητε εἰς τὴν αὐριον*. Curiously it is far, *far* easier in a less easy period than in what we call a 'cushy' one. In the Ypres days 'twenty-four hours out' was a thing to look forward to, and down in our last place a *week* out seemed short! So I fully hope it will be, here: in fact, I know it is so. One says to oneself that it is silly even to *think* of anything unpleasant till we get to So-and-so at the earliest, and there one stops; at least, I think so.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 14, 1916.

This will reach you too late to be a proper birthday letter. I had hoped to write two days ago, but it couldn't be done. But, at any rate, let me now send all my very best love and prayers, and wish you *many happy returns* of the day.

I think, if it must once be granted that I am to be away *at all*, you would agree that this, of all places on earth, is the most wonderful for me to be in. I must not, I suppose, describe it at all yet, though a bit later I see no reason why at least a general outline, without names, should not be given of what to me has been the most incredibly beautiful and thrilling thing I have ever seen on earth.

We are not in the line as I write. I am sitting on an inverted biscuit tin (my bath!), and what I see looks rather like the Great Orme's Head on a crowded day. Ah, it is wonderful, wonderful; everything that one had dreamed of. . . . Well, I will tell you more about it later. Meanwhile,

there is no doubt I am portentously pleased with everything I see and *hear* (if you understand), and highly fit and happy.

TO MRS. REID.

B.E.F.

Aug. 14, 1916.

This little line I have meant to write for a very long time, and now that Capt. Wilmer has your address to give me, as I have just found, I will write at once; only saying that neither that nor any other excuse (such as our occupations, for instance) is really any reason, I fear, for my delay.

Schoolmasters are narrow-minded creatures, I am told (*he* wasn't!), and this, perhaps, explains the kind of jealousy which makes me sometimes feel that *none* can miss Malcolm more than I do: sometimes I am good enough to make a generous exception in favour of his family and of the New House, but not always even of them. It is absurd, of course, for do I not know perfectly well how enormously (more than any man I ever knew; it is not, obviously, true of everybody, however much it ought to be) he loved 'his ain folk' and his home, and was constantly talking of you all? This and that he would mean to do when he got home for the holidays, just as he used to when he was a boy: it was good to hear him. Yes, I do know really how sad a blow it must be to you all.

Ah, but I have seen his letter written just before the advance, and it is wonderful, is it not? I have good reason to know of one friend of his, who walked over some lately German trenches; with what thought, I leave you to imagine. I do not know, myself, where he fell; but it is no idle saying, as I may perhaps explain later, if I tell you how surely every tree, and village, and trench speak of him and his



achievement to me, as I pass by. . . . A most wonderful letter, surely, and so typical of him: it is, indeed, an inspiration to any soldier that reads it. But more important than all is the great fact that he was perfectly happy about it all—and *whoever* could imagine he would be otherwise?—and that for him there is nothing but a frenzy of congratulation, even of envy, though for us there's always the almost intolerable blank. I can say that, now: I could not feel it a month ago, when it was too new. But now (in a tiny little degree) I seem to think I guess the way he went, and with what colossal triumph and shouting he *really* ought to be greeted!

Yes, but that is easily produced here, that sense of immense success in his doings, and of a wildly inimitable and challenging example to us others; but for you it cannot be quite the same. A letter like this cannot, however light-headed (at the moment) its writer, really consist of nothing but a beating of the drums! And I do ask you to believe that I most deeply sympathise with you; most deeply and most easily, in the loss of your dear brother and my friend. No: in spite of those last two words, I am not going to be jealous any longer! Only very sorry for you all, and hoping most devoutly for your comfort.

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

Aug. 18, 1916.

We go up into the trenches to-morrow, so I've not time for a very long letter. One can, I think, feel more quietly and happily about our dear Man now; at least, I feel much happier than at first. I think his wonderful letter must lead that way. *Our* bit of the line will not be what is known as a soft job, though our present intentions after

arrival are somewhat doubtful. But I would like you to think I'm fit and well and happy, and not to be anxious at all.

TO HIS SISTER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 18, 1916.

Lately we have been seeing 'Punches', and 'Bairns-fathers', and things galore, though I don't think it's very likely that we shall be quite so comfy for next week. We are, in fact, going into the trenches to-morrow, and we know that it will not be what is called a 'cushy' job. More than that we do not know, just at present; but 'keep up your best courage', as the dear, dear, patient, and little understood, and most adorable Riflemen say in the simple letters home which I have censored and send with mine.

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

B.E.F.

Aug. 19, 1916.

Thank you enormously for your letter and for the copy of *The Salopian*. I needn't say, what every one must have said when they heard it, how wonderful I thought your two addresses.<sup>1</sup> I liked hugely the definition of Education: it seemed *exactly* to combine the two sides of the thing; so that neither the Philistine hero (for all his merits) nor the mere artist can quite claim perfection; a sort of Goliath-Léon Berthelini character (is that the name of the man in 'Providence and the Guitar'?<sup>2</sup> I mean him, anyway) is, I suppose, tolerable, but not either alone.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Aug. 28, 1916.

I expect you'd like some horrors before long!! I dare say I can give you some one day, but it doesn't seem par-

<sup>1</sup> 'A Conversation': published in *Shrewsbury Fables*.

<sup>2</sup> In *New Arabian Nights*.



ticularly necessary. There is nothing so *very* romantic over the remains of brave men blown to every kind of bits weeks ago, as to make them worth remembering *too* much, nor in recollections of the same thing happening to one's own people in one's trench, though, so far, only in a milder degree as regards numbers. Oh! but the R.A.M.C.! They are wonderful. Seventy-six hours' carrying without sleep, one party had. And I'll never forget, after my corporal (I call him 'mine') was killed, how, on a call for stretcher-bearers, *four* came *doubling* towards the exposed place, and I had to shout them back, all but one, the others being needlessly exposed. That arrival nearly broke me down altogether.

It is a WONDERFUL world, you know!!

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

September 1, 1916.

I am now (for a considerable period, probably; perhaps—well, no; but anyway a good long rest, I can say; during which you need not have the least anxiety therefore!) right, right back, several miles behind the most beautiful cathedral I know, which I hope, if I'm lucky, I may see again soon, at closer range than the railway.

We are quite exhausted. After a terrible forty-eight hours' (on and off) bombardment of varying degrees in trenches, we came out and marched to bivouac in reserve. I went dead off to sleep several times on the road, and bumped into the man ahead! Comic, that; but at the time I was not happy, because I was so done that it was a struggle to get in at all. This was one of the few times I've been so done that I had difficulty in keeping going, and it is, I suppose, rather a good thing for people who

are as a rule *reasonably* strong, at any rate to be really 'done' occasionally—(not, of course, that I've been out here eleven months without finding out; but seldom, if ever, was I so tired as last night): it keeps them mindful of what sort of task is suitable for the smaller, and perhaps weaker, among the men.

Well, I will write to-morrow some more about the things we've been through. At present, there's no need to say more than that there has been indeed good cause to thank God for the events of the last three weeks.<sup>1</sup>

TO C. A. ALINGTON.

Sept. 1, 1916.

It would not be justice to our own people not to point out that we were gloriously miserable up there, and had the most *beastly* time, thank you! That wood, with its horrible battle signs, was indeed no joy-party: and it seems likely to remain an offence before God and man for a long, long time, for it is not easy to see how to mend matters under present conditions. Yet even so, in one's better moments, when not too 'done', one could see it was all very glorious, and even from the horrors—nothing very new, only so ubiquitous—that were all around it was not hard to catch *some* slender inspiration. . . . Well, well.

And now here we are, right, right back, miles from anywhere—though the most lovely cathedral on earth (I think) is within a day's march. And we find we are farther from shops and civilisation than ever—it is thirty odd days now since we saw a shop—and in spite of being happy enough (as we ought to be: the last forty-eight hours' bombardment left me unhurt, but hit by little pieces literally a dozen times, I should think; only falling stuff on the clothes or

<sup>1</sup> Spent in trenches by Delville Wood.



helmet, and only a few nasty jars, really, which but for the helmet would, I think, have done for me, but my dug-out was broken in over me once, and—well, in fact, I was very lucky through the whole of a very long and tedious bit of crumping; that's all really).—As I was saying, instead of being happy to be alive, we're already 'strafing' at not having ordered things to read (and so forth—see below), and in fact, to put it plainly—could you be so very good as to send me out something? I don't a bit know what, but I'm getting horribly stupid and ignorant of everything: has nobody written a book lately which one ought to read? (That's rather dreadful, but I can say that,—as I'm so notoriously not a seeker after books that are 'in the swim', so to speak—without being misunderstood!) Hasn't somebody written something like those *Housemaster's Letters* lately, or some pedagogic work? And all this panicking about education that goes on in *The Times*; do tell me, when you next write, where we are. One would think, from the way people talk, that there would be no England, as we knew it, at all after the War!—Or, indeed, anything printed would be simply pounced upon out here—you can't imagine how mentally starved one gets, and all without any particular reason, if one would once make up one's mind to the prospect of treating books as what the Army calls 'consumable stores'; I mean of getting a book out and not *mind*ing leaving it behind in billets. Ah, if every one did that! For we had to send home practically everything we owned, lately, to get luggage down to weight.

There, I've got that grievance off—I've said much the same thing to my people too. It's all one's fault for not asking sooner; so is the absolute starvation which seems to threaten one's religious attitude out here—unless one is already one of the great ones. Then again we hear a few

sermons—about one a month, perhaps; not more than a handful, ever since I came out; and not till to-day have I written home to ask for something to read to keep one's soul alive. One's so appallingly stupid, that's all: it is easy to arrange better, really.

I said I would explain 'and so forth', just now. It means I've been made sort of O.C. Entertainments (!) for our rest period, and am too blank to be able to think of anything clever beyond football and concerts—'and so forth', and it's all very vague and unsatisfactory. And in fact, as I've not had any proper night's sleep for ages, I'm writing drivel which should never have been begun, and had better go to bed.

PS. Do send me a sermon letter: I'm sure that's what I want. A kind of religious Broadsheet, you know; they ARE WANTED!

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

September 6, 1916.

This first visit to the wood was the most unpleasant time we have had, in some ways, which is consoling—now it's over!!

Our casualties, owing to the vigorous digging which the men put in, were quite small. One rather tragic figure, though he was brave enough, and only rather badly shaken, was Wallis, our comic singer, who had certainly had as bad a time as most others among the men.

It was in the recreation room at Arras, in the ———, that he first came out strong as a humorist; and to see the poor fellow scared badly—and no wonder—during these later days of our trip, was sad for any one who remembered his



impersonation of that irate husband in search of the Toreador, or his song 'Leetle by leetle, and beet by beet':—

I am not fishing, though here I sit:  
I'm only drowning a worm in it  
Little by little, and bit by bit.

All of which, of course, was reproduced at ——, at that quite memorable starlit concert in the orchard. Still, a rest will no doubt revive him. . . .

Horrors? Well, yes, I suppose so; but there seems no useful purpose in recalling them. Even from the most lamentable remains of brave men, blown to every sort of bits, and accusingly unburied beneath the stars, it was not hard to catch a rather obvious inspiration. There is some rather grim tale of a certain hand protruding through the parapet (such as you may see withered and beckoning, and not ghastly at all, near the more dreadful valley of Tophet, which lies to the west, nearer the village's brick-dust) in some trenches far away from here, which a certain Regiment grasped familiarly as they passed by. I am not at all sure whether this was a profane act at all, even though done in jest. Myself, as I said on hearing it, I do not feel humorous about the dead at all: I feel more inclined to salute them: in fact, when alone, I generally do. But it is not impossible, I think, to see something grimly sacramental in this curious greeting of theirs; and I believe the shade of that warrior smiled to see it, and knowing the hands that grasped his for those of new comrades, he would not be troubled at all.

Oh! dear, this is poor stuff. But what would you have?

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

Sept. 7, 1916.

There was a motor lorry going from Brigade H.Q. to Abbeville at 10, carrying Quartermasters and Mess Corporals and casual officers, in search of purchases of various kinds ; and I was sent with our Q.M. (Paine), to get various odds and ends for any one that wanted them. I dare say it was a kind of excuse for getting me a holiday, but anyway sundry officers are the richer by towels, shaving soap, slippers, wine, tobacco (oh no ; I left that behind at the canteen, a bad business!), and so forth. Rather a good game, seeing all your money gradually fade away, and then remembering you'll get it all back next day.

After a most wonderful ride, we found the lorry gone off, not having given us even five minutes' grace. What our Q.M. did was to catch no less a man than the A.D.M.S., just leaving for the town in his ambulance. So we got on that, and were there in no time. The Brigadier has a lovely 'château' in the valley, and I noticed that he has real chairs to sit on ; I mean, leather arm-chairs that one might dream of in a dug-out ! But I suppose every one thinks his neighbours are more cosy than himself in the Army, and certainly the B'dier did not enjoy his day any more than I did.

With us was an interpreter—with terrific good rumours ; rather tantalising this sort of thing, I fear, but you can't have these *yet* !

You know there is a good deal to be said for riding of a morning through the wonderful country that is really France ; real valleys and hills, and a real harvest waiting to be brought in, and real trees at which you look in surprise, to see if it is true that they really have their branches, and



are not torn from their roots by shells. Even now, after leaving the salient months ago, a valley of any pronounced character still strikes one as a glorious novelty.

Well, we reached the town. Throughout the day I made the wineshop my depot (let me add hastily that it is a wholesale place!) for my parcels, and after making a few purchases I went off to see the cathedral. It stands wonderfully well above the neighbouring houses, and though it is not like *the* Cathedral, it was quite enough to make me catch my breath, on seeing its two towers suddenly round the corner. Late Gothic, I suppose, but Gothic good and unmistakable: and the boast on the west door, 'Dilexi decorem Domus tuae' (dated 1624, by the way), was worth making.

There was a curious monument (I suppose to St. Wulfran) standing in the middle of the chancel; a gold, mitred abbot, facing the congregation with so realistic an attitude that I could not, for a moment, be sure that it was not some priest reciting some very special office. Though if so, and even if not so, why back to the Altar?

Yes, indeed I stood still and praised God for that façade. So, as usual, I went into my own place to pray. I met tragedy, though, on my way out. (Mais, mon Dieu, le beau tableau!) It was a black-clad woman sobbing into her handkerchief by a pillar near the west end, watched commiseratingly by a girl with two little children. It was a temptation, almost, to ambush her and murmur 'Du courage!', or something of the sort, but I thought not. . . . This is the sort of thing that makes me feel the incarnation of selfishness, for really believing in my foolish moments that the War, taken as a whole, is not such bad fun. . . .

There was one quite famous half-hour or so, actually in a second-hand bookshop, though 2½*d.* for reading *The*

*Vision of Er* (in an old collegiate edition, I suppose) is not bad going!! True to my pedagogue instinct, perhaps, I also got an old copy of Horace, just to throw away, and a thing with German in it. These were both well worth getting, just for a few days, at least. Here I must stop, as space is running out.

TO HIS MOTHER.

B.E.F.

Sept. 7, 1916.

I read *The Vision of Er* after breakfast; *voilà assez!*

Fussy, otherwise: fuss with that map of billets for the Division, mild fuss I mean; the Battalion are not worrying me for it, but my incompetence is, and I am already sick of compass bearings. Mild fuss, too, with the football arrangements, though Dennet is being splendid with them.

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Sept. 1916.

*Books.* Do send me some Novel (or something) that people are talking about. What *does* one read, nowadays, of anything? My mind is a complete blank, and I get daily stupider and more cabbage-like. Is there anything in the 7*d.* series (no, not *that*, I think) that is really good just now? Do you know that for over thirty days I've not been near a place where you could buy anything in print at all, or anything else, and I'm simply starved (mentally, I mean!! not otherwise)? I lived for a week on J. Verne's *Centre de la Terre*, borrowed from a schoolmaster at —. Which reminds me, I've been terribly starved for some devotional book, and if you could send out one, Knox Little's, perhaps: oh dear, oh dear, look at this list, and this request has come nearly last; it's rather



dreadful. Sometimes, in these little churches, I have pounced greedily, like a famished beast, on an old, tattered volume of Huguenot or Roman sermons, to catch any glimpse of a message of exhortation from any casual line, and *found* it, every time; but I ought to have written *long* ago, to ask for something fuller. . . .

I believe the thing would be if I could have something (turning to secular literature again) sent out periodically, of a cheap nature, to leave and lose. One doesn't hope to return smokes, which cost more; and yet, just because books will and must be lost now, one hesitates to ask for them. It is the wrong end of the stick, surely!

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Sept. 9, 1916.

*A Civilian Reaction.* 1st week Sept. '16.

If it seems, as it probably does, that my letters are about anything but the Push and the War, this does not so much imply a conscientious dread of the censor (myself, mainly) as a rather definite feeling that, for the time, it is rather good to have a change. And I have had particularly good opportunities of letting the War alone for a week, for I have been made to run a little committee of three to look after 'games', i. e. a concert, football, cross-country running, and so forth; and as this takes more time than one might think, we have been given a good deal of time free from the not very humorous parades which the Battalion has while out at rest. I don't, as a matter of fact, excuse myself the early morning march (7.0-8.30, usually), because, though I am notoriously a horrible person to get out of bed, I do definitely enjoy this show enormously, and it does a little to keep one fit; so, though not compelled, I generally go.



It is true that I've been asked occasionally, 'What *is* it that this lazy, mysterious Sports Committee does?' But I tell them that it is their jealousy and ignorance that makes them ask! It's a bit like the Army, at first sight, to put *me* into Association Football, but I suppose an Old Blue is supposed to know something of how to start things of the kind: that is one explanation. Anyway, let me claim that a concert is being given to-night, and that our football ground is rather remarkably good. So is the team, but we let the Captain of the side do all that, naturally, so the aforesaid 'L.M.S. Committee' claims no credit there. We beat the Trench Mortar Battery handsomely yesterday.

However, what I was saying was that a reaction has rather set in, and for a week I've been rather enjoying the different outlook. Of course the visit to the big town — was a day to remember; but there was an excursion to a smaller market-town, quite soon after we came here, which stood out at the time as a day of wonder. Remember, I had not seen a shop for over thirty days; and imagine what it was like to be confronted, after a delightful ride with Heycock, with two really standing streets (no ruins), full of little shops where you could buy civilised things like teacups, books (there were *at least* twenty, in all, in the village; twenty volumes I mean!), and even shirts, to say nothing of fruit and wine, etc.:—but not tobacco, except the French, which is rather hopeless, though I once loved their cigarettes, I remember.

They know how to make omelettes there, too, but that's by the way. . . .

This is all very well, and of course the militarism must come back, and come quickly. If the whole Army said 'Now, let's be civilians', the Hun would have a fine time! But I tell myself that perhaps it doesn't do much



harm right back here for once; and, considering the total abandonment of my civilian life with which I took the plunge into the Army, I see no reason to doubt my ability to get back into the groove! Let's hope so, as the groove however narrow is, I take it, what I am here to move in!

To H. E. E. HOWSON.

B.E.F.

Sept. 9, 1916.

I was just saying, overleaf, to myself, that I had met a good man. He was dining at our Head Quarters the other night; I forget his name, or rather I never heard it; but he was Adjutant Cambridge O.T.C., like Maclachlan at Oxford. I said, when he came in, to myself that you would have called him a great man; for when we were introduced to him, after getting up in the middle of our dinner, he took just no notice beyond a glance, and went on peeling his coat. This was glorious, and all the more because, though he didn't care a damn what our names were, he made himself very entertaining at dinner.

We are, for the moment, miles upon miles upon miles behind the land of the 'Push', from which the Division has come out: sufficient that we spent three weeks there, and the Division is supposed to have made a great name. Our Battalion was spoken very well of, I hear; we did not make any very organised attack, but were said to have held on to the captured trenches in a satisfactory manner: we had a longer go, naturally, than anybody else in the Brigade, as it was not the turn of the Battalion to go over the top this time. I don't think I want to bother about this Push just now, though. It is Autumn, and there are good things about. And, between ourselves, that Wood<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Delville Wood



is not one of the better places. I said the Division had been in for *one* dip in the Push,—you understand. . . .

Well, this morning there was the real hungry, academic mist, that has marked the beginning of a new epoch every autumn these twenty odd years in my memory. Last time I saw it begin would be somewhere near Ypres, I suppose. There were also some unusually good trees about (they look strange, somehow, with their branches on); and there was a deal of dew, and I confess I ran a few hundred yards before I would consent to eat breakfast. Not much wind, nor your cattle,<sup>1</sup> here; but what Phiz will remember as ‘good birds’ were eating placidly and rather enviably, in a way. And though we cannot exactly be said to be getting near a chance of fires—not the fires you mean anyway!—we can still remember that it *is* going to happen to you. Also, though I don’t know how far this is due to the autumn air which came like an inspiration from heaven to-day, we are beginning to think about books. The O.C. (Garton) and I have, during the last week, held a series of duets, wherein one says that the Army is a very stupefying concern and leads one’s mind to an entirely vegetable state, and the other says, ‘Yes, it’s awful: we *must* do something about it’. Nothing very much has come of this yet, but we have made violent and curious resolutions; how we will read books during the winter, solid, indigestible books into which one must get one’s mental teeth, books with backs, lettered, blue and important, books the very sight of which will restore our self-respect. *Philosophy* is all the talk in the proposals, and we mentioned Pragmatism the other day, and I felt the Man’s protest and warned myself, ‘Now, not too much jargon about “what *works*”.’ This

<sup>1</sup> As seen in Westmorland.



intellectual renaissance contains some great moment with regard to 'Love in the valley'.—G. was the first to quote it, but then he can quote *stans pede in uno* for 'duration'; and Rupert B., but I told you about that. Also I was persuaded to read *Bealby*. And though the style of that work is lamentable and its tale irksome, it really marks a big change, for for years I've read *nothing*, nothing!! . . .

To C. A. ALINGTON. *Camp, behind trenches somewhere.*  
Sept. 13, 1916.

Now, thank you a thousand times for your great letter. Yes, I agree about the hymn:<sup>1</sup> it is the one that matters, and, thank God, so many men here entirely feel the truth of the first two lines, whatever else they believe. They must, I think: it is so much less trouble, if only *that* occurs to them as a reason!

To H. E. E. HOWSON. *A Camp.*  
Sept. 13, 1916.

Herewith, two letters<sup>2</sup> of the Man. One is a great letter written before his attack, the other one is one I got in April; it is very good and very typical, but I fear one page is missing.

As for the Division in the last show, I told you, I think, that all the big men said wonderfully good things of it, which is gratifying. By the time you get this, it will have received the biggest compliment<sup>3</sup> of all; please tell C. A. A. and Worcester, as, though I have told them, they will

<sup>1</sup> No. 535 in *Hymns A. and M.*

Lord, it belongs not to my care  
Whether I die or live.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 237 and 256.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the attack which took place two days later.

like to hear again, and letters are irregular and slow just now.

C. A. A. has been awfully good, and sent me out books in reply to my appeal. You were good enough to offer the same, Man, more than once, and if there were not reasons of space in my valise, I would have accepted long ago. Over a month ago, though, we had to lighten our kits before we went into the Push, and that explains why we have had little to read. He has sent *Clifton School Addresses*, by one Irwin, to-day, and *Chance*, and *Biglow Papers*, none of which I know. If all goes well, we have been thinking of reading more in the future: I believe Boswell or Military History are indicated. Man, if I write later, will you send me a heavy, edifying work on M. History or Tactics? I feel very ignorant and stupid on this business, and there may be a chance of mending!

Shrewsbury will, I suppose, be beginning again soon after you get this, and as I wrote in my diary, among a list of good things, there will be Autumn Mists, and new faces, and new books, and the sound of early football. . . . All that is very good, and the Man would have liked to have watched a match with me out here, for it would have been full of memories.

Not that I think he has forgotten!

TO HIS FATHER.

B.E.F.

Sept. 14, 1916.<sup>1</sup>

You have, no doubt, by now got my letter explaining more or less. But in any case there is no need to add more, as I told Mum, except that I love you all very, very dearly, and that I believe, as I have said before, that it is good to be here.

<sup>1</sup> The day before his death.



## DIARY

*July 25, 1916.*

It was July 13, noon, when I got Phiz's letter that the Man was missing; July 14, before I got a letter written in reply. It was hard, because I seemed incapable of what I called an attitude about our Man; it was a terribly egotistical effort, that letter, but all I could do seemed to me to be honest. Well, I could not feel the sort of mournful triumph which is apt to associate itself with some losses—other people's especially (!); not yet, anyhow. Nor was it any good, the other extreme—'A complete knock-out'. Nor when, as I said, 'I thought of many brave men, and told myself I must be very stout-hearted. The Man is dead: carry on.' For, at that, I merely laughed at myself. Was it not all out of a book and quite insincere? Or, I thought, with a great thrill of tears, as I paced that little garden near the ———, full of every summer scent that went so near the Man's heart, should I just write on a p. c. 'Credo'? Rather good, had I dared; yet I think, somehow, I would rather make that claim, the only one that really matters in this life, after all, to myself than announce it as a fact (though I did suggest it to Phiz).

I am so tired now (it is July 25), that I cannot make out a recollection of what else I said. But I remember saying to Ronnie in a letter that the sort of physical effort of thrusting away unpleasant feelings (as over bad sights of war, for example) seemed to be making itself felt here, half mechanically. One seems to treat all feelings alike and push them, or rather try to push them, aside; and that, without regard to the true nature of the feelings in question.

And just because semi-physical, so this effort tires, undoubtedly. I should add that both Phiz and Ronnie wrote wonderful, wonderful letters; and that I think the answer to his promise in his closing sentence is not being withheld.

Ah, no: it is my last evening in this line (7.30 p.m. July 27): things may be going to happen. There cannot be any more faltering over *him*. In God's great arithmetic, said I to my father in a recent letter,  $1 + 1$  in sorrows do *not* make 2. Surely, surely, if all the world is not wrong, I *must* think 'All's well with our Man', after all. He knows too now, I most deeply believe, he has found at last his music, his art, and his loves; and I think, through all my sorrows, of him reaching down to his faltering friend, *not without many a prayer that I, too, may somehow find sight, to see which way it is written for me to go, and neither to doubt nor to complain any more at all.*

*Night, July 27-28. Move.*

We led on quickly by the north gate and out at once, so as to avoid dawn on the Open Road. But it was daylight when we got up and out, though the mist prevented any harm resulting from that. It was only about 5 miles, and as always, always, thank God, I recovered completely and gloriously with the dawn. (Cf. the 18-mile route march at night on the Plain.<sup>1</sup>) So much so, that I had to embark on a needless and vehement row with K. P. over the breakfast question in the big billet. This was silly: but less so was the fact that I decided to get my own (and not make people cook) in the village. This I did in a little cottage over the Scarpe, but not before I had a glorious little bathe in the river. I only took a short header and out-swim, owing to the long march ahead and the heat, but

<sup>1</sup> See page 60.



it was wonderfully reviving. By now I had fairly reached 'to-morrow', though!

*To Grand Rullecourt.*

*July 28.*

A day of tremendous heat. It was always hot, hot; and strange thirst, for most of the men, caused a good deal of discomfort and a few fall-outs. We had a long halt for dinner somewhere near Hauteville in a field, and I discovered again the merits of the Army stew on a hot day. But we were all very distinctly tired when we reached G. R.; I perhaps rather particularly, after pulling by his rifle an acting corporal, who had got rather done up by the heat. There, at last, lay the old village of the snows, all dusty in the sun; and though we had not time or energy to pilgrim to the old billet where Songer, Coulson, Irving, Elliott and myself talked Browning and gramophone-music of an evening, yet we did not forget to remember some good days when I had not yet, even once, lost the command of the Company.

*Candas: before going to Buire.*

*By the Railway. Aug. 7, 1916.*

There remains the high bank on which I lie behind the lines, and a perfectly idle afternoon, on which to watch from it that kind of motion which is notoriously the most exciting—the to and fro of heavy trains. One such has just gone by; sacred I think to the R.F.A., for most of the uncountable trucks had one of those remarkable soldiers at least on board them, in various attitudes of repose. Repose, certainly; though few but soldiers would find it so. In one there were men stretched gloriously asleep on the floor, seen through the half-open door; while over them, and nearly on them, stood their animals tethered and



patient, with the kind of silent wonder on their faces which one is accustomed to find in pictures of the Nativity. Repose, certainly, in the G.S. wagons, which, packed on the trucks, carried a gunner or two on the front seat, exalted very high, and serene in air with cigarette and magazine. Repose, too, I devoutly hope, for the animals as well; but eight horses to a wagon is a tight fit, I fear, and made no less so by the spurious label 'Moutons', which ridiculously stands on their carriage wall. There: that train is gone, with its endless rows of trucks, and its serene look of rest from the land of the 'Push'; and we are left without a train (a moving one, anyhow) to watch. 'We' are a goodly crowd for what is known as 'one tactical train'.

We are not at all perturbed by the delay; at least, I think not: I know one officer who (after his manner) is loving it. The rest of two Battalions are stretched before me, about four deep among the rails, and I do not think they are in undue hurry. A R.F.C. car dashes up beyond the rails, and a D.R.L.S. (cyclist), or whatever he is, whizzes down the road behind my head. Aeroplanes, of course, come (with their kind of coquettish curtsying, peculiar to their kind when infantry are about), to see the trains and their loads; a Red Cross car flits in and out of the station; Frenchmen wander down the line in shirt-sleeves and white trousers, or in a blue tunic and forage cap.

But nowhere is there much of a hurry, thank God. It is true the guns are pelting away somewhere or other; but nobody cares. The sun shines over our shoulders, and it is the infantryman's day out. Every moment sees him, indeed, a thought more comfortable; and as I write, he is already beginning to get his tea.



Aug. 28.

The line I took was a very ordinary one, and was merely to the effect that I did not at all regard the science<sup>1</sup> as nonsense—it would be silly to say that to one who had been recommended to it by Sir Oliver Lodge!—but that, till it advanced farther, I did not like the idea of my friends burning their fingers; using the figure of a new surgical operation. A selfish and unliberal view, probably, but at present I do not see past it. I did also say one or two things, with no very certain voice, about the faith. . . .

We were tired when we detrained at God knows where for a three-mile march, and the men were glad to get down to yet another bivouac. Tea was got for them, somehow, and they were allowed to sleep in peace for a good time: and so were we. H. G. and I lived in the wee room by the yard, where the gunners came to drink cider of an evening (how good it all sounds from here, behind the Wood, and how little we appreciated our tremendously good fortune!), and the others in a bivouac. And all the while the lovely river ran behind the trees, full, full of Wiltshire and the Downs, with an adorable weir by which, one grand morning, I sat with that copy of old Lamartine, borrowed from the village schoolmaster—ah, but that *must* be returned, please God!

And there it was that the grand doctor and I would have bathed, but were prevented by a wholly damnable, but perhaps not quite futile, parade. There, too, it was that I sailed my boat—a F. S. postcard makes a *grand* one—and followed it eagerly, under the anxious eyes of the gunners on the bank. I will do it again, if we get there. Perhaps we may. Is it on the road to Amiens, I wonder? Supposing we went *there*!!

<sup>1</sup> Psychological science.

Ce serait moi qui chanterais,  
Ce serait moi qui chanterais,  
Dans votre cathédrale!—

I am a poor soul, and thus it was that my grand moments were rather limited to the pre-breakfast period. I would go along the wood road to the railway, and look in at the little chocolate and memento-card shop, or while away time buying ink and absurd stationery at the chemist's—who does not, however, sell *all* he ought—or I would look in at the church: there are few I have been near without going in, for many a long month now, thereby shewing how lamentably like I am to C. A. A.'s man who goes to get religious emotions anywhere, and then comes back and is 'no kinder to his Aunt'.

And after breakfast, somehow, the time would also be glorious till about noon: for always dreaming, dreaming, as ever, I would walk round until the rifle parade and the rest of it came along: and then, by the afternoon time, I would write hurried letters to overdue people, with a rather less keen taste of life; till finally round came the night parade, and with it always the splendid and eternally unique expectation of *Morning*.

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*A page or two of Good Things.*

These are some of the things I love, and God pity those who find nothing dear among them all.

Maps; and route marches. And Gothic architecture; yes, and the little Village Spire rising out of the green. And Hills; hills from the plains, or the plains from the hills—I do not know which is better. Autumn Mists, and new Books, and the Sound of Early Football; and, with that, a Large Table and a Scholar's Morning, and the Memory



of Many Patient Men unsung. Small brooks and sluices amid the water-meadows, and their reeds like tongues of fire: and great rivers also, and big ships that ride them in the harbour. And Dust in early spring, and the great white road swinging over the Downs, and the lane that brings you to the fairies in the lonely dingle. Bach's Fugues also, and the sad songs of much infantry singing together. And bridges, whether over water or rail, especially if there is the sun dancing over all. And green fields after London, but more, London after the wilderness. Old books and their fragrance and their endless columns. And Paintings by Murillo: horseback at dawn: railway journeys, long and book-full: and running, but not fast or far; for I am a poor athlete. Sleep; and food after hunger; and drink after thirst, especially Brown Army Tea in the heat: and trees, especially the silver birch and the slim lady poplar: and French peasants and their kind farewells: and Eton's fields under midsummer floods in boiling June, with the Winchester Match to follow. Bells, especially in the less dear places, for these bring a swifter memory; as you may hear in the ward at Hazebrouck, and remember many great towers and little belfries of home. And there are good things to be done in a boat with the right man to help, and the right part of the river to do them in, and no crowds shouting, unless it be in the re-told tales when the lamps are lit and the row is over. And that is a good moment when the dusty Company piles arms in bivouac after a long day; but less good than 'Stand Down' after a night of watching, when the larks fly neutral over No Man's Land and the sun has made up his mind. And the ancient Greek tongue, because it is the perfect tongue; and the Latin, because it has fought and conquered the centuries. And a high wind on the Shropshire hills is good, and the

smell of hay at evening. And the theatre and full-hearted applause, such as men and women give in England, but not in France, where they do it for hire. And best, surely, is the coming *home* on leave of a soldier!

But most, far most of all, that which I most rarely find; and what it is you will look in vain to guess, for I cannot and will not tell.







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