



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library

DUTY AND SERVICE



LIONEL.

November 1912.

Photo by S. G. Payne & Son, Aylesbury.

[Frontispiece

DUTY AND SERVICE

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

FROM CAPTAIN LIONEL WILLIAM CROUCH
Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry

From August 4, 1914, the date of mobilisation, to July 21, 1916, when he was killed in action leading his Company in an attack on the enemy trenches in the Battle of the Somme

"Greater love hath no man than this, that
a man lay down his life for his friends"
ST. JOHN XV. 13

Passed by the Official Censor (Press Bureau)

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1917

PRINTED BY
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.,
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.



TO
THE MOST HONOURABLE
THE MARQUESS OF LINCOLNSHIRE, K.G., ETC.
THE LORD LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTY
OF BUCKINGHAM
THAN WHOM FEW HAVE MADE, OR MORE
COURAGEOUSLY BORNE,
GREATER SACRIFICES IN THE PRESENT WAR
THIS VOLUME IS, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

1917

P R E F A C E

THE Letters contained in this volume from my elder son, Captain Lionel William Crouch, Oxford and Bucks L.I., extend over the period commencing from August 4, 1914, when the Territorial Force was mobilised on the outbreak of the war, up to July 20, 1916, the date of his last letter, written a few hours before he was killed in action leading his company in an attack on the enemy's trenches before daybreak on July 21, 1916. The letters cover the eight months of preliminary training before the Battalion left Chelmsford for the front on March 30, 1915, and the subsequent sixteen months at the front.

Although most of the letters are of a private and family character, many of Lionel's friends who have seen them have found them of such interest as to persuade me to have them printed in book form.

This I have consented to do on the understanding that copies are sold at a moderate price, the proceeds to be given to an approved War Charity—preferably for the benefit of the wounded of the Bucks Battalion

and the relatives of the men of that Battalion who have given their lives for their country.

I think the publication of these letters is justified as one amongst numberless examples typical of the fine spirit in which our sons of all ranks and classes in their hundreds of thousands have left their civil occupations for the Nation's service in its hour of need. They were under no illusions about what this war meant to their country or to themselves, and yet at England's call, in the flower of their splendid youth and strength, with everything before them to make life's promise delightful and alluring, they have given up all—their lives if need be—and faced hell upon earth! We fathers and mothers, who have to stay at home, can only keep them constantly in our thoughts, and proudly salute them!

I take this opportunity of offering my grateful thanks to the Marquess of Lincolnshire, the Lord Lieutenant of the County of Buckingham, for the honour His Lordship has done me in accepting the dedication of this volume; also my thanks for valuable advice and assistance received from the Rev. Victor L. Whitechurch, Vicar of Aylesbury, and from Mr. Walter Hazell, a member of whose Firm, Captain Oscar Viney, was one of Lionel's brother officers and an intimate friend and served with him at the front; and to Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, the grandson of the author of *The Ancient Mariner*, for the touching tribute

contained in his "In Memoriam" poem which recently appeared in *The Poetry Review*, and has been inserted at the end of this volume.

I trust that, while these letters may be found of interest, especially to those who knew Lionel, there may be nothing in them to cause pain to any relatives of other soldiers who have fallen in the war and whose names may here and there be mentioned.

LIONEL'S FATHER.

FRIARSCROFT, AYLESBURY.

March 1917.

Note.—Perhaps it may be convenient to readers that it should be explained that the name "Deedoos" which appears in some of the letters is the nursery name of Lionel's brother, Captain Guy R. Crouch, 1st Bucks Battalion, and "Do" is his sister Doris.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	PAGE 9
-------------------	-----------

PART I

MOBILISATION AND TRAINING	17
-------------------------------------	----

PART II

AT THE FRONT	35
------------------------	----

PART III

PRO PATRIA MORI	127
---------------------------	-----

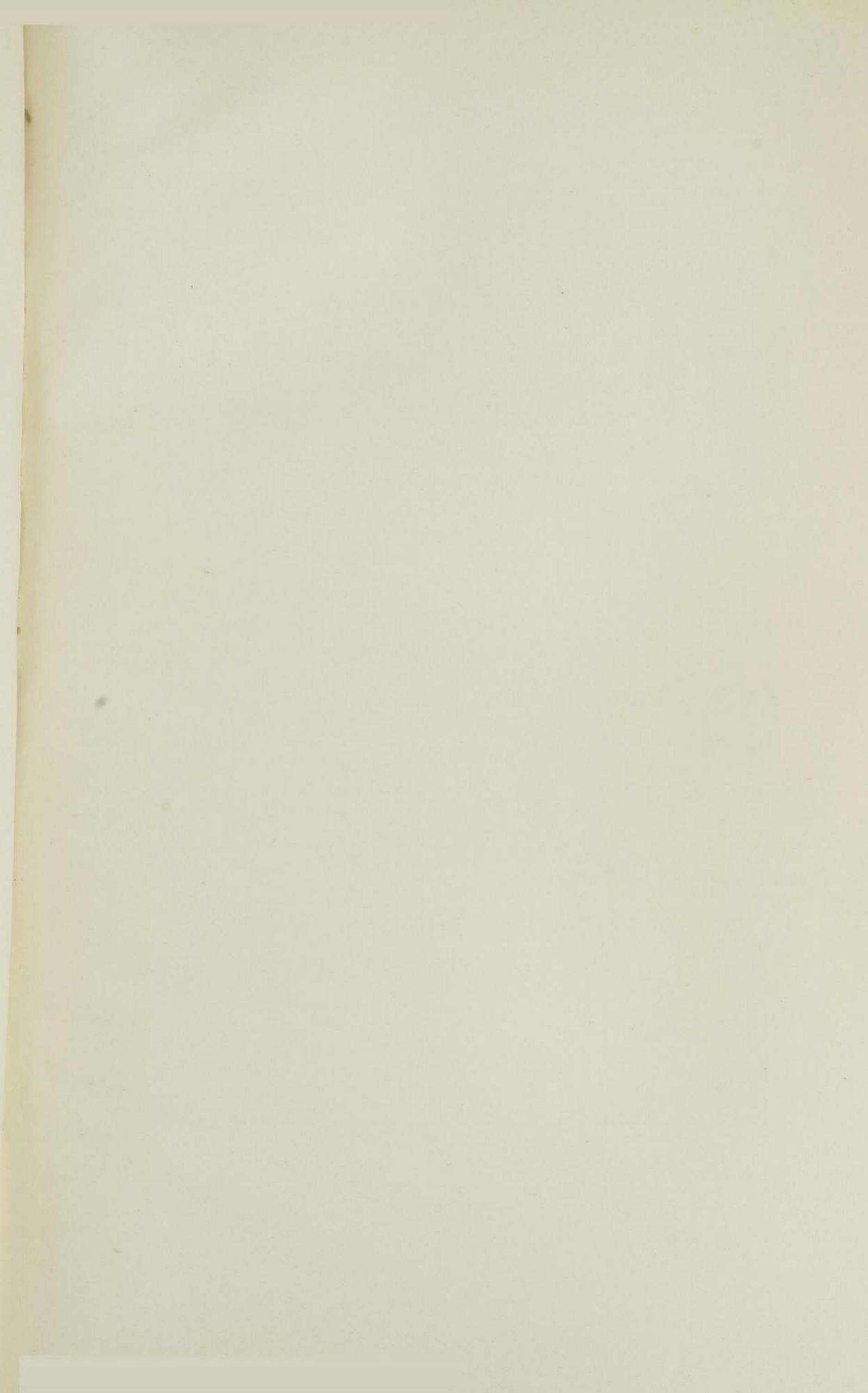
APPENDIX

“ A VISION OF WAR ” (A SHORT STORY OF THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1870, WRITTEN BY CAPTAIN L. W. CROUCH ABOUT 1908) .	149
--	-----

INDEX	155
-----------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIONEL—PHOTOGRAPH, NOVEMBER 1912	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
INSPECTION OF GUARD OF HONOUR AT UNVEILING OF LORD CHESHAM'S STATUE, JULY 14, 1910 .	17
LIONEL—PHOTOGRAPH DURING TRAINING AT CHELMSFORD, 1914-15	24
CAPTAIN LIONEL W. CROUCH AND LIEUTENANT (AFTERWARDS CAPTAIN) R. GREGSON ELLIS LEAVING CHELMSFORD FOR THE FRONT, MARCH 30, 1915	36
“OFF TO THE FRONT”: 1ST BUCKS BATTALION MARCHING OUT OF CHELMSFORD, MARCH 30, 1915	64
CAPTAIN LIONEL W. CROUCH AND HIS COMPANY OFFICERS IN TRENCH KIT (GROUP)	116
LIONEL'S GRAVE	148





Colonel the Hon. Harry Lawson (now Lord Burnham). The late Lord Rothschild (Lord Lieutenant).
Captain L. W. Crouch. Lord Roberts.

INSPECTION OF GUARD OF HONOUR BY FIELD-MARSHAL EARL ROBERTS AT THE UNVEILING OF
LORD CHESHAM'S STATUE IN THE MARKET SQUARE, AYLESBURY, ON JULY 14, 1910.

Photo by the Sport and General Illustrations Co., 45, Essex Street, Strand, W.C.

PART I

MOBILISATION AND TRAINING

From August 4, 1914, to March 30, 1915

DUTY AND SERVICE

Extract from "The Bucks Herald," August 8, 1914

"THE WAR

"THE CALL TO ARMS

"MOBILISATION OF TERRITORIALS

"In Bucks, as in other counties, great activity was displayed upon the receipt of the Proclamation.

"Late on Tuesday night (August 4, 1914) an advance party, under Captain Lionel Crouch, left Aylesbury for an unknown destination. During Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning the other companies from various parts of the county made their way to the Headquarters at Aylesbury fully equipped.

"DEPARTURE OF THE BATTALION

"As the time arrived on Wednesday evening (August 5, 1914) for the departure of the Territorials, the crowd on the Market Square increased enormously. The Slough, Wycombe, and Marlow Companies were the first

to assemble near the Town Hall. The men commenced to entrain about 7 o'clock, and at 7.30 the train commenced to leave the platform amidst a volley of cheers and the waving of handkerchiefs. The remainder of the companies, Aylesbury, Buckingham, and Wolverton, assembled in the Square between 8.30 and 9 o'clock. The crowd had now swelled to enormous proportions, and from the Square along Great Western Street to the station they stood several deep. At 9 o'clock came a quick, sharp command, 'March.' Gradually the men moved off, closely hemmed in on either side with the crowd, and then from a few exclamations of 'Good-bye,' 'God speed,' and 'Come back soon,' there broke out a roar of acclamation. The Aylesbury Company, headed by Lieutenant Guy Crouch, left their native town with the cheers of their friends, relatives, and fellow-townsmen ringing in their ears."

GROUVILLE, MAGDALA ROAD, COSHAM.
August 6, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

I am writing from my billets in Cosham. I am billeted here with Geoffrey, Howard, and Simpson. As you know, I and my advance party left Aylesbury at 9 p.m. Our train was late at Marylebone, and we missed our proper train at Waterloo. I, however, found that there was a newspaper train leaving at 3 a.m. I cajoled the railway people into attaching a first-class coach thereto, and we travelled down here in state. The train came into Waterloo about 1.20, and so I put two men into

each compartment, so that they might get some sleep. We arrived at Cosham about 6 a.m. and went into Portsmouth, where I reported myself to several authorities. The rest of the day was exceedingly strenuous, drawing ammunition, transport of various kinds, and stores. I found that the A.S.C. couldn't supply me with all the horses I wanted, so I turned up at Cosham looking like a nightmare of a battery of artillery. I had four weird civilian waggons, each with something else tacked on behind, a water-cart on one and two each with a small-arm ammunition-cart. I had no choice, as I had to get the transport and only got six horses, though two of the waggons were pair-horse vehicles. I had to sit up late that night to receive the Battalion, who are in billets here now, and it was 3.15 a.m. this (Thursday) morning before I dosed down on a bar floor covered in dust and stinking of beer. Needless to say, I never lost consciousness, and that makes two nights running without a wink of sleep. I have got ripping billets here, and am very comfortable, the inhabitants of the house being awfully kind. The Chesham men are in a skating-rink, and the Aylesbury men in an empty house which must have been a butcher's. The state of war is very real here. There are several waterworks near here, all guarded with sentries, barbed-wire entanglements, trip wires, electric bells, and other devices, also loop-holed sandbag parapets. Every bridge, tunnel, and important point on the railway from London is guarded by Territorials. I know nothing of our movements yet. I hear that the troops had a great send-off from

Aylesbury, and that a number of men, notably young Pollard, were kissed by ardent damsels on the way to the station.

Even if we see no fighting throughout the war, this show will be the making of us. I do think that it is an answer to scoffers at us Territorials that the order to mobilise is received at 6.30 p.m. on one day and on the following night the whole Brigade of four Battalions is at their war-stations complete in every respect, including each man carrying 100 rounds of ball ammunition. Besides that carried by each man, I drew 82,000 rounds yesterday, and we now have 108,000 rounds for our Battalion. Another great point is the notable absence of any absentees from the mobilisation. Every man rolled up, and I believe the grief of the few rejected as medically unfit was great. I was glad to have charge of the advance party, but I should like to have seen Aylesbury yesterday. I guess they must have been woken up a bit.

I think the men will go through this show well. One would hardly recognise the responsible-looking, disciplined chaps here, as the rather free-and-easy jovial Terriers of our annual training camps. I don't think that there is any danger of fed-uppiness after months of service, and I believe that nothing would please them more than a raid on Portsmouth by a German landing-force.

Much love to you all. So long !

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

COSHAM.

August 8, 1914.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

The weather here is perfectly abominable. This morning we spent digging trenches to cover the approaches to the main forts. Our fellows worked astonishingly well, and did more in the time than is laid down in the Regulations. I took a hand and sweated away with a pick and shovel in my shirt-sleeves *pour encourager les autres*. We had a few casualties. One fellow got a pick in his back and another in his arm, while a third had the back of his hand skinned by a shovel. Inexperience was of course responsible for these accidents. We all got soaked to the skin. It rained hard and steadily the whole morning.

Guy has gone on to-day with twenty men of my company as an advance party to Swindon.

Aren't those Belgians ripping? If those slovenly-looking coves can whip the Germans, we will smash them. I believe our Terriers would make them sit up. That reverse at Liège will hit German pride pretty hard.

Love to all.

Ever your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SWINDON.

August 11, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR,

The weather has at last changed and to-day has been frightfully hot. We did a route march of about twelve miles in full marching order, and the men were pretty cooked. They aren't in marching trim yet. Besides, they are carrying more than usual as well as

100 rounds of ball ammunition per man. I had two or three of my company fall out.

To-day the G.O.C. has called for the whole Division to volunteer for foreign service. The response of the men is very disappointing. In our Battalion only about 50 per cent. have volunteered, and the Colonel said that ours and the 4th Oxfords have volunteered the smallest quota of the whole Division. It is sickening. One of the Chesham sections came up well, twenty-four out of thirty-two volunteering; about seventy or seventy-five men of D Company in all are willing to go. Needless to say, Guy and I are for it. I wouldn't be left behind for the world. I should feel such a cur. We shall not be going abroad for at least a month. I forgot to say that only 533 of the Bucks Battalion have volunteered. I hope you won't mind my going: I must be in the show. If I come back, well and good; but if I don't, it won't matter. The only thing I am sorry about is leaving you in the lurch with all your work; but don't worry, Dad, stick to it, and I hope the war will soon be over and I shall be back quite safe and sound. We shall have to do a lot of hard training before we are fit to go out, and it will take my tummy down. Anyway, there is plenty of time yet, and perhaps the Germans will get such a hiding on land and sea that we shall never be called upon.

I'm on duty to-morrow, so good-night.

Love to all at home.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.



LIONEL.

Photograph taken at Chelmsford during training, August 1914—March 1915.

Photo by Fred Spalding, Chelmsford.

SWINDON.

August 12, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

We have got a few more men for foreign service, I'm glad to say. The latest numbers are 600 of all ranks—D Company, four officers and eighty-two N.C.O.'s and men. I do hope Bucks will find her proper quota.

I write this short note so that you may know that it is probable that in the next few days our Brigade will be coming to Leighton Buzzard. The whole Division is here, and I do not know where the other Brigades are going. Also there is a rumour, which may or may not be true, that we are to be sent to Malta. I hope to goodness it isn't true. We all want to go to Belgium. I shall feel very much inclined to volunteer into another unit if we go to some rotten foreign garrison, but I suppose I must stick to the Battalion.

Your loving Son,
LIONEL.

SWINDON.

August 13, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

By the time you get this letter you have probably seen Deedoos,¹ as he is unofficially coming to sleep at home to-night, I believe.

There really is nothing at all heroic about volunteering for foreign service. All of us, except ——, who is not physically fit, have volunteered, in addition to about

¹ Guy.

600 of the men. One could not dream of doing anything else. What is the good of wearing His Majesty's uniform, if one is not prepared to fight? I shall be very sick indeed if we are sent to a foreign garrison at Gib. or Malta. I hope that we shall be employed on the lines of communication at first, and then, when we are fitter, for more serious work.

Your loving Son,
LIONEL.

HARLOW, ESSEX.
August 22, 1914.

MY DEAREST DAD,

Here we are after sundry adventures. The day after you left us we marched to Hitchin, about fourteen miles. I had very nice billets there with a dear old couple. The next day we went to Ware, sixteen miles—a cruel march in blazing sun. I was properly cooked, and we lost several men fallen out, though we had none the day before. To-day we started from Ware to go to Cheshunt, but about a mile out of Ware we were diverted and sent to Harlow, where we are now. I am in ripping billets with delightful people. To-morrow we march to Great Dunmow, about sixteen miles. This marching is like a nightmare, trudge, trudge, trudge, and those packs feel like lumps of lead. I shall be glad when we get settled down somewhere.

I start early in the morning and am very tired. No news of Guy. I don't know where he is.

Your loving Son,
LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

August 29, 1914.

MY DEAREST DAD,

I do think that English people haven't yet realised the seriousness of this show. Every man of military age ought to be put into training *at once*. We have got to lick these chaps, and we are only playing at it at present. Our Expeditionary Force will be practically wiped out in a month, and more men must be sent. I don't take a pessimistic view of the ultimate result, but by our present shilly-shallying we are likely to keep the war lasting for years.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

October 6, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

We had a night out last night, and I dossed in a stable full of manure, rats, and fleas. I'm feeling rather itchy still. We got up at 3.30, and I had to march across country in the dark and seize a lodgment in front of the enemy's position. I collared a spur running into his position in the dark. The enemy tried a small counter-attack, which we beat off.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

October 10, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR,

It seems impossible to get leave unless one really has some urgent private business, and I can't fake any up.

We had our night out last week. I had two companies under me and had orders to obtain a lodgment in front of the enemy's position during the night, to serve as a kicking-off place for the main body the next day. We bivvied in some farm buildings, and I had my headquarters in a stable full of manure, fleas, and rats. I didn't get much sleep, as scouts kept on coming in to report. We started at 3.30 a.m. and marched a longish way across very broken country in the dark guided by the scouts, who did really excellent work. I was able to seize and occupy a spur running right into the enemy's outpost line, but, as so often happens in war, I couldn't tell in the dark and didn't secure the whole spur. When daylight came, we opened fire on some trenches about 700 yards away, but found no response, and they turned out to be dummies. I was had on. Then the enemy attempted a counter-attack, which was very weak and which we drove off. We then advanced to complete our job, but were stopped and the battle was over, and we went back to the farm for breakfast.

We had a long Brigade route march on Friday, about fifteen and a half miles, though some call it seventeen. It was quite a nice walk.

Your loving Son,
LIONEL.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

IN CAMP AT GREAT TOTHAM.
November 13, 1914.

We came out here on Monday and are moderately comfortable. Our mess is in a little village school

which we have appropriated. We are about twelve miles from Chelmsford, and send in cyclists twice a day for papers and letters. We only suffer from one of the common active-service complaints, lack of reading matter. After tea I always feel at a loose end, and after dinner I go straight off to bed, generally retiring about 8.30. It is pretty cold at night, but I keep pretty warm in bed. I wear a pair of pants and socks under my pyjamas and a sweater over them. Tuesday night was awful, a regular hurricane of wind and rain, and to add to the mess our horses stampeded and galloped back to Chelmsford. Curiously enough, the horses of other units round Chelmsford all stampeded the same night!

Our entrenching is quite interesting but filthy work. The soil is all clay and as heavy as lead. After the recent rain the men get plastered with it, all yellow from head to foot. We are making some ripping dug-outs with little stores and, tell Dad, very nice latrines, which Birchall says are as good as an aperient to look at! We are just starting on doing the overhead cover for them.

I do wish we could get definite news as to going out soon. I hate this stopping at home and hearing of others going off. You see that Kitchener is going to call for another million men. The war isn't going to be over in a year and a day. I guess they will have to introduce conscription.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

December 22, 1914.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

We have had a stiffish day to-day. We paraded at 7.30 a.m. and were on the range all day, getting back about 5 p.m. I hadn't then finished work, for I had to complete my registers, make out averages, etc. It was 7.30 p.m. before I had finished.

Best wishes and love to all at home for Christmas and a happy New Year. I shall score two Christmas dinners. One may as well have as many as one can get, because it may be one's last Christmas.

The Gimsons' servants have a blow-out on Christmas Eve, and they have asked Corporal Dixon, Wheeler, and Coy to it. Isn't it just like the Gimsons to think of such a thing? They have got a special turkey for them. They are corkers.

Ever your loving son,

LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

December 24, 1914.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Thanks for your letter. I hope that you will have a cheery Christmas and that next year we may be celebrating the end of the war, but I do hope that we shall get a look-in some time. I should hate to come home without having bagged at least one German. I hope that I shall be able to get at my first German, as I want to secure his helmet like Dad keeps his woodcock and snipe spikes.

An attack of cold feet has upset the W.O. again and all

Christmas leave has been stopped. I'm awfully sorry for the chaps who were going home.

Much love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

DEAR OLD MASSAH,

January 21, 1915.

No news from here. The departure for France seems as remote as ever. We have our newly sighted rifles, which must mean that we shall go eventually; also they are always fussing round clothing and equipment. It is a weary wait. I have waited eight years for this and now we can't get a look-in. Dozens of little whipper-snappers who have never soldiered in peace-time and did nothing but play golf have got out before us. Bartlett heard from a cousin of his in the Monmouthshires, who are Terriers. He joined in September, having done no soldiering before, and was at the front in October. Isn't it perfectly galling? Even those blooming Zeppelins or whatever they are don't come here, but go everywhere else on the east coast except Chelmsford.

Love to all. My salaams to the Major.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, CHELMSFORD.

DEAR OLD DAD,

March 22, 1915.

I think we shall be off this week, or at latest on Monday. Somehow or other, Aylesbury got wind of it, and the town is full of Aylesbury people.

I can't be bothered to make a will, but there are a few things I want done in case I stop one.

Perhaps you had better keep this letter. It will be as good as a nuncupative will, perhaps.

One more thing, if anything does happen to me, for goodness sake don't go into mourning of any kind. There is nothing to mourn about.

Love to all.

Ever your loving Son,

LIONEL.

March 28, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

So at last we're off. The C.O. has got his orders, which are secret, and we don't know what they are. Our valises have got to be on the transport by 6 p.m. to-day, and we expect to go either Monday night or Tuesday morning.

Isn't it queer? I always go for a foreign trip this time of year, and here I am off again. 1913 Paris, 1914 Luxembourg, and 1915 Berlin—who knows? Tell Massah that in 1916 we'll go out again together and I'll give him a personally conducted tour over the battlefields. Let's hope that Metz will be French then. We'll go and have a look at Fort Kaiserin again.

Well, good-bye to our next merry meeting. Write

as often as possible. Salaams to the Major and Sister. Love to all the family, Winkle, Dick, Gibbs, and Cuthbert.¹

Ever your loving Son,

LIONEL.

¹ Family pets: Winkle, Pekingese; Dick, terrier; Gibbs, cat; Cuthbert, tortoise.

PART II

AT THE FRONT

From March 30, 1915, to July 21, 1916



CAPTAIN LIONEL W. CROUCH (LEFT) AND LIEUTENANT (AFTERWARDS CAPTAIN) R. GREGSON ELLIS (RIGHT) LEAVING CHELMSFORD FOR THE FRONT, MARCH 30, 1915.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

March 31, 1915.

'Ere we are. We had a topping crossing smooth as a lake. I saw old Booty's¹ in the dark. I expected to be crowded up on a deck, but it was difficult to realise that I wasn't merely going abroad for my usual Easter trip. We had the usual saloon and stewards, and could have had a jolly good meal, but I had filled up in the train. We marched about two miles up to a rest-camp, which is on a very breezy hill. It was rather cold, but Wheeler tucked me up and I got a fair amount of sleep. We shall be retracing some ground familiar to you and me to-day.

It was very funny this morning watching a group of our chaps surrounding a French Tommy who was endeavouring to teach them French. One expressed his horror to me at seeing a French sentry smoking a cigarette at his post.

I have ordered two copies of a group of Bucks officers to be sent to you. If you don't get them in ten or fourteen days, write and damn Messrs. Fred Spalding & Sons, High Street, Chelmsford.

Love to all at home.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

¹ Lionel's preparatory school at Folkestone.

April 1, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I've got some time on my hands, so I thought that a letter might interest you. We left our rest-camp yesterday afternoon, and after a three and a half mile march arrived at a station where we entrained. It was jolly hot work marching in a lambskin-lined British-warm, with all one's Christmas-tree arrangements hanging on. We had a long and tedious train journey, going over ground familiar to Dad and myself. At last we detrained at night, and had a long wait before we moved off. We then had a very tiring night march for about seven or eight miles, but it was like marching through fairyland. It was a beautiful clear night with a full moon giving light like daylight. I always thought that — was flat and ugly, but we marched through some charming scenery rather reminiscent of Luxembourg and the Ardennes. One very pretty village was perched on the top of a hill, up which the road winded. It was perfectly delightful, although the men were dead beat. The poor beggars had been crowded forty-six into a sort of cattle-truck. They had hardly room, if any, to sit down.

We finally reached our destination, a little village near the Belgian frontier, and billeted in the kitchen of one farm. The place stinks of garlic, and I couldn't sleep—the tiled floor was too hard. About 100 men are in the straw in barns, and Viney, Kennish, and myself dossed in the garlic-scented kitchen.

Kennish and Viney are still sleeping soundly. I wish

I could. Wheeler, Coy, and other officers' servants are snoring in the next room, much to the embarrassment of our hostess's little daughter, who burst in there without knowing of their presence. A French aeroplane has just flown over us.

These people are very difficult to understand, as they talk Flemish and French with a rum accent. My arguments with Mme. la patronne seemed to amuse the men. Uhlans were playing about all round here last August and September, but have left no traces, as far as I can see.

This room has a beautiful old oak ceiling, but the whole thing is spoiled by the dirt and stink. The natives seemed rather astonished at seeing me shave, wash, and clean my teeth. The milk in a very unclean bucket is now in course of being watered by the daughter. L.C.C. inspectors wouldn't approve. Two very grubby small boys have now appeared.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

April 6, 1915.

DEAR OLD MASSAH,

As you will have seen from my first letter, we had a ripping crossing. It was quite warm and we had the use of the saloon, where we could get drinks and food.

At present we are thoroughly enjoying life. We are billeted on a ripping farm. All six officers mess

together, and we have very good fun. I suppose the unpleasant part will come later.

I'm not in need of anything at present, except that I want another towel, one of the small ones.

I forgot to say that we moved up here on Easter Sunday. The weather was grand for the first two days or so, then it turned to rain. Yesterday was perfectly beastly, and everything is deep in mud, but to-day is a lovely day.

I've actually got a bed here. It isn't very comfortable, being far too short. I sleep on the top of it in my flea-bag, but I really believe that I slept better in the straw.

The men find the marching round here very hard, owing to the *pavé* roads. A Brigade passed us yesterday very cooked, poor devils.

No more news, I think.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Mind you keep all the envelopes you get from Guy and me. I shall want them *après la guerre*.

April 8, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I got your letter yesterday all right. As you have seen from my letters, up to date we've had a jolly time. Now we are well up into it, and are starting on a five days' course of instruction. My company goes into the trenches to-morrow night for twenty-four hours. The most extraordinary feature of this place is that the inhabitants seem to take not the faintest notice of the

war. Here they are in the thick of it : our heavy guns are booming away about 300 yards from us ; and a field battery near here has also fired some shots this morning. But in the streets the kids are playing about, the postman goes his rounds, and the newspaper man blows his little trumpet and calls *Le Petit Parisien*. The farm where we are billeted is shelled sometimes and there are a few holes in the roof. Bang, there goes a big gun !

We left our last billet yesterday, and were sorry to leave as it was so comfy. We marched about ten miles and arrived at a big town that Dad and I know. It is a somewhat different visit from last time. I quite expected to see Percy Frith as we passed through the town. The officer who was instructing us this morning is an old Marlburian¹ and was in Trilby's house. I remembered him directly I saw him.

I broke a tooth a few days ago over bully beef. It is annoying. I hope it won't give me trouble.

You say in your last letter that you know where we are. I don't know how you do, and probably you are wrong. We keep shifting pretty frequently.

Last night my company was inlying piquet, and we had to sleep in our equipment and boots, which was darned uncomfortable. I hope we shall get a better night to-night. Ellis and I have a bed. I understand that we've made a very good impression here and that our army commander is very pleased with us.

¹ This was Captain (afterwards Lieut.-Colonel) A. J. H. Bowen, D.S.O. (since killed in action.)

Later.—I've had the most enjoyable day I've had for years. Some of my company and other companies had a sort of baptism of fire. Two platoons of my company were working this afternoon in some communication trenches. The German guns were particularly active and shells were humming over us all the time. I must admit that when the first shell, or rather a flight of three, sang over my head like a flock of wild-fowl as we were going along a road, I felt a wee bit uncomfortable, but after that I felt quite happy and never noticed them. It was all most awfully interesting and fascinating, and one's first impressions could form the foundation of an article, but I will spare you and the Colonel, who has to wade through this. Our Battalion has been blooded, but not my company. Old Ellis is certain he was sniped at, as two bullets whizzed past his head. I ducked once when one came fairly close. This, I suppose, will soon be a very ordinary occurrence, but the first effort naturally impresses one most.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

April 13, 1915.

I wrote home a few days ago for another towel, but I really don't want one now as I have retrieved the one I lost at Chelmsford. I wish you would send me a big box of Abdullah cigarettes, as I've nearly run out of mine.

I am thoroughly enjoying life. I came into the trenches last night. We were split up with a regular

regiment and have had a jolly good time. We had to come up a long communication trench which in one or two places was up to our knees in water. These trenches are very complex and wonderfully made, some ruined houses being turned into regular redoubts. These are only about thirty yards from the Boche trenches. I had a go at one of their loopholes this morning about fifty yards away. I had three shots, and then a German put a spade up and signalled a miss. This is quite true and not a *Punch* yarn. These chaps say that they always do that. But like the man in *Punch* they were darn liars, because my shots went close to the loophole every time. I've seen a lot of interesting things which I can't write about. I am writing now in a dug-out, where I've quartered myself with the company commander. The Germans fired several rifle grenades at our trench last night, but only one fell in it and blew a man's equipment to smithereens; luckily he wasn't wearing it at the time!

This morning the Germans started shelling some trenches and points behind us; then our guns replied and the Boches got the worst of it, part of their trench going up. It is quite good fun listening to the whizz of the shells going over us and looking for the explosion.

I forget whether I told you that we had our first proper baptism of fire yesterday. We were sent into some second-line trenches and were shelled by Jack Johnsons, but none came near enough to do any harm. They all fell into a ploughed field behind us, sending up a sort of volcano of black smoke and earth.

All this doesn't alarm me at all. I thought it would, but it only interests me intensely. I have never enjoyed myself more than during the last three days. The guns are banging away again and bullets are zipping over our trench all the time. I've just been into one of the advanced posts, and the communication trench thereto isn't very healthy. It is very interesting looking at the German trenches through a periscope. They are only twenty-five yards away. Their trenches are beastly untidy; all their old uniforms are thrown over on to the parapets, and the result is a patchwork of grey and blue. I long to see one of the brutes, and to get a shot at him. I'm going up to that loophole again this afternoon to have another go.

The more I see of this show the more I want to see. The only thing I don't like is the responsibility of commanding a company. What I should love would be a roving commission to saunter around where I like. A war correspondent's job would just suit me.

Now for the Lord's sake don't go sending this letter to the local papers. *Es ist verboten.*

I could sit all day waiting for a Boche's head to appear. It is far better sport than rabbit-shooting; the game is much more shy and can also hit back. Don't forget to send some cigarettes and sweets, not chocs., but barley sugar, cream toffee, and such like.

Love to all at home.

From your filthily muddy and
wet but very happy Son,

LIONEL.

April 22, 1915.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

I suppose you will have heard from Guy before this, that he has done his knee in again. He always was a lucky devil. I suppose he will get three or four weeks' holiday in England. Even at Chelmsford he goes and gets flu and ten days' sick-leave. It is most unfortunate that I am always so robust. I hope his knee will get all right again soon.

I shan't be sorry to get out of being in reserve. It is far safer in the trenches. It gets on one's nerves wandering about in the open at night with these infernal stray bullets whistling about. I wouldn't mind if one could have a smack back at the blighters. It is very fruity out to-night. Kennish had a funny experience. Our officers' latrine is rather exposed and screened with straw hurdles. A bullet came through the latrine close to him. I told him that if he had been killed, it would have been rather difficult for me to write to Dr. Kennish an account of his son's heroic death!

A darn funny thing happened last night. An officer of the regiment on our right had been asking questions of my sentries, and they ran him in. I went down and saw an irate officer sitting between two truculent warriors with fixed bayonets, and he said: "I say, Crouch, you were at Marlborough, weren't you? I wish you would identify me. Your men think I'm the Kaiser." Sure enough, it was a fellow called Mylne who was at Marlborough College with me.

This is an extraordinary show. Our working parties go out in front of the trenches and work, and the Germans do the same, and although they are only about 100 yards apart, no notice is taken. One chap the other night shouted out, "I say, Bill, where have you put those b—— wire-nippers?" The Germans were singing "Auld Lang Syne" in the trenches to-night. Night after night these working parties go out and ration parties go along exposed roads, and yet a man is very seldom hit. Last night several of my ration parties had machine guns turned on them.

Some officers have just been in from a working party, and say that the Boches were out working too. They could see them and hear them hammering away and talking. It's a funny war.

Love to all at home.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

May 6, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I don't know that there is much to write to you about, except that I am quite fit and well, barring my ankle, which gets better every day. I should really appreciate a jolly good bath. I feel beastly grubby. I am longing for my ankle to get right so that I can get out of my dug-out to see how my company is getting on.

I am pestered here with a plague of midges which bite like the devil. The days are frightfully hot, but very

pleasant. The trees and hedges are coming out beautifully. I have got some rather pretty flowers in my dug-out. Wheeler picks them for me. To-day he got two very nice narcissi which smell ripping. From the gardens of this ruined village we get potatoes, rhubarb, and spinach. This is very good for the men, and I encourage them to go out at night to get garden stuff.

To-night I heard a lot of shouting. A man from A Company came with a tale that the Huns were calling out, "How are Aylesbury and Marlow getting on? How is the Spotted — (I forget the name of the pub) at Marlow? You b—— Bucks can't shoot for toffee."

So one of ours called out, "Aren't you tired of the war, Fritz?" and they gave the Huns five rounds rapid! I can hardly believe the yarn, but the man swore it was true, and I certainly heard the Huns shouting. They always seem to know what Regiment is in front of them. They are said to have shouted soon after we came here, "How do the South Midland Terriers like the trenches?"

Another story, which I believe is quite authentic, happened during our tour of instruction with a north-country Regiment. A Boche shouted out: "Is there anyone over there from Wigan?"

Chorus: "Yes."

Boche: "I've got a wife and two children living there."

Tommy: "You'll soon have a widow and a couple of orphans." Bang!

My hair in the absence of any form of grease is totally beyond my control !

Much love.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Our machine gun has just started on the Huns. It is close to where I'm writing and is making the deuce of a noise, but I hope is slaying a few Huns.

May 11, 1915.

MY DEAREST OLD GOVERNOR,

My ankle is ever so much better, but still aches a good deal at times.

We came back from the trenches last night after a longer spell than usual. My dug-out is being improved every time by Wheeler, who potters about all day doing little things to it. I had a large earthenware vase full of beautiful peonies in it this time.

We had the hell of a boost on Sunday and hotted up the Huns, I hope. One platoon of mine got through — rounds. Our guns shelled the enemy's trenches to some tune, and our machine guns were rattling away merrily on and off during the whole day and two nights. The Huns replied a little, but not much. Their revenge was of course wreaked on innocent civilians. The brutes shelled the little town behind our lines, where Guy and I were billeted once, and killed a lot of poor wretched people. I came through it on my way back last night. The church was of course already wrecked, but now there are great holes in several roofs. An

estaminet just opposite the church is sans roof, a little chapel formerly used in place of the church is partially wrecked, and a convent smashed up. A shell burst outside Guy's and my old billet, smashing all the windows. One of my men who was in the town said the sight was pitiful, all the people and children running about nearly demented. When I came through last night, I saw some of the people coming back. The expressions on their faces made my blood boil. My man said that during the shelling there were little quiet crowds of forty or fifty people kneeling down outside each of the little shrines along the road outside the town. Guy will know the locality. I believe some twenty houses were burnt down. These things are doing good in a way as they properly upset our chaps, and after the news of the *Lusitania* and this bombardment I think our chaps would have liked to get at the swine. Our famous sailor Lawton carried on wonderful, I hear, and his language was picturesque and to the point. Wheeler tells me that he was simply dancing with rage!

When we came back to our billet, we found Madame's old father installed. He is a dear old chap of seventy-nine and partially paralysed. Madame tells me how the Boches had ill-treated him. They knocked him about and punched him, and an officer shoved a revolver at his throat. The whole race want wiping off the face of the earth.

Our servants are very amusing here. There is a chubby and cheery daughter at this farm, about eighteen years old. Coy is awfully funny with her, talking pidgin

French. He calls her Sophie, and she calls him "Leslie Cook," because he does the cooking for the mess. They chaff each other like anything. The people at this farm are very nice and cheery, and always delighted to see us back. "Com bark," they always say.

I've got no one in Deedoos' place, and I am very short-handed having only three subs., Viney being Intelligence Officer.

There is no doubt that there is some jolly good stuff among some of our chaps. One incident which happened to my knowledge when last up particularly struck me, but I'm afraid I mustn't tell you. I wish I had a tenth of that chap's pluck. Kennish also tells me that one boy in his platoon at 11 a.m. one morning asked for permission to be allowed to go out the next night in front of the trenches to do the wire. Another chap in the same platoon when a shell burst on the parapet was on the spot at once searching for the nose as a souvenir, before Kennish could stop him. I don't think they quite realise the danger.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

May 23, 1915.

DEAR OLD GUY,

How goes it ?

It is perfectly stifling in the trenches. I have my whole company in now, having taken over C Company's bit. My dug-out is not exactly commodious. I can't

stand or sit up straight, and the bed is too short. I couldn't get my sleep this morning and only got cramp in my legs. But one thing, this dug-out is very cool.

I've got a continual thirst to-day, it is so hot, and have dreams of cool iced drinks on the tennis lawn, you lucky old dog. One wakes up to the reality of dusty sand-bags and tepid water flavoured (not to taste) with chlorine or whatever it is.

The Huns were very active for ten minutes this morning and popped a lot of Little Willies into us, knocking some of our parapets about. I got smothered in earth and débris from one which exploded about twenty yards away, and it sent an empty Maconochie tin flying, hitting Kennish on the leg. This bit of trench took several 5·9-inch howitzers yesterday. I hope they won't visit us to-day. They are too big to be amusing.

Our guns had a boost this morning. It was pretty to watch the shrapnel—a flash and then a puff of cotton-wool drifting away in the wind.

We hear to-day that Italy has mobilised. The more the merrier. Let's have the whole world against the swine.

The Huns had the infernal cheek to hoist a German flag opposite us, the usual black, white, and red. I'm going to try to rig up a loophole in order to fetch it down to-morrow.

So long, old bird.

Yours,

LIONEL.

May 24, 1915.

1.30 a.m.

Just got your letter. Bagnall must have had heavy casualties, from his account. Dashwood was killed and Cranmer wounded, both by rifle grenades. Rose was shot through the behind. None of the reserve have turned up yet. Yes, we've had sundry types of respirators issued and sundry conflicting instructions, but have now settled down to one definite type which is guaranteed to stifle you before the gas reaches you!

We've just had a bit of excitement during the night. I suddenly heard on our right the deuce of a noise, cheering and shouting, and the air was thick with rockets. We manned all the parapets at once, and rapid fire broke out on the right. I stopped my blokes from firing. I thought at first it was an attack and that we should have a bit of fun, but no luck. I dunno what happened

DEAR HOLLIS,

June 4, 1915.

Now we are out of the trenches for a few days, I will answer your letter, which I was glad to get.

I suppose you haven't been passed for foreign service; besides, what would become of the Museum if you were killed!

We are in a quiet part of the line and our opponents are quite good sportsmen, no gas or anything objectionable. Also they give us opportunities of musketry practice by showing themselves sometimes. My servant bowled one over early one morning, and occasionally we bag another.

This hot weather is bringing out the stinks in fine form. There are several dead horses and cows in our wire and in front of our trenches, and the gentle breezes waft their sweet scents over to us. The other evening one of our working parties struck an unholy smell, and we found that they had come on an English Tommy about a foot down in a ditch. He had evidently fallen there and been lightly covered over. One of the "missing," I suppose. We made a mound over him and put up a cross: "Here lies an unknown British soldier."

Yours,

L. W. CROUCH.

June 26, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I've got nothing to read, so I will write you a letter. We are on trek again. We left our usual rest-billets and trekked about six miles to a small town where we billeted. We do all this trekking by night, and after nearly three months' trench work the men feel the marching a good deal, especially on these infernal roads. The men had rotten billets unfortunately, most of them being in a school. They had to sleep on the stone floor, which must have been rotten. I had the best billet I have had up to date, a ripping bed with sheets, the first I have met out here. Wheeler and Coy were also lucky, as they got a bed made up for them on a little landing outside my bedroom door. The house was a very nice one owned by a kind old couple,

retired farmers. There was quite a pretty little garden full of roses. The old girl was frightfully garrulous, and I only understood about half what she said. This town was the one where Guy went to hospital first. Our marches are done by night, so we paraded at 9.15 p.m. and marched another six miles. There had been some heavy thunderstorms during the day, and it was raining most of the march. It was very muggy, and in spite of the short distance the men were pretty cooked. Our billets are farms this time, and rotten for the men, worse luck! Two platoons crammed into a barn, and the other two into a loft and some stables. I was billeted in a tiny cottage, the only inhabitant being an ancient and skinny old peasant woman. In spite of a few weird scents I had a spotlessly clean bed. The pillow and mattress seemed to be stuffed with hay or something which smelt very clean and sweet. I didn't get turned in until about 1 a.m. and slept the sleep of the just. The old girl was full of apologies this morning because she couldn't feed me, as she worked on a farm all day. She looks as hard as nails. She is very difficult to understand, as she hardly talks any French, only Flemish, which she helps out with a few French and English words. One can follow her, as so many Flemish words are the same as English or German. Viney, Kennish, Ellis, and Woollerton are billeted near by at a cottage, where the menage consists also of a skinny old woman with a parchment complexion, her daughter who is very middle-aged and hideous, no teeth in front, a withered right hand, and a

stiff leg, and the son's wife and baby. The son is a sous-lieutenant in the transport! When we arrived at 1 a.m. this morning, the good people had some coffee ready for us, and they looked like two of the witches in *Macbeth*. There is a very jolly little dog here called Dick, the property of the sous-lieutenant.

When we were in billets at the town I have already mentioned, Singer came to see me. He is in the Motor Transport. I had a long chat with him. He told me that "Miss Doris" had often asked his wife if he had come across me. At the said billet there was a subaltern in charge of some details who knew Walker who married one of the Drakes. He was in the same Militia Battalion in South Africa.

Coy is a great asset as a servant; all the old women fall in love with him and he can get anything he wants. The old dear at my last billet called him the "petit soldat," and was highly amused at the idea of him being a footman in civil life. I believe we have got a thirteen- or fourteen-mile trek to-night. I dunno where the deuce we are going to in the end. We are zig-zagging about the country. I am very glad of the change. The same old trenches, the same old billets, and the same old roads became rather monotonous, and this is like a holiday. We can't see those beastly Verey lights nor hear the rifle and machine-gun fire, only the boom of guns in the distance. It is a relief.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

June 28, 1915.

After writing to you we trekked again at night. A very tiring march of about thirteen miles, as far as my company were concerned. It seemed much longer and there was considerable argument about the distance. We had a good few men fall out. I had only three in my company. We arrived at a small village about 3 a.m. in daylight and found that our billets had not been vacated, so we bivouacked in a cherry orchard. I slept under a tree laden with white-heart cherries. Later on we bought lots of cherries and ate them until we felt ill. The weather has broken up and we had a lot of rain, thunder and otherwise, which made things beastly wet. We marched again about 6 p.m. for about three miles only, and arrived at a small town not far from a larger town with the same name as a well-known one-armed English general. We are billeted in the town, in a rather slummy part. We got mails at our bivouac yesterday, the first time for several days.

Two new officers joined us yesterday, Hales and Pullman.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

June 29, 1915.

DEAR OLD DO,

We are now about twelve miles behind a different part of the firing line and are trying to recover from the bad effects of three months' trench work, which makes the men unfit and slack. I don't know how long we

may be here, but probably for some time. We haven't heard a shot fired for ten days. We are in a coal-mining district, and there are huge piles of coal-refuse like the pyramids of Gizeh. These mines are still being worked, no doubt to the benefit of the French and English armies.

I took my company out for a route march this morning for two and a half hours. They marched pricelessly, quite in their old form, but of course there was no one to see them. If they had been all over the shop, we should have met every General in the Army List. Such is life! The country is bung full of troops, and I was not able to follow my intended route as we met a Brigade on the march which turned down the road I wanted to go along, so I went up a different way. The Brigade included Captain Smith-Neill's old Regiment, and they marched past us. Ellis met a friend of his in it. They were a fine-looking crowd, but although they had only come two miles their march discipline was pretty bad. Behind them was a Highland Regiment with pipes playing, but I couldn't see which it was as by then we had turned off on to another road. I believe Donald Brown's Battalion is in that Brigade.

A little farther we overtook another column, and clashed with yet a third at a cross-roads. The latter was only a squadron of cavalry and some cyclists; among the former I saw and waved to Smith from the Grammar School. He is a Lance-Corporal!

When we got back in our old place, Kennish had a twenty-first birthday, so we invested in several "borrels of the boy." It was awful gooseberry, I fear, although

supposed to be Roederer. Anyway, we all had heads in the morning. Every little shop here sells champagne, but it looks poisonous.

Much love, old girl.

Your loving Brother,

LIONEL.

July 17, 1915.

DEAR OLD GUY,

I don't know when this will get off, as we are on the move again.

We have had a lot of rain lately, and had the hell of a march last night in pouring rain, arriving in billets at 4 a.m. Previously we had been bivvied in a wood for four nights. One night I took out a working party and it rained in torrents. We were soaked to the skin. Yesterday I also took out a working party. The Huns shelled a railway-station and a coal-mine away to our right and also burst shrapnel about 500 yards to our right, but left us alone. I feel quite pleased to hear the jolly old shells again. It was like meeting an old friend. I wanted them to keep on to vary the deadly monotony of navvying. We were close to a village where a certain Welsh regiment was billeted, and a man came out to have a look at us who was a gardener at The Bury before the war. Of course he knew me by sight.

While we were waiting at our rendezvous, a lot of Indian working parties passed us. A very chatty English Major and native Colonel stopped and talked

for about half an hour. They were very nice. The Indian Colonel was a cousin of the Maharajah of Jodhpur. They said they had got old Pertab Singh with them, and that he was very fed up with it all and wanted to get back to his pig-sticking.

No more news that I can tell you, although there seems to be a lot doing. I don't see much prospect of getting leave. You have scotched it by leaving me in the lurch without a second in command.

Yours,

LIONEL.

July 19, 1915.

A chance to get a letter off. We moved again last night by train, and it is no earthly good your guessing where we are, because you would never guess right. We are bivouacked in a beautiful beech wood which reminds me of Kimble.

These moves are very interesting, and I wish I could tell you all about it.

L. W. C.

July 25, 1915.

DEAR OLD WHISKIN,

Thanks awfully for your letter. Yes, thank goodness we are back in the trenches again, some thirty-five miles south of where my people knew I was last. Personally I like the trenches. There is always something doing. At the present moment shells are being plumped into a wood and village about 800 yards in

front of our lines. One got rather tired of mucking about behind the line, digging trenches here and marching there. It is a grand life and nothing to grumble at. Of course sometimes one gets tired and irritable and apt to grouse at nothing.

The guns are going it some just now—boom, crash! but as long as a shell doesn't come inconveniently close, one doesn't notice them.

I have a fine dug-out right in the earth. I will endeavour to describe it. You must first scrape your boots, then you go down four steps. The dug-out is quite large and roofed with large timbers (bits of trees). The roof is supported with a large bit of tree and large cross-beams. I forgot to say that I have a door and a fanlight over it.

Inside is a good-sized table, five chairs, a little table (what an auctioneer calls a "what-not," I think), a tapestry cloth, a large bed with spring mattress, two pictures, and various little china ornaments, a large curtain. The dug-out is walled and roofed with some sort of leather.

I don't think there is any more news.

Yours,

L. W. CROUCH.

July 27, 1915.

DEAR OLD GUY,

I got your letter from Totland Bay last night. I had previously written you *such* an interesting letter, but *οἱμοι τῆς τύχης* it was returned by the C.O. as

unfit for publication, or rather for posting. It was all about two prisoners my company took two nights ago.

We have moved from where Coxhill went on leave, and are now in the trenches thirty-five miles or so *south* of that place. I am writing this in my dug-out (for description see a letter I wrote to old Whiskin).

Tell Mother not to fuss about respirators. Every man has a respirator and a gas helmet, which are absolutely perfect protectors. Old Backchat¹ and several N.C.O.s have been gassed experimentally and felt no effects. Two Johnnies on the Staff sat for forty minutes (I think it was) in a room full of poison gas and felt none the worse, except for a slight headache and a slight sore throat.

Tell Do that I got the things from Fortnum & Mason's.

Could you arrange for 100 Abdullahs to be sent me once a week? I am run clean out of smokes. One can get no smokes, but on the other hand one can get jolly good wine.

I had a letter from Jim Price² the other day. I was digging trenches close to him and never knew it. He is awfully anxious to see me, and wrote "Dear Granny," which takes me right back to the old Booty days, doesn't it?

Yours,

LIONEL.

¹ Lieutenant Backhouse, killed February 1916.

² A schoolfellow at Mr. Booty's Preparatory School, Folkestone. He was afterwards killed on Good Friday, 1916.

July 29, 1915.

DEAR GUY,

Of your guesses, three is the correct one. We never went back to any base. I hear that rumours were about at home that we had gone back to Havre. We have never at any time been farther from the trenches than some fifteen miles.

We are now in our rest-billets in a deserted farm forming part of a fairly large village only 200 or 300 yards behind the front trenches. Most of the village is, of course, shelled out, and the church a thing of the past. It is extraordinary that one can live here. There are even a few civilians here, and two shops where a few things can be bought, but charges are naturally high—tin of milk, five francs !

Reynolds and Green have come out again, and Young and Troutbeck have joined from the 2nd Battalion. The two former have rejoined their old companies. Young has come to me and Troutbeck to A. Norwood has been transferred to D from A. Viney, Combs, and Vernon are now Captains. Viney is my second in command, and Vernon has gone to D *vice* Hall, who now commands C. So you see we have had some changes, which will interest you.

We had some shelling yesterday, and old Kennish nearly got buried in his dug-out. A shell burst on top near the door, and brought down all the earth and blocked the door. It was very funny to see Kennish, who was asleep at the time, emerging with a tousled head and in his shirt-sleeves (he had got soaked through on

patrol the night before). I am afraid we were very unfeeling and roared with laughter.

Yours,

LIONEL.

August 11, 1915.

DEAR OLD GUY,

No, Viney is still Intelligence Officer, although he is my second in command. I suppose you will go to the 3rd Battalion when you are passed fit. It is indeed curious that the 3rd Battalion should have marched out of Aylesbury on the exact anniversary of the 1st Battalion being mobilised and leaving for Cosham.

Oh, I've had the hell of a time, as the parrot said when the monkey had plucked him. Last night we had the worst time we've had since we've been out. A terrific thunderstorm broke out, the worst I've ever seen. Rain poured in torrents, and the trenches were rivers, up to one's knees in places and higher if one fell into a sump. Baby fell in one above his waist! It was pitch dark and all was murky in the extreme. The rifles all got choked with mud, through men falling down, so I instituted an armourer's shop in each dug-out, and the rifles were brought in one by one to be cleaned. A man worked in each dug-out all night. The rest sweated at baling with buckets. *Mon Dieu*, it was a night! Bits of the trench fell in. To cap it all, a thick mist arose at sunrise and we stood-to for five hours until it cleared! The mist, however, proved

useful, and one could go out and inspect the wire in daylight. I had a wiring party out during the fog and they managed to do a lot of work. However, by 8 o'clock we managed to get the trenches fairly clear of water, but the mud was pretty bad.

I haven't got the palatial dug-out I occupied last time. I can't sleep in mine, as it is over-run with rats. Pullman slept here one morning and woke up to find one sitting on his face. I can't face that, so I share Newbery's dug-out for sleeping purposes. Newbery is a very nice chap, an old Harrovian, *ætat.* thirty-five, married, with three kids. He is a stock-broker in a normal existence, and 'listed in the L.R.B. on the outbreak of war. He had previously done four years in the L.R.B. at the time of the Boer War.

I hope you got my letter about leave. I shall cuss if some rotten thing turns up to stop it. Tell Dad to try and raise a day's shooting for me. I should love a day in pursuit of the little brown bird.

Yours,

LIONEL.

P.S.—I forgot one item in the attractions of this filthy dug-out. I slew a little beast on my table last night. A pukka bug, isn't it? Ugh!

September 5, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Well, here we are again. I found my company in the trenches and one has dropped into the old life.



OFF TO THE FRONT.

The 1st Bucks Battalion marching out of Chelmsford, March 30, 1915.

Photo by Fred Spalding, Chelmsford.

I feel as if the leave were all a dream. I did enjoy it so much, but it passed like a flash. You should have seen the miserable party of four officers and fourteen men who walked up to this village along that dreary road.

September 6, 1915.

I started this letter in the trenches, but was too busy to finish it. I am now writing in a farm about five miles back, where we are in rest-billets. These are only temporary, however, and we move again to our proper ones. I will tell you about our journey back. Our boat was simply packed—officers and men returning from leave, besides drafts both English and Indian. We had to cross with all lights out, not even a cigarette or pipe being allowed. It was quite rough and raining. The only seat I could get was on somebody's valise. Then we had an awful railway journey lasting for hours, jogging along and stopping at every little station and halt. Jackson and I got into a carriage with three Belgian officers. One was in khaki, with a frightfully coloured stiff shirt which stuck out beyond his jacket sleeves. He also had on a Sam-Browne belt, badly cut leggings, and appalling brown boots, all horribly new and yellow. He had fair hair standing bolt upright, and glasses. He looked just like a German. We had to change at a suburb of the town which we got to in the French car on our way home. There we had two hours to wait. Jackson and I and the secretary of the Berks T.F. Association (who was spending four days

leave at the front: good Lord, what a thing to do!) went to a little café and had some coffee. We devoured our sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, which were very welcome. We also got a wash. Then we got into another train, which was even worse than the first. We couldn't get into a first-class carriage, but got into a second-class with several French Tommies also returning from leave. One in L'Infanterie Coloniale insisted on exhibiting a loathsome wound in his leg which he got last January and of which he was very proud. Luckily we had already had our breakfast. After a wretched pottering journey we arrived at a station near our railhead, where we detrained and boarded a motor-bus which took us to our divisional H.Q. There we messed about, getting three or four contradictory orders—first we were to stop there that night, then join our Battalion, then stop, then rejoin. Finally we did rejoin, walking the five or six miles to the trenches. I found the company all fit, no catastrophe having occurred under Viney's régime.

Young has developed into a blood-wader since I left, and is quite mad keen on patrolling. Baby has also done a good patrol, investigating an old German trench and collecting several souvenirs in the shape of German pull-throughs and oil-bottles. I found some K.'s in with us for instruction, the 11th Battalion of the Regiment of which our late C.O. commands a Battalion. The officers attached to us were a very nice lot and had been with the company for a week. I found them all a very happy party. Curiously enough, one of the

subalterns was nicknamed Baby, and was attached to our Baby for instruction !

Nothing much happened in the trenches except the usual dose of shelling, which was rather unusually unpleasant, but they didn't score any direct hits.

My temporary billet here is an excellent one with a ripping bed, but the others are in a filthy hole. I am with the officers of the Regiment to which Smith of the Grammar School belongs. They are a very nice lot and gave me a good dinner last night with a cigar to wind up with. They want me to mess with them while I'm here, but I can't very well abandon the others.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

September 17, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Here we are up again, I'm glad to say. I've got rather a nice little job on my own for a day or two, until another officer comes back from leave.

I'm at present living in rather a nice house, the only decent-sized house in the village which is untouched by shells. There is a pretty garden in front, with rose-bushes and one or two flower-beds, and a fair-sized kitchen garden behind. There is plenty of furniture in the house, the inhabitants having evidently left in a hurry. I don't sleep upstairs, but in what was evidently the dining-room on the ground floor. There are two swagger candelabra and a clock on the mantelpiece very Frenchified, and not quite according to English taste.

The clock goes very well and has a very nice strike. When Wheeler was unpacking my valise in this room this afternoon a shell burst some distance away and a shrapnel bullet came through the window, which was open, and hit my valise. Rather curious, wasn't it? Wheeler has kept it as a souvenir. This house is only 300 or 400 yards from the trenches, if that, and I hope the Huns won't hit it. It will be such a relief to the unfortunate owners to find it intact after the war.

I am writing at night, and it is very quiet except for heavy booming of guns in the distance. This has been going on for two or three weeks now and was especially violent last night. Barring that, the only noise is an occasional sputter of rifle fire and the cracking of bullets among the houses of the village. After sunset the guns were fairly active; some big howitzer shells from the Huns went moaning overhead and were followed by a dull boom right away back somewhere. Then some of our guns replied, and our shells seemed to have much higher velocity. Their explosions were terrific crashes which shook this house.

This village is a most interesting place, and the more one sees it, the more one would like to be allowed to describe it. I should dearly love to be let loose with a camera. I hear that there is a new Army order out which is still more stringent with regard to cameras. It is curious how strict our authorities are, while one can buy picture postcards in the villages behind the line, with views of this village, the church, etc. One can get picture postcards of Neuve Chapelle taken by

French photographers, but an English photographer would be taboo.

We hear leave is stopped again, and rumour saith until November, but I know nothing officially.

These partridges I brought back were jolly good. Do you think that later on, when the weather is cooler, game would travel out here all right? Coy cooks them to perfection. We had chipped potatoes and bread sauce with them, everything quite in order.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

September 21, 1915.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

It is devilish cold at night now, though hot in the day. Will you get me some good leather gloves with a warm lining?

I never told you that we were gassed the other day, but not by the Huns, merely experimentally. They filled a big stable with chlorine gas, and we went in. I had a smoke helmet on, a rather thinner kind than usual, but I was perfectly all right. My nostrils smarted a bit, and afterwards during the evening my head ached abominably. Several others complained of headaches. It was very satisfactory to have actual experience of the efficacy of our helmets. My clothes stank of chlorine for some time afterwards. Brass buttons on people's jackets turned a very curious colour.

I put up a covey of six (partridges) off the parapet of

one of our support trenches a couple of mornings ago, when I was going round about 6.30 a.m.

The weather is perfect just now, and the trenches are in ripping condition. All the floor is bricked, and is brushed over with a broom until one could eat one's dinner off it.

I'm holding the same line and living in the same dug-out, which looks like a log-cabin in a cinema show, except that it is underground of course. Last night I slept on the first floor of an undamaged house (practically the only one) in the village. I moved upstairs when I was relieved by the fellow who came back from leave. The Huns disturbed my early-morning beauty-sleep by dropping shells all over the shop—most rude and unthoughtful. However, they didn't fetch me out of bed. The faithful Wheeler was getting me my washing water from the pond about sixty yards away when a shrapnel burst just over the trees—he said he was biting the dust very quickly! They were very lively at intervals. The trenches are far preferable to houses when shells are about.

I have got two more souvenirs, consisting of two German "crowsfeet." They are thrown down to hinder cavalry pursuit. However you throw them, there is always a point sticking up. I got them from a road which runs through my trench, when I was having a look at my wire. I suppose the Germans sprinkled the roads with them during their retreat.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

September 23, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I received your letter of the twenty-first to-night. We are still in the trenches, and between the guns and the threatening thunder-weather I've got a rotten head on me. The guns are making the deuce of a shindy, and some jolly old crashes are taking place in and around the Hun trenches. But the weather is beastly muggy and there is an oppressive feeling in the air. I hope the deuce we shan't have a storm like last time.

Much love, Mother.

Ever your loving Son,

LIONEL.

P.S. *Later.*—The thunder has arrived and it is raining, but I think we shall miss the worst of the storm. The trenches get very moist and watery, though. The guns have abated a bit now it is dark.

October 14, 1915.

DEAR OLD GUY,

I am writing at 4.15 a.m. We shan't be standing-to for an hour yet. We have some K.s with us for instruction, some of Carson's crowd. The second in command of the company is a priceless old Orangeman, and "To hell with the Pope" is his motto. He was astonished at the trenches, and especially with Birchall's dug-out. "Shure and it's a drawing-room with paper on the wall and all *and* pictures." He is awfully amusing, but seems to know all about his job. The men are weird and happy-go-lucky. I've had awful

trouble about their rations and meals, because when the rations, etc., are brought up, the platoon sergeant issues it to all the men who are around, and forgets all about any luckless beggar who happens to be away on sentry or on the telephone. They've no idea of method. One funny incident was when two platoons changed over and one went into some dug-outs. I got one party out and asked the corporal in charge if they were all present. "Ah, shurely." I then suggested he should go through his roll and put them into their dug-outs five at a time in the order of his roll, so as to keep sections together as much as possible. Of the first five names he called, three were absent. "Oh, but it doesn't matter; they are present all right, but have lost themselves." I nearly collapsed. However, they all arrived somehow or other.

Bowyer's information was quite correct. It would have been a murky business.

Yours ever,

LIONEL.

October 22, 1915.

DEAR OLD DO,

We are out of the trenches for our rest (so called), or I shouldn't be writing to you. Some of our Brigade had the deuce and all of a time while we were up, but only one company of ours was affected. They had the worst bombardment we've had in the last seven months. Imagine thousands (literally, some say 3,000, others 6,000) of h.e. shells pitched into a fairly short front of trench. It was pretty noisy to listen to, one con-

tinual scream of shells and explosives. The Huns were putting in big stuff too—not Little Willies from field guns, but 4.13, 5.9, and they say 8-inch. I think it speaks well for the dug-outs and other precautions that the casualties were insignificant. The C.O. of one Battalion in our Brigade, which Battalion had no casualties at all, told me that the sentries stuck it out, and when one traverse was blown to kingdom come, they moved on to the next.

I have been fairly on the go all day, and am quite tired. Some bright spirit in the early hours this morning had a brain-wave and discovered that a Captain ought to go out with each company's working party. By the time the order had filtered through "the usual channel" and reached me, my party was on the point of parading and I hadn't had breakfast. So I had breakfast and then pursued the working party, only to find that the R.E. had scattered them all over the face of the globe in little parties. Birchall and I tramped for two hours over this country of magnificent distances before we found the first fragments of our companies. Some I never discovered at all!

I got back and had lunch, and then a more or less distinguished cavalcade rode out to reconnoitre the way to an obscure and very dull village on another part of the line. On the way back three of us were having a very nice canter across some fields when Algernon must needs put his foot into a hole and do an acrobatic stunt. I landed well clear, partly on my head and partly on my revolver, while Algernon lay on his back, having turned

a complete somersault. I rolled clear of his heels, which were unpleasantly close. It knocked me a bit out of time for a few seconds, but there was no harm done. Luckily we were going a good pace and my momentum carried me on, otherwise Algernon might have turned over on to me.

So long, old girl.

Your loving Brother,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

November 13, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Oh, I've had the deuce of a time, as the parrot said when the monkey had plucked him. Our journey was uneventful as far as our port of embarkation, and then our troubles began. The boat was a small one with very limited accommodation, only a small smoking-room for about 300 officers. The crossing was awful, more like purgatory than anything else, and if someone at Havre had offered me £100 down and another week's leave to go back that night I wouldn't have accepted his offer. I was awfully sick for seven and a half hours; everybody was sick everywhere and on everything and everybody. Some officers were so bad that they didn't care, and lay down in it. Some officers had brought over some greyhounds; they were sick too. When we landed, I felt so weak that I could hardly stand, and it was twenty-four hours before I could face a smoke or anything but the very plainest things to eat. I couldn't

possibly face those pork turn-overs, and swapped them for sandwiches. Then our railway journey was awful. We got into the train between 3.30 and 4 a.m. and reached our destination at 9.30 p.m. We were in a filthy second-class carriage, seven of us. The Army's notion of feeding us was to chuck into each carriage a chunk of cheese, eight tins of bully beef, and about twenty dog-biscuits. There was no opportunity given of getting any food or drink *en route*. We steamed slowly through Rouen station past an appetising buffet, and stopped for about a quarter of an hour well away from the temptations of the buffet. The only bright spot in the whole job was a long stop of twenty minutes at some outlandish place where there were some tubs of rain-water to wash in and some kindly French soldier distributed free gratis to everybody in the train some hot coffee with a dash of brandy in it.

We officers and a few men were kept at the village where we detrained. The others went on to their units by motor-bus. We got some grub, and I was nearly frantic with thirst, as, except for the coffee, I had had nothing to drink since having tea on board the boat about 7 p.m. the night before, and that had all come up with the rest during the crossing. However, I got three bottles of Bass and soon flattened those. I then slept the sleep of the just until 8.30 the next morning (this morning). Of course, there were no arrangements to take us on, so we started walking, but soon picked up a motor-lorry which took us to the next village, where we managed to get some riding-horses

and a cart from a kind transport officer of another Battalion in our Brigade.

And now the trenches! You can't imagine their state, and what I told you, that people at home can't do too much for the poor devils of men out here, I would repeat twice as strongly. Conditions in the trenches this weather are rotten. The sides all fall in, dug-outs collapse, and all leak. Even our "marble hall" leaks badly, and my bedroom is hopeless. We can only use one bed. Everything is liquid mud. When the company took over, one length of trench was liquid mud over one's knees. None of the men in the front-line trenches can lie down to rest; they have to sit up on their packs or on a box, because the floor is all wet mud. The Huns are evidently still worse off, as their trenches opposite us lie well down a slope. A number were seen this morning busy baling with their trousers turned up.

Will you make a routine of sending me a new pair of socks *every fortnight*? I lost my gloves during that awful crossing, so please have a similar pair sent out at once. I left a towel behind: please send another.

Much love to all.

Your muddy but quite happy

LIONEL.

P.S.—I forgot to tell you that Crouch the jeweller's eldest son was really wounded, but only slightly. A small piece of shell went through his hip. It happened during our relief last week. The Huns started shelling a communication trench. He bent down to avoid one shrapnel which burst close, but a bit caught him.

November 15, 1915.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

We had a hard frost and some snow last night. The trenches are perfectly awful for the men now ; everything is falling in and all the dug-outs leak. The only dug-out in my line which doesn't is our new mess-room. Viney's and my sleeping dug-out is like a well and one of the beds has had to be abandoned. The water drips from a dozen places in the roof continuously. I went into my old company headquarters, called the Rathaus, the other night, and what a spectacle ! One side has all fallen in, water pouring from the roof, and two wretched signallers squatting up in one corner with a candle and their telephone instrument, a waterproof sheet suspended over their heads to keep the water off. The savages opposite us are evidently in a far worse state, and we have fired on parties repairing and baling their trenches. Apparently their front trench has completely foundered for 100 yards in one place, as a Hun had the impudence to walk along the top of the parapet yesterday morning. The range, 750 to 800 yards, is too great for accurate shooting. Their shelling has been very quiet lately. They put about a dozen at us yesterday, but none hit the trenches or even our wire. Darned idiots, their gunners. Our guns had a good Sunday hate and dropped it into them some.

I am having a Captain Gregson of Indian Cavalry attached to me for a month's instruction.

Viney has got a comic job to-day. He is showing a couple of M.P.s round the trenches. We told him to

drown the blighters in a sump-hole. He may be bringing them in to tea.

Well, cheer oh!

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Our great battle now will not be against the Huns, but against frost-bite.

December 4, 1915.

MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR,

Please forgive the filth, but I am writing in the trenches, and hands—everything—is mud. I thought you might like a brief if lurid account of our present existence. It can only be described in Tommy's language, "bloody." I really don't think that swearing is bad language out here. Oh, how I should like to get hold of some of those slackers in England and put them in trenches, also those people who still think that Territorials are no good. We have had nothing but rain, rain, rain. Some parts of the trenches are well over the knee in jammy mud. It is literally true that last night we had to dig one of my chaps out of the parapet and his thigh boot is still there. We can't get that out. All the dug-outs are falling in. The men are astonishing. The worse the weather the more cheerful they are, and Viney had to slang one platoon yesterday for singing in the trenches. Of course they get no rest; they have to work all day and all night in order to keep the water down. The sides of the trench fall in and with the water form this awful yellow jam.

This morning I was going round and, to my amazement, saw a brazier at the entrance to what looked like a hopelessly collapsed dug-out. Merely a hole, mud, fallen beams, and sandbags. I called to a sergeant and wanted to know why the blazes a brazier was left burning there, when a filthy face from inside (like those pictures of Bairnsfather's) with a Woodbine hanging out of one corner of the mouth announced with a broad grin that it was fairly all right inside.

A pathetic sight in the early dawn of yesterday was Company Sergeant-Major Sirett rescuing Baby from a sump into which he had fallen and stuck in the mud. The C.O. this morning fell into a sump, and a few minutes after Baby follows suit into the same sump! There is one awful place nearly up to one's waist. The Colonel carried his orderly through it this morning.

Sergeant How has just brought me the cheerful news that one stretch of trench is impassable, the jam being up to a man's waist.

Under these conditions hostilities are almost a wash-out. Our guns shelled the Boche trenches heavily yesterday, but there is little rifle fire, except when our chaps get so exasperated that they loose off some rapid. I shot a rat last night with my revolver. I missed him first shot, but shot him right through the body with my second. Not bad in the dark.

One of my platoons had no dug-outs at all last night, nothing but a wet trench. So I had them into mine round my fire two at a time, each pair for half an hour. One can hardly see uniforms now for the mud. I'm

caked all over—hands, face, and clothes. I have given up washing or shaving, but Viney does heroic things every morning with a bucket.

Well, so long, old bird.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

December 6, 1915.

I am sending probably this week by one Horsler, who is coming home on leave, a German helmet found in my trench. It is in very fair condition, but wants doing up. The top of the spike is loose, as also is the crest. The leather part wants restitching in places and doing up. The rosettes at the sides are rusty, but in cleaning I'm afraid that the colours, black, white, and red, would come off. The brass-work will clean up nicely. It isn't a bad souvenir, as it really came from my bit of the line. One of my trenches is in a little orchard and the parados is falling away in the wet weather, disclosing all sorts of débris. Four or five helmets have been found, but only two were in anything like decent condition. Mine is far the best. The ground is full of leather equipment, boots, and stinks, and is, I guess, full of dead Boches. We found a German rifle, belts, map-case, bayonet, etc. There is also a French soldier, one Pierre Jeanneau, buried in the parados, and he is making himself rather unpleasant.

We had a rotten time yesterday. The Boches took it into their head to shell our almost unharmed end of the village. First they put over salvos of 5·9 howitzers.

I went out and fussed round, getting men into cellars, and then just as I was well in the open, I heard a big one coming. I was so petrified I couldn't move. It seemed a lifetime that the thing was coming, it was so slow. And then, a huge crump, and it burst about fifty yards away, destroying a barn and badly wounding a sapper. It was an 8·2 shell. They put in several. One cut a big tree slap in half less than 100 yards from our old farm. These 8-inch fellows make a most awful noise. I don't mind admitting that that first one put me in the deuce of a funk. One laughs at field-gun shells and at any sort of shelling when in trenches, but I hate being shelled in houses. Do you recollect my telling you of the nice little house in our village where I slept on the first floor? The house had hitherto escaped unscathed, but this time a 5·9 shell went slap into that bedroom of mine and blew all the window and part of the wall out into the garden. After this sort of unpleasant episode one always jokes and laughs at it, but it isn't nice while it lasts. I'm glad to say that none of our fellows were touched. They have got so casual. I had to order them into the cellars. When I did so, some of them said, "Oh, but we are just having our dinners!" They seemed to think that they weren't playing. Shells had just been bursting all over the shop, but their dinners were far more important!

Well, love to all. We are back at our rest-billets now.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

December 19, 1915.

DEAR OLD DAD,

Thanks for your letter. I was awfully glad that the Boche helmet is such a success. Would you like a skull to go with it? The rain is disclosing all sorts of interesting souvenirs behind my trenches. There is a little osier-bed in front of a hedge, and evidently two shallow pits were dug and dead Boches were bundled in anyhow. The pits are now sinking a little, and boots, bones, clothes, and all sorts of débris are sticking out. There are two fine skulls there. I carried one on the end of my stick and planted him at the head of a communication trench, but it has been removed.

We had the hell of a night last night. Patrolling was rife. One of my patrols, which was pretty strong, dropped into it proper. An infernal Boche patrol spotted them and lay in wait for them, receiving them with rapid fire both from the trenches and from a hedge between the lines. The Boches were too far and in too good a position to be rushed and so our patrol discreetly withdrew, luckily without a single casualty, although one chap had a bullet through his coat. A little later I sent a small party round their flanks to try and bomb them, but the blighters had gone. It was a plucky job of this second party. Young, later still, went with two N.C.O.s and got right up to the Boche wire and cut the outer strands. They could hear the Boches talking and one man whistling in their trenches.

Little Katie Gimson has sent me a muffler which she knitted all herself. Isn't it sweet of her? Of course it is full of dropped stitches and irregularities, but that makes it all the nicer. Would you send each of the kiddies a half-guinea box of Fullers for me? All you people at home must buy your own presents and send me the bills.

Cheer oh!

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

December 23, 1915.

DEAR OLD DAD,

I've got some more things for you: (1) a ball bomb, (2) a light friction bomb, (3) nose cap of 77-millimetre field-gun shell, aluminium, and (4) a complete 77-millimetre shell.

Nos. 1 and 2 both have the explosive still in them, but are perfectly innocuous, as there is no detonator in them. They can be thrown about. Live bombs without detonators are used for practice throwing. They can't possibly go off.

No. 4 is rather nice. I found it lying in front of my trenches the other morning. The shell had exploded badly and only the fuse had blown out. The empty case is quite complete and intact. It is the ordinary German field-gun shell which is nicknamed "Little Willy," "Pip-squeak," or "Whiz-bang." The two bombs are of an obsolete pattern. The light friction is

a very good bomb charged with high explosive which kills within a radius of about six yards only by the force of the explosion. One can throw them and stand and watch them burst with perfect safety. Other types scatter bits about and have been known to kill at 100 yards. The light friction bomb is merely a tin case full of lyddite.

Wheeler has re-engaged for the rest of the war. Squire Newton and Dixon had also done so. Old Sirett is re-engaging too, although several of the older N.C.O.s are not doing so. Sirett is a fine sportsman and much to be admired, I think. A lot of senior N.C.O.s whose time expires are not re-engaging. Sirett, in spite of a certain amount of pressure from some quarters, is taking on again, and says that where the regiment goes he is going, and that he couldn't bear the idea of leaving. Any recognition of him or Mrs. Sirett would, I'm sure, be well deserved. I cannot speak too highly of his patriotism and sense of duty. It really is fine. He has done about twenty-five years in the Battalion, including eighteen months in South Africa. He is married with a family.

We've had some sporting patrol scraps this time, and on one occasion caught a Boche patrol bending at twenty yards with a machine gun. We have taken machine guns out between the lines on several occasions.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

December 28, 1915, 9 p.m.

DEAR OLD DAD,

Here we are again. Our reliefs are now the number of days corresponding to the number of our old house divided by two.

I enclose a snapshot of myself taken by the boy at our rest-billet. Of course cameras are *verboten* to the English, but the French seem to be allowed to use them.

I returned to find my dug-out in a further state of collapse, but it has been repaired and is still holding out bravely. We had rather fun relieving, as there were several Boche aeroplanes circling about. They were shelled very heavily by field guns, Archibalds, and pom-poms. The last are rotten things, to my mind, as a percentage of their shells come down and burst on the ground. We were hung up for some time, having to conceal ourselves from the aircraft.

The Battalion we relieved had had a lively time with shells and had some casualties, but are rare events here, luckily. Soon after we relieved, that damned minenwerfer started werfing Reynolds, making ear-splitting crashes even where I am. We were able to spot the brute and got the guns on it. They soon shut it up, and one shell seemed to hit the very spot where the minnie was. One can see the minnie shells coming. They make a hole big enough to put a taxi into.

I have got a ripping little black cat in my dug-out.

It should bring luck. It is a corker at catching rats and mice and is "laying" for one now.

The Boche has stuck up a large Prussian flag between the lines. It is probably a trap, so our patrols will steer clear of it.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

January 11, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I got your letter of January 6 last night. The mails seem to be a bit groggy.

Brown and Williamson (two wounded) are coming back. Brown arrived last night and goes to C Company. Williamson and a new man from the 3rd, Furley, are expected to-day. Williamson goes to A Company, and I am going to get Furley, I believe. So we are looking up as far as officers are concerned, but are grievously short of men. Also we are all dead tired and fed to the teeth.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

January 15, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR,

Just a line to tell you that the C.O. has got the D.S.O. and Reid and Brown Military Crosses. The

list doesn't give numbers of Battalions, only Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry (T.F.).

Yours in haste,

LIONEL.

P.S.—Two of our men got D.C.M.'s. Corporal Nolan for pulling Piggy Hampden out of a tight place at P—— when he was wounded, and Lance-Corporal Gostelow, a machine gunner, for several bits of good work, one especially when the circus came round. He and Combs took a machine gun out into the open.

L. W. C.

THE TRENCHES.

January 23, 1916, 6.30 a.m.

MY DEAREST OLD DAD,

I got your letter of the 18th last night. I thought I would answer it before having breakfast and turning in.

This is a murky spot. I am sitting in my dug-out. I am smothered in mud, my uniform is caked. It was a lovely moonlight night—a bit too light, as the Boche could see one when going up to the front line. I had to lie on my tummy in the mud three times on my way up from my dug-out to see Baby. Their machine guns sweep all the ground behind, and the communication trenches are no *bon*. I then proceeded to fall into every bit of mud in France. These thigh gum-boots are fine things but awfully difficult to walk in. The consequence was I got back in a vile temper. I've got

an awful cold by dose, and a pain in my tummy. Altogether I don't feel particularly bright, but one can't expect to do so at this time in the morning. I am beastly wet. Oh, strafe these trenches! Poor Baby is immured up in the front line, as no one can get in or out by day. He thought that some Boches were sniping from some trees about fifty yards in front of the trenches last night, and he and a man must needs go crawling out after them with a selected assortment of bombs. They weren't at home, but Baby listened to them talking in their trenches. I do hope the blighters are more uncomfortable than we are. Brrrh, it *is* cold!

I was sorry to hear of Percy Wright's death.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

January 30, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

It is very disappointing, but my leave is off this week. The trouble is that the C.O. took a toss off his horse a few days ago and broke his collar-bone, and the — Brigade are sticking to Viney for another trench tour. My leave has now been delayed a fortnight. It is sickening.

Viney is a man who ought to get a staff job, and the result is that he is always being taken away from me for every conceivable job there is going, while a poor devil of a company commander has to get up to his neck in mud. A company commander's job is the

worst in creation. He is responsible for everything and gets all the kicks if things go wrong, but he never has a chance ¹ of a "mention," much less of a medal.

I've got the most infernal cold and cough and a spinning headache, and can't get rid of it. I have had it for weeks. I also feel so beastly "nervy" now I have taken to ducking at bullets, which I never used to do, and shells make me jump like blazes. We are all getting like that. It is absurd keeping us in the trenches so long—six months continuously now.

Well, till next week.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Did I tell you that Furley, one of my subalterns, was killed last time up? He was shot through the head and killed instantly. Poor chap! he had only been with us a fortnight.

L. W. C.

February 12, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I have got back to the Battalion safely, and found them out of the trenches for a few days, luckily at a village a couple of miles back. They have had a rotten time in our absence, having been shelled like blazes. Poor old Backchat has been killed. A big

¹ Lionel never did get this chance. Many decorations were awarded on his report or recommendation to officers and men of his company (see his letter of April 14, 1916), but for himself Lionel never received any "mention," medal, or any other official recognition of his services.

shell killed him and another officer of another Battalion. Several of our machine-gun men have also been knocked out. Poor old Backchat was killed instantly.

Hawkins is away on leave, and I am living at Battalion headquarters, being second in command.

I had a decent though rough crossing, but managed to get a bunk.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

February 17, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I will now give you a longer description of my journey. Dad and Do will no doubt tell you about Waterloo. I had a carriage to myself all the way down. We crossed on the same boat as that on which we came over. One Battcock of another Battalion in our Brigade went down on the first train and very kindly had secured a cabin for me. At least we shared one. I was very comfortable and never felt like being sick, although it was pretty rough. We had the usual dawdling journey through France, but everything was far better arranged. We stopped for an hour at the place where the Y.M.C.A. people were, and had an excellent breakfast of coffee and omelettes at a little pub near the station. Only one of the girls was at the Y.M.C.A., and not the pretty one. When we got to our destination about 8.30 p.m., we had dinner at a café and then first learned of the awful strafing that

our people had had, and about poor old Backchat, but of course as the news came from officers of other Brigades we were uncertain as to the truth. We asked the orderly where we were going to sleep, and he told us up in the loft on stretchers, so Hadden of the 4th Battalion asked if he could do us a nice line in coffins! Our Battalion headquarters are in a very nice big farmhouse with no inhabitants. Carpet on the floor and fine furniture.

Reynolds had a jolly near squeak during the strafe. A big 8-inch shell had just knocked out a machine-gun team, killing four and wounding another. This chap had both legs smashed and Reynolds met him crawling along, paddling himself along with his hands like a rabbit when one has hit him behind. He looked up with a cheerful smile and said, "It's all right, sir; I'm not killed." Some of these chaps are wonderfully plucky. Reynolds and two stretcher-bearers got him on a stretcher. Reynolds was one end of the stretcher and the two bearers the other. Then came another shell and killed both stretcher-bearers. It knocked Reynolds flying, but never hurt him. It didn't hurt the man on the stretcher. It must have been a rotten time. This shelling went on for three days, but the casualties were very few.

I left my identity disc in my bedroom. It must be somewhere on my dressing-table or in the drawers. Please send it out immediately.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

SHELL-BLOWN VILLA, H——.

March 4, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

The place where I am sitting is well named. Combs and I thought we would sleep in the next room last night, but decided for this one after all, as the other is so draughty. Most of one wall has been disintegrated by a shell and the hole blocked with hurdles. The playful bullet also keeps on coming through. I am glad we changed rooms, because last night it snowed and the snow all came into the room. The trenches are perfectly abominable. Reid found a party of four men stuck fast in the mud yesterday. They had exhausted themselves in their struggles and couldn't move.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

March 7, 1916.

DEAR OLD DEEDOOS,

Thanks for your long letter *re* officers. Let me know when they come out. I have applied to have Rolleston with me. A young fellow from the 13th Company of London turned up last night as signalling officer. Viney has torn some ligaments in his leg by falling into a communication trench, like you did. He is in hospital, and I should think may reach England.

We had a great stunt last night, which I hope may earn a D.C.M. or two for B Company. Combie, who is my second in command, as you know, took out a large patrol to round up some Boches who were suspected

to be occupying some poplars and a sunken road about 700 yards from our and 100 yards from their trenches. Smaller patrols of my company had found them there two nights in succession. His scheme was to bomb them out of their post at the end of the poplars and drive them up the road into the arms of another party. Lance-Sergeant Baldwin put four bombs into the Boche post; these were followed by loud shouts and groans. The Boches manned the whole line of poplars and opened fire and threw bombs. About twelve of them charged along the road towards our own trenches. Lance-Corporal Colbrook stood in the middle of the road shouting, "Hands up." The Boche was shouting "Deutscher, Deutscher," evidently taking our people for Boches. Colbrook would have been mopped up, but Corporal Baldwin and Goldswain each put a bomb into the middle of them, knocking out all but three. These swerved round Colbrook and began firing from the hip. One charged on to Goldswain, who fired his rifle from the "on guard" position when the Boche was practically on to his bayonet. A Boche bomb then burst behind Goldswain, throwing him down nearly on top of the dead Boche. Another was also shot and the remaining one fled in another direction. Heavy Boche reinforcements came charging down the road, and nearly bagged Corporal Baldwin and Co., who escaped by the skin of their teeth. The patrol was then reorganised, and Combie made a counter-attack, driving the Boches out of their listening-post again, but the Boche reinforcements occupied the line of poplars and opened

fire and threw bombs. We have three men very slightly wounded in the face by bits of bombs, including Alan Crouch and Goldswain. The patrol retired in fine order, halting occasionally and facing about in correct style! Combie reckons he put out from twelve to fifteen Boches in all, killed and wounded. Anyhow, it was a very successful little scrap.

Send this letter home, as they will be interested. I don't think that I have infringed any rule of censorship by telling you this.

Yours,

LIONEL.

SHELL-BLOWN VILLA.

March 8, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Thanks awfully for your letter and the fine cake.

Viney is in hospital now, having torn a ligament in his leg. Combs is now my second in command.

I told Guy to send you on a letter I sent to him about a stunt my company did the other night. The boy who was home on leave from my company when I was last has paid off one score. You may remember that I told you that he had had a brother killed and always volunteered for every patrol, in order to kill a German. Then he was poor Furley's servant, and so had another score to wipe off. The other night he bagged one. One charged nearly on to his bayonet. Goldswain pulled the trigger with the rifle in the "on guard" position and killed the Boche. A Boche bomb burst behind him and blew him up. He fell on the dead

Boche, but only had a slight scratch on the face. Altogether our patrol laid out twelve to fifteen Boches, and we lost three very slightly wounded in the face by bits of bomb. One was Alan. All three are still at duty. The Boche bombs were absolutely ineffective. They went off with a terrific bang but little result. Our lemons were splendid. The Boches fought finely and wouldn't surrender, although our men tried to get them to do so. They are a good crowd opposite us, always cheery. One can hear them whistling and singing even in this horrible weather, and, barring an occasional deserter, fight well.

The snow has been awful and the trenches knee-deep in half-frozen water. The nights are bitterly cold. To-day I move into that villa of which you have a snapshot. But it isn't the place it was, and has been shelled a lot. One has to live in the cellar now. I have already applied for Rolleston when he comes. I have been having awful toothache lately. It nearly drove me dotty the other night. I am going to a dentist at the first chance.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

A CELLAR UNDER THE VILLA OF WHICH YOU HAVE A PHOTO.
March 9, 1916, 12.30 a.m.

MY DEAR OLD MASSAH,

I am quite fit, but suffering from awful toothache at times. The left side of my face is very sore.

Those infernal Boches deposited a lot of howitzer shells around "Shell-blown Villa" to-day. We sat in front of the fire listening to them just clearing the roof and bursting about 150 yards away, but the limit was reached when one exploded about thirty yards away. I then beat a strategic retreat to the cellar.

Birchall says that he doesn't want to get killed a bit.¹ He wants to die at the age of ninety-five and be buried by the vicar and the curate, and his funeral attended by all the old ladies of the parish! He strongly objects to large objects of an explosive nature being thrown at him, and then his remains being collected in a sandbag and buried by ribald soldiery and dug up again two days later by a 5·9!

The Division has just had a very nice farewell order from the G.O.C. of our late corps. It is a long order, and says that he "feels sure that when the forward movement begins the name of the Division will be engraved in the history of that advance," and he "much regrets that such tried troops, in whom he places complete confidence, should be leaving his command." It is nice to know that we are well thought of.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

THE TRENCHES.

March 21, 1916.

Thanks so much for the studs, etc. I have written and thanked Mrs. Cooper.

¹ Captain Birchall died of wounds, July 1916.

I expect that you will see in the papers more liveliness on our front. We had a very cheery time the other night. Suddenly about 2 a.m. the very deuce of a bimbaro started like a thunderclap. Every conceivable gun from a 5.9 to trench mortar and machine gun started on us and the Battalion on our right. It was the hottest thing we have had, and they must have put in at least a couple of thousand shells. Our guns, of course, at once opened with a barrage, and our machine guns and rifles let rip. The Boche put across some gas and also fired stink shells, but my company was hardly at all affected by that. We didn't get the worst of the shelling either. The Boche infantry tried to attack, but he didn't get far against our Battalion and never reached our wire. Evidently our machine-gun and rifle fire was too hot. He reached the wire of the Battalion on our right, but got no farther, and left behind one prisoner (a boy of sixteen!) and a number of scaling ladders. The show lasted for about an hour, and you can't realise what a din there was. Our casualties were miraculously light. We never lost a single man killed in our Battalion. I had no casualty at all in my company, although Combs was coshed on the back with a big bit of shell. He escaped with a bad bruise. Sergeant Bateman and Corporal Chimes who used to be in my company were both wounded. Chimes was hit in the backside with two bits of shrapnel and also in the arm, and was frightfully concerned lest people at home would think that he was wounded in the back because he was running away.

Altogether it was great fun. The din of the guns, bursting shells, and machine-gun and rifle fire was beyond all expression. The bursting shells, rockets, and flares lit up the scene every now and then, and the smoke from the bursts hung about like a mist. After the show was over, the gas from the lachrymatory shells reached my company's headquarters. It was too weak to affect my eyes, but I had already a sore and irritable throat and it made me cough until I was nearly sick.

Sergeant Bishop, formerly of my company and now in C Company, who caught the hottest, was in C Company's front line, and told me that he never expected to come out alive. The trenches were terribly bashed about, but every minnie and shell seemed to go where there were no men.

The pathetic thing was that a draft from the 3rd had arrived the night before, and thought that that sort of thing happened every night.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

April 1, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

Thank Mother for her letter received yesterday. This one must do for both of you.

I am writing this in the cellar of the villa of which you have got a snapshot. The house itself is really in a state of collapse. It has been knocked about frightfully in the last few months.

Yes, Dwight was wounded in that Boche stunt.

C Company lost ten wounded, including two of my old N.C.O.s. I think I told you that we had our first taste of gas that night, both from cylinders and from stink shells. D Company had two wounded and A one. My company none. One of D Company's casualties was a lance-corporal who had only just come out again with a draft, having been wounded in our old line. We had bad luck a few days ago: a big 5·9 shell wiped out a group in D Company, three killed and four wounded. One of the killed and one of the wounded were 3rd Battalion men, who only came up the day before. The wounded one is not likely to live and has probably died by now.

A funny thing happened to-day. A man in C Company was hit in the arm by a ricochet off a tree. He just said, "I got that one," and the others laughed and said he was a lucky devil. He was most indignant. Most of us would have given a tenner for his wound.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

April 2, 1916.

DEAR OLD DEEDOOS,

I think you will be interested to hear of another stunt last night. It has pleased the authorities highly, but unfortunately cost the lives of four jolly good men, Lance-Corporal Colbrook, Privates Coleman, Hazzard, and Webb, all of whom you probably remember. Combs and Aitken went out with a big patrol, and had a scrap

with something between fifty and seventy Boches. They got out just about seventy yards north of the poplars you wot of, where the former stunt was. They then lay doggo and listened some time to hear if the poplars were occupied. They then saw six or eight Boches approaching on their left. These Boches evidently got wind of them and lay down. After lying up a bit longer, Sergeant Baldwin and several other men went out to the left to search the ground where the Boches had been seen. He soon came up against a very large party of Boches and deposited nine bombs among them, which produced loud squeals and groans which lasted some time. The Boches opened rapid fire and threw bombs. As Sergeant Baldwin was almost surrounded, he withdrew gradually to the rest of the patrol. On the way back Webb and Hazzard were killed, and for a little while lay out in front of the alignment of our patrol. Lance-Corporal Jennings and six men dashed out under heavy fire and brought Webb and Hazzard back to the alignment of the patrol. Coleman, who was one of Jennings's party, was killed. About the same time Lance-Corporal Colbrook was also killed. Just as the bodies had been got back to the patrol, the Boches tried to make a rush which was checked by rapid rifle and revolver fire. The Boche then settled down to bomb-throwing, which wounded Sergeant Baldwin in three places and slightly scratched Private Todd, E. Then began the job of getting the bodies back some 600 yards to the trenches. Very few men were left, after allowing for carrying parties, for

a covering party. The Boches pressed hard the whole time, and Combs with at most six men at any one time kept them back, chiefly with the aid of rifle grenades splendidly worked by Lance-Corporal Vincent and Private Bloomfield. One rifle grenade was seen to burst in a group of three or four of the swine and bowl them over. It took ages getting these bodies through the wire. I went out a long way in front of the wire to superintend getting the bodies in, not knowing that there was a Boche anywhere about, as the firing had ceased then. I came on some people lying in a saphead, and a voice said, "Get down, you fool." I got down into the sap and found that the Boches were creeping up. I saw one about fifteen yards away and could have shot him when he raised himself easily, but we feared to give our position away and draw bombs on to us (there were only six of us) and on to the body-carrying parties. I drew a bead on the swine and longed to pull the trigger. We withdrew up the sap, which was full of barbed wire. It was a sweat.

The men were absolutely magnificent. Aitken said that their behaviour made him proud to belong to the Battalion. There was absolute coolness and no confusion. Men worked hard getting the bodies in. Lance-Corporal Goldswain, Small, H. G., and several others were soaked in blood and we have had to get them fresh clothes. Sergeant Baldwin, although wounded in the leg, arm, and face, helped to carry men in, and then, when things were critical with the covering party, went back to them. He was with them when I joined them,

and I helped him in. He would not give me his rifle until I made him. Coleman simply gave his life for Webb and Hazzard. That is no exaggeration, but of course they were dead. Words absolutely fail to give any idea of the pluck and steadiness of the men—Vincent and his rifle grenades undoubtedly saved the situation when practically every man had to help carry bodies or rifles.

The Brigade are delighted with it. Of course it was sad losing those good chaps, but undoubtedly the Boche losses were heavier than ours. It was a fight against over two to one odds.

Send this letter home. It may interest them.

Yours,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

April 8, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

We are back again in our old line. I am in the old farm with the grandfather clock ticking away in the corner. Before we left this line, we turfed over the beastly manure-heap common to all French farm-houses. Young got some bulbs out from England, and now the manure-heap is a grassy mound with lovely daffodils and purple and white hyacinths. The men have made a garden on the side of a communication trench. It is labelled "Kew Gardens—Do not pinch the flowers." All our spirits are reviving under the influence of the better weather. The trenches are

beautiful and quite like old times. The apple trees and hedges are budding; some of the hedges are quite green.

We had quite a gay rest-period. The first night we had a cinema, then the Varlets and then the Curios. These are Pierrot troupes, the former raised from one of our field ambulances and the other our Divisional troupe. One of the Varlets dresses up as a girl, and a jolly pretty girl he makes. When "she" came on, old Aitken quite gasped and said: "By Jove! what a fine gurr!" When "she" is made love to by another member of the troupe it is very ludicrous. If it wasn't for "her" feet and hands, I bet most people would take her for a girl.

It has been very noisy to-day. A lot of gunning and shooting at aeroplanes.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

April 11, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Thanks for your letter and Mrs. Cooper's socks, I mean the ones she made for me. I have written to her. Also thank Mrs. Archer for the bug belt.

I simply can't keep my 3rd line officers. Old Aitken was shot through the leg two nights ago. We miss him very much. He was the best platoon officer I've ever had.

He was hit during a very sticky job my company had

to do. The whole company had to be covering party to a huge working party. Directly it was dark I had to take the company out into No Man's Land and post my groups, about 600 yards in some cases from our own trenches and 150 to 200 yards from Brother Boche. I had posted eight of my groups when Aitken's group came in contact with a Boche patrol, and then there were crumps from bombs and a lot of rifle fire. He was hit, and another man (from Aylesbury) shot through the shoulder. I got out more of my groups, and then the Boche got his wind up properly, chucking bombs about regardless and opening rapid fire which made life most uncertain and precarious. The Boche couldn't make out what was going on, and chattered like a lot of monkeys. It was more like the monkey-house at the Zoo than anything else. I then went on posting my groups, continually delayed by rifle fire. We had to lie as flat as pancakes, praying hard while those infernal bullets zipped, buzzed, and ricocheted all round. I began to think that No Man's Land was no place for a staid old company commander.

Once a Boche challenged in a very high-pitched and obviously frightened voice "*Wer da*" three times. One could hear him as plainly as talking to him.

We were out all night, withdrawing just before dawn. The Boches brought into action one or two machine guns which were an infernal nuisance and made me lie flat on several occasions. One burst of fire killed an Aylesbury man called Fall and wounded one of my best Lance-Corporals, also an Aylesbury man. His

name is Whipps. He was hit in the head and also in the side, but is not seriously hurt. He was a rum sight, his face smothered in blood, but cheery as anything and said: "I don't think I shall be back with you for a little while, sir," and sent a message back to me from the dressing-station asking me not to write to his people.

The Boche shelled occasionally, but the darned idiot fired on his night lines and the shells fell well behind the working party and hurt no one. One of my men went off his chump. I had an awful job getting him in.

Brother Boche was evidently much startled next morning when he saw what had happened during the night, and chattered away again like a packet of monkeys.

I have started a garden at my company headquarters. Will you please send as soon as possible two packets of candytuft and two packets of nasturtium seeds. My daffodils and hyacinths are topping. I told you about "Kew Gardens." The men have now put on the grass two bones labelled, "Here lieth all that remains of the last man who walked on the L'hawn."

The weather has been simply priceless until to-day, when it is dull and raining.

Please keep all the enclosures for me with my other things.

Guy may like to see this letter.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

April 14, 1916.

DEAR OLD DAD,

I think I told you Combs has got the Military Cross for his recent patrols. Now Sergeant Baldwin, W. J. (from Slough), has got the D.C.M., and Lance-Corporal Jennings, P. (from the Lee Estate Office), and Lance-Corporal Vincent, T. W. (from Aylesbury), the new Military Medal. These are all my company. So I haven't done badly. I have already got a D.C.M. corporal.

We have just got the news by wire that the Commander-in-Chief awards these decorations. This is of course a double honour.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

April 21, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

No rest for the wicked, and we are the wicked, I suppose.

Here we are up in the trenches several days before we expected to be. I am in the worst trenches in Christendom. You remember "Maison Pas Demi," and all the beastliness round there. Well, I'm next door to this place and it is ten times worse. To make everything absolutely inexpressible, it is bitterly cold, and has started to rain and looks like keeping on all night. We are miles from anywhere, and although we

came in this morning and it is now nearly half-past five, we haven't had a meal.

.

I am continuing at 10 p.m. It is pouring with rain and black as your hat. We have only one tiny dug-out for four officers containing two bunks of filthy muddy canvas. The rain is pouring through the roof and has saturated such beds as we have, so there is nothing for it but to sit up for forty-eight hours. Isn't this the blooming limit? The trenches are now knee-deep in water and still it rains. Oh, how I should like to put those people in this muck who say we aren't in the trenches!

I am sorry to say that one of my men, who was wounded at the same time as Aitken, has died in hospital. He is an Aylesbury man called Jakeman. I can't think why he died. He was shot through the shoulder.

I'm dead tired and everything is too horrible.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Next morning.

A horrible night and morning, pouring with rain. If you can imagine a deep trench filled knee-deep with a yellow-brown liquid, that is what we are living in. I'm soaked to half-way up my thigh, and have spent the night sitting on a wooden bench in this miserable little dug-out.

Just before daylight these Schweinhunden of Boches

bombed one of my posts, knocking out four. We managed to get one wounded man out, but the brutes fired at my stretcher party. The others have got to stop where they are till dark, *i.e.* all day. We can't get to them by day. Cheerful, isn't it, for the survivors to sit under a couple of pieces of corrugated iron with one dead man and two wounded all day. It has taken hours to get the man we did get out to the dressing-station, four hours from the time he was hit. He was carried along soaked to the skin and covered in mud and slime, lying in a stretcher full of rain-water and blood. It was a nightmare getting that chap along the trenches, knee-deep in water and in pouring rain. I've had no sleep and I'm nearly dead. This is the worst I have had in over twelve months. I shan't be able to lie down for another thirty-six hours.

Love to all.

LIONEL.

April 26, 1916.

DEAR OLD DAD,

In my last letter I said that something rotten had happened the night before. Well, when we got to them after dark, it was worse than we thought. Imagine three survivors (one of whom was slightly wounded) and two stretcher-bearers having to sit all day in a little shelter of corrugated iron with two dead men and three wounded. Another man who had been sent on a message was missing, and the poor boy was found forty-eight hours later lying in front of the wire, wounded in the

head but alive, in spite of lying out in drenching rain. I have just heard that he has died. None of my killed belonged to Aylesbury, two to Cippenham, one to Tring (Wigginton), and one to Wolverton. The last, a corporal, lived for three hours, and took charge the whole time, in spite of seven wounds, his left foot completely blown off, a large chunk out of his right leg, and a severe wound in the back. One funny old chap from Quainton, called Knight, was wounded in three places, and had a piece of bomb one and a half inches long in his foot. He pulled it out himself and was as cheery as a sand-boy twenty-four hours later when he was brought in.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Weather simply glorious now, thank goodness.

May 5, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

The world is proverbially very small. We were relieved in trenches the other day by a certain London Battalion. A subaltern came up ahead to take over stores, etc., from my company. In the course of conversation I asked where he lived. He said: "Beckenham." I asked if he knew the Prices. I found out that he married my first flame Fanny Price and that Jim Price married his sister. His name is Lloyd and he is a very old friend of the Prices. When I told him my name he said he had often heard of me. Jim Price

was killed on Good Friday, he told me. It is sad. He was only married last September. He had got the Military Cross.

Laurie Mather is interned in Holland at Gröningen.

Another funny thing happened yesterday. I had sent out a patrol to a hedge between the lines to investigate a suspected sniper's lair. They went out at 2 a.m., and I was in the front line about 3.30 a.m. to see them come in. They would come in in daylight. Suddenly a sentry said: "There is some one coming in on the right." I saw a man walking upright towards our trenches waving his cap over his head. It was rather hazy and I thought at first that he was one of the patrol who had lost himself. Then I saw it was a Boche. Rolleston and I ran up the trench to where he was coming in. The men were awfully funny and were calling out to him: "Come on, mate, it's all right. Are you hungry?" I spoke to him when he was still in the wire in my best German: "*Sprechen sie Englisch?*" He said, "*Nein, ich spreche frenzosischen.*" He spoke very good French. He came in and was disarmed. I asked him what Regiment, and to my surprise he said "*La Garde.*" I expected to hear that he belonged to one or other of the Regiments that we knew are opposite us. He belonged to the Prussian Guard. He deserted in a fit of pique evidently, as he had been hit by his lieutenant. He left his rifle behind, but was wearing his equipment and bayonet and a dagger. He was very young, but a fine, well-set-up chap, and extremely pleasant.

The men loved him and called him "Ginger." They

gave him chocolate and made a great fuss over him. Isn't the British Tommy a weird person? He fraternised with "Ginger," who was certainly a very nice boy. He was evidently of a superior class and well educated. His French was perfect. To hear the men calling him "Mate" and fraternising with him made one feel the fatuity of war.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

May 13, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I am living in a cottage which has not been much damaged and I have a very comfortable bed, a framework of wood with sacking nailed across. I was so comfortable last night that I dreamt I was in sheets. I haven't seen a sheet since I was home on leave.

The Boche has been most infernally noisy this morning. He started about 5 a.m. and went on steadily with 5·9's at the rate of four or so a minute. He must have fired at least 600 shells. I lay in bed listening to them whining through the air and crumping, but as they didn't come very close, one didn't bother. A 5·9 is not much use worrying about, as if it does hit your house or dug-out it is all U.P. If it don't, well it don't, and that is all about it.

The weather is extraordinary. Yesterday it was fine and hot, and the nights are always beautiful, but

to-day is miserable and wet. You can't imagine what a difference rain makes in the trenches.

I think I was a bit optimistic about getting leave in a month. It is quite impossible to tell, of course.

Love to all at home.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

Any news of the 2nd being out yet ?

May 17, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Yes, I hope we are on our way to beds with sheets and electric light. At the moment we are bivouacked in glorious weather.

We had a very cheery farewell given us by the Boche. He gave us two hours terrific bombardment, but did not attack us. I wish he had—he would have had something to remember it by. He did attack on our right, but, by golly ! he did pump shells in—every calibre and minnies and trench-mortar bombs. We got off fairly lightly. I had only one man killed, Woodford, one of my best patrollers and footballers. He has no father or mother, but his brother lives at 33, Mount Street. He was always known as “ Pongo ” Woodford, and was a wonderful chap for finding things. He found my Boche helmet. He was hit by a large piece of shell ; he bled to death in two or three minutes ; all he said was, “ I'm killed.” I had a good few wounded, including my D.C.M. corporal—a topping Irishman named Nolan. The men were first-rate, quite steady

and longing for the Boche to come over. One can't help admiring the men more and more. One chap who had only just come up with a draft remained up on the firestep through it all, and kept on firing. Lance-Corporal Jennings, one of my Military Medal men, was slightly wounded.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

June 17, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Just a line or two to let you know that all is well with me.

John Rolleston was wounded last night. He stopped a piece of bomb in his arm during a short scrap with a Boche patrol. I am in those beastly trenches where I was at Easter, and which I told you about. Rolleston was leading out a covering party and bumped into a Boche patrol, who challenged them three times and then threw bombs and opened fire. The Boches charged with the bayonet and ran right past Rolleston, who was lying on the ground. The worst part is that I had one man, a 3rd Battalion man called Ware, missing. I am afraid that the Boche pinched him. Luckily none were killed, but tell Guy that Corporal Reynolds was wounded. There were a few others wounded, but all were slight. Guy will also be interested to hear about Rolleston. He and Brown are rather lucky, I think.

Love to all.

Yours,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

June 20, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD GUV'NOR,

Things are very noisy here, and to add insult to injury, my company headquarters were nearly obliterated the other day by our own guns, who deposited darn great crumps all round it. By way of variety, Fritz put a 5·9 yesterday twenty yards from my dug-out. We were having lunch. Dirt and muck fell into our food. Isn't it annoying? At night machine guns and minnies are horribly active.

The weather has much improved.

The Russians are doing finely, aren't they? I hear that their push against the pukka Boche—the Germans—began two days ago.

Yours,

LIONEL.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

June 23, 1916.

Bleak House is thinning fast! Five officers have gone in almost as many days. Brown and Rolleston wounded, young Reynolds to the Flying Corps, and the last blow was that Vernon and Combs went to Blighty yesterday to the Machine Gun School. I felt parting with Vernon and Combs more than I have felt anything. I have soldiered with them for years and I simply couldn't say good-bye. Combie has left me his trench club. I should think that Guy and Viney will get out now.

When I joined the Battalion up in the line, I found everything quite different from when we left to go back.

I can't tell you anything, but will some day. Entirely *entre nous* (don't tell anybody), my name is going in for a majority together with Lloyd-Baker's, but whether it will go through I don't know. Besides, things are moving too fast for one to take much interest in promotion.

One of my old pre-war hands, now a Sergeant in D Company, by name Lacey of Chesham, was killed two nights ago. His right arm was blown off by a rifle grenade. He was the best shot in my Chesham detachment.

The other afternoon the old Boche warmed us up some, putting over ninety rifle grenades and trench-mortar bombs. We had no casualties. We are so close that matters are most unpleasant at times.

I had a line from Geoffrey the other day to say that Will Bunning had been wounded. He stopped a bullet in his arm. It was a stray one. He was some distance behind the line at the time.

I believe that Rolleston's sister is at Minehead. You had better look her up.

Cheer oh! Thank Do for her letter. Love to you all.

Yours,

LIONEL.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

June 24, 1916.

Many thanks for your letter. Don't be surprised if I write very infrequently, and don't get your wind up if you don't hear from me.

The weather has been great until yesterday, when we

had a terrific thunderstorm and it rained all night. We are in some very leaky huts in a wood, and the rain came through and dripped on me while I was in bed. It is finer to-day, but very showery. Everything is very wet.

I received a parcel containing a cake and two pairs of pantaloons to-day.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

June 29, 1916.

The weather is the chief topic. It has been too utterly detestable. All the roads and tracks are ankle-deep in mud and just as bad as during the worst winter weather. To-day has been better, and no rain for a wonder.

It was frightfully sad saying good-bye to Combs, but we had a very jolly reunion last night, Viney and Ellis rejoining. It is nearly a year since Ellis left me. He has been with an entrenching Battalion, but has now come back to me. It is priceless getting them back. Viney is in command of A Company.

No more news.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAREST DAD,

June 30, 1916.

I enclose four groups of my company officers, one for you, one for Mother, one for Do, and one to be put among my other war papers; also a group of my



Lieutenant E. N. C. Woollerton. Lieutenant J. Rolleston.
Captain L. W. Crouch. Captain H. V. Combs, M.C.

**CAPTAIN L. W. CROUCH AND HIS COMPANY OFFICERS IN
TRENCH KIT.**

Photo taken in France, May 1916.

sergeants which should also go with my war papers. The group of officers is in trench kit.

There is no news to tell you. The weather is still very unsettled.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

July 6, 1916.

I want to let you know that you need not be anxious about me. For some time now we shall not be doing anything desperate ; in fact, by the time you get this letter we shall be back in trenches leading the normal life, but I sincerely hope that it will be only temporary. When we came out of trenches (for the last time, we hoped) we were all as cheery as crickets, in spite of the fact that we were probably going into a boost. I would rather boost twice over than go back to the monotony of trench life.

Our Corps show was a bit of a missfire. Only one Brigade of our Division was put in, and they got very badly chewed up, but did magnificently. Our Battalion of this Brigade got right ahead, but was hopelessly enfiladed on both flanks and had to get back. Only one officer and less than 200 men got back. A little fox-terrier went over with them and was wounded in the side with a bit of shrapnel.

The weather is better now, but rather unsettled.

Love to all.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

July 7, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

Nothing of note to tell you, except rain, rain, rain, dull skies and cold winds. Was there ever such a "summer"? The trenches, roads, and tracks are as bad as ever they were.

Can you get me a leather strap about 2 feet 6 inches long, with a good strong buckle.

Thank Do very much indeed for the Fullers sweets. I wish you people would send me sweets from time to time.

I hope that this boost keeps going and that we get our show. The weather is much against it. The scene behind is remarkable. When an infantry attack is in progress, it is interesting to see the wounded coming back, some on foot, others in motor-lorries, waggons, motor- and horse-ambulances. The papers write a lot of clap-trap about the cheerful wounded. Of course they are cheerful; they know that they are on the way to Blighty. One sees them all bandaged up roughly, with their faces perhaps all blood, or with their clothes cut and torn, where their wounds are. Sometimes they seem to be in pain, but usually are very happy. The bad cases are of course on stretchers inside the ambulances. It is a sight one will never forget. The organisation is also very wonderful. Certain tracks and roads are marked for up traffic and others for down. Some are for wounded, and there are frequent notice-boards directing the way to the nearest dressing-station. At various points are stationed military police as battle-

stops, where all men who have "lost direction," as it is euphemistically called, are collected.

Yesterday I rode through a village about two miles behind the line where we have often been billeted. The Boche used to shell it occasionally. Now it is like a village of the dead. People hurry through it and no troops live in it. One of my old billets, where an old veteran of '70 lived, has had a big shell right in its face, and the front of the house is all blown out. All the houses have suffered. The church is unhurt, except for scars from flying pieces of shell. Of course all the civilians were cleared out before the boost, and it was a sad sight to see the old women and children being carried off in lorries with their household goods. Many of the poor old things were in tears.

The rain is coming down in torrents, and as we are bivouacking in a clover field it is perfectly beastly. We have a few square yards of dry, as we have rigged up a tarpaulin. I wonder if there ever will be a time of peace or of fine weather again.

The guns have been going at it all last night and all this morning. Our Corps won't be doing anything for a bit, I think. As you no doubt saw in the papers, our Corps show was a bit of a wash-out. Our Brigade with others actually had orders to attack, and marched some way, and then the orders were cancelled. The men were furious. We were all very disappointed. I would rather go through anything in an attack than go back to this infernal trench monotony, but perhaps it will be only temporary. I have attached to me a subaltern

of the Wilts. who knows Hogarth very well. He is a middle-aged city man and reminds me of Uncle Pot.

Yours,

LIONEL.

THE TRENCHES.

July 10, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

Weather is *bon* again now, thank goodness, and the trenches are getting better under the influence of the sun and our efforts with pumps and balers, but they are still knee-deep in thick mud in most places.

I have often seen pictures of battlefields, but I have never seen one until yesterday. I don't call ordinary trenches "battlefields." From part of my trenches one can see where an unsuccessful attack was made. Our men were wearing tin triangles on their backs for the purpose of showing the advance to aircraft. One can see these triangles glittering in the sun, not only between the lines, but also between the various German lines. In front of the German trenches one can see bodies lying, some in heaps, others by themselves or in twos and threes. The German trenches are nearly flat and all their wireswept away.

I was talking to a gunner officer who watched the advance, and he said that the accounts in the papers are quite true. The men were fine; they marched ahead under very heavy shell and machine-gun fire which simply mowed them down. The survivors went straight on, not running, but walking. The dead are

lying out there in hundreds. What the place will soon smell like, I hate to think.

One man lay out wounded for five days. He finally crawled into our trenches. He had been unable to tell which were ours and which were German until he saw a bully-beef tin lying outside, which made him guess that they were British. He threw the tin in and attracted attention. He had eaten the biscuits of his iron ration, but had been unable to open his bully-beef tin owing to his wounds. He had subsisted on grass. He had a fractured thigh, but the wound had healed. His arm was badly hit and there were actually maggots in his arm. He was very cheerful and ate a large meal. Old Summerhayes attended him, and says that he will lose his arm but ought to live.

Haste to catch the post.

Yours,

LIONEL.

July 15, 1916.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

The weather is perfectly priceless to-day. Do you recollect saying in your last letter where Duncan was? We are now there. We had quite a nice little jaunt in motor-lorries, which was far better than marching. *En route* we met little batches of Boche prisoners. The first little batch of six or eight were Guards, I think. They had the silver braid on their collars and included a young officer who wore spectacles and looked more like a conscientious objector than anything else.

Another batch looked a fearful collection of blackguards, dirty, unshaven, and covered in dust. One or two were slightly wounded. One was puffing away at a pipe like the one I bought at Echternach. One sees many Tommies marching along wearing German helmets and caps.

Rumour is rife here about cavalry getting through, but you get news long before we do.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

July 19, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR,

Please thank Mother for her letter, the sweets, the waterproof shirt-holder, and the strap, all of which arrived safely yesterday.

As you know, I have gone on the principle in my letters of telling you and describing to you everything I can as far as the rules of censorship permit. I think that you prefer it, don't you? so that you may realise how things are and not imagine all sorts of terrible things which don't exist in reality. Well, I propose to go on with that system; but if you are likely to worry or fuss, don't read my letters—put them by until after the war. Don't go on with this one.

Everything is awfully interesting here, and although we have been out sixteen months now, new experiences crowd on each other every day. The other afternoon things seemed pretty quiet as far as we were concerned, and so I and another officer got leave to ride up and

have a look over one piece of the battlefield. We were just entering a town when Ellis came galloping up and said, "About turn; you are wanted at once." So we galloped back nearly the whole way, wondering what the deuce had happened. It was nothing very much really, except that we had to move up and some of us had to do a stunt. My company missed it owing to my absence. My company had to carry bombs and water up to a dump for the others. It was very interesting. We had to go through an erstwhile German village. I had never before realised the power of high explosives. This village must have been once a pretty little place in its cluster of trees on the crest of a rise. According to the map, there was once a church, no doubt with its usual pointed spire showing through the foliage. That village is now completely off the map. I know you will think it an exaggeration, but it is true. There is not a vestige of a brick wall. I never even saw a brick. The place is merely an area of several acres of mounds, craters, and banks of earth and chalk, with a few burnt stumps of trees emerging from heaps of débris; there is not the slightest sign or indication of a house of any sort. Of course the smells were not exactly those of a rose-garden. One walked on along a road lined with battered trees and the inevitable shell-holes; there was also a more sinister border to the road, consisting of dead Germans in singles, pairs, and little heaps, lying in every conceivable attitude.

Yet farther on we proceeded by a long German communication trench, and it was astonishing to note

the accuracy of our artillery fire. Although this communication trench was some miles behind the old Boche front line, it had been searched from end to end and almost flattened out. The length seemed interminable. From one point evidently one of our attacks had just started, because there were ladders up against the sides, and a clearer indication still, the results of the Boche machine-gun fire, in the shape of dead men lying on the sides in the attitude of going forward. It was extraordinary to see all these men lying there apparently asleep. About fifty yards of this trench was a veritable charnel-house; the dead were everywhere on the sides, in the floor of the trench. It was like walking through a bivouac of sleeping men. One had to step over and round them. I found one of my men sitting on one; he thought that it was a pile of sandbags! All this sounds very horrible and all that from home and peacetime standards, but it isn't so really. We don't worry over this kind of thing.

I must dry up now and catch the mail. Cheer oh!

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

July 20, 1916.

MY DEAR OLD DAD,

I enclose some things which I want you to put with my other stamp things "To await return."

In the next few weeks you may receive a letter addressed to me from Hayti. Don't forward it, but put it with my stamp stuff.

You would have been amused last night. Young and I rigged ourselves up a fine bivouac with our valises and waterproof sheets. We got nicely settled in, but had to vacate in a hurry, as the infernal old Boche proceeded to shell all over the shop. We then went into an old gun-emplacement, where we slept securely. The blackguards put over a lot of gas shells too, but it is all in the day's work.

Your loving Son,

LIONEL.

[This was Lionel's last letter. He was killed in the early morning of the next day (July 21) before daylight.]

PART III

PRO PATRIA MORI

July 21, 1916

“ If I should die, think only this of me :
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England ! ”

RUPERT BROOKE.

July 25, 1916.

WARWICK. O.H.M.S. 12.6 p.m., reed. 3.6 p.m.

To Crouch, Friarscroft, Aylesbury.

S. 4411. Regret to inform you Captain L. W. Crouch Oxford and Bucks L.I. is reported missing July 21. This does not necessarily mean that he is killed or wounded.

COLONEL IN CHARGE,
TERRITORIAL FORCE RECORDS, WARWICK.

July 26, 1916.

Of last night, WARWICK. O.H.M.S. 9.45 p.m. 9.29. a.m.

To Crouch, Friarscroft, Aylesbury.

T. 4539. Regret to inform you Captain L. W. Crouch Oxford and Bucks L.I. previously reported missing July 21 now reported killed in action. The Prime Minister expresses his sympathy.

COLONEL IN CHARGE,
TERRITORIAL FORCE RECORDS, WARWICK.

August 6, 1916.

O.H.M.S. Buckingham Palace of last night.
Handed in at 6.30 p.m., received here at 9.28 a.m.

To W. Crouch, Esq., Friarscroft, Aylesbury.

The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the Army have sustained by the death of your son in

the service of his country. Their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow.

KEEPER OF THE PRIVY PURSE.

*From Colonel the Hon. T. F. Fremantle, formerly
commanding Battalion.*

NORTHERN COMMAND SCHOOL OF SCOUTING AND SHIPING.
July 30, 1916.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

I can't forbear sending you a line to express my real sorrow and deep sympathy in the loss of a friend whom I valued so much and thought so highly of, and who had done so very much for the Battalion by his enthusiasm and thoroughness ever since he was a youngster. You and he both realised long ago the national peril which has come upon us, in the days when many people were blind to it.

Will you please convey my sympathy to Mrs. Crouch ?

But it is not only his parents who were proud of your son. The Battalion and Aylesbury and all who knew him join in that feeling.

Believe me to be,

Yours sincerely,

T. F. FREMANTLE.

*From Colonel F. O. Wethered, C.M.G., Oxford and
Bucks L.I.*

B.E.F.

August 7, 1916.

DEAR CROUCH,

I must send you a line to tell you how much I sympathise with you and Mrs. Crouch and with your family in the death of Lionel. He was one of my very best and keenest officers, as you know I think, and was always to be depended upon.

I believe that he died as he had lived, leading his men, and no one could wish for a nobler death.

But I can guess a little what his death must mean to you.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

F. O. WETHERED.

From Colonel C. P. Doig, D.S.O., Oxford and Bucks L.I.

OUGHTERARD HOUSE, OUGHTERARD, CO. GALWAY.

DEAR MRS. CROUCH,

July 30, 1916.

I cannot tell you how distressed and sorry I was to see in the papers the announcement of your son's death in action, and how much I sympathise with you in your great loss. During the time I commanded the Battalion I always found him a very efficient officer, and he was a great favourite with all ranks. His loss will be greatly felt in the Battalion. I cannot say how sorry I am at not being with the Battalion in these stirring times, but I am quite crippled for active service.

With much sympathy,

Yours sincerely,

C. P. DOIG.

*From Colonel L. L. C. Reynolds, D.S.O.,
Oxford and Bucks L.I.*

ON SERVICE.
July 22, 1916.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

It is with very great regret that I write to tell you that your son, Lionel, was killed in action yesterday morning while leading his company in an assault on the enemy trenches.

The whole Battalion sympathises very deeply with you and your family in your sad loss. He is a great loss to us both as an officer and as a friend. After working with him for so many years, it is very hard to realise that I shall not see him again, and I feel his loss very much. After the assault his servant, who was himself wounded, reported that he was killed, and last night two of our officers found his body.

He has done so much for the Battalion, and I am sure that if it had got to come, he himself would have wished for nothing better than to die charging at the head of his company which loved him so well.

Please accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Yours faithfully,

L. L. C. REYNOLDS.

*From Captain E. Birchall, D.S.O., Oxford and
Bucks L.I.*

July 22, 1916.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

You will have heard before this, I expect, that Lionel was killed yesterday morning. Three companies

did an attack on an important point, and Lionel was killed at the head of his company. He is a terrible loss ; one of the real old *ante-bellum* company commanders who knew all his men and their homes and their families—they all loved him.

Personally I feel it very deeply ; I don't think anyone could help loving him—he was so absolutely simple and loyal and kindly—and about the only man I never knew depressed or worried. He was absolutely impervious to any worry or fear of the Boche—whenever we got to a new place he always judged it by its natural amenities rather than by the measure of the Huns' offensiveness ; frankly, he never gave a damn for what the enemy did to him. He and I always rather felt like two remaining members of the old régime—they are almost all gone now.

It is difficult to think of the Battalion without Lionel, and of old Sirett and all the Aylesbury men without “the Captain.”

He did more than any other man to build up the Regiment, and then when it finally took its place in this great battle, he died in the front rank. I think you will get some consolation from that.

Please remember me to the family.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

EDWARD BIRCHALL.

[Captain Birchall was mortally wounded within a few hours of writing this letter and died in hospital shortly afterwards.]

From Captain Oscar Viney, Oxford and Bucks L.I.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

July 22, 1916.

You will have had a letter from Reynolds by this time telling you of Lionel's gallant death.

I thought I would like to write and say how sorry I am personally, and how much we all miss him now and shall do in the future. It seems so difficult to think of the Aylesbury Company without Lionel, he having been in command for so long. You have the consolation of knowing that he died as he would have wished, leading his company in the attack. I feel his death especially, because it was he who interested me in Territorials and got me to join originally.

Wheeler, his servant, was wounded in the arm and should be in England soon. He was with him, I think, till the end, and will be able to tell you more than I can.

With deep sympathy to you all,

Yours sincerely,

OSCAR V. VINEY.

From Lieutenant Norman Woollerton, Oxford and Bucks L.I.

WENDOVER, BUCKS.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

August 3, 1916.

Words cannot express the grief that the death of your son gave to both officers and men of the Battalion. He had worked for the Battalion for such a long time, and was dearly loved by all.

I had been one of his subalterns almost since the

commencement of this awful war, and his death was a terrible shock to me.

I wanted to write before, but as it hurts my arm, my sister is writing for me. They let me come from hospital last night.

Yours sincerely,

NORMAN WOOLLERTON.

From Major G. Christie-Miller, Oxford and Bucks L.I.

SEAGRY HOUSE, LITTLEHAMPTON.

September 24, 1916.

DEAR MRS. CROUCH,

I have tried to write to you but have found it so hard, but now I am at home I really must.

I want to tell you what a shock it was to hear of Lionel's death, and how much I sympathise with you all, for I know too well what this loss means to you and how much he was to you all.

The Battalion has lost one of its best officers and one who cannot be replaced—for new officers cannot be found with his experience and gift of leadership. He has been a splendid officer, and I hear his gallantry during these last days as well as on previous occasions was magnificent.

It is too sad for words, and personally I feel I have lost one of my oldest and best friends. It was a sad week for the county, with both Battalions in it so severely in the same week.

With my deepest sympathy,

Yours very sincerely,

G. CHRISTIE-MILLER.

From Captain R. G. Ellis, Oxford and Bucks L.I.

October 9, 1916.

DEAR MRS. CROUCH,

I have been meaning to write to you for a long time about Lionel, as I thought you might like to hear how universally he was loved by officers and men in his company. Although I was away from the Battalion for some time, all the rest of the time I was in his company. We all loved and trusted him, as we knew what a sound and competent officer he was. Personally, when he was killed I lost one of my best friends in the Battalion. The men all looked upon him as their friend, and in all their letters afterwards they referred to him in terms of the deepest affection and showed plainly how very deeply they felt his loss. Unfortunately we have lost a lot of the old officers, and things can never be the same, as we were such a happy and cheery crowd, and always got on so well together. As you know, Lionel was shot leading his company and showing a glorious example to his men. I can only express my very deepest sympathy with you and Mr. Crouch, and I know all the old hands in B Company feel most sincerely for you in your loss. Please forgive me for having put off writing to you for so long.

Yours very sincerely,

REX GREGSON ELLIS.

[Captain Ellis died of wounds, April 1917.]

From Private C. J. Wheeler (Captain L. W. Crouch's servant), who was with him when he was killed.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

July 28.

DEAR MR. AND MRS. CROUCH,

Sorry I have been unable to write before expressing my deepest sympathy to you through the death of your son, Captain Lionel, who was killed on Friday morning (July 21).

I can assure you he died bravely. He was leading and cheering his men on when he was hit with a bullet. I was dragging him back to a shell-hole when I was hit in the muscle of the right arm.

I still tried to get him back, but could not do much with one arm, when he was shot again, this time through the stomach, and he died in about ten minutes.

I laid with him until his death, and then took his maps and personal property he had on him, which I will send on in the course of a few days.

He will be very much missed by all ranks.

Once again offering you my deepest sympathy in your sad bereavement,

I remain,

Yours respectfully,

No. 503 PTE. C. J. WHEELER.

P.S.—Pleased to say my arm is going on very well.

From Sergeant-Instructor F. R. Elburn (formerly Company Sergeant-Instructor D Company, Aylesbury).

THE DUKE OF YORK'S ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL,
BRENTWOOD, HUTTON, ESSEX.

July 29, 1916.

DEAR SIR AND MADAM,

It is with the deepest regret that I read of the death of your beloved son, Captain L. W. Crouch, "killed in action." Words fail to express the sorrow I feel for you at the loss of one who, I have always declared, would be one of the best officers who ever wore His Majesty's uniform.

Kindly accept my deepest sympathy in your bereavement.

Yours respectfully,

F. R. ELBURN.

*Late Company-Sergeant-Instructor, "D" Company
(Aylesbury), 1910, Oxford and Bucks L.I.*

ROUEN.

Sunday, July 30, 1916.

MY DEAREST MAS'R,

We arrived here yesterday afternoon, and Heath¹ and I had some tea in the town and then came up here on a train.

As soon as I got here I went down to the men's lines to see if any of Lionel's men were there, and there were

¹ Second Lieutenant W. R. Heath, who was killed in action a few days afterwards.

one or two, who were in the attack in which he was killed, and I heard from them that Wheeler was in hospital close by here, so of course I went over to find him, which I did eventually. He has had a bullet through the muscle of the right arm, but does not wear it in a sling, so he is not very bad.

The attack in which dear old Lionel was killed (and a good many others) was just to the left of the place you thought, in open country and at night. I mayn't tell you more. He was hit by a machine-gun bullet, but was not killed at once, as he fell down and said to Wheeler, "I'm hit, Wheeler." Wheeler started to try to get him to a shell-hole, but was then hit in the arm himself, so he had only one arm to drag Lionel with. Lionel was hit again almost at once, and that seemed to be fatal, as he said "good-bye" to Wheeler several times, and then spoke no more, and Wheeler said he evidently died almost immediately after the second bullet. He doesn't think Lionel suffered very much, thank God.

Wheeler then went back and reported that Lionel had been killed to Birchall, who was all right then, but has been very badly wounded since. Viney, I hear, is badly wounded too, in the abdomen. Jackson,¹ Abney, Percy Chapman, and Trimmer killed, Mason wounded.

Don't worry about me, Mas'r; I expect the Battalion won't have to attack again now they have had so many

¹ Captain Jackson was reported "missing" and was afterwards found to be a prisoner in Germany.

casualties ; they seem to be getting on well everywhere, too.

With best love to Mother and Do and yourself,

Your loving Son,

GUY.

B.E.F., FRANCE.

August 30, 1916.

DEAR MR. CROUCH,

Yesterday I was up in that part of the line where your son lost his life. There we found his body. We buried him where he lay, and we had a short service. A small cross now marks the spot. I thought perhaps you would like to hear this.

With every sympathy,

Yours sincerely,

KENNETH C. JACKSON,

Chaplain, Oxford and Bucks L.I.

[It will be noticed by the date of this letter that Lionel's body laid unburied where he fell for nearly six weeks. He was killed on July 21 and buried on August 29.]

September 3, 1916.

DEAREST MOTHER,

I have to-day been able to see the officer who was in charge of the burial party who found dear old Lionel and buried him. He says he knew who he was by his medal-ribbon, etc., and buried him near where he lay, and the padre who was with them read a short service over him. They put up a stick with his name, regiment, rank, and the date (July 21) on it (they had

no crosses left), and also left a card in a shell case with the same particulars on it, in case the stick got displaced or obliterated. The whole thing was necessarily rather hurried, as the party were being shelled and one man was hit by shrapnel. The map reference is . . .

If we go back to that district, I will make a point of getting a proper cross stuck up and a decent grave made. In case you want to write to the officer who found him, his address is, Captain Pickford, Oxford and Bucks L.I., B.E.F.

Best love to Dad and Do.

Your loving Son,

DEEDOOS.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE BATTALION.
November 14, 1916.

DEAREST MAS'R,

I went up this morning and met a party of three men and a lance-corporal (Joiner by name, who lives in Bicester Road), and we made up dear old Lionel's grave properly. The cross is of wood and has a Bucks Battalion cap badge let into the top, and the lettering is cut into the wood to make it permanent. The grave is in a hollow made by a shell, about 8 feet across and 1 foot deep. We made up the mound, and made an edging of cast-iron shell-cases, like this (see illustration). So the top of the mound is about level with the surrounding ground, and the 1-foot dip into the shell-hole makes a very good protection to the grave

itself. We put the other cross, that was there before, at the foot.

With best love to you all,
Your loving Son,

DEEDOOS.

WAR OFFICE, WINCHESTER HOUSE,
ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.
(*Director of Graves Registration, November 23, 1916.*)

Reference : 8/11115.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed to inform you that a report has been received which states that the late Captain L. W. Crouch, Oxford and Bucks L.I., is buried in . . .

The grave has been registered in this office, and is marked by a durable wooden cross with an inscription bearing full particulars.

Yours faithfully,

PERCY D. AKROYD,

*Captain D.A.A.G. for Brigadier-General,
Director G.R. and E.*

W. CROUCH, Esq.,
Friarscroft, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Extract from "The Court Journal," August 4, 1916

CAPTAIN L. W. CROUCH

CAPTAIN LIONEL WILLIAM CROUCH, elder son of Mr. W. Crouch, Clerk to the Bucks County Council, and Mrs. W. Crouch, of Friarscroft, Aylesbury, has been killed in action. The sad news came as a blow not only to his family, but to the large circle of friends Captain L. W. Crouch has in Aylesbury and the district. He was well known in the town for the keen interest he took in the Territorials, both at Aylesbury, Chesham, and the surrounding villages, and his energy and success in encouraging recruiting for the Bucks Regiment before the war will be recalled as a testimony to his worth as an officer. He was educated at Marlborough College, and after studying for the legal profession, qualified as a solicitor in 1909, being articled to Messrs. Horwood & James. He joined the D (Aylesbury) Company of the 1st Bucks Rifle Volunteer Corps in 1907, being gazetted Second Lieutenant. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 1908, and his zeal and proficiency in the performance of his military duties was officially recognised in 1909 by his being called to the command of the Aylesbury Company, succeeding Captain Christie-

Miller—an officer who from the first saw the making of an excellent leader in Mr. Crouch.

In his annual report of the company's work in 1907, Captain Christie-Miller said: "I cannot conclude this report without alluding to the acquisition this year of a new officer in the person of Mr. L. W. Crouch, who joined at the beginning of this year. Though he had no previous experience at all, he attended the Chelsea School of Instruction within six months of joining, and passed out top out of about forty-five, with special certificate, being the junior officer at the school. At the range he has won the recruits prize, and also the rapid shooting competition. No comment is needed; but these accomplishments, added to a considerable knowledge of military history and military subjects, are sufficient to show that we have the right man in the right place."

Raised to a Captaincy in 1912, Mr. Crouch continued his splendid work, winning the respect and loyal devotion of officers and men alike. When the Territorials were mobilised at the commencement of the war, the Battalion in which Captain L. W. Crouch commanded a company were among the first to volunteer for foreign service. After prolonged training they proceeded to France in March 1915, where they have been ever since holding their line of trenches. Captain Crouch was most enthusiastic in his work, and was implicitly trusted by his men. On July 21 he was killed in action in leading his company in an attack upon an important point of the enemy's trenches.

On Tuesday afternoon a War Office telegram was received at Friarscroft stating that he was reported missing, followed on Wednesday morning by a second telegram and a letter from Major L. L. C. Reynolds announcing that he had been killed. As stated in Major Reynolds's letter, Captain Crouch's servant, Private C. J. Wheeler, of Aylesbury, saw him fall and was himself wounded. Captain L. W. Crouch, who held the office of Deputy Clerk of the Peace for Bucks, practised as a solicitor in Aylesbury, and assisted his father in the work of the Clerk of the County Council. He would have been thirty years of age next month, and but for the terrible war had a brilliant legal career before him. Captain G. R. Crouch, the deceased officer's younger brother, reported himself at Southampton on Thursday last, to return to his brother's Battalion at the front. At a meeting of the Bucks County Council the Chairman, Lord Anslow, made sympathetic reference to the loss Mr. Crouch had sustained, the members rising as a mark of respect.

Published in "The Poetry Review," March 1917

In Memoriam

CAPTAIN LIONEL WILLIAM CROUCH

OXFORD AND BUCKS LIGHT INFANTRY

You did not count yourself above your kind,
Or dream of climbing to some high estate ;
Work to your hand, and pleasure to your mind,
That was the prize you drew, a happy fate !

Tradition made you, and ten thousand more,
The *flos et decus* of our England's pride,
Who tread the path where Duty goes before,
And worth and modesty walk side by side.

But there was something in your smile and face,
The express image of the soul within,
A boon inheritance of kin and race,
Which made you like and unlike race and kin.

You had a nice discriminating eye,
Infallibly dividing sheep from goats,
In that fine sortment hight " philately,"
Which marks and measures casual specks and motes.

Whate'er it was, you took the thing in hand,
And graduated in its proper school :
You would not slack or shirk in aught you planned,
In sport or games, or on a lawyer's stool.

But when the nation slept you heard the call,
The faint prelusive note of coming strife ;
And thenceforth gave yourself, for good and all,
To learn the lessons of a soldier's life.

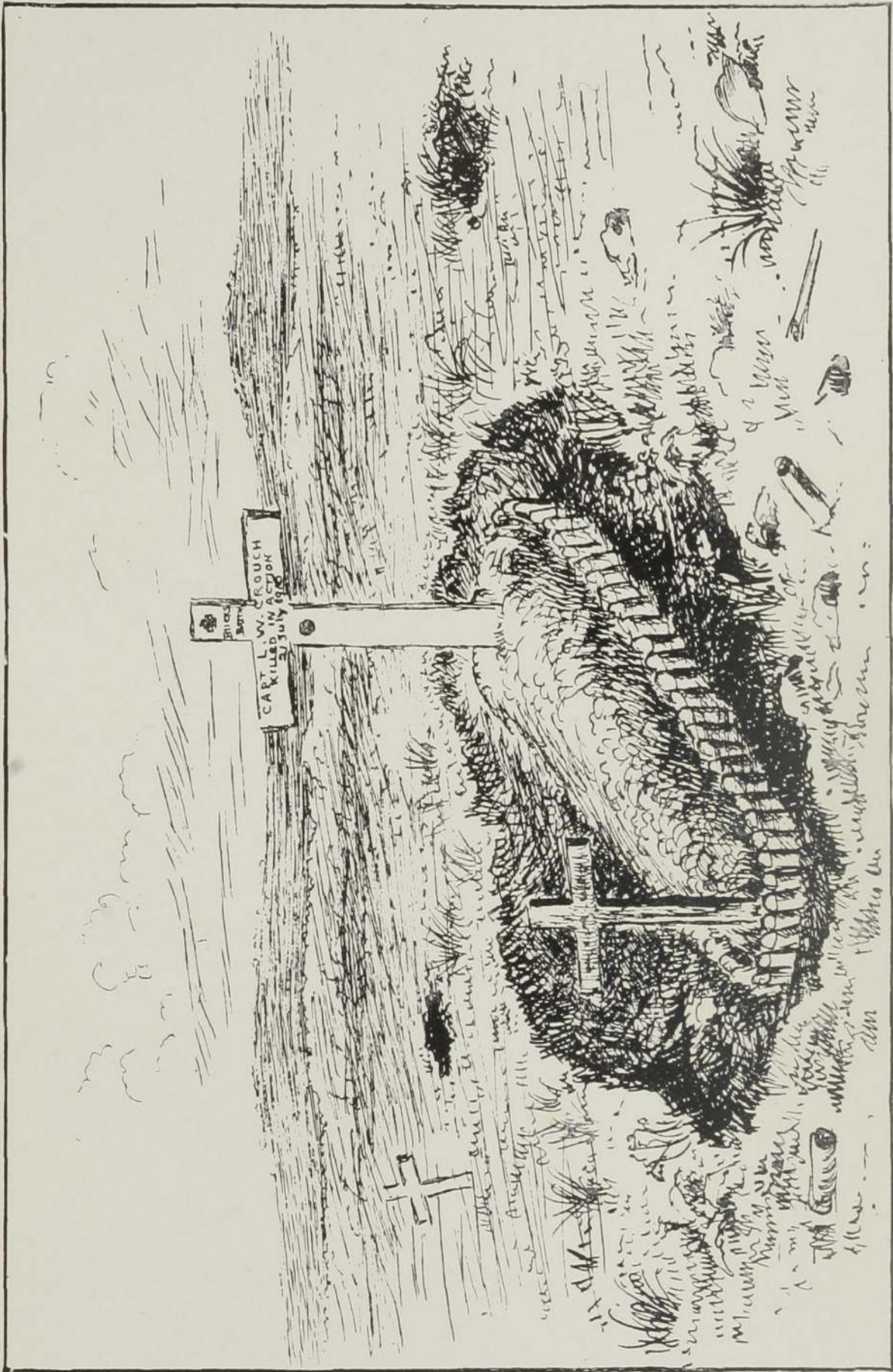
Till mid the din and clash of war's alarms,
You gaily led your men, and nobly fell :
So we acclaim you, Captain, Knight-at-Arms !
You gentle, lion-hearted Lionel !

ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

January 1917.

Note to Mr. Coleridge's Poem

[LIONEL WILLIAM CROUCH was born August 20, 1886. He was educated at Marlborough. He was the elder son of the Clerk of the Peace for the county of Bucks, and was appointed his Deputy in February 1913. An enthusiastic collector of stamps, at the age of nineteen he was awarded the gold medal at the exhibition of the Junior Philatelic Society in 1905. He was afterwards the Vice-President of the Society. In 1907 he was gazetted Second Lieutenant of the 1st Bucks Volunteer Corps, and received the command of the Aylesbury Company in 1909. From an early age he devoted himself to the study of military history and military subjects. Captain Crouch was killed in action as he was leading his company in an attack on the German trenches, July 21, 1916.]



LIONEL'S GRAVE.

From rough sketch and notes taken on the spot.

APPENDIX

[This story of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was written by Lionel several years before the outbreak of the present war (about 1908) for a prize competition for original short stories.]

A VISION OF WAR

JACQUES GRETTIER was a *franc-tireur*, a mere amateur soldier. He looked a curious, unmilitary object. Anyone meeting him in ordinary circumstances would have drawn aside from him in disgust, and looked at him furtively as he passed, thinking him a pickpocket or perhaps a low-class Apache. He wore an old blouse which had once been blue, but was now of that nondescript hue which long exposure to rain, snow, and sleet, long nights spent on the sodden earth, can alone produce. His trousers were the only military part about him, having been taken from the dead body of a mobile, whom Jacques found lying frozen and stiff at the edge of a wood near Villersexel, the night after their hard-won victory; but the smart red stripe had now nearly vanished, worn away by rough usage. On his feet were a pair of contractor's boots, bad leather tops and brown-paper soles; his feet showed through the gaping toes. His tangled and unkempt locks were crowned by an old felt slouch hat in which was stuck a dirty and draggled plume.

In spite of his appearance, Jacques Grettier was by no means dejected; he held his head high and carried his *chassepot* proudly, for had he not shared in the triumph, as he thought it, of Villersexel, and had he not greatly distinguished himself in the three days' battle at Héricourt? True, they were retreating, they had failed to relieve their

brave comrades at Belfort, but no doubt his General, Bourbaki, was but falling back for reinforcements, in order that he might again attack the stubborn Prussians; and then, the *furie française* would overcome all obstacles, and Werder's army would be driven back, shattered and beaten.

Jacques was trudging along the miry road with his battalion, now numbering scarce 400 men, and as he marched, he noted the signs of demoralisation of Bourbaki's raw levies. The roadside was thickly strewn with knapsacks, rifles, and equipment which the panic-stricken fugitives had flung away in order to accelerate their flight; they thought little of the cold nights in the snow and frost before them, they recked not of the little comforts contained in those discarded knapsacks; their one idea was escape from the pursuing foe.

Here lay the stiffened corpse of a man, there the emaciated frame of a dead horse still harnessed to a derelict waggon with a broken wheel. On all sides was desolation, fields uncultivated and burnt farms. Such were the sights which met our hero's eyes.

They had just reached a little village (Jacques knew not its name, but it was Abbevilliers), when the order to halt was given, and the weary men flung themselves down in the mud and half-melted snow by the side of the road. A few explored the houses and cottages near by, to see if it were possible to find a little food, for one loaf of bread to eight men had been their rations that morning. All the houses were empty, forsaken by their terrified occupiers, some of whom had fled into the neutral territory of Switzerland a few miles away, others had gone none knew whither to be frozen or starved to death in the neighbouring forests. Nothing but smashed furniture, broken windows, and battered-in doors rewarded their search. Meanwhile, the officers had gathered together in conclave and the men were soon informed that they were to defend the village to cover the retreat of the army. There was little time for it, as the boom of the guns and the rattle of musketry came nearer every minute, telling of the heroic resistance which was being made by the devoted rearguard. However, orders were swiftly given, and the *francs-tireurs* settled down to the work in which they delighted, the laying of an ambushade for the hated Prussians. The houses on the outside of the

village were held, everything which would resist a bullet being piled up against the windows. The garden-walls were loopholed, and several picked shots "lay doggo" behind the hedges on the outskirts of the village. The *francs-tireurs* were determined to give the pursuers a warm reception; they expected no quarter from the enemy who refused to recognise them as belligerents and shot any who were taken prisoner without mercy.

During these feverish preparations for defence, French troops were pouring through the village; infantry doggedly marching along smothered in mud, with torn and draggled uniforms; the cavalry mounted on horses all skin and bone; the once-fine Cuirassiers with helmets and cuirasses rusted and dented. The sounds of the rearguard action came nearer and nearer, but appeared to be less furious, as though the pursuers were wearying. Soon the rearguard itself defiled through the village, shattered but still full of fight. Jacques with eight others was ordered to hold a loopholed wall surrounding the courtyard of a small farm about 200 yards outside the village; their position allowed them to see some distance along the road from Héricourt. Their orders were to hold their fire and to allow the enemy's scouts to pass them in order that they might, in conjunction with comrades in the farmhouse itself and behind the hedges near by, be able to surprise and inflict heavy loss on the enemy's main body.

Their excitement was great as they watched that stretch of what had once been a road, and Grettier scarcely felt the bitter cold in his eagerness. At length they saw four Uhlans approaching cautiously, and our gallant *francs-tireurs* grasped their rifles eagerly, but their wily enemy was not going to walk blindly into a trap. Carefully and thoroughly they searched every inch of ground, and had approached within some ten yards of where Grettier and his friends lay hidden, when a nervous man in the farmhouse behind them could restrain himself no longer, and fired. The game was up, the *chassepots* spoke, and three out of the four horsemen fell to the ground; the fourth, leaning on his horse's neck, galloped furiously away, the bullets spattering all round him. The enemy's advance-guard soon developed their attack on the village, and their fire was hotly returned by the *francs-tireurs*, and by four guns

which had come to their assistance. Grettier heard a groan, and, turning, saw the man at the next loophole sink into a crumpled heap to the ground. The rattle of small arms beat a devil's tattoo, and Jacques's rifle-barrel became too hot to touch owing to the incessant firing. Boom! The Prussians had brought up guns. Soon there was a crash, a noise as of the dissolution of the world, and Grettier was thrown to the ground. A Prussian shell had struck the farmhouse, the roof had fallen in, and from the cloud of dust came the shrieks and groans of the buried men.

The village soon became untenable and the order to retire was given. The Prussians were now very close; the firing was incessant. But Grettier was a *franc-tireur*, not a regular soldier accustomed to discipline; his blood was up, he would not obey. He stood behind his loophole firing like a maniac, cursing "the Prussian dogs" under his breath. He saw the Prussian lines coming nearer and nearer; at last they swept into the village. His last cartridge was gone, and he sank down behind the wall in utter weariness. In the excitement of the fight this one poor pawn was overlooked; no Prussian entered the courtyard, no doubt thinking all the defenders fled or slain. Grettier dimly heard the fusillade, the shouts, and the horrible sounds of the fight, as if in a dream, until finally it ceased altogether, save for some desultory shots in the distance.

Where Grettier lay, he was hidden from the view of any person entering the gate of the courtyard from the road by a heap of bricks and rubbish thrown down where a shell had struck the wall. He heard and saw nothing clearly; his nerves had absolutely given way under the excitement and stress of the fight. Gradually recollection and intelligence returned, and he began to consider his position. The Prussians had rushed and carried the village; his friends were no doubt miles away, struggling along that melancholy road with frost-bitten and bleeding feet, and the Prussian wolf ever snapping at their flanks. He was by himself in a ruined village; his only neighbours dead and dying Frenchmen, and not a few Prussians. He well knew that capture meant death, that he would be summarily shot against the crumbling farmhouse wall without even the farce of a court-martial, if found.

The instinct of self-preservation was strong upon him ; accordingly he crept to the dead bodies of his comrades and searched them for any spare cartridges they might have. Four cartridges were all he could find, so keenly had the position been contested. He had scarcely done this, when he heard the noise of heavy footsteps in the road outside and the gruff sound of German voices. Quick as thought, Grettier sank behind his protecting heap of rubbish and watched the gate anxiously. Into the little courtyard came several Prussian soldiers, whose appearance plainly showed that they had been lately engaged in the fight in the village ; their uniforms were stained, and two or three were without their familiar spiked helmets. At the very sight of them Grettier saw red ; he thought of the ravaged and burnt homes of fair France, of the thousands of slaughtered Frenchmen, and of the women and children starved and frozen in the country villages. His mind was made up ; he could die but once and he would take at least one of the hated Prussians with him. He rose from behind his heap of rubbish, and shouted, waving his rifle in the air, in order to warn them of his presence, for he was no assassin to shoot them in the back. The Prussians were startled and ran for cover, one into the street, another behind a small outhouse, another into what remained of the farm. Grettier was determined to sell his life dearly and to make every cartridge tell, so he waited for a favourable opportunity. Shot after shot rang out from the Prussians' needle-guns, but his enemies were so quick that Jacques did not get the chance he coveted. Not hearing any shot fired in reply, one Prussian incautiously exposed himself among the ruins of the house. Grettier's aim was true, a yell was heard, and the Prussian sank down among the shattered brick-work, his rifle clattering to the ground. A minute later he fired again at the Prussian outside in the street, who had taken a snapshot at him ; this time he was not successful. The last two cartridges Grettier also expended in vain, and now he was defenceless. The firing from the Prussians continued, and had attracted several others who were in the village. These now joined the first party in opening fire on the heap of rubbish. After some time, not hearing any reply, they cautiously peered out of their cover, and seeing several together, Grettier made a stern resolve. Fixing his

long sword-bayonet, he rose quick as lightning and charged straight at his foes, who fired wildly at him without effect. Now he was among them, striking out right and left; he feels the sickening resistance of human flesh to his bayonet; he exults in his fury, he shouts aloud, "Vive la patrie! Vive la France!" and then a violent blow on the head, a sudden pain, and all is black. The Prussians stab his body again and again with their bayonets.

Jacques Grettier, *franc-tireur* and patriot, has fought his last fight, has struck his last blow for his beloved country.
Vive la France!

INDEX

A

- Abney, 139
"About turn, you're wanted at once," 123
Aircraft, German, 85
Aitken, 99, 101, 103
"Algeron' does a somersault, but I landed clear of his heels," 73
Ambulances, 118
Artillery fire, accuracy of our, 124

B

- "Baby" Woollerton, 66
"Baby" Woollerton immured in front line, 88
"Baby" Woollerton rescued from sump-hole, 79
Backchat, 61, 89, 91
Bagnall, 52
Baldwin, Lance-Sergeant, 93, 100, 106
Baling out trenches, 63
Baptism of fire, 42, 73
Bateman, Sergeant, 97
Battlefield, a ride over, 122
Battlefield, description of, 123
Battle stops, 118
Belgian officers, 65
Berks Territorial Force Association, Secretary of, 65
Billets, 38, 53, 65, 67
Birchall, 29, 96
Birchall, Captain, letter from, 132
Birchall's dug-out, 71
Bishop, Sergeant, 98
Bivouac, shelled out of, 125
Bivouacking in clover-field, 119
Black cat, 85
Bloomfield, Private, 101
Bodies lying in heaps, 120

- Bombardment, heavy, 72, 80, 97, 112
Booty's, 37, 61
Bowyer, 72
Brown, 86, 114
Brown, Donald, 57
Bugs, 64
Bunning, 115

C

- Cameras, 68, 85
"Carson's crowd," 71
Casualties, 99
Cavalry getting through, rumours of, 122
Chapman, Percy, 139
Cheerful Tommies, 78
Cherry orchard, bivouac in, 56
Cheshunt, 26
Chimes, Corporal, 97
Christie-Miller, Major, letter from, 135
Christmas dinners, 30
Cinema, 103
Civilians cleared out, 119
C.O. falls into sump, 79
Colbrook, Lance-Corporal, 93, 99
Coleman, 99, 100, 102
Combs, 62, 87, 92, 93, 94, 97, 99, 106, 114, 116
"Conscription will have to be introduced," 29
Cosham, 20, 23
Court Journal, extract from, 143
Covering party, 104
Coxhill, 61
Coy, 30, 38, 49, 53, 55
Cranmer wounded, 52
Crouch, Alan, 94, 95
Crouch, Captain G. R., interview with Private Wheeler (Lionel's servant), 139

Crowsfeet (German), 70
 "Curios," 103

D

Daffodils and hyacinths, 102
 Dashwood killed, 52
 D.C.M., 87, 106
 Dead cows and horses, 53
 Dead Germans in heaps, 123
 Dinners more important than shells, 81
 Dixon, Corporal, 30, 84
 Doig, Colonel, letter from, 131
 D.S.O. for C.O., 86
 Dug-outs, 29, 50, 60, 64, 70, 77, 78, 107
 Dump, carrying bombs and water to, 128
 Dwight, 98

E

Ellis, 41, 54, 57, 116, 123
 Ellis, Captain, letter from, 136

F

"Fairly all right inside," 79
 Fall, 104
 Farewell Order from G.O.C., 96
 Flowers in dug-out, 47
 Foreign service, call for volunteers, 24
 Foreign service, "Nothing heroic in volunteering for," 25
 Foreign trip, 32
 Fort Kaiserin, 32
 France, going out "a weary wait," 31
 French, lessons in, 37
 French soldier distributes hot coffee, 75
 French Tommies, 66
 Frostbite, 78
 Furley, 86, 89

G

Gas, first taste of, 99
 Gas helmet, 80
 Gassed, experimentally, 61, 69
 German flag hoisted, 51
 German helmet, 61
 German signals a miss, 43

German trenches described, 44
 "Get down, you fool!" 101
 "Ginger," 110
 Goldswain, 93, 94, 101
 Good-bye to Vernon and Combs, 114, 116
 Gostelow, Lance-Corporal, 87
 Grave, Lionel's, 141
 Great Totham, 28
 Green, 62
 Gregson, 77
 Group of officers, 116
 Group of sergeants, 116
 Guns "booming," 60, 68, 71

H

Hadden, 91
 Hales, 56
 Hall, 62
 Hampden, 87
 Harlow, 26
 Hawkins, 90
 Hazzard, 99, 100, 102
 Heath, 138
 Heavy bombardment, 72, 80, 97, 112
 "Here lies an unknown British soldier," 53
 High explosives, effect of, 123
 Hitchin, 26
 "Honours for my company," 106
 Horses stampeded, 29
 How, Sergeant, 79
 Howard, 20
 Howitzers, 51, 68
 Huns' revenge, 48
 Huns shelling, 58, 70
 Huts, leaky, 116
 Hyacinths and daffodils, 102

I

Identity disc, 91
 "In Memoriam" (Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge's poem), 146
 Indian working parties, 58
 Inhabitants take no notice of the war, 40

J

Jack Johnsons, 43
 Jackson, 65, 139
 Jakeman, 107

Jennings, Lance-Corporal, 100,
106, 113

K

Katie Gimson's present, 83
Kennish, 38, 50, 54, 57
Kennish buried in dug-out, 62
Kennish, narrow escape, 45
"Kew Gardens," 102, 105
"Killed in action," W.O. tele-
gram, 129
King and Queen, telegram of
sympathy, 129
Knight, 109
"K.s" for instruction, 71

L

Lacey, Sergeant, 115
Lachrymatory shells, 98
Latrines, 29
Laurie Mather, 110
Lionel buried where he fell, 140
"Little Willies," 51, 83
Lloyd-Baker, 115
Lunch spoilt by shell, 114

M

Machine guns taken out between
the lines, 84
Maharajah of Jodhpur's cousin, 59
"Maison pas demi," 106
Majority, name going up for, 115
Mason, 139
Mather, Laurie, 110
Midges, 46
Military Crosses, 86, 106
Military Medals, 106
Military Police, 118
Milk, five francs a tin, 62
"Minnies," 85
"Missing," W.O. telegram, 129
Mourning, "don't go into, if any-
thing happens," 32
M.P.s going round trenches, 77
Mud, 78

N

Newbery, 64
Nolan, 87, 112
Norwood, 62

O

Off to the front, 32
Officer arrested, "Your men
think I'm the Kaiser!" 45
Officers, K.s, attached for in-
struction, 66
Order to attack cancelled, 119
Organisation of traffic, 118

P

Partridges and chipped potatoes,
69
Partridges, covey on parapet, 69
Patrol scraps, 82, 84, 92, 99
Pertab Singh, 59
Petit Soldat, 55
Picture postcards, 68
Pierre Jeanneau, 80
Pierrots, 103
"Pip-squeak," 83
"Pongo" Woodford, 112
Posting groups, 104
Price, Jim, 61, 109
Prisoner (deserter from Prussian
Guard), 110
Prisoners, batch of, 121
Prisoners taken, 61
Prussian flag, 86
Pullman, 56, 64

R

Rat shooting with revolver, 79
Rats, 64
Rats and fleas, 27, 28
Reconnoitre, 73
Reid, 86, 92
Respirators, 52, 61
Rest-billets, 62, 65
Reynolds, 62, 85, 91
Reynolds, Colonel, letter from, 132
Reynolds, Corporal, wounded, 113
Rifle fire, 68
Rifle grenades, 115
Rifles choked with mud, 63
Rockets, 52
Rolleston, 92, 110, 113, 115
Rose wounded, 52
Rough journeys back after leave,
65, 74
Route marching, 57

S

Shell blows wall and window of
bedroom into garden, 81
"Shell-blown Villa," 92, 96
Shelling, 70, 111
Shelling Boche trenches, 79
Shrapnel bullet through window,
68
Simpson, 20
Singer, 55
Sirett, 84
Sirett rescues "Baby" from
sump-hole, 79
Slackers, 78
Small, H. G., 101
Smith, Lance-Corporal, 57, 67
Smothered in mud, 87
Souvenirs, 66, 70, 80, 83
Squire Newton, 84
Stampede of horses, 29
Stretcher party fired at by the
Boches, 108
Stuck in the mud, 78, 92
Summerhayes, 121

T

Teaching French, 37
Third Battalion marched out of
Aylesbury on anniversary of
First Battalion being mobilised,
63
Thunderstorm, 63
Tin triangles, 120
Todd, Private, 100
Tommies fraternising with Ger-
man prisoner, 110
Tommies wearing German helmets
and caps, 122
Training—"every man of military
age should be put into training
at once," 27
Trekking, 53, 56
Trench, impassable, 79
Trench mortar bombs, 115

Trenches, in good conditions, 70
Trenches, state of, 76, 78, 106
Trimmer, 139
Troutbeck, 62

V

"Varlets," 103
Vernon, 62, 114
"Village of the dead," 119
Village "off the map," 123
Village "shelled out," 62
Vincent, Lance-Corporal, 101, 106
Viney, 38, 50, 54, 62, 63, 66, 77,
78, 88, 92, 94, 114, 116, 139
Viney, Captain, letter from, 134
"Vision of War" (Appendix), 149
Volunteers for foreign service,
call for, 24

W

Waiting to go to the front, 31
Ware, 113
Webb, 99, 100, 102
Wethered, Colonel, letter from, 131
Wheeler, 30, 39, 47, 48, 53, 68, 70
Wheeler, Private C. J., letter
from, 137
Whipps, 105
"Whiz-bang," 83
Will, "can't be bothered to
make," 32
Williamson, 86
Wiring party, 64
Woodford, 112
Woollerton, 54
Woollerton, Lieutenant, letter
from, 134
Working parties, 46, 73, 104
Wounded coming back, 118

Y

Young, 62, 66, 82, 125



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library