

Excerpts from: Notes A Soldier's Memoir of World War 1, Clifton J. Cate, Charles C. Cate, Trafford Publishing, Victoria, Canada, 2005.

*Concerned that the most just of all wars might be over before he would have an opportunity to participate, 17-year old Clifton J. Cate, of Sharon, Massachusetts, having already been denied in one attempt to enlist at the Mexican border in the summer of 1916, returned to school in a troubled state of mind. "...Ought the United States enter the war? Would I be accepted to fight for America when the time came? Would I remain at home when my pals were proving their right to citizenship in France?" Talk of going to Canada to enlist was common during the winter of 1916-17 while Uncle Sam was fast reaching a decision which would soon make all those questions moot, and which was soon to affect the life of every American. One week after the United States declared war on Germany Clif Cate, now 18, tried to enlist again but was told to return in a month. Then on May 13, 1917, he and a friend entered Commonwealth Armory in Allston, Massachusetts as civilians, but came out as privates (stretcher-bearers) in the First Massachusetts Ambulance Corps. For three months life in the army consisted of a series of casual training days and, often, nights at home. In August the Federal Army took charge and the recruit's first real physical exam resulted in Pvt. Cate being released from the service by way of a medical discharge that read, "by reason of physical disability—no teeth upper jaw". Frustrated yet once again in his attempt to "get into the fray", Private Cate, on advice from the British Mission in Boston, purchased a ticket to Fredericton, New Brunswick, via St. John, and on the 8th of September, 1917, left for Canada having delayed only long enough to attend the wedding of his mother to a Mister "Chic" White, an event that increased his family by four additional siblings. While on the way the boat stopped for a time at Eastport, Maine, where on reflecting that there was a possibility of his never coming back from France, he went ashore for a possible last walk on American soil.*

*It was not until after my father's death that his "Notes" and the "Kit Bag" full of his souvenirs came into my possession, and then my own life was so full of what I thought were more important things that it was years more before I gave these artifacts their most deserved attention. I have embraced them now and marvel at the tour-de-force effort my father's original manuscript demanded (hand typed at four ms. pages per sheet, collated into folded sections, with over 40 miniature pen and ink drawings, sketches, cartoons, and maps—some in full color painstakingly placed in and around the text), and can scarcely hold back my sadness knowing that the wonderment, the questions that I might have asked, want still to ask, can never be properly expressed or satisfied, victims really, of lives moving on too quickly, of children who may not even have known what questions to ask, and of fathers too busy to listen. And, I wonder... have I talked enough of such things...with my sons? The story that follows is Clif Cate's. Included are portions of his original "Notes", and some of many letters written by him to his grandmother (who, fortunately, saved the lot). I have corrected some of the typos, misspellings, and here and there (but not in all cases) made a grammatical change. For the experience this work has given me, I remain thoroughly humbled by and grateful to the author, and am pleased to finally have the opportunity to share his words with his family and friends.*

*The source for many of my father's statistical and historical facts was Europe Since Waterloo, William Stearns Davis, The Century Company, New York, 1926. An invaluable source of text and maps allowing me to trace the movements of the 12th Battery across France and Belgium was Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919, Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War, Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.; Roger Duhamel, F.R.S.C., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, Ottawa, 1962. [Excerpts from "Notes" follow.]*

**From: CHAPTER II  
The United States Army**

The United States declared war on Germany April 6, 1917. On the thirteenth, I tried to enlist but was told to return in a month. On May 13th, Norman Cann (who later received several decorations and won his sergeant's stripes in France) and I entered Commonwealth Armory in Allston, Massachusetts as civilians, but came out as privates (stretcher-bearers) in the First Massachusetts Ambulance Corps. "Private C. J. Cate, Regimental Number 120" sounded rather pleasant to me. I began to feel the importance of the occasion, as the following extract from a[n *earlier*] letter to Grandmother Allard indicates:

Sharon, Mass.  
May 6, 1917

My darling Grandma:

. . . This war is a terrible thing, it is just what Sherman said it was. My belief is that the harder the fighting notions go at it now, the sooner the war will end, and God will put things right again—for good.

As expected, as the Bible says, altho not directly, this great country of ours did get into it. It is a case of war between Democracy and Aristocracy, rule without military forces, and rule with military forces. The result will be as the Bible says, a genuine Democracy, a real rule without military forces and thence without war. Therefore the quickest way for this long looked for rule to come, is for every American, in fact every ally of the democratic powers, to go into this thing, however terrable [*sic*] it sounds and is, and do his or her part by joining one of the three armies:

- I The one in khaki, who gives his life,
- II The one in overalls, who gives his labor,
- III And the one in silks, who gives his money.

In my honest opinion and belief the one to join the first is the man from eighteen (18) to thirty-five (35) who is physically fit for army life, and he should join the department where his former experiences can help him, where he is more at home.

The man for the second is every man, woman, and child who can not be a wonderful businessman, and who can do some work, in gardening, or in factory or in shipping, even tho physically they may not be O.K.

The man for the third is the businessman, and the rich man, whose money will help run the other two armies. Not one of these three armies can exist without the other, neither can this nation exist without them all, right now, and until God takes a hand.

Every home in the country will bear a share of the sorrows, but every true American will take his or her sorrow, as it comes, and not object forcibly no matter how hard it is and no matter how much it hurts, for the country's sake, their own sake, and for God's sake.

So believing all this, I joined the Marines two weeks ago, but have got transferred to the 1st Massachusetts Ambulance Corps, and will probably be called in about three or four weeks.

Hoping to see you all soon. Love to all, Clif.

...Our training began with squad and stretcher drill at the Armory on certain nights of the week, the rest of the week being spent in our own homes. In June we took up quarters in the Armory, and were subjected, as rookies, to some rough handling from the "old-timers," as training began in earnest. Our days were filled with lectures, drill, hikes, PT (physical training), and the ever-present "physical exams" and "papers to be filled out." We all took part in the big Red Cross parade of July 4th. Nights were filled with "good times in town," "quiet times at home," "old-timer capers," discussions, and hearty slumber. Spirits were high. A mighty army was in the making.

...In August the Federal Army took charge of us. We had passed many tests, physical and otherwise, taken "jabs" against typhoid and sundry diseases after standing for hours in a broiling sun. "Bring on your Federal Medicos!" we shouted in all confidence. They came, grizzled and grouchy. The line formed. Inspection and examination began. But something was wrong. Man after man came out of the long tent with his confidence shaken. My turn came. I passed the body, eye, ear, throat, and teeth tests – breathed a sigh of relief and started out of the tent. An examining officer held me back, re-examined my teeth and said, "You sure had me guessing, but it is no use old man!" "UNFIT!" A terrible word then, as thousands can testify. My heart sank down to far below zero. All the tricks known to a fine and sympathetic Captain were tried, in vain, to "squeeze me by", and I had to face my comrades and tell them that I had failed. It WAS hell! On August 15th I left the unit to go to Belmont where my Mother lived. My discharge read, "by reason of physical disability—no teeth upper jaw! I doubt if there is anyone to whom I told the truth about my sudden leave from service.

August 17th I stood in the sun on the State House steps on Beacon Hill with two other "PDs" (Physical Disability). After some moments of silence I said, "Who's coming to Canada with me?" One "PD" answered, "I was good enough to go with the bunch to Mexico. Now they don't want me. Well—So long!" He walked away. The other boy came with me to the British Mission on Bromfield Street where we told the "kilties" in charge that we wanted to join the Canadian Army. Were we Canadians? No! Then we would have to buy a ticket to some Canadian town. "That lets me out", said my mate, and so it did. I made further inquiries and then, hunting up a booking office, bought a ticket to Fredericton, New Brunswick, via boat to St. John. I waited until after Mother's wedding on September 7th to "Dad" White before leaving, however, working in the meantime for the Adams Express Company in South Station. On the 8th I left for Canada. The Customs Officer gruffly asked why I was going to Canada. I told him to join the Canadian Army. After a moment of uncertainty, he gripped my hands in his and wished me a hearty "Good bye and good luck, my lad." My first "ocean" voyage terminated at St. John. While on the way the boat had stopped for a time at Eastport, Maine, where on reflecting that there was a feasibility of my not coming back from France, I went ashore for a possible last walk on American soil. During the ride from St. John to Fredericton I shared a seat with a wounded soldier fresh from hospital in "Blighty." From him I learned much that proved of value later on. That night I slept in the Windsor hotel—still a civilian, and an American citizen.

**From: CHAPTER III  
The Canadian Army—in Canada**

Early on the morning of the 13th of September I applied at the Armory for admittance into the army. The OC (officer in charge) suggested the medical branch because of my training period with the ambulance unit at home. Examinations had been very simple, and the Canadians considered me in perfect condition. A sergeant in kilts told me that I was made for being an infantryman in a Scottish Battalion. As I considered the possibility a cool breeze blew in thru the window from off the St. John River, and I thought the sergeant's knees trembled, so I joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps with knees covered. Temporary quarters were provided at the Queen's Park Military Hospital Barracks. In the afternoon I rode over to St. Mary with a Yankee representative of the United Drug Company, and from him learned several things about the St. John River, also something about driving Ford Coupes in Canada. My only training while in Fredericton came from a friendly old sergeant whose specialty was "First Aid Field Dressing."

...By the first of October I began to get restless. The duties grew tiresome. There was very little talk of "going across." Thus it was that I applied for a transfer to the artillery. On my birthday I stood before Major Whetmore at the Martello Hotel Barracks of the 9th Siege Battery—"American, eh! Why didn't you join your own army?" "I did, Sir, but was discharged." I showed him my U.S.A. discharge. "Hell!" he exploded, "Do they think you're going over there to EAT the Germans? I guess that warrants your transfer." So my rank became that of Gunner. Life at the Martello was easy for a new man but we soon moved out to Partridge Island in the harbor where training was resumed. A gunner's training was harder, but there was much of interest, and talk of "going over soon" was common. Spirits were higher, so much so that an oversensitive nature suffered. Our officers and instructors enjoyed sharpening their wits at our expense as I soon learned. During drill one morning I got badly mixed up as orders came fast, and an officer shouted, "Cate—you come damn near being 'late' don't you!" much to the amusement of my mates.

...A three-day-pass enabled me to spend Thanksgiving Day in Belmont with my family. Not long after returning to the battery a draft was drawn for overseas. My name was on the list. Those of us who were picked to go were a happy lot, the rest were truly downhearted.

...On the night of December 6 occurred the "Halifax Disaster," when the munitions ship *Mont Blanc* collided with the *Imo*. The resulting explosions created havoc in the harbor and on shore. Fifteen hundred people lost their lives. St. John, with the rest of the country, felt the excitement. Guard was doubled and the feeling of responsibility trebled. Finally, on the 16th, we boarded the Allen liner *Grampian*, starting next morning for Halifax. After a night in Bedford Basin while the convoy formed, we steamed out onto the Atlantic. We were "going over" at last! It sure was a grand and glorious feeling.

*[Canadian drafts sent overseas from 1914–1918 included 1,966 men attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Canadian Garrison Artillery. CJC left for England and the War in the third draft of*

1917—one among a complement of 153 men drawn from the 9<sup>th</sup> Siege Battery at Partridge Island.

The morning of the 31st found me on deck waiting for the first glimpse of Liverpool. Very slowly the fog lifted. Gradually green hills and a little village of stone houses with red roofs came into sight. A double-decked tram crawled slowly along one street. Was this the great Liverpool? I hailed a passing dory, questioning the occupant, but it seems we did not speak the same language. Later as we made our way up the Clyde I learned that we had been anchored off Grennock in Scotland. Immediately rumor had it that our pilot boat had been sunk by torpedo, so we had put in there instead of Liverpool. From 10 A.M. until 5 P.M. the *Grampian* wallowed thru a muddy and narrow channel, arriving at last in Glasgow. All along the way we had seen ships in the making, and had been cheered by crowds who watched our progress.

At Glasgow we were rushed aboard trains without ceremony. It was difficult under the circumstances to make the acquaintance of no more than a very few of the Scottish lassies who crowded around the cars. These cars were of the European compartment type and the first of that kind that I had ever seen. At first I was bewildered by so many doors, but in time I learned to like them, for they ride smoothly and permit acquaintances to be made quickly when necessary. As the bells rang in a new year we were riding thru Carlisle at a fast clip, trying to sleep in impossible positions.

**From: CHAPTER IV**  
**The Canadian Army—in British Isles, “Before” France**

After a run of some twelve hours from Glasgow, and long before daylight on the first day of the new 1918, several hundred very sleepy soldiers were routed out of the train at Milford, Surrey, England. We detrained in a cold drizzling rain onto cobblestones slippery with mud. The outlook was none too pleasant—just mud, and bushes, and trees dripping water. The uplook was no better. It had been raining for hours – maybe for days – and the earth had become a quagmire. After batteries were formed we “fell in,” “right dressed,” “counted off,” “formed fours,” and “by the right,” moved away by sections. We marched several miles thru mud to a city of wooden huts set in, and surrounded by, more mud.

As we sloshed along, the watery surfaces of shrubbery and buildings, walls and lamp poles, metal equipment, brass buttons and faces, reflected flashes of light from occasional road-lamps. Here and there a comforting contrast appeared taking the form of slightly more cheery glimpses of the bright green leaves and red berries of holly – the one midwinter bit of color. Our destination (always “just around the next corner”) was a quarantine section of the artillery area at Witley Camp. The distance marched was probably less than three miles, but seemed more like nine.

Witley Camp! With clothing and equipment heavy with moisture and our feet slipping in our shoes, we entered a barbed-wire enclosure to be assigned to wooden huts. We were issued three boards and two end-sections apiece, which, when properly assembled, were to keep us several inches off the floor when and if we slept. We brought so much mud and water into the huts that the floors became shallow lakes. The air, if there was any (and there must have been some for most of us continued to breathe) was so full of moisture that the walls and ceilings absorbed to the point of saturation. Later this became most annoying in the form of steady dripping on us (or on the floor, that splashed back up into our faces). Those who knew how, or were ingenious enough to guess, put the “Five piece bunks” together and rolled into their blankets. Those who could not make the tricky little bunks work just rolled into their blankets on the floor and slept where they lay. Although tired and cold and, I repeat, wet, and a bit “touchy” as we rolled into soggy blankets, most of us were also “healthy kids” so we slept soundly in spite of it all – in this our first night in Merry Old England!

1917 was gone. More nations had been added to those already at war. Uncle Sam had been in the fighting line since October 21st when the First Division entered the Luneville Sector near Nancy. Were Cann, Dolan, Jackson, Black, and other mates of the 1st M. A. C. there too? Peace overtures there had been aplenty but the Brest-Litovsk treaty drawn up by the Germans after the collapse of Russia was reason enough that the war must go on. The Allies were gaining power, and yet the blackest days of early 1918 when Germany seemed to be crashing thru were many weeks away. As St. John's quota of reinforcements passed thru London we were all too tired to take notice of the great capital.

January 10th camp was broken and we were sorted according to fitness and placed with different units. A new SIX INCH HOWITZER Battery was being formed, into which went most of the old Partridge Island group, including myself. This battery

was the Twelfth, and was to be my outfit from then on to the finish. No longer were we to be reinforcements without any special name or unit. We were the 12th Canadian Battery, with a definite purpose before us. With that realization came a great satisfaction. We were an "original " unit, and upon us fell the duty and honor of making its history. Our record though short, was clean. Our pride in our name, "12th Battery," was strong, and later when the old-timers dubbed us "Canada's last gift to the Empire" we liked the idea.

It was here at Deepcut that the "BIG 4" was formed when Cameron (Cam), Bosdet (Mex), Fisher (Dreamer), and Cate (Yank or Cankee), shook hands and bound themselves together according to the old formula, "One for all, and all for one." In training, on leave, in action, the Big 4 stuck together and many were its common joys and pains. It really wasn't so big, but as a combination dedicated to the welfare of its individual members the group was unbeatable.

There was Charles Louis Bosdet, born of English parentage December 19, 1887 at Arichat, Nova Scotia. In 1911 he completed a special mine engineering course at Colby College in Maine, from which he found his way into Mexico where he followed the mining industry until he heard the "call to arms" and traveled all the way to the "10th Battery" at Halifax, Nova Scotia to enlist as gunner with the regimental number 2100833. At Witley he transferred to the 12th where he found this Yankee. His service with the 12th came to an abrupt end in September (16th) 1918 when he "got a Blighty" in the form of a smashed knee. After a series of hospitals he rejoined the two remaining members of the "Big 4" at Rhy1 and returned to Canada with them. Dubbed by some as "the smiling Mex" because of his rare good humor and naturally pleasing smile, he was a true friend, uncannily lucky at games of chance, and is yet I presume, as of old, by far the wisest member of the "Big 4".

Alexander Nelson Cameron, 2100743, was also born in Nova Scotia, on February 18, 1896, of Scottish-English parentage and he too enlisted in the 10th battery at Halifax in 1917. "Cam" was (still is, I hope) the most perfect specimen of healthy youth, physically, mentally, and morally, in the 12th, to which he was transferred at Witley Camp. He alone of the "Big 4" went thru it all without any visible scratch. In 1922 after graduating from a special course (won thru his efforts with a Canadian Insurance Company) at Carnegie Institute he visited with me for several wonderful days in Belmont.

Harry M. Fisher—a college professor—was another 10th battery man, transferring to the 12th at Witley where our old outfit was formed. His strength was in a well-developed brain, his weakness a Canadian sweetheart – and his nickname (if you will) "Dreamer." Until the Eswars episode which sent me out of the war for a short period he also served continuously with the 12th and the "Big 4", and because of that episode he too went out of the war for all time. I have never seen him since that night in a dry ditch on the outskirts of Eswars.

The spirit of the "Big 4" lives—its members are separated by thousands of miles, but someday we'll all get together again—to serve one another on and on thru eternity—with perhaps some younger editions of ourselves to help.

*[Attesting to the hazardous duty of the WW-I artilleryman is the attrition rate of members of the two crews making up the 12th Battery's "A" sub-section. Of the 14 members present on June 1st, four were lost before August 8. After the 2nd Somme offensive, only four of the original crewmates were left in the Battery to begin the occupation of Belgium—to be joined later by a fifth (my father) who returned to his outfit in December 1918. Only one member (Cameron) remained unscathed. Of the "Big-4", three were wounded, one fatally. CCC]*

... It was to the camp at Lydd that we moved from Deepcut. Here the huts were of metal, and it was well that they were, for at Lydd the gunners got their first actual target practice with the shiny new six-inch howitzers. The rivalry between gun crews, the jarring of the guns as they blasted away at fixed or moving targets, the nearness of France sobered the 12th.

...Out on the range, one day, a thousand men were picking up brass and copper scraps left by the exploded shells. These scraps were piled near the narrow-gauge railroad that lay across the range, sometimes in a straight line, though often thrown criss-cross by shellfire. Later this valuable metal would find its way back into the munitions plants to be used over again in fuses and bands. Many unexploded shells, or "duds", lay about, and when found were left unmolested. Their location was marked by placing sticks upright in the shale nearby with a rag tied to the upper end to attract the attention of the Royal Engineers, whose duty it was to care for these dangerous explosives. Over our heads the blue sky was dotted here and there with fleecy white clouds. The sun sent its warmth into our hearts and the beauty of the day was manifested by much song and fooling. For several miles about us the earth was covered with loose pebbles or shale. In the direction of camp there were patches of coarse grass, and beyond them, sand and more grass. Not far away was the sea—restless and mysterious as ever – cloaked in all the splendor of a perfect day. To our right stood a small stone building enclosing the laboratory in which many secret experiments were carried on with highly explosive materials. Here Lyddite had been developed. Suddenly—a roar! Many of us were knocked to the shale. When we were all again on our feet, one British Marine lay still. Someone had "fooled" with a "dud". This was the first of the many deaths to shell burst that we were to see. The work went on—but many pairs of eyes watched the little flatcar as it rolled slowly back to camp with "somebody's boy."

One morning on "parade" we received a lecture from Major Robinson, a seasoned old veteran who had already lost an eye in France while an Infantry officer. The substance of what he said was that—our period of training was over—our instructors had done their best to prepare us for the test which was soon to come—we had "almost" developed into soldiers—we had all the appearances of a fighting unit—we would conduct ourselves accordingly—meanwhile we were to be granted an eight day leave—we were entitled to a good time but must remember that we were Canadians—on expiration of our leave we would meet at Codford in Wiltshire—that was all.

...Codford in Wiltshire, one of the small villages on Salisbury Plain, consisted mostly of plaster or clapboard homes with straw thatched roofs. There were one or two fair estates, boasting of stone houses, and a very few brick buildings, with tile roofing. Most of the shops were cheap affairs, as were common in all troop-infested towns. The several churches monopolized the structural beauty of the town. Here the Australians

had a large camp and hospital. Several big hills shut the village in on one side. The rest of the place looked out over the plain. Though the River Avon was not far off, the only stream here was the Ford, which ambled lazily thru the town. To this place, which without the excess of troops, would have been serene indeed, came the 3rd Brigade for a short rest before going to France.

Our camp was comfortable, food was good, duties were very light, the weather was perfect, and our time was spent for the most parts in sports. Long hikes over the hills rewarded the hikers with sound sleep when they turned in for the night. One bright day I watched a plane come sailing, apparently, out of the sun. It circled over the camp and headed off over the big hill. All at once a wing flashed in the sunlight and collapsed against the body of the craft. The plane came tumbling to earth like a giant wounded bird. As it crashed, rebounded from the gentle slope of the hill, and settled back a complete wreck amid the shower of turf and dirt, the hillside swarmed with men running from every direction. When I reached the spot, its two occupants were being removed from the fuselage. In a few hours they had gone on the long flight. The story was that the pilot, a major of the "RAF" (Royal Air Force), was giving a New Zealand Infantry Captain his first (and last) air ride, as part of the latter's birthday celebration.

At Codford our equipment was inspected and put in completeness for service at the front. Though life was easy there, we all knew that the orders for our move to a channel port were in the brigade office. On one fine morning we paraded in marching order, and preceded by the "Aussie" band, marched to the railroad where we were assigned to first class compartments for a ride thru malt and hop fields to Southampton. In short order we were aboard a transport, steaming out by the Isle of Wight into the English Channel. Ahead of us: France, the line, and the Hun.

**From: CHAPTER V  
The Canadian Army—in France**

With Britain and "play days" behind us, and France and "workdays" (and nights!) ahead of us, the channel transport was not long in covering the hundred and twenty-five miles from Southampton to Le Harve, at the mouth of the Seine. As we trotted over the gangplank onto French soil, a few dockworkers, soldiers and sailors gave us a welcome. Deep within our secret thoughts was the realization that our coming was tardy, so the little welcome cheer helped to put our consciences at ease.

...Our next move was into the little boxcars, the markings of which, "40 Hommes ou 8 Chevaux," have found their way into practically every story of the war. Then followed a long, tedious and bumpy ride into the interior.

..."40 HOMMES OU 8 CHEVAUX", means forty men or eight horses. The boxcars on French railroads were toy affairs, and forty men per car meant that most of them stood on their feet (or some other fellow's feet) for the duration of the ride. Usually, in cool weather, in the center of the car, burned a brazier, which so filled the atmosphere with soot, smoke, and gas, that breathing was all but impossible. On many of the cars, at one end, was a small ell or tower, the top of which extended anywhere from one to three feet above the top of the car proper. To get away from the uncomfortable atmosphere inside the car, many of us rode in these towers or on the car roofs. This practice was all right in fair weather or when our route did not lie thru some of the many low tunnels.

... St. Pol followed Rouen. Here the guns were unloaded from the flatcars which had brought them from Le Havre, and fastened to "FWDons" (Four-wheel-drive-trucks). Supplies and ammunition were also transferred to lorries. Then we found room wherever we could and the caravan started for "up the line". Every kilo covered brought further evidence of the struggle that had been going on for over three years: razed homes, blasted trees and posts, fields turned topsy-turvy, and then we came to an area of absolute ruin. Just before dark we reached a small group of corrugated metal huts, covered with sandbags and "elephant tin" (curved sections of corrugated metal) where we found shelter (?) for the night. Bunks on the "hen wire springs" were quickly prepared, and we soon fell asleep.

Our awakening came not naturally, nor with the morning, but at about midnight, to find our scalps strangely bristling, our spines all aquiver, and in our mouths a strange "stingy" taste. The night was crowded with awe-inspiring sounds: whines, whirs, growls, crashes, shrieks, and just plain bangs; the whole exhibition accentuated by many weird flashes of light. This was Jerry's "Welcome-in" party. We were getting our "baptism." A few of us just stared—wondering, while others ran about bewildered, and some 'just naturally' disappeared, to be rounded up later covered with mud and dirt. On leaving my bunk I had run out to a little mound apart from the huts. There I stood, and watched, and listened, too fascinated to run or duck. My emotions during that first few minutes (if I registered any) are not on record. There were no casualties. As a matter of fact, as the "old-timers" explained, those shells were on their way to Mt. St. Eloi and vicinity, and none were likely to land nearer than a thousand yards. Then the "OTs" ordered us back into our bunks. All of us obeyed—some of us slept.

Thru a section of France already made famous by Canadians—Vimy Ridge, Thelus Wood, Plank Road, Suicide Corner, and other names full of meaning—the 12th moved, and at Nine Elms went into position. I was back with the "Big 4" on the guns, or to be more explicit, with Number One or "A" gun, as Number Two of a crew. My duties included handling the breach, raising the gun into firing position or lowering it to be loaded, and firing the gun. This place on the crew I held until "gassed" at Esvars October 13th, leaving only for short periods of reconnaissance duty as an assistant to Lt. Bacon.

*[Note: In fact, although they too are inconsistent, CJC's medical records obtained from the National Archives of Canada indicate the gassing incident occurred at Esvars, probably on the 11th of October, which gives some indication of how unsettling such events tend to be. CCC]*

...Leaving Nine Elms, the Battery went into Arras. In this town the positions were changed from time to time. Sometimes a position would be subjected to shells from Heinie's guns continuously, while at others we enjoyed days without receiving a shell in our direction. The Dainville "orchard" position of "A" gun was such a position for almost a week. From this position we were firing mostly gas, and at night the gunners were often forced to don masks to protect themselves against "leaky" shells. Almost every time we fired during the first night, we were showered with apple blossoms and little apples from the trees overhead.

...A second trip into the line near Arras was not like the first. "A" gun was somewhere in the vicinity of the famous Daisy O-Pip (Daisy Observation Post), where the earth had been soaking up the blood of thousands of Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, English, French, and German youths at intervals for nearly four years. Adesolate region indeed. A hill, sparsely covered with withered tree stumps and tangled barbed wire, a section of filthy trench, a cemetery where even the dead had been torn from their slumbers to peel in the sun and bleach in the rain; a veritable "no-man's-land"—and another storm was brewing.

...The two sights that never failed to bring forth harsh remarks about Fritz were the wrecked dwellings, and the Arras Cathedral. The latter was but an irregular mound of gray dust, with here and there a section of a wall poking its few remaining feet of raggedness up above the rest. A few statues there were, still standing upright, but pitted and cracked by the shell splinters. Beneath the surface were many subterranean corridors and chambers. In several of these were great piles of irregular gray blocks, and on most of the blocks were written the names and addresses of soldiers—many thousands of them in all.

...One night, as I lay in a hole in the wall of a trench, I heard the faint crying of a cat. "I've got 'em now all right," I thought, and so I investigated. There, on the parapet was a kitten. How she got there I do not know, unless some of the fresh troops had just brought her in. Until the gas killed her a few days later, I found much pleasure in her company.

*[Mention of this incident appears in the following letter to his Grandmother Allard]*

Dearest Grandma:

While I was out on my rest the last time, I sat in this same little cozy hole in the wall of the trench and wrote home – while writing a kitten walking across the wire jumped into the trench and we two speedily became acquainted. I was just thinking of her and where she went when I had to go back up the line—and behold—ye kitten's mind must have been thinking of me for here she is—returned to my hole now that I am back—guess she is hungry and my stomach says time for lunch too – so good-bye & love to you both. Clifton

About this time Bosdet left the battery to take a special course of instruction at the "mining and sapping" school down the line. Roaming was, of course, impossible. The instant my relief reached my gun I was instantly ready to rest, and thus spent most of my "off duty" time "under ground." "This business of War is getting worse all the time," suggested one of the gunners one night. Nobody laughed at this. Even the old-timers held their customary "wisecracks", saying only that the worst was yet to come. And, so it was, as planning for the final Somme drive was already well underway!

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### The '18 Somme Drive

...The Great Spirit seemingly could no longer stand the horrible crime that was being committed by the most "civilized" nations of the earth. A "victor" was chosen, and all that was left for him to do was drive, d r i v e, DRIVE! In mud, knee deep, Right Section struggled to get its two guns into position. The whole battery tugged and grunted and perspired for hours. Center and Left sections performed under even worse conditions, accomplishing great feats of engineering skill to place "C," "D," "E" and "F" guns in their proper places. In a cold drizzle we "humped" shells and charges until near each gun were piles of "canned death" for German consumption. Then when all was in readiness we were ordered to get some rest. Cold, wet, dirty, nearly exhausted, we rolled into our wet blankets wherever we happened to be, and slept the sleep that only the weary soldier knows.

On the following morning I went with a detail after "ammo", and before dark, every available space was filled with shells, charges, fuses, tubes, and supplies. During the day I had seen more men and guns, as well as more of every other device of modern warfare, that I had dreamed was in France. Over our heads the air force was unusually busy. As we went to rest on the night of August 7th there was a feeling of great expectancy throughout the battery. General Haig, working with Marshal Foch, was ready for the last Somme drive.

...[The following passage from the British Official History describes one of the precautions taken by the Allied Command leading up to the impending offensive: "...Since it was impossible to conceal the preparations for the attack from the troops who were to take part, further security instructions were ordered posted in every individual's service and pay book. Under the emphatic heading 'KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT!' these cautioned against loose talk

*before the offensive and directed that anyone having the ill fortune to be taken prisoner should supply no information beyond rank and name..." CJC's, "sudden move away from Arras", was part of activities that began on July 30th with movement of the main body of the Canadian Corps to an area southwest of Amiens, with all travel made at night. Troops were told they were going to the Ypres Front to repel a suspected German attack. The Battle of Amiens began early on August 8th, and over the next three and a half days the 12th Battery advanced, apparently in support of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Infantry Brigades of the 2nd Canadian Division, almost nine miles (as the crow flies) through Villers Bretonneux, Wiencourt, Vrely, Rosieres en Santerre, and on to a forward position at Meharicourt. There they dug in and remained for the next seven days. CCC]*

Long before daybreak on the eighth we were "standing by." Each passing moment added to the tremendous strain of "waiting" for the "zero" hour. We tried to hide our emotions under cover of unnecessary odd jobs about the guns. Number Four, testing his sights for the tenth time, Number Two polishing the mushroom head of the breach, "blowing" the vent, testing over and again the swing of the breach mechanism, the lift of the "quick release," cleaning tubes, while the rest of the crew re-wiped shells, inspected the trail and the spade, the brakes, cartridge boxes, fuse boxes, and cases of the silk-wrapped charges. With every man nerved to the utmost, we received, at last, our second set of orders. The act of carrying them into effect overcame the greater part of the waiting strain, in fact, no gun crew was ever more calm, more certain, more deliberate than "A" crew as they swung the gun into line, loaded, placed it into firing position, and reported, "A" gun ready, Sir." Upon receipt of elevation, the elevating gears whined a tune as they were spun just over the mark, and then back to "Take up the lash," and then...C R A S H!...the gun shot back along its carriage, its mouth belching fire, and out over the rim of dead man's valley hissed a hundred pounds of trouble for Fritz. At that very instant, "ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE"! The darkness of the night became a glare of lightning-like, red, yellow, and white flashes. The earth shook as from an earthquake. Breathing suddenly became difficult, as our nerves grew numb from the terrific concussion caused by the crashing, roaring, blasting, air-splitting din about us. Thousands of guns were firing from wherever room for one could be found, on a front twenty miles long. Thousands of tons of high explosive and gas were being thrown into the German trenches, gun positions, and routes over which his reserves must march. How any of the troops in that part of the German line ever escaped that terrible bombardment is a miracle.

...Soon after daybreak on that memorable August eighth, the 12th moved forward thru Villers-Brettoneux, where we realized for the first time something of the telling effect of our shells of the night before. As far as eye could see, complete devastation. Not a thing left upright. Homes, trees, poles, wires, railways, wagons, trucks, guns of every description, ammunition, and men, scrambled together into one immense "dump." The bodies of men and horses were strewn all about, mangled in every possible manner. How many men were buried in that "mess" no one will ever know. Many khaki and blue-covered forms were being put beneath the ground as quickly and carefully as possible. As we jolted along, over the blasted excuse for a roadway, we watched thousands of German prisoners at work clearing a passageway for advancing troops. Among those gray-clad troops, with pale and weary visages, were many young boys, and men well over the middle age. Very plainly they showed how sick of any manner of war they were, and it was evident that as prisoners, for the

first time in a long while, they now felt certain of food, rest, and a fair degree of safety from further shell fire.

...Sometime in the latter half of August, the French came in to relieve us, filling Vrely Square after dark with a host of men, horses, and battle paraphernalia. Someone was careless enough to display a tiny light that was seen by German observers in their bombing planes so high above us that we had not heard their motors. Immediately there came the unique whistling sound of falling bombs, followed by the dread C-R-U-M-P! C-R-U-M-P! as they detonated in the square and vicinity. Some thirty men were lost, including several of our own. Our good Major lost a leg, and Captain Colin McKay, a rare "OC", became our chief officer. The events of that night were sickening—too much so for me to attempt a description here—and out of them came a Medal Militaire for Bombardier Brown, a medical orderly of the 12th. On the following morning, Canadian and French joined in funeral services, punctuated by frequent shell bursts, in the little churchyard. (The following story I will not vouch for as true, though it is quite likely that some such thing did occur.) The French detail sent to the churchyard to prepare the graves for their dead, found most of the space there occupied by German graves. Rankling under the unhappy loss of the night before, they tore open many of the graves, and throwing the dead Boche into an old dry well nearby, applied petrol and then a torch to the lot. (You have the story as it was told to me. Such things seem far more horrible in times of peace to those who have never been drawn into the real active fighting area of war, but to those who "know," far worse things have often happened.)

With us at Vrely, as everywhere else, was the Canadian "YMCA." To its personnel, mostly wounded men from the front unable to stand more active service all honor is due. (Particularly so because as "Y" secretary in any advanced position, their plight was no less dangerous than any other)

One afternoon while on duty at the "forward" position I found to my horror, that there was not a cigarette, a "chew," nor tobacco of any kind among the two crews. Such a sad condition was a most serious one with us, as "fags" were as necessary as "ammo." At the time a man could be spared to find a "Y" and replenish the supply, so I volunteered for the honor and started for the rear. Finding my path blocked by heavy enemy fire I retraced my steps and headed for Meharicourt, where I had heard that the infantry had established a "Y." Two kilos over shell-pitted ground spread with tangled barbed wire were covered after much ducking of shell splinters and machine gun fire. In the town an infantryman directed me to the dugout where I purchased a good supply of "fags," plug tobacco, and sweet chocolate at a reasonable price. (Cigarettes were 1 franc, plugs 2 for 1, and chocolate was 2 bars for 1 franc.) On the return I skirted the area where Hun machine guns had so nearly found me a target not long before, and in so doing had to climb over a mound of debris. At the top of the mound was one straggling rosebush bearing a single rose in full bloom. Less than a foot away was the outstretched arm and hand of an all but buried German private. Seemingly his last thought had been to pluck the rose, though of course, such had not been the case. At first sight however, the view held an uncanny appearance. I still have that rose of Meharicourt (which is in Picardy) as a treasured souvenir. As a result of the thoughts that were set going in my mind on the occasion mentioned above, I "waxed poetic," as

the boys called it, and for a long time after that day, a certain old song kept running thru my mind. It was "Roses of Picardy," a story of roses, and longing, and love.

She is watching by the poplars,  
Colinette with the sea blue eyes,  
She is watching and longing and waiting  
Where the long white roadway lies.  
And a song stirs in the silence,  
As the winds in the boughs above.  
She listens and starts and trembles,  
'Tis the first little song of love:-  
"Roses are shining in Picardy,  
In the hush of the silver dew,  
Roses are flow'ring in Picardy,  
But there's never a rose like you!  
And the roses will die with the summer time,  
And our roads may be far apart,  
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy!  
'Tis the rose that I keep in my heart!"

*[Lyrics: Fred E. Weatherly, Music: Haydn Wood, Chappell-Harms Inc, NY - 1916]*

Taking my cue from that song, I composed my own tragic and comic versions of what took place that day in homage to the Rose of Picardy.

#### A Rose of Picardy

There's a song that fills the heart with warmth,  
The mind with reverie,  
'Tis a song of love and lovers,  
And of roses grown in Picardy.

There's another song less known perhaps  
And of somewhat dissimilar theme  
That also speaks of a rose that grew  
Nearby a Picardian stream.

Here's a petal from that latter rose  
Found where romance, ageless, thrived.  
In a land where Cupid with arrows and bows  
Many terrible wars survived.

'Tis part of a rose that I found one day  
In Meharicourt in early September,  
'Neath a smiling sun in a clear blue sky.  
How well, indeed, I remember.

The Great War surrounded me  
Disgorging its hell and its sorrow,

Its whine of bullets, and roaring of shells.  
Warm life today—cold death tomorrow.

Alas! Poor war-torn Meharicourt!  
Smoking mounds of twisted debris,  
Trenches, dug-outs—now a Canadian fort,  
Protected by our Infantry.

At the top of one heap that once was a home,  
In full bloom grew a lone untouched rose.  
Near it, together, and forever asleep,  
Lay two of my German foes.

Half buried they were, in the dust and dirt,  
Bodies crushed, their souls long flown.  
In their sleep they smiled, forgetting the day,  
Unmoved by the wind's low moan.

One lay with his hand stretched toward the rose,  
As though his final wish had been  
To find in its petals some word from the land,  
That never again would he ken.

Standing there, I thought of the ache  
His folks would feel when full sure  
That the boy whose being they so carefully wrought,  
Was now but one price of the War.

Then, a shell bursting near knocked me down,  
And my hand touched that of the Hun!  
Gripping it tight! My emotions exploded!  
Laugh! If you think it was fun.

I jumped to my feet and hurried away,  
Plucking the rose as I left,  
'Twas the one thing of beauty in that desolate street,  
Of all other beauties bereft.

Thus ends the story, such as it was  
Of the last rose of Picardy, somewhere in France,  
Its sweet scent has gone, but in my memory yet,  
Burns clearly that sad "day of chance."

Gnr. C. J Cate - #536636  
Canadian Expeditionary Force  
Vrely, France, 1918

[The vignette of the Rose of Meharicourt is enhanced by events that resulted in the rose petals' disappearance and ultimate reappearance some time later. The following journal entry relayed in a letter by CJC explains: "20/3/19 – On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October after a 5'9 had terminated a swift journey in the dug-out on which I was sitting, I naturally went "down the line" (It would have been more natural, under the circumstances, had I disappeared altogether.) En route all of my personal belongings were lost, and however much it may surprise you to know it, that which I missed the most—tho among my losses were several things which represented very dear friends at home—was my rose of Meharicourt. And now after nearly an elapse of six months—back comes these two petals and a bit of fern—it hurts to have lost so much of the beauty—but it is a great satisfaction not to have lost the whole. St. Symphorien, Belgium, '19."]

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[In a lighter tone, CJC describes the importance of, and the hazards of seeking—at almost any risk—those all important 'smokes." CCC]

### 1970 - Granddad Tells a Tale

-I-

Listen my lad—and I'll tell you a tale,  
Of a time when more faces than mine grew pale.  
'Twas down on the Somme—that last little stunt,  
The beginning of which began Fritz's last grunt.  
Our guns were silent for the time, you see,  
But not so old Boche, who was busy 's could be.  
My mates were all weary—and shaky as me,  
And it wasn't the shells—from them we were free.  
That which we needed was just o'er the wire,  
But between us and it was Jerry's hot fire.  
All day we had watched for a bit of a slump,  
But the sun began sinking with him still on the jump.  
So our hopes went down—we'd all done our best,  
Though 'twas plain that the night would send us all "West,"

-II-

"I say! I've a hunch! On the right of that slope!  
I'm off to it boys—'tis our one and last hope!"  
And away goes the speaker, a man of two score,  
With a home in God's country—and kiddies four.  
Yet here in this Hell with so much at stake  
He risks losing them all for his gun crew's sake.  
He's running – ducking – and now's by the slope,  
Full half past the wire is our one and last hope.  
And now! He is through it! And over clear ground  
He's beating the splinters, bound after bound.

Good God! What's that! Beside him a thud!  
That shell has got him – No – NO! It's a DUD!  
Now then the smoke blots him clean out o'sight  
But our hero has WON the first half of his fight.

-III-

"Well – it's over I guess, for our hope isn't back.  
With the night closed in, blacker than black,  
And now – hear you that?" "ACTION! S.O.S.!"  
We've no heart for such, of strength we have less,  
Yet somewhere off there in this black inky night,  
With our lads in the outposts, Jerry's starting a fight.  
The quick-release sticks! My breach—damn, she's stiff!  
My tubes are all wet! That's GAS! Get that whiff!  
Good Lord, what's next... "Here's your lanyard old man",  
And into the gun-pit—thank Heaven—jumps Dan.  
And—with him the F A G S! Away goes the gloom,  
As away go our shells bringing Kultur its doom.  
Finis—(Gi' me a light!)  
Rosieres Forward,  
(Vrely) September, 1918.

...The tremendous job of overcoming the Hun in his favorite stronghold was given to the British First Army of which the Canadian Divisions were a part. General Sir Henry S. Horne, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (and some other things), who had commanded many of the same men in this army on the retreat from Mons in 1914, was our Commander on the return to Mons. Our job consisted of overcoming the Hindenburg, Fresnes-Rouvroy, and Drocourt-Queant lines, the fortified Canal du Nord, Bourslon, and capturing Cambrai with its high ground to the north, which was the key position. This done, it was up to us to "carry on" to Berlin! Foch's system of creating the impression of an attack in one place while launching a series of small attacks at rapid intervals, at different points along the line, thus harassing and wearing down the enemy, was renewed. The main attack had started on August 26 at 3 A.M. without artillery preparation. By the time the 12th had reached Cagnicourt, some 9,000 prisoners, with hundreds of guns, and much material had been taken. A big gap had appeared in Heinie's plans, and he not only did not like it, but showed that he did not by fighting desperately all the time. At times it seemed as though the 12th would soon have all new faces, for his fire was hotter than anything we had seen. No one was excused. A 9'2 was no safer than a six-inch howitzer. On one occasion as I ran thru a courtyard in which were two 9'2s firing from behind a brick wall, the Boche dropped a single shell so close that the burst killed fourteen and wounded the remaining seven of the men on duty there. It was about this time that the "Big 4" lost its first member, as Bosdet went down the line with a shattered knee.

...On the first of October the Canadian Artillery fired seven thousand tons of shells. It was a busy day for the 12th. Moving forward to a position on the plains before Haynecourt, "A" and "B" guns were driven past their point of departure from the main road, and after questioning several runners met on the highway, discovered they were very much lost. The "Big 4" less Bosdet, rode in the first lorry, and until shaken awake by an abrupt halt, were sleeping peacefully. An unexpected reply was given to our officer's request for directions which, as near as we could find out, was to the effect that we would reach the German lines in about eight minutes, if we kept on as we were headed. Our informer could not guarantee that our reception among the Hun would be particularly pleasant. In fact, he was surprised that we had not already drawn fire. In the act of turning about, the drone of German bombing planes reached us. This, added to the proximity of German machine gunners who no doubt were enjoying our predicament, did not raise our spirits any. Suddenly all was as light as day. The flyers had dropped flares, and we were in plain view. We scattered from the lorries which were loaded with shells and ammunition, and very liable to create quite a racket if hit by bombs. I fell flat on my face in the shallow gutter by the roadside, and there awaited the first bomb—the others I never expected to hear. Someone said something about, "Good-bye France—Hello Satan!" And then came the dread whistle of descending trouble. Cr-r-ump! Cr-r-ump! Crump! Crump! The air was split with the shock of the exploding bombs. The stench, which always follows after heavy explosions, stung our nostrils. Steel flew in all directions. Then the flares went out, and the planes flew on, evidently too sure that we were wiped out to stop to look. Three minutes later we were hitting a wild course for "down the line" without having suffered a single casualty. In a short while we had located our position and were placing our guns. (What a celebration for one's birthday—October 2nd!)

Later in the day I was sent back to our last position with a message to bring up the rest of the battery. On the return to "A" gun I came across a young German officer, stretched out on his back, with a bullet hole thru his head. The corner of a black-bordered envelope protruded from his tunic pocket. This I took, wondering what the folks at home were writing to their soldiers of the Rhineland. Here is the letter:

September 22, 1918  
My dear Fritz,

Only a week ago, I would have written your birthday letter in a different way. Today, everything within me is dead and destroyed, I am waiting for more bad news.

When I received your letter in which you spoke about spending a vacation together, I was sad. I don't know what will happen now, but I'm prepared for the worst. For your birthday, I wish you the best with all my heart. May all the dreams you have today come true. Above all, I wish for you that your luck will continue and that you will withstand all perils safely and soundly.

This is the third letter I have started to write; two I have already torn and thrown into the waste paper basket. It's not easy for me to find the right tone to express myself, because I don't know what will become of us. I don't want to write you about my love and myself; you should make your decisions free of any influence. Impatiently, I am awaiting your answer. Until then I don't want to

write as much, it does not help anyway. After all you know how I feel. For my poor mother's sake I must keep my head up and show courage. I'd rather lie down and neither hear nor see anything anymore. We need someone who would take everything into his hands and who, over all, is good with finances. My uncle is no help at all. On the contrary, he leaves everything to me.

The times in Brussels were all too beautiful, and I remember them in a bittersweet way. Maybe we could have celebrated your birthday together? Now, you are celebrating it all alone, who knows where? Is there a chance for any time off? I don't know yet what I will do now. I have asked for extra vacation and must return to Brussels after that. Maybe then [I] must come home for good. It depends on how things will develop. It is terribly hard for me to find the right tone in my letters. So dearly I would want to pour out my heart to you, like in earlier times, and yet I cannot do it. After all, I don't know yet what I am to you.

So, dear Fritz, accept again my warmest wishes.

Sincerely yours,  
Gretel

*[Translation provided by Astrid Münder & Sophia Bienek-Cate, West Virginia University]*

(This boy was a lieutenant in the 8th Battery, 21st Field Artillery Regiment and probably a part of the 12th German Division—origin Upper Silesia—6th Army Corps). In 1918 the 12th Division was commanded by General Lequis. In 1914-15 this was a part of the German Crown Prince's 5th Army Command. The division saw service in Russia (1916-17), Italy (late 1917) and against the French and English on many fronts. Had the Lieutenant lived another week he would have gone out of the line with his battery on October 6th and might have been alive today—but what are "might-have-beens" in battle? He gave his life. CJC)

At noon on the 3rd of October, with the battle noises quieter than usual, I sat on the raised edge of "A" crew's dugout bathing my feet. A few yards to my right the rest of the boys were getting their noon rations. One lad (Graham, I think) had just passed in front of me carrying a bucket of tea and a "hunk" of bread in one hand, and balancing a pan of soup and a cover on which a boiled potato and some queer looking mush had been placed, in the other. The whine of a shell reached our ears—but of course, as every old-timer knows, the "ones you hear never hit you." This, however, was one exception to that rule. An instant of the whining, which became a roar, and then....

As the roaring sound in my ears became more defined, I knew that someone was moaning. Then I knew that there were many different groanings and moanings. Suddenly I realized that I, too, was groaning. So I ceased. Opening my eyes I saw, as in a dream, the familiar surroundings of our position, with the ground strewn with bodies, some moving a little, others still. The blackness again. I returned to consciousness, and immediately felt that my back was on fire. That I was about to die, I had no doubt. Placing my hand at my back, I felt but a slippery surface (never realizing that my tunic, shirt, and undershirt had been ripped away), and then my convictions that the war was over for me were strengthened when I saw my hand covered with blood. Again I looked about—some of the bodies were now on hands and knees. One only was upright, and that belonged to Graham, who stood astride one mate who would never move again. Graham's left hand and arm hung limp, but his right hand still held an empty and battered mess-tin. His face wore a most bewildered

look as his eyes gazed upon the rest of us. Over against a gun wheel, one of the boys had been propped by Fisher or Cameron, and was being given first aid treatment. Then I crawled on hands and knees into our old dugout—not aware of the fact that I was crawling thru a space where a few moments before had been some three feet of sandbags and several thicknesses of elephant iron. Then...darkness for the third time.

When I finally regained my senses, one of our officers was trying to do something to my back. He asked me how I felt, and I told him that I was fine. Then he informed me that my back had been stripped of clothing as well as some flesh. After a rest, I walked to a field dressing station with Bombadier Budd, in whose breast was a tiny red hole. At the dressing station, two orderlies picked a neat pile of steel and gravel from my back, painted most of me with iodine, gave me an inoculation, and tying me up, ordered me to lie down to await an ambulance. For some time I slept. On awakening I saw that the sun was low in the west and remembered that I had had nothing to eat since morning. Beside me was a 12th non-com, who said as soon as he saw me awake, that if it was "jake-a-loo" with me, he for one was ready to return to the battery. I asked him about the dressing on his neck, but he seemed to think that it was nothing serious, so we started back to the guns. Almost back, Cameron, white faced and much out of breath, met us, and commenced cursing me roundly. "Why did you go away without letting me know about it? They told me that you were killed. Damn you, I've a mind to give you a good licking!" But I never got the "licking" and Cam was not as angry with me as he appeared. At the battery we ate, and as we ate I learned what the 12th had suffered from that one lone 5.9 that had entered so suddenly into our dugout. Several days later our Medical Officer removed more steel from various parts of my anatomy. Luckily these tiny splinters had not entered very deep.

It was from this same position that I first entered upon a new type of work, as a runner with Lt. Bacon on reconnaissance duty. The change was a desirable one. On this first trip, there were three of us, including the lieutenant. We hiked forward thru several fields, skirted a village, and then took to a long communication trench which led us out onto a slightly sunken road. Here on the enemy's side of the road were infantry, lying face down, with rifles handy, keeping a close watch ahead. On the other side of the road were small dugouts in which more infantry were sleeping. Here and there was a man busy with needle and thread, or with cleaning rags. The lieutenant talked a few moments with an officer in private's uniform, who closed his conversation by pointing off over a field and saying, "...and keep down." The other gunner was left behind, to be ready to send a message over the wire, in the event that Lt. Bacon thought it necessary. As we advanced out of hearing distance from the road, and reached the wire, the lieutenant began to walk nearly doubled up. This did not strike me as being as pleasant an outing as I had anticipated, for unquestionably I knew that we were being watched by German snipers. There was ample proof of the fact. A sharp command from the officer to "duck" was followed by a sudden burst of "pip-squeaks." Fritz was beginning to wonder just how far we intended to come. My first wishes were for a deep, cool dugout, but as no splinters found us, my courage increased, and I found the experience good fun. It was a relief to reach the protection of a trench which ran along in the general direction of our destination (wherever that might be). This we followed for some time, halting every few minutes, while Bacon looked at the face of some dead Canadian. There were many of them, slouched into every conceivable position. Rounding a curve in the trench we came to an abrupt stop, to find this last

outpost manned by a single machine gun and its crew. Bacon talked with the non-com in charge, who showed a very decided distrust of anyone so plainly crazy as to go further in bright daylight. With a crisp, "Follow me, gunner!", Bacon climbed over the parapet, and started to run toward the not far distant roadway. I followed—fast! At the edge of the road we dropped—none too soon, for lead was flying close. About this time I decided to ask where we were going. Bacon obliged me with the information that we were headed for a crumbling brick house on the other side of the road some hundred yards away. We crept along our side of the road to a position opposite the house, and then taking a deep breath, made a dive for the other side. We made it all right, but with hot lead uncomfortably close. From a position behind the dusty brick wall on the second floor, we looked out toward the German lines, and I, at least, was surprised to see that we were within easy calling distance of many troops. The lieutenant was busy making notes. I watched our friend the enemy, seeing many things which interested me. Now and then I pointed out something to my companion, who sometimes examined what I had noticed more closely, then made more notes.

That day I learned that in many respects, all soldiers of all armies are alike. The most noticeable item of all was the fact that without doubt the army opposite was preparing to retire, under protest. Long after dark we made the return to the 12th, with no more excitement other than a few bullets and shells, none of which injured us. I have never mentioned before, that one queer sound of war is that made by the shells of both armies as they pass overhead, going upon their business of destruction in opposite directions.

...Behind the remains of an old wall all six guns of the 12th were pulled into position for the great effort to straighten the line before Cambrai. The famous Hindenburg, and southern Drocourt-Queant lines, and Canal du Nord fortifications had crumbled as the Canadians advanced nearly twenty miles between August 25th and October 2, south of the Sensee River. The double defense systems to the north of the river were still German. The loop thus formed left us in position with German fire reaching us from every point of the compass between southeast and northwest via north. It was indeed an unhealthy sector. The enemy clung desperately to all he had, using in his struggle every device known to modern war-science to hold back a determined army. On the 8th the 12th fired steadily all day and night. About midnight Jerry placed a shell in our "ammo" dump, setting it afire. The blaze was a big one, and a hot one, and drew fire heavier than ever for the remainder of the night. A salvo of two shells falling between "E" and "F" guns wiped both crews off the battery strength. Men were taken from the other guns to keep Left Section in action, and the battery "carried on" as though nothing had happened. Twenty minutes of tying up wounded, and moving dead, were all that was necessary to satisfy any normal man that civilization had not yet reached a point to boast about. Cambrai was in flames, but the red glow which lit up the sky for many miles, was no greater than the red stain of blood which soaked into the fields of Flanders during that drive. The Canadians entered Cambrai at 1:30 AM on October 9th.

The battery moved to Epinoy, then on to Blecourt, and from there Right Section headed for an advanced position at Esvars.

With "A" and "B" guns in position, the crews went to work digging their fire trenches (emergency "covers") ten feet long by two feet deep. "A" crew dug down about two, only to find the hole flooding with water. Abandoning the trench, we found a dry ditch about fifteen yards ahead of the gun, and into it we dropped for some sleep before ordered to "Action." One man was left on watch for SOS signals from the trenches ahead, and for gas. At twelve o'clock McNutt woke me for the next two hour stretch. As I rolled out of my blanket, he rolled in, mumbling something about some neighboring batteries opening up during the last hour, and that probably I would get an SOS soon.

Standing erect, the upper half of my body was above the top of the ditch, and although it was too dark to see my comrades less than five feet away I knew that there was nothing before me to prevent my seeing the expected SOS. Several batteries of eighteen pounders were firing at intervals not far off. Occasional bursts of machine gun or rifle fire added their quotas of disturbance to the night. Now and then Jerry dropped a few shells in the vicinity, and his planes sent down a few bombs. All over the sector there was evidence of life. Now and then Heinie would send up his "onion-strings" in the hope of bringing down one of our planes in flames, and the long rows of white balls of fire would sail crazily through the air until burnt out. Verrey lights, flares, and varicolored signals flashed up from time to time. Single lights, and lights on strings—white, green, yellow, red, or blue—but the signal for which I watched was three balls of fire in a vertical line—red over red over red. Seconds after sighting it my gun would be surrounded by action—seconds more, and our shells would be hissing on to prearranged targets. But no such signal came during my watch. The time dragged on, the war-sounds continued, the rumble of distant guns, a more defined boom of nearer artillery, the crack of rifles—sometimes almost dying out, and then increasing to a steady rattle, every now and then the sudden uneven "rat-a-tat-tat-tata" of machine guns, the crash of shells landing (some near, some far) and their various warnings as they tore thru the air, the even purr of our planes and the uneven whine—increasing to a roar as they passed overhead—of the Hun planes, followed by the "K-R-R-UMP! KRUMP!" of their bombs after they had whistled their way to earth, and finally, the dull "pouf" of our anti-aircraft shells as they exploded far up along the powerful beams of light from the searchlights. Many noises. But none of particular interest to the man on watch, yet he listened intently for one particular sound, as he watched for the SOS. The sound created by a certain shell exploding with less force than the others. The dread gas shell. The night was a bit chilly, and the man on watch turned his coat collar higher about his neck. It was also a bit lonely as he hummed a song of the British Tommy:

"Good-by-ee, don't cry-ee.  
There's a silver lining in the sky-ee.  
If a 9 point 2 - - - gets a line on you,  
Its a case of Napoo! Good-by-ee!"

Suddenly—A red-yellow glare! A choking sensation! A gasped warning true to habit, well drilled, of, "GAS! GAS! GA\_!" Then...!

Short flashes of consciousness left me with some knowledge of what happened after that first sudden shock: Being carried on a stretcher—a night a million years long

in the skeleton of some old building with the wind and shell splinters whistling thru it—an awakening to hear faint voices—a hazy suspicion of a sunny morning—a miserable ambulance ride—an overcrowded dressing station—another ride—a field hospital where someone did several things to me—more riding—a restless night at a (#22 Canadian) clearing station—a ride in a much crowded, badly heated box car full of groans, prayers, and curses—more handling—more riding—more night—and a sleep that must have lasted for many hours, for when I awoke I felt myself between clean bedclothes, and these on a real bed (hospital cot).

...Just what occurred in the next few days I do not know. It was the 10th of October when I left the 12th Battery at Esvars, and at least the 16th before I knew for a certainty just what "it was all about." Doctors and nurses worked at their best at #4 General Hospital at Camieres, and their charges recovered because of that fact, or died, but not for want of attention. For some time the wonderful quiet of the ward disturbed me more than it rested me, for it was difficult to realize that for me, there was to be no more of shells, gas, mud, bugs, bombs, filth, action, or in fact, much of anything until the "MO"s decided that I was once more fit for active duty in the line.

*[In another letter home following the gassing at Esvars the author's treatment of his injuries was typically lighthearted—although subsequent transfers to two additional convalescent camps while many of his fellow casualties were being returned to duty kept him "in hospital" until discharged on November 15, whereupon he bounced back and forth between convalescent camps until finally, in December, instead of transferring home, he found his way back to the 12th, then stationed in Belgium. CCC]*

October 16, 1918

No. 4 General Hospital, B.E.F., France

Dearest Grandma—

Above all do not be frightened because my heading includes a hospital. True I did not come here by choice, but since I am here, and am out of bed again and running around as usual in my hospital suit of blue, am getting the best rest I have had for months. Reason for my winding up at the base is due to a very light touch of gas—one of Fritz's weapons of war which without breaking any bones sure breaks a fellow's heart for awhile. However under care of the finest of Briton's [*sic*] doctors and nurses a fellow is soon out of bed and ready for business. And speaking of beds—can you imagine the comfort of a soft, clean, white bed after months of hard, dirty and scarcely white bunks found "up the line?" No madam, instead of worrying about my state of health—just assure yourself that the comforts derived from being here are almost worth the discomfort endured at first..

The country about here is very different from any I have met with in France since en route to our first position. The hospital is pretty well surrounded with big hills - have not climbed them yet, but if they keep me here a day or two longer I'll know what is on the other side by seeing it from the top. As is my walks have been only along the different walks and roads near my own ward,—from the top of any of these hills I should be able to get a fine view.

Yesterday while finishing a letter to Mother one of my mates who came down the line with me but who got separated at the C.C.G., walked up and I learned

that we have been in the same ward all the time. Our luck is poor there tho – for mate goes off to Blighty while I remain (so far as I know) at the Base.

Speaking of meeting mates—old timers—yesterday was my big day. During a walk to the Church Army Hut I met a fellow in Yankee uniform who looked natural—he seemed to think I looked familiar as well, and before we had spoken we knew each other—he was a member of the 1st Mass. Amb. Corps in Boston, and we were side numbers on the same ambulance at Framingham. A good chat resulted.

All manner of British troops are in this ward—thus plenty of life and humor to pass away the time. Furthermore, breakfast is up and my appetite is as lively as ever—both you and Aunt May know the meaning of that. So love to the both of you and regards to folks interested.

Write soon, Clifton

There did not seem to be much left for me to worry about, so I got busy worrying about "A" gun, the rest of the "Big 4," my pack of souvenirs left behind, and the condition of my ward mates. Most of them were worse off by far than myself, for in some hour of the night, a Canadian flag or the Union Jack, was sure to be draped over the bed of more than one broken soldier. For several days I felt sure that I was going to be blind, but the worries turned to other things when my sight proved to be as fine as ever. A man with a slight ankle wound and a moderate dose of gas should keep in rather good spirits when he sees on all sides men without arms, legs, or with artificial bones in their bodies, laughing and joking, and even smiling when in pain.

...To prompt and proper treatment my system responded as it should. I soon sat up—stood up—walked. Then I received mail from home that was more than welcome. It seems that Mother had been notified that her son had been "killed in action", but an efficient Red Cross Service soon assured her of the true state of affairs.

...From time to time I got reports from the battery, either by official communication posted on the bulletin boards, letters from old mates, or other casualties. There seemed to be no doubt that the drive toward Belgium was still going on, and that the Canadians with the British, French, and American troops were surely tying up the Hun. Following the occupation of Cambrai on October 9th, Douai had fallen on the 17th, and then Ypres, Lille, and Ostend were also won. The old city of Valenciennes fell into our hands after much severe fighting thus ensuring, from the first of November, a rapid advance to the Franco-Belge frontier.

...After Valenciennes the enemy's withdrawal became more rapid, and on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of November, our mates took Sebourg, Angreau, Roisin, St. Waast, and crossed the Belgian frontier. On the 6th, Quievrechain was captured after stiff fighting, and progress was made along the Conde Canal. Floods and bad roads were causing more hindrance than the German army, but by the 9th, Tertre, Boussu, Jemappe, and Maubeuge were in our grip. German flags were being torn from their standards daily, to be replaced by the Union Jack and the Tri-colors of France or Belgium. On the 10th, at Le Verrerie Chatear, were some of the same troops harassing a beaten enemy that suffered from that same enemy's hands in August 1914 at the same place. On the 11th Mons was in the charge of Canadians, and as the 11th Canadian Corps Headquarters was established in the Grande Place, Sir Douglas Haig's last communique was sent out:

"Canadian troops of the First Army have captured Mons." By eleven o'clock in the morning our line had been pushed to a point seven kilometers east of Mons. In two months the Canadians had won three great battles: Amiens, Arras, and Cambrai. They had captured over 28,000 prisoners, 501 guns, 3,000 machine guns, much needed supplies, 69 towns and villages, 175 square miles of territory, and defeated decisively 47 German Divisions. In other words, Britain's North American Dominion had proved quite a help to the Mother Country. A long looked for message was finally received at Headquarters, which read, "HOSTILITIES CEASE AT 11:00 HOURS, NOV. 11, STAND FAST ON LINE REACHED AT THAT HOUR." An answering message of recognition read: "Warning order re-cessation of hostilities received. Thanks."

...The morning of November 11th, found our tents at #12 Convalescent Camp stuffy with dampness. Outside, the sun was hidden by a cold drizzle. Most of us poked our heads out of the tents to turn back with a mean "grouch" well underway. Call to breakfast failed to excite interest. Persistent rumors of an armistice evoked no response. About eleven in the morning a few gathered near the canteen to hear the Armistice Order read by the Camp Commandant, and to hear prayers offered by the Chaplain. I heard no cheering, and saw no signs of great joy. When one man shouted, "Great God, Boys! It's all over! Don't you get it?—" There was no answer. Some of the boys returned to their games. Some went back to the canteen for their beer and light lunch. Here and there were gathered little groups discussing the possibility of truth in the report with slight interest. The whole world was going crazy with joy—up in the line the boys had started a cheer that had grown to a deafening roar—but here at "Con. Camp" the thing failed to go "so big." It mattered "ALL," and yet "not at all." The stupendous meaning of that order did not get "home" because as more than one fellow expressed it, "Aw Hell! In what latrine did they start that rumor?" Gradually, however, as the hours passed, I noticed a new expression coming over the faces about me, and by the time we received word that we were free for twenty-four hours, to go and do as we pleased, we knew that "something" had happened. There was much grumbling at the luck that had kept us out of the line at the finish, and I for one, would have given much to be with the 12th at that moment.

At dusk as I walked into the sea town of Boulogne along with the crowd from surrounding camps, I was startled at the sight of open lights. A new condition—for there would be no air raid that night. The "MPs" (which means Military Police, and some other things) had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, and it was just as well, for on the hike from camp I had overheard many sinister threats cast in their direction, as well as some reference to a certain incident earlier in the war which occurred at Etaples, and in which some British MPs and some wounded "Jocks" had played a prominent part. In the town, all was wildest confusion, representing celebration. The civilians had gone wild, and they were joined in impromptu parades by uniformed "Frogs," "Limeys," "Jocks," "Canucks," "Aussies," Anzacs," "Southies," "Yanks," sailors, nurses, "WAACs" and all manner of servicemen and girls. Even the dogs yelped with the shouting humanity. Men, women, wine, song, all joined in one great jubilee. The "time" was "NOW"—what of the regrets of an unknown "tomorrow?" Thru the noisy mobs, I pushed my way to the best restaurant in town, previously "For Officers Only," held up every few steps by some man or maid to receive my allotment of hugs and kisses. At the restaurant things were happening. The big plate glass windows in front had been smashed to bits. The "For Officers Only" sign had been trampled under foot.

A battle royal was in progress between those inside, mostly officers and their female companions, and those outside, mostly privates and civilians of both sexes. With the attackers I threw my weight – fighting, kicking, pounding, and laughing against the others. Slowly, we fought our way into the room. The month of ease had softened me, and just before I "passed out of the picture," I saw an Australian Major and a private of a Canadian-Scottish Battalion, pounding each other heartily on their respective jaws, grinning broadly all the while. Coming back to my senses inside the restaurant I found my head resting in one ma'mselle's lap, while another was pouring champagne in the general direction of my mouth. Sitting up, I received a cheer, for no good reason at all, except that the fair maid with the champagne improved her aim with invigorating liquid. On a nearby table danced a bright-eyed girl, who was suddenly carried away in the arms of the Australian officer of previous mention. Up onto the table jumped a "doughboy" waving an American flag. Under his leadership was sung every national anthem known to the universe, actually including "The Watch on the Rhine." I decided to wait until quiet was restored and then enjoy the balance of the evening with my lady of the champagne. But there was no quiet that night—which of course did not prevent my enjoying myself.

At daybreak of the 12th, I was plodding toward camp in a heavy rain. My veins seemed ready to burst. My whole body burned with a fever. My brain was not functioning as I knew it should, though it did tell me that I should have taken the advice of my friend of the night before and remained in town another night. The close of my "armistice account" will be retold as my London Regiment friend told it to me at a later date: "About 4 AM you came stumbling into our tent and asked if the boys were all back. Two were still missing so we started out to find them. It was raining harder than ever when we reached the first estaminet on the road to Boulogne. To offset your fever we decided on cognac, and so went to the cafe entrance. Here we found a big "Jock" arguing with the proprietress who wanted to close up. The "Jock" objected. She attempted to push him thru the door, and he grabbed a bottle and took aim for the big mirror behind the bar. You jumped for him, and pulled the bottle out of his hand. Just then another "Jock" bounced a bottle off your head and you "flopped." I was carrying you away when both "Jocks" jumped on me—and that's all I remember." As it happened, the same two mates for whom we had started a search, located us, and brought us both back to camp. It was several days before normal routine was restored, and all hands accounted for.

...For weeks I had been homesick for the 12th. Where was it? What was it doing? How about the boys of Right Section? Was the "Big 4" still represented in "A" gun's crew? Fisher had been in the ditch with me on the night of October 10th, and Cameron had not been far away – what of them? The few letters received from men of the 3rd Brigade had not mentioned either Cameron or the "Dreamer". On November 15th I was moved to #7 Ration Depot at Boulogne; on the 17th, to the South Camp at Etaples, on the 26th to Marenla (CCRC-4thDiv), and on the 5th December to Aubin St. Vaast (CCRC-2ndDiv). Not very long after reaching Aubin St. Vaast, a party was to be sent on to "Blighty" by way of Etaples. I was in that party.

Etaples was quite a railroad center, and a little information quietly gathered showed me in which direction the trains bound for Arras went. Next I deserted the party to which I had been attached, and stowed away on a train going "up the line."

Arras was easily reached, and I went on toward Cambrai without stopping to look up old friends. At Cambrai I could learn nothing of the whereabouts of the battery, but found plenty of "MPs" willing to arrest me on general principles. The trek to Valenciennes was a long, slow, hard battle. Of food I found aplenty—but transportation was scarce, and I was not feeling as healthy as when I left. I spent some time in this old town trying to gain some word of the 12th, but to no avail. Eventually, I decided to go on to Mons, in Belgium, where I felt certain that there would be someone to direct a weary traveler. Then my luck asserted itself. As I trudged along a muddy road, a lorry passed me, and on the wide panel at the driver's seat I saw painted a six-inch shell, upon which was a big Figure 3. A 3rd Brigade Canadian Artillery ration lorry I guessed, and the 12th was part of the 3rd. As fast as heavy feet could carry me I ran shouting after the lorry, but it soon passed out of hearing. Uncertain whether to laugh or cry, I stalked grimly along. My feet and legs were carrying twice their own weight of mud. My every muscle ached. But I had gained one thing, and that the knowledge that our ration lorries came to Valenceinnes for their supplies and mail. About an hour later I again saw the same lorry, parked outside a ration depot. I charged toward it, and there before me was Bombardier Holmes, ration orderly of the 12th. Confronting him I spoke (I wanted to embrace and kiss him!). For an instant he stared at me, then said, "Cate! Well I'll be damned! I thought you were..." But it matters not what he thought. Far more important was the fact that he found room for me in the back of the lorry, and as we rattled and bounced along toward the Belgium border he told me much about the battery.

**From: CHAPTER VI**  
**The Canadian Army—in Belgium**

In an old convent in Boussu, I located the battery, and into a room on the second floor, marked "RX" I hurried to greet my old mates. Inside the room I soon became convinced that the "RX" marking was wrong, for the six faces about me were not the old familiar faces I had expected to find. Then...the reassuring voice of Cameron, as he bounded into the room. Preliminary greetings over, we visited the other rooms on a hunt for old friends. A general exchange of experiences followed, and I learned that the 12th had played its part well in the great advance, although losses had been heavy. This fact explained the many new faces. Fisher had "gone down" with me, and reports had it that he had been sent home to Canada, to die there from the effects of gas and wounds. No word had come from Bosdet. Several of those wounded since the commencement of the "Somme do" had found their way back "home" as I had. The 12th was still ready for instant action at a word from higher up.

...Boussu was an ordinary Belgium town, of somber aspect, made more so by weary-faced civilians and dreary weather. The Hun had left little of value behind that the townsfolk could gain a living from. Most of the nearby coalmines were flooded, and what few factories might once have existed were then in ruins. The winter season prevented farming. Food was scarce. Daily the bread and soup lines at our kitchens grew longer, as the government communals became greatly overtaxed as civilians crowded back into the district so lately occupied by Fritz.

...Nearly every Belgian youngster made it his proud duty to "adopt" some one of us as his own particular Canadian. One cold and rainy night on guard duty at the gun park, the rain had so soaked my greatcoat that its weight had become burdensome. My cap lay limp upon my head, sending little streams of water down my neck and over my face. My shoes having slopped thru the mud and water along the beat, were soaked thru and heavy. The rifle, its breach protected under my armpit, sent a steady stream of water off its down-pointed muzzle onto my puttees. The canvas-covered guns lay in shadowy rows in the park like many sleeping monsters (which they really were). It was one miserable night. I stopped at the end of my beat to wait for my relief just before two o'clock. A brother sentry splashed and slouched over his route spitting vehemently at every puddle reflecting a bit of light. I dropped the rifle butt to the ground, and rested my weight on my hands, crossed over its muzzle. My thoughts were not of the gun park, Boussu, or Belgium, but of "home". No particular place...just a combination of Sharon, Mass, Berwick, Maine, and East Alton, New Hampshire.

Very faintly at first, and then more *distinctly* I heard a timid voice. I suddenly realized where I was, and saw before me, a small, scantily clad boy of about fourteen (though he looked much less) looking up into my face. His hands rested lightly upon my own. "Bon soir, Monsieur. Le nuit est mal." "Right you are, Sonny. But why are you out so late on such a night?" He told me that he had been watching me for over an hour, waiting for the time when he knew that my relief was due, so that he could invite me to his home for cafe. "Votre mere—et votre pere?" I asked. "It is all right," I gathered from his native tongue, "You are expected. My father works at the mine. My mama keeps the coffee hot." "And who else?", I asked. "Olga, ma soeur—" but I interrupted him with, "No. No. Mon ami. Je suis trop fatigued. Un autre nuit, peut-etre." Too

many sisters had sent out older or younger brothers with similar invitations, and quite often the results had not been benefiting to good health. My new-found friend divined my thoughts and his expression showed plainly his disappointment. He spoke again, his eagerness to make sure that my mind translated his language as he intended, causing him to tremble slightly. "Mais, mon Canadien! Vous ne comprenez. It is not for *that* I invite you. La petite Olga—she is younger than I!" In the end, I agreed to accompany him to his home, and he disappeared into the shadows until I was relieved from my post.

Although officially attached to the guard, and not supposed to leave the guardhouse except on duty, I received permission from the corporal to be absent for an hour. Meeting the young man whose invitation I had accepted, we started for his home which I had thought was within a few steps of the park. For some distance we walked thru the rain. Up alleys, down roads, thru a small field, skirting some deserted factory. I began to wonder just what sort of a home this fellow lived in, and also where it was. After about twenty minutes of fast walking we reached a long, low, whitewashed building. From a shaded window in the end nearest, shone a dull yellow light. Opening a door, the young man called, "Mama! Le Canadien!" Stooping low so as to miss the low doorframe, I followed my guide, and stepping down over one or two stone slabs found myself in a small room. The ceiling and walls were whitewashed, and the floor was of red brick. Two curtained windows I noticed, and two doors, one to the street, and the other (as I learned later) into a tiny bedchamber and another chamber a bit larger. A few old and cheap pictures, a religious illustration, a statue of Mary, and the inevitable Cross, graced the walls and the mantel over the small open-grate stove. An old sideboard, a closet, a table, several chairs, a few cooking utensils by the stove, and a few dishes on the table, made up the rest of the furnishings.

As my young friend hung up my cap and coat on a chair, his mother poured the coffee and produced some dark bread, a saucer containing what looked like lard, and a dish of hard brown lumps. I found that the "lard" was somewhat sweet and meant for the bread, and that the lumps were also sweet and for the coffee. The boy told me to call him Jean, and that his full name was, Jean Baptiste St. Pierre. My name became "Charles," in spite of all my attempts to make him say "Clif." The moments passed. Jean and I had munched the last of the bread, drunk our coffee, and I was about to refill my pipe as the chamber door opened slowly. "Olga!" said the mother quickly, as a tousle-haired girl of eight or nine slipped thru the opening and dashed into the shelter of her mother's dress. There she remained, peeking out from time to time. Conversation was slow. The mother's eyes were ever on the boy, whose gaze never left my face except to study my uniform. My hour was up, and after a hurried promise to return the first time I was free I returned to the guardhouse. There were many visits made to Jean's home, and to the homes of several of his relatives. An evening at the home of any, meant an evening filled with many new faces, many old faces, wine, lunch (in which I saw much evidence of our own canteen and kitchen), laughter, music, dancing, and a bit of all around good cheer and friendliness. Often I slept at Jean's home in the tiny chamber off the kitchen-dining-living room. From these visits I learned much about the stay of the Hun, his arrival in 1914, and his leaving not so long before. Jean's cousin, Georgia, who cared for the small store "up the street," provided me with the companionship which helped my stay in Boussu.

(Note: A letter to Jean, sent in care of his father, Monsieur Demonstier Nicolas, #36 Rue Montanbon, Boussu-Bois, Belgium, was never heard from nor was it returned to me. So it seems that my friend of Boussu had left his old home after I reached America. CJC)

...Shortly before Christmas, the brigade moved to St. Symphorien, about seven kilos beyond Mons on the road to Chalroi. "A" subsection was billeted in a two-family brick house on the outer edge of the town in the direction of Germany. The crossroads at this spot was where the leading patrols of the German and British armies met in 1914. The civilian occupants of the house were a middle-aged couple, who looked more German than anything else, and often acted very much as though they were German. This red brick two-family house was not very large, and though I never investigated, I do not think it had either a second story or cellar. The floors were red tile, the walls were barren, and the ceilings dirty. The crew was divided into three parts, each finding a section of the floor in the two larger rooms for blankets, kits, and sleep. Cameron and I commandeered a small room apiece for our selves. Where the two civilians slept is more than I can remember. Each of the larger rooms boasted of an open-grate stove of ancient manufacture. Water was out in the well in the yard, and none too clean. The rest of the battery was spread over the town in this same vicinity, with the cookhouse and quartermaster housed in an old factory. Baths were to be had in the little mining town of Havre, some six kilos away, and to them we went about twice a week.

The town was a cluster of dirty brick, wood, and plaster buildings, intersected by mud or slimy cobbled streets, with neither a decent building nor a pretty face to relieve the strain. The civilians were more than "fed up" on war and occupation, and though they tried at times to be hospitable, their efforts lacked both strength and conviction. Certain actions at times, from a few of them, indicated sorrow at the Hun's departure. Even the wines and beers in the several miniature estaminets lacked all punch. About the only thing in or near the place of interest was a soldiers' cemetery not far from "A" sub's quarters, built by the combined efforts of civilian and prisoner labor under German supervision in 1914 and 1915. On its main shaft was inscribed the legend, "DEUTSCHEN UND ENGLICHEN SOLDATEN." Here slept many young men from over the Channel and over the Rhine. The German graves were marked by marble slabs, many of which had all but returned to dust from neglect. The British graves were large circles in which many occupied one grave, and around which had been planted evergreen trees, for the most part in flourishing condition in the winter of 1918. On one big grave the legend on the wooden monument read, "46 ENGLISH SOLDIERS of the ROYAL MIDDLESEX REGIMENT," mute testimony to the loyalty and sacrifice of England's ultimate victims.

...On Christmas night I was on guard duty at the gun park, thus missing the Christmas dinner with the boys. One old reliable, Cameron, came out and relieved me so that I could get in "on the finish." To the eternal honor of QMS Bailey, and the chefs, Young and Sharpe, I want it known that our Christmas dinner of 1918 was a rare success.

## CHRISTMAS SUPPER 1918

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* * * * * Soup * * * * *
Turkey * * * * *
* * * * * Roast Pork * * * * *
* * * * * Roast Beef
Creamed Potatoes & Gravies * * * *
* Carrots Cabbage Turnip Beets
* * * * *
Dressing Catsup Pickles
* * * * *
Plum Pudding & Cream Sauce
* * * * * Mince Pie * * * * *
*** Apples ***** Oranges * * * *
* * * * *
Beer * * * * Ale * * * * * Rum
* * * * *
* * * * * Cigars * * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * * Concerts * * * * *
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*[In a history of the Canadian army in the First World War, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914 - 1919, the official version of Christmas, 1918 reads: "The Canadians' occupation role in Germany lasted well into the New Year. A timely snowfall on the night of 24 December enabled all units to celebrate the white Christmas to which so many were accustomed at home. The traditional turkey and accompanying luxuries might be missing (they arrived later), but resourceful messing officers ably backed by expert battalion cooks saw to it that all enjoyed a Christmas dinner worthy of the name." Truly, in the 12ths case those heroic efforts were well appreciated. A perhaps more poignant remembrance of Christmas day is revealed in the continuing memoir. CCC]*

...On the 24th Jean had trudged all the way from Boussu to Mons to find me, for I had promised to be with his family for Christmas. All thru the afternoon and evening he had hunted about the little city for me or for someone who knew me, all in vain. Back to his home he went early Christmas morning—perhaps I would not forget—but when the family and the relatives had gathered at the table to honor an ordinary buck gunner of the line, I did not show up. Guard duty held me fast, and there was no way of notifying my friends. With them at the New Year supper, I had to do a lot of explaining before some of them believed that I had not found a better home. Jean and Olga trusted, Georgia was willing to, and the others managed to forgive as best they could. To me it was evident that all had dug deep into the meager supply of cash to prepare the "great" Christmas celebration to which I had failed to come.

...On February 4th, returning from a short stay with my friends, Jean and his family at Boussu-bois, I learned that my Paris leave had "come thru." Over a month before I had entered my request for this leave in the approved army fashion.

...Paris! The Mecca of all "leave hounds." At first sight a confusing, dazzling, and yet pleasing swirl of activity. No war ever touches Paris for very long—that is—on the OUTSIDE. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the sous-officer led Cameron and me thru the busy section before the Gare du Nord to a cafe in the vicinity, where we enjoyed a light lunch and champagne. This, by the way, at one of the many tables under a canvass awning out on what in America would be the sidewalk. Incidentally, it is a pleasant and neighborly custom, even in February. As we talked, I watched the people passing by—young folks—old folks—children—uniformed men and women of many nations—well dressed—poorly dressed—all intent on going somewhere about something. One can "grasp" Brussels, but Paris...!

...The day of parting came. It was easy to say good-bye to the many friends I had made. But, I learned with surprise that leaving Sussette, "ma petite camarade de Paris" was not as easy as expected. She could not accompany me to the station, which was probably well, for there I had to think fast and move faster to duck two redcaps. In her home the night before we had said all the necessary things that were to be said, so that when I saw her for a moment just before leaving, a simple, "Bon Voyage," was all that was needed. The usual light heart was missing as I settled down into the upholstery of a compartment, on board the train bound, late again, "up the line."

At the battery the wise old Sergeant Major's long, steady, calculating gaze, was my only chastisement. The unspoken rebuke, but it was sufficient. Cameron said simply, "Gunner's luck, Old Pal!" At St. Symphorien I found the Khaki College of Canada in full swing. There was another name in use among some of the officers—"Universitaire' de St. Symphorien"—and yet *another* one in use by certain of the troops. Most of us found it a help in "ducking" fatigues about town, and a very few even gained something of value from a little diligent study.

...On March 10th, at Nimy, a little distance out of Mons, the 22nd Corps held a horseracing meet. The weather for the day consisted of rain, and more rain, but the races went on, and were well attended. A few of the affairs were interesting; one or two were exciting. Betting was heavy among those who had money but I was still carrying a "dead" pay book. The most notable riding of the day was done by a jockey wearing yellow and blue colors, who finishing six out of eight starts, ended well up in the money.

...On March 29th came a long looked for order. After a last "good bye and good luck" to many good friends in the vicinity, the 3rd Brigade entrained at Mons for Le Havre. This was our last, long, weary ride in the famous "40 HOMMES OU 8 CHEVAUX" boxcars. As we rolled slowly "DOWN the line", we passed many familiar places, and saw the civilians and soldiers making great strides in repairing the damage wrought by many battles. At night we kept warm with braziers, and when the gas and smoke grew too thick, we climbed to the roofs of the cars for fresh air.

The last day of March found us back in Le Havre where the 12th had landed a year ago. (Throughout the description of this last ride down the line I have said "we" and "us;" but now comes the confession of a last breaking of Rules and Regulations. I did not reach Le Havre with the battery, though I was there soon after. All letters from Sussette of Paris had carried a postscript which read, "Si vous passez Place de l'Opera a 7 heures moins 10 minutes, je passerai sans faute, tous les soirs", and it was my great pleasure to test the quality of that promise by getting into Paris, "by hook or by crook", while the battery went on to Le Harve and made its first preparations for the departure from France. The memory of that last stolen trip to Paris has since made many discouraging hours much easier.) The 12th that went thru the various process of preparing for departure was not the same 12th that had been in those tents a year before. There were many different faces, and all the familiar faces wore a different expression....

At 6 P.M. on April 2nd, we marched off from French soil, and on to a Channel transport. The ship soon slipped quietly out of the mouth of the Seine and headed for Southampton across the channel. France was behind us, and so were the trenches, days and nights of hell, comrades whose faint "goodbyes" we really could not hear, St. Symphorien, a few real friends, Brussels, Paris, and—"ma petite camarade de Paris." Before us was a NEW world, but we did not realize it then. My whole being thrilled with the thought of "going home," and yet there was a little heaviness in my heart. Pal Cameron was beside me as we took a last look before hunting for a warm place to sleep.

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...No "Notes" would be considered complete without mention of the world-famous "cootie". This little pet was ever true to its master, never deserting except after death. I had 'em, the "Big 4" had 'em, the 12th had 'em, the Allies had 'em, the Hun had 'em, the "civies" had 'em—in fact, EVERYBODY had 'em. It was part of the game, and for many, the worst part. At the "delousing plant" (ugly term), we filed in one door with our clothes and personal kit. As we moved along in single file, our outfits were taken by attendants, checked and sent to be baked in steam and sulfur until free from every form of germ and "cootie". Then into a big cement chamber we marched, and when more attendants were ready—Oh! What evil grins their faces bore—we were shut in...naked. For a few seconds nothing happened. We stood staring stupidly at one another, with perspiration oozing from every pore. Then, faintly at first, but gradually increasing to a roar, came the hissing of steam. Clouds of it filled the chamber. Then water—hot, and growing hotter! For a while the place was thick with soapsuds as the boys scrubbed. We had "got the idea". Then the atmosphere within that vault grew unbearable. There was coughing, choking, spitting, shrieking, cursing, and here and there a man collapsed. Then the water became warm... cool... cold... I C Y! Those attendants were there to KILL COOTIES, and THAT THEY DID, regardless of other possibilities. After what seemed hours, a door opened, and we dashed out of that "hell's kitchen" and ran down a corridor to another room. Here we found seats, with numbers to correspond with those on the discs hung about our necks. Less evil attendants handed us towels, bathrobes, and smokes—and in one or two cases assisted in the rubdown. We sat down in our robes, to smoke and wait. Soon, hanging from overhead rails, came little wire cages in a long train, which stopped when the numbers upon them coincided with the numbers on our seats and discs. Here were our clothes.

We made a dash for the cages, but sprang back dismayed when our fingers smelled of burning flesh. In time, even the tarnished buttons on our uniforms were cool, and we were out in the open once more. Fresh blankets were issued to us, and for the first time in many months, we were truly clean and we OUGHT to have been. (NOTE: I was somewhat amused one day while on a visit to the Libby Museum just out of Wolfboro, New Hampshire, to find a "real" cootie from France, pinned to a card in a glass case. The legend said that the little fellow had arrived from the trenches in a letter in perfect health, although quite hungry. CJC)

**From: CHAPTER VII**  
**The Canadian Army—In British Isles “After” France**

The transports docked at Southampton at about one o'clock of the morning of April third, but the troops were permitted to sleep until daybreak before going off. Just before the order came to leave the boat, I was awakened by a chorus of voices shouting the old song of the line from another part of the deck:

"I wanna go home! I wanna go home!  
I don't wanna go to the trenches no more—  
The bullets—they whistle, the cannon—they roar-r-r-r.  
Take me over the sea, Where Heinie can't get at me—  
Oh! My! I'm too young to die!  
I WANNA GO HOME!"

...(Note: I have failed to mention before that, while at St. Symphorien, a parade was held at Mons, where units were "cited," and individuals "decorated." Our Major, Colin McKay received a Military Cross, and good old Sgt. Troop, another Bar for his Military Medal. CJC)

On the 7th of April we moved to Kinmel Park camp in Rhyl (northern Wales). This shift to a camp near Conway, and that country in which I had found so much that was pleasant a year earlier, was a real pleasure. At Kinmel we found quarters in wooden huts that were dry and easily kept clean, in spite of frequent rains. One fine afternoon as I sat on a bench outside my hut with several other mates I received a visitor who was more than welcome. Bosdet, the "Smiling Mex," stationed in another part of the great camp, had returned to his place in the "Big 4." Only Fisher was missing then.

...Money was sometimes scarce, but the "old board," poker, and craps, kept some of us in funds. Bosdet's uncanny knack of winning did not fail. The old army game of "crooked raffle" was common. Thus one day, when my luck let my last tanner (sixpence) melt away on a bad bet on the "old Kimberly" (the diamond on the infamous board) Bosdet and I resorted to the raffle. Into four foreign camps went Bosdet, selling raffle tickets on the camera which is now a prized souvenir in my possession. When the cash collected equaled a previously determined mark the drawing was held. At just this time I "happened" along, and as a "disinterested" party, was requested to draw the lucky number. Bosdet shook up the numbered stubs in his cap in a most professional manner. Then, with the cap held high, so that I could not see what I picked in advance (and so that no one else could see where I picked it from), I reached into the lot and extracted a number. "Number 12! Who has got number 12? The lucky 12th wins!" And out of the crowd stepped a corporal, a stranger in this camp, who took the camera and marched off muttering something about, "This is the first time I ever won anything by chance." The majority of the losers would turn away and forget the incident, (unintentionally I have confessed that there WERE more than a FEW such raffles!), but there were always a few, "I wonders!" from the inevitable skeptics. Then, back in Medical District #7, when the corporal had received his beer money, and I had regained possession of the camera, Bosdet and I would divide the four or five pounds of loot.

With this capital, Bosdet and I usually out gambled the gamblers, and made out a fair existence. Incidentally, the "lucky" number had been held pinched within the cap, between Bosdet's thumb and fore finger, to eliminate as much chance of loss as possible. A simple and profitable scheme if one did not get caught. IF one was so unfortunate as to be discovered a fraud, he was sure to get plenty—even though those who served out the "plenty" were planning to try the same stunt in our camp that same day.

From the 15th [of the month] there had been persistent grumbling about remaining any longer in Europe. By the 27th after several false starts for Canada had been made, the troops lost their usual good nature. Insubordination commenced, increasing in volume until whole units, and then whole camps, took active part in demonstrations in favor of leaving Wales to the Welch. On the 15th the cry was, "We wanta go home!" By the 22nd it was, "When do we go home?", louder than before, and by the 1st of May it became a spirited battle cry, "WE ARE GOING H O M E !!" The natural sequence was a series of wild riots during which some folks were hurt, and some government property was destroyed. The War Office at London heard the noise, read the reports, and sent us to Southampton on the 2nd of May. There were many high-ranking British officers who breathed a deep sigh of relief when the Royal Mail Steamer *Mauretania* sailed for Canada at 2:30 on the morning of May 4th, with a heavy boat load of "those bloomin' Canadians." There were also many who breathed deep sighs of relief on the boat.

We were headed WEST... and home! Home—relatives, friends, old familiar faces and places— one need not go 3,000 miles to war to know what that means to a Yankee. Again I heard old songs from different decks, among them one which ended with:

"Take me over there, drop me anywhere,  
Toronto, Hull, or Montreal, I just don't care.  
Oh! Tiddle-de-iddle-de-I-ty,  
I'd rather be there than Blighty,  
Take me back to old ST. JOHN!"

*[Note: There were several unpleasant incidents (some resulting in violence, arson, and even deaths) in the camps during demobilization, mostly from impatience with the process. Part of the problem was logistics—there simply were too many men and too few ships and trains. Another was the decision by the Canadian Corps not to follow the "first in, first out" principle adopted by most armies, but instead, to return the men by units (although in some "hardship" cases exceptions were made). The most serious of these incidents occurred at Kinmel Park on March 4th and 5th (a month before CJC arrived there) in which a riot involving over 800 soldiers left five killed and 23 wounded. Another in mid-June, at Witley, left several civilian shops and the Garrison Theatre destroyed. Fortunately, the 3rd Artillery Brigade (of which the 12 Siege Battery was a member) seems to have avoided the more serious disturbances. CCC]*

**From: CHAPTER VIII**  
**Canadian Army—Home Aagain**

One of the finest vessels afloat is the Cunard liner, *Mauretania*. From stem to stern, masthead to keel, port to starboard, this wonderful boat presents that which fills the voyager with confidence in her ability to safely and surely do her work. The troops were once more normal—good-natured. The guns mounted as defense against submarine attacks, though hooded, helped artillerymen to feel at home. Officers and nurses were quartered in cabins and staterooms. The rank and file was satisfied with hammocks and bunks. My bunk was the top one of a tier of three in the first class smoking-room. Meals were served in the regular dining salons, and were seldom missed, for fair weather stayed with us. For five days we crowded the decks, promenaded, read, slept, daydreamed, watched or took active part in sports and games, while the distance between the ship and Canada grew steadily less.

So much to do, yet Bosdet and I grew restless because of the tameness of it all. We broke a dozen ship's rules, but nothing was done about it. It seemed all so unnatural to be so free from restraint. We wanted to be "bawled out" about something—anything! The freedom intoxicated us, as newfound freedom often intoxicates whole nations into losing possession of common sense—and we decided to see just "how far" we could go. We climbed high up into the ship's rigging, descended into the boiler rooms, trespassed on the bridge, invaded officers' and nurses' sections—yet, still, nothing happened. The sailors grew more friendly because they said we had the makings of riggers in us, the firemen grinned because we "went down to pay them a visit," the ship's officers even explained things in the pilothouse and about the bridge, and the returning officers were strangely unaware of our rank as they offered friendly drinks, the nurses—well, they were what nurses always have been, the best sports in the world. WHAT WAS the use of trying to be "bad" boys?

...Up on the "top side" were some dog kennels. One dark and cold night, when the wind blew hard, I stopped as usual at each occupied kennel, receiving a yelping, tail-wagging welcome. While petting one wire-haired pup a nurse came along to pet the same dog, and I learned that it belonged to her. For some time we petted (the pup), and then warmed ourselves with a promenade as we chatted. After that we met each night. And so, the time passed, until at 6:30 A.M. on the 9th of May, the great *Mauretania* was docked at Halifax in Nova Scotia in CANADA!

The big portals of the dock-shed were packed with expectant relatives and friends of "home-comers." As the troops poured out of the ship, Bosdet, Cameron, and I stood together in a quiet place watching them. In the excitement and confusion of getting back they were giving little thought to the separations from mates who would be more than missed later. Every little while we saw disappear a group of our own mates. Cameron, perhaps, to see many of them again; but Bosdet, in Mexico, and myself in Boston, far less likely to see any of them. Then the "Big 4" (what if there were but three of us in the flesh!) shook hands and parted. Except for one or two rare visits and occasional cards at Christmas our ways were separated from that moment on....

"Up town" all was confusion as meetings took place and welcoming shouts filled the air. Then gradually, came the realization that those who lived in the vicinity had

gone home, that many more had simply gone off on trains to other places, and the rest of us, strangely alone, were "just waiting" in "just another town" for our own trains. As the late afternoon passed, quietly, we began to realize that friendships formed under fire of battle can become an integral part of one's existence...and that neither time nor physical separation can ever weaken that bond.

At six o'clock I entrained with the units bound for St. John and points west. All night we rode, getting some sleep while cramped into every conceivable position. Truro is the only stop that I can remember. There, although it was midnight or later, we were greeted by a band and a crowded platform. Sandwiches and hot coffee and doughnuts were served by an excited throng. Many girls were there serving chocolate bars and candy kisses—and a whole lot of kisses that were NOT candy by any means. With my souvenirs is a bunch of dried and discolored Mayflowers which I received from one sweet girl along with some other things, during that short stop at Truro.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 10th we arrived in St. John, where we found that the government had found a quick way of turning soldiers into civilians... officially. A "welcome" speech, cut short by cries of, "Let's go!", "When do we eat!", "Cut out the guff, and do your stuff!" was followed by a good meal. Then we filed into one door of the armory as gunners, moved along from one counter or window to another, and on out another door, as misters. That was all. We had signed up for "duration of war and six months" and Canada had honored the contract. During the afternoon I met many old friends and acquaintances of 1917, who kept me occupied until 5:30 P.M. when, with a few others, I boarded the Boston bound train.

Another all-night ride followed with but one incident to interfere with sleep. At the border, several customs officials entertained the erroneous idea that we were not properly endorsed for admittance to the United States. Then a small but mighty determined group of EX-Canadian soldiers stated their opinions, which were few, and guaranteed to back all of them against all comers. Practically every civilian in the car offered to help us "carry on." All that we had to do was "say the word." For a few moments feelings had been tense, but later as the train rolled over the border with us on board we thanked the "OTHER" civilians and went back to sleep, to awake for a few moments now and then as our party lost a man along the way.

At Dover, New Hampshire, I was greeted by several of my family in a manner that left me feeling fine for the rest of the run to North Station in Boston. At ten o'clock on the 11th I was ducking traffic before the station in an attempt to reach the subway station. An hour later I was in Belmont, hunting for more of my family, who no longer lived in the house I had left in 1917. After splashing about for a few moments in a heavy downpour, I met a little girl about seven years old. "Do you know Dotty Louise White?" I asked. "Yes," she answered, "And I know you, too. You are the big brother, Clif, who went to war." Agreeing with her I asked her to direct me to Dotty's house. This she did in a sure fashion, by taking my hand, and leading me straight to the door of her home at number eighty-nine Townsend Road. I reckon that it was a wet and muddy EX-gunner who dropped a dripping greatcoat and pack in the front hall to receive a warm welcome. I was "at home"—with familiar faces about me—and familiar places, and still more familiar faces not far off.

I ought to have been every bit at ease, and supremely content, but I was not. Everyone did his or her part to get the trench kinks out of my system, and to all appearances the operations were successful, but the "kinks" are still there, and there they will always remain, just as all soldiers learn to know.

**From: CHAPTER IX  
Some Historical Notes**

17. A Canadian gunner's monthly rate of pay was "a dollar a day and ten cents field allowance" (\$1.10). In Canada he usually drew pay monthly—\$33; in England—3/15 (3 pounds, 15 shillings); in France—40f (francs). Balance of unused pay was credited against a leave time or to cover allotments, etc. (Normally a pound is \$4.80, a shilling is 24 cents, a franc, 20 cents).

*[For serving in the C.E.F., Gnr. Cate received \$652.30. This plus his "war service gratuity" of \$250.00 disbursed on separation in May 1919, netted him a grand total of \$902.30 for his nineteen and one half months of active duty in the Canadian Army. CCC]*

19. In the 3rd Artillery Brigade were four batteries, of which the 12th, containing 6 howitzers, was one. Divided into three 2-gun sections plus a Staff Section, the Battery was commanded initially by Major Robinson (later, Major Colin McKay, MC). In Battery Headquarters were the executive officer, Captain Skinner, Sergeant-Major Candy, and HQ Staff. Each section was commanded by a Lieutenant (Right Section—Lt. Palmer, Center Section—Lt. Bacon, Left Section—Lt. McNeal, Staff Section—Lt. Walford). A Sergeant commanded each subsection, and each of the two crews making up the "sub" was led by a Corporal. Lest we forget—the busiest man in the battery was the Sergeant-Major (called a First Sergeant in U.S.A.) in direct contact with every duty of the unit.

*The 12th Siege Battery was one of fourteen Siege and Heavy Batteries supporting the C.E.F. in France at the signing of the Armistice. Seven of the batteries were commanded by men of St. John, N.B., the home of the 3rd Field Artillery Regiment (known as The Loyal Company), which had the distinction of being the oldest artillery unit in Canada, and the third oldest in the British Commonwealth. [From their website, [www.saintjohn.nbcc.ca~Heritage/3far/index](http://www.saintjohn.nbcc.ca~Heritage/3far/index).]*

20. Roster "A" Gun—12th Battery: (**June 1, 1918**)—Sgt. Troop, Corporal Henry, Bombardiers Byers and McCrae, Gunners Brown, Bosdet, Cameron, Cate, Clarke, Fisher, Mason, McConnell, McNutt, and Tulippe. (These men formed the two crews for the battery's No.1 Gun.); (**January 5, 1919**)—Sgt. Troop (MM), Bdrs. Byers, Cameron, and Stratton, Gnrs. Cate, Gilchrist, Hall, Hanson, Kirk, McNutt, Marston, Mounce, Moore, Pollock, Raph, Tait, Toungue, Wilde, and Wade. (Five of the originals were still in the crew. Those underlined represent members wounded or gassed that returned from hospital. Only one, Cameron [*italics*], never left the battery.) Snapshots of most of these men are in my album thanks to "VPK" (the camera that stuck with me—see Chapter X)—and much luck.

21. As the '18 Somme drive was about to start (August 8, 1918) the roster of the two "sister" guns, "A" and "B" which formed "Right Section" of the 12th Battery seems to have been: ("A" sub-section)—Sgt Troop, Corporal Henry, Bombardiers Budd, Cameron, McCrae, Gunners Allen, Andrews, Bosdet, Byers, Cate, Colwell, Fisher, Gilchrist, Kleisher, McNutt, Hugh McKenzie, R.C. McConnell, Paynter, and Tulippe, plus Anti-aircraft Lewis Gunner Mason and Medical Orderly Brown; ("B" sub-section)—Sgt Cropper, Corp. "Spud" West, Bdrs. McCann, Vincent, Barnwell, Gnrs. Agafonof, Barber,

Beveridge, Duncan, Fairclough, Fitzpatrick, Graham, Horncastle, Jenkins, Kay, Kent, Lloyd, K.P. McKenzie, Ross, Sparrow, Spinney, Stratton, Tregitt, Trethaway. Officer in Charge: Lieutenant (Leftenant) Palmer. Each subsection was divided into two crews each serving in turn twenty-four-hour stretches. #1 Crew of "A" sub sect. consisted of: Bdr. Cameron (#1—in charge of crew), Bdr. Budd (gun-layer or sighter), Gnr. Cate (#2—responsible for breech-handling and firing of gun), Gnrs. Andrews, Colwell, Fisher, McNutt, McConnell, & Paynter. Five men were needed to man the gun in action; the others kept busy supplying ammunition, etc.

22. Call to Action!. Out of warm blankets and the semi-safety of a dugout my (six inch howitzer) crew would rush in answer to, "Right Section—ACTION!" A sequence of orders would follow, something like this: "Number One gun: Amatol, Fuze one-oh-six, N-C-Tok, Size Sixteen, Charge Four—," varied according to various types of shell, fuze, charge, etc., to be used. Then would come the "switch" followed by the "elevation," and "Load-Up and report when ready." Often we fired on "receipt of elevation" or without other orders than, "S.O.S. Number—" (in the latter case with a previously arranged shell and load at a pre-arranged target). Orders varied, but the activities about the gun were much the same for all.

Our howitzer differed from a gun in many ways. It was of shorter barrel, its projectile traveled higher and dropped more directly upon the target. Generally, it was the most accurate gun in the service. Its extreme range was about 9 kilos at extreme elevation of 44.5, with charge #5 or #6. If I remember correctly, its barrel weighed some 3800 pounds. It could provide an elastic barrage of no mean proportions, destroy a trench system or level a town, and not infrequently was it used for "sniping."

Our shell measured 6 inches in diameter and weighed 100 pounds. It was loaded with "HE" (high explosive) or one of the several forms of gas. The latter was held in liquid form in a small glass bottle in the heart of the shell. When the shell came to us, a ringed plug was screwed into its nose. This we removed when preparing for firing, inserting a silk bag containing a detonator or "booster charge" of TNT (Trinitrotoluene) into a little well (about the depth and size of the average man's index finger), after which we screwed home the fuze in place of the plug. Several types of fuzes were used, usually the two known as 1-O-1-E or 1-O-6, both of percussion type (detonated upon striking target).

Charges or propellants were TNT or cordyte (or cordite)—a smokeless powder composed of nitroglycerin, guncotton, and mineral jelly of dull wax color in the form of macaroni-minus-the-hole-like strings. The TNT was of dull wax color in the form similar to split peas and about the same size. These charges were delivered to us in silk bags, each bag representing a single charge—hence "charge four" for four bags or "six" for six bags. The first charge or bag had a red patch sewed to its base in which was black powder. Charges were tied together before insertion into the breech behind the shell.

With shell and charge in place the breech was closed, a "tube" (.303 cal. cartridge) slipped into the rifle breech fitted to the gun breech, and when all was ready—gun sighted and elevated to firing position—a quick pull on a short cord jerked the pin to which it was attached from the rifle breech causing the firing pin to detonate the

fulminate cap in the base of the "tube," igniting the "cordite" in the "tube" which, expanding as it burned, forced its way thru the vent in the gun breech, igniting the powder in the red patch fitted to the base of the charge, igniting in turn the main charge of TNT or cordite, and our "calling card" was on its way to our German friends howling a warning to them as it went (a warning rarely heard by those near our target in time to save themselves).

I ought to mention, after going this far, that before the shell was rammed "home" in the breech, a "safety pin" had been pulled from the fuze. If we had forgotten this little matter our shell would have been a well-known "dud." The rate of fire varied from "rapid"—about 2 per minute (if we could keep it up)—to "harassing", which was varied slow fire when we simply dropped shells "here and there" over a chosen area to harass the enemy.

The order in which the scans & drawings may be referenced in the Text are as follows:

Scans:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Chapter II   | a. "Notes" Title Page   |
| Chapter III  | b. Dog Tags, c. Grampion accomodation   |
| Chapter IV   | d. CLB/CJC Photo, e. Aeroplane Wing Cloth   |
| Chapter V    | f. Rose Petals – Meharicourt; g." Mein Lieber Fritz" Env; h. Player's Navy Cut; i. Wounded Man's Kit; j. Telegram, k. Envelope-Allard |
| Chapter VI   | l. XXII Corps Racing Form; m. "Suzy's" Invitation   |
| Chapter VII  | n. Kinmel; o. Garrison Theatre Program  |
| Chapter VIII | p. Mauretania meal ticket; q. "Crown & Anchor" on Fantail; r. Dog Aboard Mauretania; s. WW1 Medals-C&A                                |
| Chapter IX   | t. CJC Paybook; u. 12 <sup>th</sup> Battery, CGA  |

Drawings:

- |            |         |
|------------|---------|
| Chapter V  | 1 – 12  |
| Chapter VI | 13 & 14 |