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it was at its full value only worth a halfpenny, it was rather a shock to us after the accounts we had read of the kindly treatment received by our soldiers passing through France, it was our first impression of the French people and it was by no means in their favour, we certainly did not want anything for nothing, but it was pure robbery the prices we were asked for coffee bread etc.

We travelled all through New Years day, and did not arrive at our destination until 10 pm that

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night, after some 33 hours cooped up in a cattle truck, we pulled in to Bailleul railway station just after 10 pm, a regular picnic for us then started it took us hours to sort us a find out the harness, haul the guns off and get ready for the road again, it rained almost the whole time, and it was bitterly cold; it was here that we first saw signs of the actual war, Percey lights could be quite plainly seen, in fact it was only about 5 or six miles to Britz's front line it was rather quiet this night

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apart from an occasion
at road from the guns,
and the very lights one
could imagine ~~themselves~~
anywhere but within actual
range of the German guns;
finally we were ready
to start about 3, am, and
with a guide in the lead
we made for our first
billet some seven miles
distant, with the guides
help we managed to lose
ourselves some 3 or 4 times,
and it was not till 6
am that we at last found
a rest, we pulled into an
old farmyard, the mud
was already churned up
to a considerable depth,

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in this we plunged and
struggled about till we
had the horses securely
picketed and fed, this
took us well over an
hour, and at last we
were free to look after
ourselves, we were marched
to another farm house a
quarter of a mile away,
we were shown a large
barn half full of straw,
this was to be our home,
the lads simply threw
themselves down, and slept.
I did not even bother to
take off my accoutrements,
I slept with all my equip-
ment on, I was too tired
to do anything, I just wanted

to sleep, we were allowed to sleep for about 3 hours. We had to turn to look after the horses, by the end of the day, we were all glad to seek the straw, and have a decent sleep.

We remained at this place (Strazuel) for about 11 days, our day was very much the same as another, it rained religiously every day, and the cold kept the pain coming, almost every night a couple of pals and myself went for a stroll into one of the villages close by, it was interesting to us to sit in an estaminet,

(Bar or wine shop) and listen to the gabber of the french folk, these places are always cosy and warm and one can procure a plate of potato chips and three eggs for about 1/2 coffee and bread included, I became very anxious to learn the french language, and during my stay there in one way and another I picked up a good deal of it, enough anyway to enable us to order food, and that is the most important thing as far as I was concerned; all this time we were only about 11 miles from the Lure, and