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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, Verey 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 (Strazule) 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 yabber 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

We could hear the guns quite distinctly, sometimes hardly stopping all day and night, we were getting very impatient stopping behind the line so long, and on the night of Jan 12th our sergeant Major dramatically announced that our section was to be going into action on the morrow, our enthusiasm knew no bounds, we decided that such a wonderful event must be fittingly celebrated, we drank good fortunes to one another that night with bubbling, sparkling champagne, the last voice I remember

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 hearing that night was Jimmy Carlton, he was giving voice to Yuroo! Well — the Col.
 Reville was blown the following morning at 5, and then commenced the worst day I can ever remember experiencing, for two hours we were plunging and tearing about in the mud with the horses before daylight, the cold was intense, and rain was falling, our hands were blue with the cold, we could hardly do anything with them, it was almost fearful to be trying to put a nose bag on a horse, get it &

on, and then have it swacked wet and muddy into our face, it makes one inclined to stand off and call them all the nasty names one could think of, I was detailed to wash 30 nose bags, thick and hard with mud in a running stream that only the rain prevented from freezing, it took me over an hour to do this, & during that hour I did not know whether to laugh or cry; we had breakfast at 8 and at 10 am we were ready for the road; we started out in a heavy snow storm, we were

wet through, and feeling about as comfortable as a snake on an ant bed, when the snow stopped the rain started, and vice versa, a dirtier day one could not possibly imagine; we passed through Bailleul & Hazebrouck, both large towns; we were only going very slow for we did not want to arrive at our position (in Armentières) before darkness set in, we arrived in Armentières about dusk, and we soon got an idea of what havoc war makes, ruined churches and houses on every hand; we drew into

our position about 7 pm
 this was the 13th Jan
 1917, just 12 months to the
 day after I went into camp,
 a strange coincidence, I
 had travelled a good way
 and seen a lot during
 that time, at last we
 were in action, and I
 had realised my ambition,
 I had been anxiously
 waiting for this time for
 many months, and at last
 my wish was fulfilled,
 when I first joined up,
 I was under the impress-
 ion that the artillery on
 going into action, horses
 would be galloping,
 guns firing and all

kind of a rumour, but
 my ideas were all astray,
 here were we quietly going
 into our position after
 dark, no sound except
 a few Lewis guns rat-
 a-tat-ing in the trenches
 nearly two miles away,
 still I must say I prefer
 the quiet way, to the
 way my imagination had
 it; the position we were
 taking up was an old
 one, we were to take over
 from an Imperial battery
 who were still there, they
 were to remain with us
 for a few days until we
 got into the running of
 things, and then we were to

carry on; fortunately we were not expected to engage Tripz that night, for we were all dead beat, and were thankful to lie down on the floor of an old, shattered house and give ourselves up to a good sleep.

The following day we made our debut in the firing line, we registered our guns, and sent a few shells on to Tripz trenches just by way of introducing ourselves; when we had time to look around us, we found we were very lucky in getting this position, we were splendidly concealed, had splendid gun pits, strong

enough we considered to stop at 5.9 shell, for bullets we had the partly ruined houses around us, our subsection's billet was an especially good one, protected us from all kinds of weather, in one corner was a stove, in splendid order too; we drew our rations from the wagon lines some five or six miles behind us, and we did our own cooking, a couple of the boys and myself went on a foraging expedition, we ransacked the houses in our vicinity, inside these we found confusion everywhere, signs of a hurried departure was everywhere.

Wardrobes, chest of drawers etc with clothes thrown in anyhow, in some houses we found the beds only just a little disarranged, childrens rocking horses and games lying on the floor, all seemed to show how hurriedly the french fled before the Germans in the early part of the war, it seemed criminal to us just then that war should bring such ruin with it; anyway our party soon furnished our billet with two good tables, about 9 or 10 oak chairs, plenty of good crockery & cutlery, Kerosene lamps, frying

pans, saucepans, Kettles and kinds of cooking utensils; before many days we were as comfortable almost as if we were living in civilised quarters, instead of just 3000 yards from front &ritz, for sleeping in we had bunks ranged up deck fashion around the room, with nice soft mattresses to make us feel quite comfortable.

We were in this position about two months, and if the cold was not so severe we would have really enjoyed the situation, we were not long in action before things began to loosen

up in the Armentieres section things were very quiet when we first arrived there, but it was not long before we began to raid and otherwise annoy him, we shelled him constantly, and every few nights our boys raided his trenches, mostly successful, but at times disastrous to us, two of the most successful raids during his time was one made by the 33rd Infantry Battalion, and another later on by picked men of the whole of the division, this one was splendidly organised and as well carried; at 10 pm on this night we opened up

a short but fierce barrage, and kept hammering his trenches for about 10 minutes, Fritz expected us to raid him, and replied with a very sharp fire on our front line and No man's land, but all our men were drawn well back to our support lines, and no damage resulted; then at 12 midnight the real thing was carried out, our men were waiting out in no man's land a few minutes before 12, and on the stroke of 12 all the guns on our front opened up a terrific fire, on his trenches, for 5 minutes his front line was

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bombaraded, then the barrage
lifted on to his 2nd & 3rd
supports, when our fire
lifted our boys hopp'd over,
but they only found dead
Germans, our fire had killed
hundreds, out of the 1000
men who went over we
only lost about 100 casualties
all told, most of these only
slightly wounded; some were
or so after this at a
presentation of medals to
the boys. General Plumer
commanding the 2nd Army
Corps complimented the 3rd
division on its work since
joining the field, expressed
his confidence in its men,
and said that although

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we had done good and
important work, we would
soon be called upon to
face a most difficult and
arduous task, as great as
any that had been yet set
to British troops.

When we the
Artillery first came into action
we were rather doubtful of
the reception we would re-
ceive from our Infantry, but
we were in action over a
week before many of them knew
we were at their back support-
ing them, they were still under
the impression the Germans were
firing over them, this lack of
confidence on their part was
due to the wretched showing

made by some of our officers while on Salisbury Plains, and really they cannot be blamed, it is not wise to know or rather think that our own side is likely to send shells meant for Fritz into our own line; but we soon established ourselves and before many weeks we heard expressions of confidence on every side, many of them openly said they would follow our fire anywhere, this was very gratifying to us for we had worked hard to perfect ourselves, and it made our work a lot more pleasant, and as time went on their good

opinion of our shooting grew. About the middle of March we received orders to take over a position from the N. G's, this was only about two miles away, this was only 800 yards from Fritz's front line, but was well sheltered and concealed, although not nearly so comfortable as our last position it was by no means bad, and during our three weeks there we did not have a single casualty, whereas we had 13 in the previous one, at times a few shells landed rather close and caused a little diversion, but here we learned to have a holy respect for machine

gun bullets, as soon as
darkness set in he peppered
all around us, one right
through crawling along a
road for about a quarter of
mile on hands and knees
while the zipp zipp over
my head played hours worst
hour I earned the name of
"Duck em", a pack of mine
with us was christened "Doofer
em".

At last another
shift was ordered, this time
to a position in Plug St.
the name is rather sugges-
tive, and I must say it
is very appropriate, for
Fritz plugs it hard and
often, we were not long

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here, only about 10 days,
but we made ourselves
felt by Fritz, and he did
not fail to return the
compliment, the day we vac-
ated this position he ranged
on to us, we were relieved
by a victorian battery, and
we learnt some few weeks
later that on the following
day he planted over 300
H.2 & S.95 in and around
the battery, it seems we
just got out in time; this
was about the middle of
April and our division
were ordered out for a
spell and to reorganise, our
battery all joined up and
we took the road towards

Boulogne; the weather was still very bad, rain, snow and the cold still made themselves felt, instead of as we thought riding on the waggons, we were ordered to march, for what reason Heaven and the military alone knew; the first day we marched about 18 miles up hill and down dale, raining all the time, our pack must have weighed over 50 lbs, and by the time we reached our first halting place, we were sick sore, and very sorry for ourselves, the next day it was the same, and on the 3rd about 5 pm we arrived at

our destination a little village named Seels, about 9 or 10 miles from Boulogne; shortly after we arrived here beautiful weather set in, winter had gone, one day changed everything from cold and miserableness to sunshine and a feeling that it was good to be alive; our stay here was proving very pleasant in a week everything seemed changed, the days were warm and sunny trees began to bud, and the little spot where we were proved a beautiful resting place, it was nicely situated and the French villagers seemed altogether diff-

erent to the miserable set we had been dealing with; we were given a fair amount of leave, and we made the most of it, and I had many an enjoyable stroll to one or another village and town in that locality, a number of the boys rode into Boulogne, but this was denied me. Someone who had socialistic ideas managed to rob me of a goodly number of francs, so I had to be content with hearing from the other lads their adventures, in that rather gay city.

A few days before leaving we held a brigade sports, it proved to be very

successful, the best item of the day was a championship race (horse) my fancy won, and my winnings enabled me to have several good meals of eggs & chips. Altogether we were in this place about three weeks, but at last we were ordered back into action, we were rather sorry to leave, for we had enjoyed our rest there so much, in that peaceful spot it was hard to imagine that such a thing as war was going on in the same country. Our journey back was much the same as in coming, except that now the days were hot