

DURHAM
AT **WAR**



A DIARY: SEVEN MONTHS OF CAPTIVITY
MAY 26 TO DECEMBER 18 1918
by Percy Hugh Beverley Lyon

An account of the capture and imprisonment of Captain PHB Lyon, 6th
Battalion, Durham Light Infantry



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Foreword

On the right hand pages of this book I have copied, - with some omissions and a very few emendations, - the diary I kept while a prisoner in Germany. The left hand pages I have reserved for documents, photographs, and notes, the latter being in many cases only excluded from the original diary by reason of the German censorship.

P.H.B.L.

Oxford.
February, 1919.

A Diary: Seven months of captivity
May 26th to December 18th 1918

Written by Captain PHB Lyon
6th Battalion, the Durham Light Infantry

Foreword

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PHB Lyon

Oxford

February 1919



§

This and all other exact names of places, are inserted now for the first time.

①

'X' Company, 6th Battalion, the Durham Light Infantry.

②

The Division (50th) had been through two heavy offensives and was certainly very weak. But much of this early part of the diary must be taken 'cum grano salis' - being written with one eye on the German censors - a strangely credulous tribe.

The Diary

26 May 1918

(First line trenches in the Champagne sector, immediately east of the Chemin Des Dames) §

This was my second day with my company ① in this part of the line, and the fine weather and peaceful conditions made the business of settling in and keeping everything in good order much easier than I had expected. I had one platoon holding a small area in the front line, under G--T. Two other platoon commanders were in support, and G--S was near my HQ in reserve. W--N was acting as my second in command, and stayed with me at HQ. The men were happy, and I think pleasantly surprised at the quietness of the line, many of them being in the trenches for the first time, and the majority for the second or third only. ② Their food came up to them quite hot, and the accommodation was excellent. Two other companies of the battalion held sectors like mine, and the fourth was in reserve. The support line was the only line at all strongly held, and on a less healthy front we might well have had misgivings on the possible result of an attack in force. We had a shrewd idea that behind us was nothing, or practically nothing.

I had spent the evening in the front line,

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A carbon copy of the message is attached. It remained crumpled up in my jacket pocket and escaped my own notice - as well as that of many German searchers - till some time afterwards.

Text runs: 'Prisoner states attack coming at 4am. Bombardment probably with gas at 1am. Tanks may be used. Troops must fire at infantry and not at tanks. No fighting men to carry wounded. Issue 50 extra rounds per man, and inspect pouches to see no. is complete. All Lewis gunners over four per team to come to Company HQ at once. Destroy all maps and important documents'.

PHB Lyon

Captain

Commanding IX Company

[Message attached]

improving one or two posts, and arranging work for the night. The only activity apparent was in the air, several German planes crossing and reconnoitring our lines under a spasmodic fire from our 'Archies'. On my way back I met G--N, commanding the reserve company, who had come up to arrange for a strong patrol in the evening after 'stand down'. I had myself spent most of the night before making a gap through our wire, a much needed operation. A patrol under W--N was to follow G--N out and support him if necessary. I thrashed out the matter with him and brought him back to dinner.

Halfway through dinner came the cloud like a man's hand, in the shape of our signalling corporal with a message from HQ. 'Brigade wires: "Take precautionary defensive measures" All ranks will stand to, and special vigilance will be observed'. Raids had been rather frequent lately, so we deduced that somebody had got wind of one in our neighbourhood. There was not much to do, and the necessary orders were soon issued, and dinner resumed. G--N's patrol was cancelled, ordered again and again cancelled; all this between 8 and 10pm. At about 10.30pm came the message which eventually dispelled all doubts as to the nature of the coming blow. I made a rough précis of it and sent it out to platoon commanders. ①

So the one chance in 50 was to come off. Yet there seemed nothing more to be done. I wrote out my orders with the signallers munching chocolates at my side, and transferred my HQ to the most accessible corridor of the dug-out, leaving W--N to burn all my maps, which he did at imminent risk of suffocation. All that was needed to convert our already prepared defensive measures into an active defence was done in about an hour. Rations came up just in time to be issued, with them the mail, including two

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The company 'battle' HQ in this sector were great underground houses, originally built by the Germans, and already used both by them and the French.

home letters for me. I then went round the men, who seemed cheery and confident, and saw that they understood their orders. I thought their cheerfulness sufficiently marked to mention to our HQ and sent down a message: 'All serene, men cheery as cuckoos'. I then made my own personal preparations, and awaited events.

All through the night our own guns kept up a desultory and at times heavy fire on the enemy lines and communications, the Germans remain, ominously silent. I think that many of us were half ready to believe the prisoners story a fake.

27 May 1918

At 1am exactly came the beginning of the German bombardment, following the fire of our guns as a roar of applause follows a single speaker, drowning and obliterating it in a moment. I had a lance corporal on sentry at the head of my dug-out ①, who reported a great concentration of trench mortars and aerial torpedoes on the front line, accompanied by the fire of what we were afterwards told to be 400 guns on the front and support trenches. I went out to him occasionally, but there was nothing else I could do till the attack came. Our dug-out was the target for one or two heavies but was not damaged, though the concussion was considerable. This bombardment, ranging backwards and forwards over the front area, lasted without cessation or diminution for three hours. At about 4am G--S, whose platoon had escaped the worst of the shelling, reported that the barrage had spread to his trench, and that he was still awaiting orders. That was all he could do till the attack came. I went up again but saw no signs of the expected assault. It was about 20 minutes later, just after I had heard the first sound of machine gun fire, that G--S himself came in and said the Germans had broken through on the right. I moved his platoon

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I had been reckoning on the customary pause before an infantry line can follow a barrage. But the German tactics here - well justified by success - were to place their advance troops almost in the skirts of their barrage, thus giving the defence no time to recover.

up to make a defensive flank and meet this attack:- by now the barrage was heavy over the reserve area which meant that the infantry could not be far behind. I decided it was time to move and took out my company HQ with the object of moving up to the supports and seeing what was doing. At this minute G--S came in, wounded in the left breast. I helped a stretcher bearer patch him up, and left him in the dug-out. When I came out into the open I found to my dismay and surprise files of Germans immediately to our front and level with our line on the right ①. I got my few men down as best I could to face these two fronts. The Germans were coming on leisurely, meeting with little or no resistance. The air was full of their planes, which went before them and swept the trenches with machine guns. A few tanks had broken through, and were by now well behind us. The defence seems to have crumpled up completely; the intense bombardment, heavy beyond all precedent, had split the line into small isolated groups of sadly shaken men, who fell an easy prey to the first German line. A large number must have surrendered without any resistance.

Our own position became almost at once untenable. A heavy machine gun fire was opened on us from our left rear, showing that the enemy was all but all round us, so I decided to get back while I could, and withdrew my men as fast as possible. Retirement now meant going through the barrage from front to rear, with small hope of outstripping it. For the next two hours or more I was in the barrage area, and it is a miracle I was not hit, as the concentration was tremendous. My men dropped off as were hit, and by the time I had got through to our HQ I was practically alone. I at once found the commanding officer [CO], and told him as best I could what had

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The Butte de l'Edmonde.

happened. It was obvious that our front was broken, and we were now cut off from communication with G--N's company, which was the last line of resistance. Eventually he took me with him down through the wood, which was now being heavily plastered with gas shells, with all HQ 'details' from the adjutant to the cook, trailing behind. His idea was to reach Brigade HQ and see what orders or information they could give him. After some time we met a company of the 5th Battalion coming up from the reserve area, and to this company I offered to attach myself with all available fighting men, about 20. They had orders to hold an emergency line further forward, and so the CO sent me with them, thinking that would be our best place for another stand. Our way led along a most 'unhealthy' communication trench, right up a little wooded hill, ① which formed the left of the line we were to hold. We could now distinguish rifle and machine gun bullets, which sounded unpleasantly close. At one point, where we had to get out of the trench to cross a road, one or two of the men were hit. By now the front of the company had reached the top of the hill, to find this already in the enemy's possession. Some were killed, some captured, and the rest came helter-skelter down on top of my party in the rear. We turned with them, to find the way back as bad as the way on. Men were being hit on every side now, and an aeroplane flying low added to the hail of bullets. Some of the men crept into a dugout in spite of my language, and I found very few still with me. When we came to the road I crossed it unhurt, but of the others who tried nearly all were wounded or killed. I saw two Germans through the trees about 20 yards to my right, and one took aim at me. Beyond this I found some cover where three or four men followed me, all but one

wounded. By now I saw Germans all round the hill, and looking up I saw half a dozen of them ten yards away, shouting and raising their rifles. The wounded men were shouting at me to surrender, and indeed I saw nothing else for it, so I just stood up, and in a minute we were prisoners.

The shame of that moment has proved ineffaceable. I suppose that every man taken in battle must feel that smart of indignation and remorse, for every such man has deliberately chosen life before freedom. And such a choice, even in the most desperate conditions, is a falling off from the ideal (so often in men's mouths) of 'resistance to the last shot and the last man'. For myself, I only know that it seemed inevitable, and that in similar circumstances I should almost certainly do the same again. It may be a taint of cowardice, or merely an unheroic common sense.

The Germans were all round us in a moment, pulling at our equipment. My glasses went at once, also my revolver. There were about 25 of us all told, brought in from different parts of the hill, about ten of the men being wounded. I was the only officer with this party, and spent the first quarter hour after capture going round the little group, and doing my best to dress their wounds, some of them bad enough in all conscience. I was soon relieved of my duties by a German stretcher bearer, who was gentle and considerate with the men, and I think did his best for them. Meanwhile men were streaming along the roads and across the fields in endless little columns. A German machine gun was rattling away close to us, and turning the corner of the hill we came to a field gun already in position. The speed and method of the advance - nowhere did I see the slightest confusion or hurry - filled us with a despairing admiration. I certainly am prepared to regard the preparation and execution of the whole attack as one of the best things an army has ever done.

The German soldiers that we passed paid us little attention. They all asked for cigarettes, of which I had none, and only one of them went so far

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We suffered from having no German officers with our party, as they were very strict with their men in the matter of taking things from officer prisoners.

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There was one man whose only chance, in my opinion, was not to be moved; but my expostulations naturally had little effect and we were forced to carry him with us in a waterproof sheet as best we could.

as to search me. As luck would have it he took away the one 'souvenir' most useless to him and most valued by me, a small case containing two photographs. But of course I was helpless ① at different points we were joined by other small batches of prisoners, and as we had to carry all our wounded our pace was miserably slow. I found that most of the prisoners who joined us came from the Brigade on our right, and from the time I left the CO I never saw another officer of my battalion. What prisoners of ours there were must have been taken to another centre. Our guard was a good fellow, young, with spectacles, who talked to me in French. He was full of suggestions for carrying the wounded, but had distinct orders to bring them with the column ②. 'C'est la guerre' he said by way of consolation.

The columns of infantry were now succeeded by long streams of transport of all kinds, coming up the road (which was already being repaired by some of our prisoners) between the old trenches, right on the heels of the fighting troops. A general rode by, laughing affably. No one seemed to notice us, except to demand cigarettes or souvenirs. Some muttered 'Schweinhunds' in an apathetic way, but to most we seemed merely a matter of course, as I suppose we were. Only at one point I saw a French colonel sitting helpless inside a ring of men mocking at him.

The sun was now making itself felt, and I became very thirsty and not a little hungry. But the only way to obtain water was to pay for it with cigarettes, so I needs went without. At one place we halted while a reserve battalion went by, and a German officer chatted with us in quite passable English. He said he had been a waiter at the Piccadilly Hotel, and was very fond of London! They were all elated at their success - even greater than they had expected - of their surprise. 'We will take Paris' this officer said, 'like that!' and he closed his hands with a snap.

The wounded were now left behind, to be brought on later, and our column, now quite considerable, moved on faster. I had sufficient to occupy

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The prisoners seem to have been sent into two distinct areas, and I and a few 5th DLI officers were the only officers of our brigade in this group.

②

This night, and every night till we reached Hirson, our rest was disturbed by Allied airmen, who seem to have made themselves very well acquainted with enemy back areas. None of the bombs fell very near us at any time, but we regarded their coming with mixed feelings!

my thoughts to make me forget my hunger, but my thirst was becoming insistent. But throughout my two dominant feelings were bitter indignation at my position, and still more remorse for the terrible anxiety my people would feel, until they knew I was a prisoner. It seemed to me that the punishment was falling on them for my misadventure.

After another halt at a dressing station, where a few slightly wounded men were attended to, we came well on in the afternoon to Amifontaine, a large prisoners' cage about six kilometres behind the original line. Here I got a drink of water, and found that our column of prisoners was but a drop in the ocean of captives from three divisions already collected. There were a number of Northumberland Fusiliers, among whom I met H--E (who had been with me at the base a month before) and A--N, who had once been in our battalion. I looked in vain for men of my own unit, and there were very few indeed from my brigade, though I have no doubt there were some more of them elsewhere ①.

Here our papers were examined and our names taken. Most of my papers were private letters and were returned to me. One or two old orders and maps were retained. I had no equipment, having left it all in my dug-out, except that which had afterwards been taken from me. There was nothing for us to eat, three or four thousand prisoners being hard to cater for all at once. After waiting in a queue for an hour or two I got a very little skilly (flour and water) which at any rate was hot. There were a number of wire beds in the cage, and I was lucky enough to get one and secure a certain amount of much needed sleep. I managed first of all to lose my tin hat and my only handkerchief. I afterwards 'salvaged' another hat - without a lining - which proved invaluable, serving at different times as plate, cup, basin, pillow, and (supported on a stick) sunshade ②.

①

German time ie one hour in advance of British time.

②

It was here that the Germans collected all rubber articles in our possession, especially waterproof coats.

③

About 7½ miles.

④

Here a sentence - in which I think I referred to the jubilation of the German soldiers - was expunged by the censor.

28 May 1918 Amifontaine

We were turned out at about 9 o'clock (German time) ①, and received a ration of skilly, which was very welcome, though hardly satisfying. I discovered our sergeant cook and two or three stragglers from the 6th [Battalion] among the crowd. At about 10am the whole column was turned on to the roadside, where we waited four hours before moving off ②. I had another drink of water and bathed my face and hands in a stream nearby. H--E and I kept together, and his half humorous and half plaintive comments made the time hang less heavily. At 2pm we were taken off and marched some 12 kilometres ③, a distance which we covered in 5½ hours, including a number of long halts. Our march discipline was atrocious. A number of officers seemed still too much under the spell of depression to care what sort of a show we made, and of course the men followed their example. So we streamed over the rolling, almost uninhabited, country like a swarm of locusts. Myself, I was beginning to feel things more acutely, becoming at the same time more reasonable and more self-conscious, though the lack of food was getting serious. Half-way we halted by a wayside pump, and all filed past for a drink of water. At about 7.30pm we came to Lappion, the first village we had seen, where we were to spend the night. For the first time we had the oft-to-be-repeated experience of marching past the French villagers of the 'pays occupe'. At once the size of our column came home to us with damaging force. We felt we had betrayed our trust, as we saw the old village women, some actually crying, some shaking their heads, half in reproach, half in pity for themselves and us. We felt we wanted to tell them how sorry we were, how it was not all our fault... ④. Altogether it was not pleasant. We were taken into two separate camps, officers in one and men in the other. Ours was quite a small affair, with a yard overlooked by a platform, on which stood an armed sentry. It seemed a needless precaution, as three or four guards had sufficed for our escort all day. The Germans here were more brusque, and less

considerate. We had another drink of water, and were then sent into a large hut. With us were about 100 French officers, and I found a bunk among several of them. Later on a number of men were also sent in, and this made the accommodation very limited. But the climax of the evening was when (after much counting of heads and search for German speakers) we were given BREAD. It was the sour 'black' bread, rather stale, and ten of us shared a loaf, but it tasted like a five course dinner at the Trocadero. I munched through half my slice, and put the rest by for the morning.

29 May 1918 Lappion

Out again today for another move. We had a further issue of bread - ten to a loaf again - and some very bitter weak coffee. We moved off about 8am, and joining the rest of the column just outside the village, made our way to the next stage in our journey, another 12 kilometres away. Our chief escort this time was a cheery officer in a little pony cart, a form of conveyance very popular with these officers, and certainly less tiring than a horse, though scarcely as dignified. Our marching was better, though still ragged. We passed through a number of small villages, and were always collected and straightened out before reaching them. Our chief trouble was the dust, which swept right over us every time we were passed by a lorry or ambulance. One of our own captured divisional ambulances passed us on the way.

At about 2pm we reached Lislet, where we were all taken into a large cage, close to a considerable siding, which seemed pretty full of rolling stock. Here we were again put into huts, with wire beds, and were left to our own devices. After a rest I managed to borrow some soap, and had my first real wash for four days; afterwards I actually got hold of a razor, and took off most of my beard, which was beginning to assume serious proportions. We were most of us scattered round the enclosure, with boots and socks off, enjoying the sun, though once again the question of food was obscuring the horizon.

①

This 'coffee' was in no single particular at all like our own coffee, being a very slightly flavoured and unnourishing concoction of grasses.

At 8 o'clock this question was temporarily met by the issue of a loaf to each seven, skilly, and a sausage for each 14. The 'polony' was well past its prime, greasy and stinking, but most of us ate our square two inches with relish. Then we turned in for another cramped but welcome sleep.

30 May 1918 Lislet

We are woken up early for our ration of coffee, which was again very weak but plentiful ①. The remains of yesterday's bread help to promote the illusion that we have breakfasted. We hear we are to have a day's rest, with a long march to come the day after. There is little to do all day but sleep in the sun, and get as clean as possible with our limited means. Our French money we change for German - I get 28 marks for my 35 francs - a very fair rate, I imagine. At 3 o'clock we have our chief meal of the day (the only 'meal' since capture), some vegetable soup - about the best we have had. With this we get a day's bread ration, the 'loaf for five' which we came to know as the ordinary issue. Having nothing to do and no books to read, I find the day pass slowly, and we are not sorry when it is time to go to bed.

31 May 1918

We are up at 5 o'clock today, 3 o'clock by English 'winter time', and at 6.30, after our morning coffee, are all on the road ready for our long march. I feel for once glad that I travel light, as for those who have salvaged their kit the effort of endurance must be considerable. At 6.45 we set off, north by east, the French in front and our own men behind. We go through Montcornet, where there is a strange castle-like old church, and many grand old barns - Vincy, Reuilly, where the guide (he and our escort were all mounted today!) proves the fallibility of all human - even German - nature by going half a kilometre out of the way, out into rolling country, quite beautiful but tiring, as we are constantly going up and downhill, both distressing to aching joints, through Ravennal, Dagny, Bancigny, and so to Plomion, a fair-sized village

where we arrive at noon, about 16 kilometres from our starting place. The German system of halts every 1½ hours, instead of every hour, is rather exhausting but probably tells in long marches.

At Plomion we have two hours halt, get some water, eat what bread we have with us, and rest our feet. Many of the French peasants try to give us water or food, but are driven off. We find that they are not even allowed to speak to us. At 2pm we are on the road again. The sun has got fairly hot, and I am glad of the shade of my universally useful tin hat. The people at each village put buckets by the roadside, so we are not allowed to go thirsty. The country becomes even more attractive, with small straggling villages with imposing names La Nigaudere, La Rue Heureuse, Landouzy-la-Ville.

Towards 6pm we come to La Herie, and then to our destination Hirson, a bigish town with a considerable railway station. Here, after a long wait, the men are put into a large camp, and we are taken through the town to an old deserted house, which has been converted into a comfortable prison. In all we have done about 32 kilometres, or 20 miles. So we are not sorry to scramble into our beds - bunks filled with excellent soft shavings - and lie there till the next meal. When this comes it is quite sumptuous. We have two full days ration of bread, some thin soup, jam (a great luxury in captivity), and the usual 'coffee'. This is about 8pm, after which we sleep very heartily.

1 June 1918 Hirson

Coffee at 7 o'clock, tasting somewhat, as all our food did here, of the newly painted jugs in which everything was served. After this we went out to explore our surroundings. We were all distributed in rooms of various sizes - in ours there were 46 - and had the use of a backyard complete with pump, and a garden of about an acre. Our guards were friendly and most obliging, and showed in the various offices they were ready to perform for us that proper spirit

①

The German soap was pretty useless. It would not lather, and seemed a compound of brick dust and soda! Four marks of course represented about ten times its real value.

②

Curiously enough I discovered later that although Father remembered nothing of Major T, he was an old and intimate friend of Captain A's father!

③

Here, and in all cases where names do not reappear, I have been content with the first initial only.

④

We afterwards discovered that these sardines (not à l'huile) were really part of our days ration, and that the German caterer therefore cleared a profit of three marks per tin (the price charged) by selling instead of issuing them!

⑤

Postcard attached above. This did not arrive till late in July, long after news had come through by other means.

towards prisoners, as common among soldiers as it is rare in civilians. We found we were to stay there this day, but had a good chance of going on by trains on the next. Our guards went out and bought what they could for us at intervals at a neighbouring canteen. All of my many wants that I could get was a piece of 'substitute' soap for four marks, of which I made the most ①. I washed my collar socks and underclothes, all after a fashion, besides much of myself. I again borrowed a razor and had a shave.

At 1 o'clock we had a bountiful ration of thick vegetable soup, quite the best we had had. In the afternoon I played bridge, basked in the sun, and began to feel quite contented with life. I also began to make a few more acquaintances, whereas up to now it had been hard to break into the natural alliances formed by men of the same battalion. Among these were two excellent fellows of the Rifle Brigade, a Major T--D, who afterwards I found had met my father, and a Captain A--N (DSO [Distinguished Service Order], MC [Military Cross] and bar) ②. Also I joined H--E's small mess, consisting of some jovial gunner subalterns; B, a Canadian, who shared our bunk; H, whimsical and good natured, an ex-choirmaster from Leeds; P, whose black bristling beard earned him the suggestive name of 'Darwin', who kept us all amused; and a fairly colourless little fellow called N ③. We made (with H--E) a mess of six, and straightway invested in 12 tins of sardines for the coming journey. There were about the only 'extras' available and were much sought after ④. In the evening we were cheered by the announcement that we could send postcards home, stating 'I am a prisoner of war in Germany and am quite well'. Postcards were provided gratis and were very quickly and very legibly written ⑤. Followed some more coffee, and then we went again to bed.

2 June 1918

Our breakfast this morning was enriched by a minute but precious fragment of pressed meat, which was issued with our day's bread ration. Dinner came at 11 o'clock,

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I fear this sentiment will be echoed many times by the reader before this diary is ended, - even though I intend to curtail the 'menus' to some extent. But I have let the greater part stand as written, as it at any rate bears witness to the way we all this time were forced to think almost entirely of one subject.

②

The river was, of course, not the Meuse, but a tributary which rises near Audun-le-Romain, called I think the Othaun.

as we were to move at 12.30. Soup again, as rich and plentiful as before. (This chronicle seems shamelessly devoted to food ①, but at this stage there was little else to do but eat and sleep, and little to discuss except our next meal). At about 1 o'clock we were marched through the town to the station, and were eventually put into a long miscellaneous train, consisting of 3rd and 4th class coaches. We had by now parted definitely from the men, and where they went to, and when, we never knew. We were rather unlucky in our carriage, the six of us and two others (from the Northumberland Fusiliers) being in a small fourth class with very narrow straight-backed seats. However, we had half expected cattle trucks, so we were not discontented. One of us had a pack of cards and we had 12 tins of sardines, so we were better off than many. At 2.30pm the train started, and for the rest of that day we travelled eastwards, with a touch of south, through quiet but charming French scenery. We passed through very few large towns, the first being Charleville, which seemed a modern but quite attractive place. We reached Sedan at 6 o'clock, and waited there an hour and a half, during which time some more soup was served out, proving very welcome. We now came to the Ardennes, and the scenery became more varied and beautiful. The last station I remember before dark was Margot-Fromy, one of many wayside places almost lost in the forests. We cut for the best positions for the night. I of course had the three of spades, and as a result spent a sleepless night upright in a corner, with four people sandwiched on the floor beneath me.

3 June 1918 en route for Germany

Soon after dawn I remember the little village of Joppecourt. We were now well up in the hills, and were climbing very slowly. It was glorious to see the sun rising over the forests, which were wild and almost unbroken by human habitation. We seemed to be following a river (the Meuse?) right up to its source in the hills. (I have been able to get no map, and so cannot verify my rather vague geographical conjectures) ②. A little later we came to Audun-le-Romain, which by its battered condition seemed to be a rail centre of some importance. They were firing at a distant Allied aeroplane while we were in

①

This is actually some way beyond the frontier.

②

I have here omitted some rather unusually erratic geography. We must have crossed Lorraine from west to east.

③

A very liberal use of the word outskirts; the Schwarzwald is in reality some 100 miles further south east!

④

It was here first of all that we discovered how thoroughly the Germans had been persuaded of the unimportance of America's part in the war. They greeted all questions of America with a laugh. However, as one of our party remarked in atrocious German, 'He who laughs last...'

the station. At 8.40am we crossed the German frontier at Fentsch ①, and almost at once the surrounding country seemed to be changed. Where had been desolation was cultivation. New houses and factories abounded, and we began to understand why the Germans are so anxious to retain the two provinces... ②. We came via Diedenhofen to Busendorf, which we reached at 1 o'clock, where we got soup, bread, and coffee. The attitude of the people had changed, but not very definitely. They were naturally pleased to see us (in an unusually literal sense), and except for some delightful fist shaking and scowling by the children, we might have been in a friendly country.

The crowds at the wayside stations were, compared with the French, alarmingly English-looking, the rather dowdy middle class type everywhere predominating. These remarks of course apply the more the further we went from the French border. After Busendorf we came into the outskirts of the Black Forest ③, and climbed all afternoon up a valley flanked with wooded buttresses, jutting out here and there in abrupt peaks. The woods were trimmed and showed everywhere the hand of the foresters and woodcutters, who lived in out-of-the-world old fashioned villages under fantastic church towers; but the whole effect was imposing. Large towns were now fairly frequent: Hargarten, Wadgassen, Saarbrucken, Wurzburg, Zweibrucken, Rodbalen. At one station we stopped next a civilian train, whose windows were quickly crowded. Soon an animated conversation in mixed languages and signs was proceeding. Opposite to us were three charming little boys, who were on good terms with us at once. One, the smallest and cheekiest, depicted in graphic pantomime that we were going to be hung, drawn and quartered (or something equally drastic). They were full of the 'great German victory' and the 'English disaster', and indicated they were ready themselves to fight the lot of us ④. They reminded me of some of my jolliest little English friends. What a devil of a thing this war can be.

We passed Landau at 10 o'clock, and once more disposed ourselves for the night. We had hoped to see the Rhine, but were destined to cross it in the dark. This time I made a 5th on the carriage floor, and was amazingly

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This, the correct spelling of the name, was thoughtfully substituted by the German censor for my own rather different version!

②

I was unusually sorry when later on I was separated from these two. They were more of my type and temperament than any of the men I 'pal'd' with before or after, and we should have made a good alliance for a long imprisonment. But one must I suppose allow that the German authorities were not aware of this! But this fact may explain the rather indecent haste with which I left my 'gunner' companions, with whom I had never reached any very satisfactory standing of friendship, for the society of S and D.

comfortable. At 11 o'clock we were woken by our door being thrust open: eight pieces of bread, eight good solid hunks of sausage, and eight bowls of coffee were handed in. A voice said 'five marks', the money was handed out, And we were left wondering who were our fairy godmothers. It was, I believe, some soldiers buffet society run by the Red Cross, which gave us the best meal we had had. This was at Germersheim ①, just west of the Rhine. After that we 'got down to it' again and slept till morning.

4 June 1918 Rastatt

When we woke this morning we were standing in Rastatt station, not far from Karlsruhe, which we had passed in the night. Here at 4.30am we were detrained, and after a short wait were marched by a body of diminutive guards through the town, and just beyond into a large barrack and fortress, which we learnt was a kind of prisoners' clearing station. We were put into the outer half of this fort, where we found most of the beds occupied by a small batch of prisoners from another division, who had come in the night before. Here someone called me by name, and to my great delight I saw Bill Stevens, a man of my year at Oriel. I remembered him as an independent and unusually fearless thinker and speaker (especially speaker!), and most entertaining and enlivening companion; I was to find to my satisfaction that a promising moustache had not altered the essential part of him. With him was a cheery sub. of my regiment, called D--S, straight from Marlborough, and the three of us swiftly formed a syndicate ②. At 10 o'clock, after an hour's bridge, we had another bread issue and some coffee, served in a long loop-holed passage which might have been full of ghosts if it had had more than 40 years in which to hoard them. After this I borrowed D--S's bed and slept till 12.30, when they gave us soup and some rather salt fish. Then to sleep again, until our turn came to pass on into the inner camp. We went through by regiments, filling in a paper on the way, with all our history, military (within limits) and individual. When admitted to our new camp we found ourselves in a large square (no indication of shape is intended) with a central

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The common German military salutation within doors. Elsewhere we were told always to salute with the hand.

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The canteen was looked after by our own men, of course under German supervision, and was about the best of all I saw in various camps. But the crowd round the counter was generally impassable.

bandstand, some grass, trees, and many seats and tables, rather like a small Biergarten. On the further (or southern) side was the principal building, containing the canteen (our chief consolation) and most of the bedrooms. On the west and east were the ramparts (grassy banks up against the walls) which we were not allowed to climb. In the north east corner was the large dining hall a long, semi-circular (ie crescent shaped) vaulted room, quite attractive and very clean. Northwards stretched a long open drilling ground as far as another block of bedrooms (where the three of us eventually found place together) and the baths. This then was our kingdom, at any rate for a day or two. We were told that it might be two days or a month before we went on to our permanent camp. A large number of French officers were moved out that day to make room for us. We spent the evening finding things out, and trying in vain to get near the crowded canteen counter. We were told that two whistles was the signal for our morning and evening roll calls: that we could write four postcards and two letters a month; that we must salute all German officers, by a bow if not wearing a hat ①; that our meals were at 8.30 (bread issue and coffee), 12 noon (soup and twice a week meat), 4pm (tea (??) only), and 7pm (soup and occasionally cheese). I eventually secured a toothbrush and some bootlaces at the canteen ②, thus satisfying my immediate wants. Also the three of us decided to invest in sardines for breakfast, as long as the money should last. Finally we found that we could send a postcard the next morning, and so hastened to buy them before it was too late, as they were to be collected before the 9 o'clock parade. The day ended with roll call at 9pm, and we settled down to sleep in our excellent beds.

5 June 1918

I found that among the dozen or so officers, who were here when we arrived, was Pinkney, one of our battalion, who had been reported first killed and then missing on the Somme. I had heard unofficially that he was a prisoner, so was not so very surprised to see him.

Specimen Rastatt postcard.
[Postcard attached]

He seemed pretty fit, though he had been quite badly hit, and had not been long out of hospital. He was very anxious for all the news I could give him, and in his turn confirmed my fears that Dugald Charlton had been killed. He lent me a razor, and once more I was restored to respectability. After the morning roll call, which was more or less at 9am (ninish!), we were given a towel a piece and a hot showerbath, followed quite the most delightful ten minutes since my capture. For the rest of the morning those who had books, read, and those who had cards played bridge. In the afternoon I succeeded, with my few remaining marks, in buying a couple of notebooks and a book 'Dr Faustus, Edward II, and the Jew of Malton', three plays of Marlowe; this was one of the surplus stock of Tauchnitz editions which were being unloaded on prisoners' camps. There was a tragedy to come this evening, for on assembling our bridge four after dinner, I found that I had lost D--S' pack of cards, which he had lent me for a game of patience. Such a crime has no parallel in civilised society. The canteen had run out of cards; even when more came, I had not quarter of the money to buy a new pack. Search and enquiry proved alike fruitless, and with many miserable apologies I had to own that they must be gone for ever. The German staff here leave us very much to ourselves. All the nigger-work is done by a competent sergeant major. He counts us at roll call, at which we fall in 'by fives, in men by fives' and reports us present to the Lieutenant, an old 'dug-out' complete with sword, who confines his appearance to these parades. All he has yet done is to tell us not to walk or lie on the grass. The chief rules and orders came to us through our own senior officer, the Brigadier of the 150th Brigade, a tall and unusually decent fellow, who has been a most useful and dignified representative of our party. He explained that the commandant, who had several other camps

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We did not at first believe this; but all evidence, here and later, goes to show that we were no worse off than the average German civilian. In the words of one of them they 'had got used to being always hungry'.

②

We were treated much better here in the Friedrichsfeste, than were our comrades in the 'Russian lager a very bad 'overflow' camp in Rastatt.

③

Vain hope! The Rastatt cheque became later a synonym for unfulfilled expectation. Some are not paid to this day. Mine was eventually paid six months after! All the accounts were mislaid and mismanaged. See overleaf for actual cheque.

④

This must have been the Black Forest.

in his charge, was willing to do all he could for us; our food ration was already better than the average German civilian ration ① but in every other way he would try and make our lot more comfortable. It says a good deal for our captors that no complaints were forthcoming. We have British orderlies to look after the rooms, and senior captains in each room take charge of them. Altogether we feel that we fare better than we deserve ②. Our chief trouble is lack of cash; personally I am reduced to a single mark. But we have filled in the necessary lists for pay, and are told that we should receive our first payment in 10 days or so. Also we may write cheques for anything up to £10, an advantage we promptly seized upon. This money should arrive in about the same time ③, so there may be a good time coming.

6 June 1918

After a ridiculous nightmare, followed by a golden dream of French pastries and assorted wines, I woke in time to hurry down with the others to breakfast. I foresee there will be little to chronicle in our daily life. Once again we read and played cards and washed clothes, or wrote diaries and very premature letters. S--S has an annoying habit of recalling the best moments of Oxford, which does not make for contentment. On the whole we are quite cheerful, though the longing for home is as great and unquenched as ever. From our bedroom we can see far away a blue line of mountains ④, between us and Switzerland, which speak with the tongues of liberty. If it were not that our imagination can leap beyond the fetters of space and time to the days when we shall return, the life would in time become unbearable. The worst I think will be over as soon as we know that the anxiety of our friends at home has been relieved; now we can only guess the suspense and the forebodings we have

'Rastatt Cheque' attached

occasioned, and the matter is not good to think about. When we can hear from them it will make all the difference. The Brigadier today started voluntary Physical Training for half an hour every day. It is an excellent idea if not carried too far. A little exercise is just what we need, but we couldn't take much on our present rations. Most of us turned out, and were put through the trained soldiers' table with great expedition. I read my Elizabethan dramatist today. 'Dr Faustus' seemed to me very poor stuff, in only one or two places breaking away from the rather tedious narrative of the original 'history', 'Edward II' was more acceptable, containing many good lines, and outlining quite well the few clear cut characters round which it centres. But the 'Jew of Malta' is *facile princeps* and altogether a most entertaining hotchpotch of violence and roguery. I rather doubt if this 'tragedy' was ever taken otherwise than as a rather brisk and ingenious comedy. The figure of the Machiavellian Jew, caught at last in his own toils, is full of life and humour.

7 June 1918

An unusually good night's sleep made me all but late for breakfast. In the morning I contributed half my last mark to the collection for the orderlies, and spent the remainder later on our Italian barber, whose shaves and haircuts are beyond praise. I now have left a five pfennig piece which I must keep as a souvenir, as nothing is ever likely to be quite as cheap as that. I washed some more clothes and played bridge later on. At the evening roll call my name was read out with some others to go away the next morning at 7.45. Neither D--S nor S--S was on the list, to my great sorrow. However I have hopes that this next camp may be a more permanent one, where I may find new friends who will not be dissolved (sic! PHBL) after a

①

The Europaischer Hof.

②

RWG Robinson, whose acquaintance I have since renewed to my own great pleasure. He was one of the many friends I would have given much to have kept with me during captivity.

few days. So to bed, ready to 'greet the unknown with a cheer'.

PS Wonders will never cease. We are to be paid before we go. Here I find my very new 'third pip' makes all the difference. I get 56.80 marks for the month (100 m. less 43.20 for rations), whereas subalterns get only 16.80 (60m. less the same). It seems a most unequal division.

8 June 1918

The unknown has arrived, and is as yet hardly deserving of the cheer mentioned above, though our present state is again, I believe, only a transitory one. We started off at 7.45, about 40 of us, with some French officers in addition. I 'chummed' with a Northumberland Fusilier captain, one A--N, a tall, muscular, genial, fellow. We went on 40 minutes journey in the tail end of a passenger train to Karlsruhe, where we detrained and marched a short distance to a hotel ①, into which to our surprise we were ushered. We found that this was to be our home for a time. We were called up by threes and fours, and we manoeuvred, A--N and I, to get in with two 5th DLI subalterns, with whom I had already struck up a nodding acquaintance. We were shewn into a small bedroom, with four beds, about 15 feet by 10. The door was locked and we were then left to our own devices. We had expected to go to our final camp today, so were at first rather disappointed. But the amazing discovery that not only had H--N (one of the 5th DLI) a pack of cards, but that we were all bridge players, quickly transformed the situation. And for most of the rest of the day we sat round the table, gambling desperately at 20 pfennig a hundred. R--N ②, the other subaltern had been at University, a year senior to me, and took up S--S part of tantalising reminiscence. We are not allowed out, which is a pity, as

Cheque signed at Karlsruhe.

[Cheque attached]

①

As they never gave us a fair exchange of marks for pounds, and sold their own goods to us for about treble their value, this is not surprising!

②

We suspected at the time, and afterwards heard definitely, that all these rooms were furnished with listening sets, and that prisoners were carefully kept in them for some time to encourage them to talk. Fortunately our suspicions prevented us giving anything away.

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Needless, perhaps, to say, neither of these matured. Indeed the notes were very soon lost and forgotten.

ventilation is poor: our wants are attended to by a sentry, who keeps a lonely vigil in the corridor: the orderlies are all Russian prisoners. Our food is better; potatoes and cheese as well as soup at midday, and some mixed vegetables for supper; also some 'buckshee' bread. Also they seem very anxious for us to spend money ①. Cheques for £5 were taken and cashed immediately. And the Russki who runs the canteen comes round two or three times a day. But prices are high and business is not very brisk. We succeed in passing quite a cheery day, and retire quite ready for sleep ②.

9 June 1918 Europaischer Hof, Karlsruhe

Another day behind our locked doors. The bells in the morning reminded us that it was Sunday, and further reminders were provided during the day by sonorous chants intoned by some French or Russians who are sharing our hotel. A strangely homelike sound was that of a child practising next door, always the same tune and generally the same mistake. We spent a fairly cheerful day, though time is beginning to hang a bit. I read a fairly fatuous romance of the rapier and proud maiden type, and commenced work on the framework of what may become a play, and the trimmings of what may become a comic opera ③. We played much bridge as usual. I washed my collar and A--N his shirt - and that's about all there is to it. Ah no, I forgot. We had some 'cheval' [horse] for lunch, with lettuce and horseradish sauce. I spend my spare time speculating on the state of mind of the German soldier sitting and watching our locked door in the corridor. I wonder if he is working at a play, he has plenty of time!

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At the risk of standing actions for libel and a lasting unpopularity should this diary fall into the wrong hands, I intend in future to give the full names of all persons mentioned, the strain on my own and the reader's attention is becoming too severe!

10 June 1918

This should have been Postcard Day, but it seems that this corridor - haunting sentry has shut us out from all communications with the outer world. However, we have no news to give, and no fixed address for parcels, so we do not grumble overmuch at the postponement. Meanwhile we are all finishing our last book, and I am losing between two and three marks a day at bridge. Oh, what an excellent thing is bread. Today at 4 o'clock the faithful Russki who brings our meals opened the door and deposited a whole extra bread ration each on the table. Great were the rejoicings and hilarious the feast of bread and thin cider (which at 50 pfennigs a bottle is the canteen's most popular export) that ensued. Now we are rather furtively hoping that it was not tomorrow's ration arrived too soon! I am nearly through 'It happened in Egypt', a typical novel by the Williamsons: very readable and running quite pleasantly, though a little overcharged with colour. Also I shaved, a little sketchily, there is no shaving soap, and my shaving brush (a German) moults desperately, so Hadden's ① Gillette hardly had a chance.

11 June 1918

Today we moved at last. The first sign of it was the arrival of a new batch of officers in the hotel. Two French officers were put temporarily into our room, and we exchanged as much polite conversation as was possible to our limited vocabularies. After about half an hour however they were put into another room, and we played bridge till lunchtime. Our departure, originally announced for the morning, was delayed, and it was about 2.30 before an orderly came in and called me out alone. The others were left to follow later on. I was taken downstairs and ushered into the presence of a mild scholarly gentleman, who put me through a short clever inquisition. It was all very

①
 'Any new fact' would be more correct. Some of the information he received this day must have astounded him. I don't think even a German could have believed everything!

②
 Specimen attached.
 [20 pfennig note attached]

③
 This is more a hopeful forecast than a summary of anything we actually received!

informal and friendly, leading questions being camouflaged by chatter about India, the general situation, and the classics! I found he knew much more than I did about most points and I don't think I told him anything new ①. One question, which could not be evaded diplomatically, I refused to answer, rather to his polite regret. I then joined about a dozen other officers (once again all more or less strangers) in an assembly room, and after about half an hour we were marched off half a mile or so to Karlsruhe camp. With us were about eight French officers, 20 in all. The camp looked very well at first sight; a big park-like enclosure in the middle of the town, divided into compartments by wire fences, and dotted with long wooden huts. There was a large open space near the gate, with flowers and trees, looking quite summery. We first had all our money changed into camp money ②, and were told the various regulations. Then we were carefully searched, as a result of which they took my compass and protractors, with the sufficient explanation 'We keep these'! This diary was also retained for censorship, being returned two days later almost untouched. This makes me hope that I shall keep it altogether. I had expected it to be seen, and had written it up accordingly. Only one sentence was erased. I carefully abstained from giving important numbers or details in my otherwise very full account of the first two days. We were then shown our bedrooms and left to our own devices. I got into one with seven others and as the only 'skipper' have been more or less looking after it ever since. I have made another friend in one, Taylor, a 6th Northumberland Fusiliers fellow, full of life and good spirits, and we fixed up to men with two other subs of his battalion. Once more we filled up description forms, and then gravitated to the canteen. We found that our roll calls were to be at 10am and 8.45pm, our two meals at 12 noon and 6pm. These we found we could supplement fairly satisfactorily. By collecting the potatoes or other vegetables or meat ③ we got at lunch, and taking them and mixing them with breadcrumbs and tins of fish we could buy at the

①

'Mittagsfisch' - at that time a luxury - a kind of cod, very edible when good. However later on we thought less of it - when not quite good it was distinctly horrid.

②

This allowance was made to prisoners not yet in receipt of parcels, from a store kept in the camp. We were to learn to our cost that not every camp had this emergency supply. The optimism of the next sentence was somewhat misplaced!

Specimen

Prisoner of war correspondence envelope.

[Envelope attached]

canteen ①, we could make most excellent fish pies or rissoles, which they cooked for us at the cookhouse for our tea. Breakfast could be extemporised – in bed! out of coffee (?) from the canteen (brought in our washing jug by the French orderly at 1½ pfennig each), a bit of bread and jam or potatoes from last night's supper, or failing these, sardines. Also once a week we get an issue of tea, sugar, meat, milk, cocoa, dripping, and biscuits from the Red Cross ②. So we should do very well till our parcels arrive some months hence. At seven o'clock we were initiated into the unofficial regulations by a tall philosopher-browed subaltern, who was apparently the permanent staff of the place, a prisoner of some standing. He told us all the tips about getting parcels from home; also about the library, an excellent one where books can be changed twice a day; baths, games, etc. I found we could write our letters and postcards on any day, so long as we did not write more than the allotted number per month. So I wrote home this evening, and read 'His Last Bow' till it was time to turn in. It seems to be about the best place we have struck, on the whole, and we were all in a fairly contented frame of mind.

12 June 1918 Kriegsgefangenenlager, Karlsruhe

Coffee and bread in bed at 8.30. We got up round about 9am. I shaved for the last time with a strange razor, buying one at the canteen immediately afterwards. I also got a scribbling notebook and some picture postcards, which we can send in addition to our monthly allowances, a small mirror, and a needle with about a foot of thread! The latter seems almost as scarce as soap. At 10.30 we were given an issue of underclothes. I secured, among other things, a pink flannel shirt. This made a very welcome addition to our stock, as we can now get our things washed decently and at our leisure. I had a few words with our French orderly on the important subjects of spitting on the floor, and washing up greasy plates. I changed my book for 'Typhoon'

①

Specimen photograph - I had apparently neglected to clean my boots!

[Photograph of Lyon and another officer attached]

②

This suitcase survived many adventures, and is still extant, but at first I quite expected that a shower of rain would dissolve it.

a book of four stories by Conrad, full (the first especially) of his dramatic and descriptive power, and this filled most of the day. I finished it in the evening and took out Benson's 'Mr Teddy', which I am reading more at my leisure. Dinner provided potatoes for our fish pie, and the four of us spent an amusing time at amateur cookery, the result of which was a pronounced success. A camera came round, and I got taken with Taylor. The results appeared next day on postcards at nine marks a dozen and were not bad ①. Altogether we felt surrounded by the comforts of civilisation. We finished the day with a supper of sardines.

13 June 1918 Thursday

Coffee bread and jam (from last night's supper) this morning, also a shave with my new razor, which seems pretty good. After morning roll-call I had a hot shower bath, and put on clean clothes. Strange how blissful all these things seem after our various deprivations. I foresee that most of today's entry will be about food. It's a 'meaty' day, and also Red Cross parcel day, so we have meat for tea and supper. Also some biscuits, cheese, dripping, milk, tea, and cocoa. We are all smiling. I got the diary back in the morning, and spent some time bringing it up to date. I also launched out on a suitcase (cardboard with leather corners) to take my stuff in, as it is beginning to overflow my tin helmet ②. 'Mr Teddy' I finished in the afternoon, a very pleasant story, with a touch of Benson's now rather frequent contemplation of middle age, into which I seem to read a certain self-pity. I exchanged it for 'Far from the Madding Crowd', and with a mixture of delight and remorse make my first acquaintance with our greatest living novelist. It is wholly excellent, quite a revelation in the art of selected ornament and precision. I can see that something of a more personal nature will have to take the place of adventure in this diary.

①

This effort proved more lasting than the other. References will be found to it during the next three months, though many I intend to omit, as being of purely personal interest. It eventually found definite if very unsatisfying form in a long poem called 'The Prodigal Son'. Though bad artistically it was a good discipline and a good occupation.

Activity, when debarred from physical expression, finds an outlet in the imagination. Yesterday I spent two hours trying to fit an idea into a three-act play. The result was an unprofitable scene opening and some unpromising notes, which are now waste paper. Today I seemed to see in the same idea the material for a narrative poem. The medium is certainly more in my line, and expression of it may come in time. But my meticulous treatment of verse makes rather hard for me the broad style required. Well, we have time to see what will come of it ①.

14 June 1918 Friday

This morning a German pastor came and held a short English service in the small chapel here. About 20 of us turned up to it, as it was the first chance of church-going we had had since capture. It was an abbreviation of the morning service, with well-known hymns and the psalm 23. The clergyman spoke simply in very fair English, a sermon not strikingly original but quite effective. He had for a long time been a missionary in India, and said he used to preach to our soldiers there. The rest of the morning and afternoon I spent very profitably with Thomas Hardy, and am now about half way through the book. Our smiling happy-go-lucky orderly Michel being away for the afternoon, I took his place, and have just spent a happy and musical half hour washing up.

15 June 1918 Saturday

At six o'clock I was awakened by hearing my own name. I found it was the German orderly coming round with the names of those going away. To my great, if sleepy, delight, I find that all four of our mess are going together, so that with any luck we should be able to keep together in our new camp. The other two, besides Taylor and myself, are Tolkien (tall and swarthy) and 'Buster' Brown, both excellent companions. We manage to pack all our goods, mess staff included, in two suitcases, a pack and a canvas bucket; and incidentally find time

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Nearly all the German privates we encountered seemed disposed to be amicable; and on many occasions they went out of their way to help us. Of course sometimes their motives were interested, eg (later on) to secure presents of food, or to spite their officers or NCOs, whom as a class they cordially detested.

to breakfast off fishcakes and cocoa. I finish my 'Hardy' and return it. We have to hand in all our money (a camp issue only), and in return receive a piece of paper with the number of marks written on it, which we hope will be exchanged for corresponding notes at the far end. All our arrangements are made, and Michel and the cookhouse orderlies suitably rewarded, by 10.15, when we parade. We face the journey rather more confidently in the knowledge that our provisions include an extra lump of bread, three tins of sardines, a tin of fish, the remains of our tea, cocoa, milk, and dripping, and two bottles of a newly discovered and expensive, but most excellent wine, a kind of rich sweet port! We have learnt in a good school to leave as little as possible to chance.

We were searched perfunctorily and then given our lunch, soup, spinach, and cheese. Then we marched, 14 of us, to the station, under the charge of a fierce looking but decent old officer and an escort which proved very friendly ①. We eventually left Karlsruhe at 12.20, travelling very comfortably in 2nd class saloons. We went northwards through Durlach and Heidelberg (2.15), where I had hoped to see the university, and probably did, though it was hard to distinguish it in the town; besides which it was raining cats and dogs. So on, through Weinheim and Darmstadt, to Frankfurt, where we were marched into the soldiers' buffet and given an excellent dinner of rissoles, macaroni (both probably spelt wrong) and potatoes. The dinner was served by a minute boy with a bright smile in a large white chef's hat, who was severely reprovved by our lieutenant for serving the rissoles with his fingers! We were now put in a corridor carriage, half of second and half of first class. The four of us shared a first class compartment, very well fitted up. We proceeded to be comfortable... a great discovery! The seats pull out and two can lie full length on each.

①

I cannot account for this irrelevant and possibly trivial inspiration at such an hour! I merely record it.

②

I always remembered this time as the only really decent chance of escape we ever had. Our guards were careless, and did not trouble to keep us always in sight. But with no food or money, in uniform, with no map or compass or knowledge of the country or language, we should not have got very far: as I expect they realised. As a matter of fact we were all too down on our luck and worn out to think of it seriously.

16 June 1918 Sunday en route

1am Bebra. "There once was an old man of Bebra, Who kept a peculiar zebra, It would stand on its head, On the second best bed, And do tricks on the great candelabra" ①. We are taken out of the train during a two hours wait, and given bread, coffee, and sausage. A good beginning ②. Wonders will apparently attend us this trip. At 6am we are woken and again turned out, at Eisenach, and given an even larger meal, including unlimited bread and jam. Our own commissariat arrangements have already been put in the shade. Apparently the officer carries our money with him and with this buys us a good solid meal whenever he gets a chance. We stay here long enough to wash and shave and clean up generally. At 10am we reach Erfurt, and Weimar (why do I know the name?) at 10.30. I write a bit...and we play a little bridge.

Weissenfils at 12.30, where we have some bread and cheese, (our own supplies). Our official lunch comes at 2pm at Halle (where lived the German girl, name and face forgotten, I met at Tours), consisting of soup, with meat and macaroni in it. We are now in the middle of a very industrial country, and we can see new factories built or building all the way. Eilenberg at 4.30, where our conductor bought us some strawberries! We cross the Elbe at Torgau, taking an easterly route, south of Berlin. (My detailed knowledge is obtained from a railway map in our carriage, without which we should be hopelessly at sea.) The countryside has changed, and we now run through flat, sparsely populated land, covered with either cultivation or forests. We reach Cottbus at 9 o'clock, have a decent supper there, and go to sleep in the train, which does not move off till 2am the next morning.

17 June 1918 Monday en route

Wake, after a good night, just as we get into Opalenitza (lovely name!) which shows that we are now well into Poland, of the German variety. The country is much the same, chiefly corn, and short run brings us in to Posen, a less conspicuously spotless station than is

①

The interpreter who searched me lighted on my rough book of verses. 'Poetry?' he said. I nodded 'Self made?' 'Yes' (with a hasty look round to see none of my friends were listening) 'Ah!' he said, returning it to me with a bow!

usual in Germany. Here, at 9am, we had breakfast, a bowl of soup and a little bread, and start off again at 10.30 in another and rather inferior carriage of second and third class mixed. After a rather uneventful run we came to Gnesen at noon, when our train is joined by a large batch of boys going off to their training, about 16 years old or so. They are very cheery and make a lot of noise. At Thorn we change again, have some potatoes and beans and go on in a small local train at 4.55 to our final destination, Graudenz. Here we detrain and are marched for about 20 minutes down the long main street of the town to the camp, attended by many small boys. The camp is part of a large block of barracks, used as an OTC [Officers' Training Corps] before the war, and now divided into various parts, the rest being used for the recruits. Our sector consists of a large square parade ground, about 100 yards by 50 yards, with two 'blocks' of rooms, one on the south, the other on the west, each with three floors and room for about 300 to 350 officers. In the south west corner is a small block holding the kitchen, baths and dining hall (two floors). The whole is ringed round with a strong barbed fence, and beyond a high wall with barbed wire above. There is at least one sentry always on duty on each side, and strong double electric lamps every 50 yards. As soon as we arrive we are searched, and this diary is taken and kept for four days ①. After this we are put into our quarters. I find myself separated from my three messmates, and put into a room with eight others of our 14, about whom more later. Then we have supper, sweetened semolina soup, with a ration of bread and jam. Just before supper I meet Dobson, a 6th DLI officer taken on the Somme. From him and others I learn the following details:

1) The camp contains about 540 officers, nearly all of whom came to it about a fortnight before, when the camp was first started. Since then they have had a pretty rough time, as is not unnatural in the circumstances. Everyone is new to the job, and all arrangements have to be made from the beginning. We are a little depressed at this, as we hoped to come to a camp in full working order...

2) Food. Scarce at present, only the ordinary ration

① Quite undrinkable, except to those in our condition. Later it was useful to shave in. Its appearance always depended on the orderly, who as often as not was busy elsewhere. As soon as parcels came in it was discontinued.

② Chiefly swedes and mangels [beet], occasional carrots.

③ Highly fermented and not very wholesome, but very good when we had no English jam with which to compare it.

④ Soon discontinued, as interests increased and the supply of those both willing and able to lecture diminished.

is available, and that, in Prussia, is less than elsewhere. Parcels are just now things of the future, for us of the distant future, and until they come we have to do as best we can. Coffee (very weak) is brought round to the rooms at 8am and 4 o'clock ①. Our first meal (Soup of some kind, generally with vegetables ② or meal) at 12 or 12.30, two sittings being necessary. Our second at 6.30 or 7pm, consisting again of soup, and generally less satisfying than the first. Potatoes are a regular ration (very small one!), either in the soup or issued separately. Once a week very bad fish for first meal. A loaf (2000 grammes) of bread every week, issued on Tuesdays. Of course the improvident wolf it before the week is up and go hungry for a day or two. The provident divide it into rations, and the ultra-provident (self included) into eight, leaving a 'buckshee' corner for feasts and festivals. Also jam ③ twice a week (about 1 desert spoonful) each time, every Sunday a very little good butter. Bread and emergency parcels are said to be on the way from Denmark, a Danish representative having been at the camp lately. A useful tip, we discover later, is to save potatoes from lunch to serve as tea, and keep some soup from dinner to serve as supper or breakfast next day. This helps to spin out our rations, and produces an illusion of plenty. (?)

3) Books etc. The library at present consists of all private books in the camp, anyone coming in with a book being allowed to join. Fortunately I still have Marlowe's plays with me, and so become a member. There is little worth reading, and practically no books on the shelves to choose from, the whole number being out all the time. However we hear that a large number of books are expected from Leipzig. An effort is being made to arrange for classes for study. The chief trouble is lack of books, another is the shortage of qualified instructors. But this is as yet in the air.

4) Lectures etc. A lecture is to be given every evening, as long as the supply of lecturers holds, on various subjects ④. The first were on 'Butterflies', 'Heraldry', 'The Church in the time of Richard II' and so on; a pretty fair range of subjects. Concerts and theatricals are to be arranged, and later on debates. So we have in us the germs of a busy society.

①

After some consideration, I have decided to leave my account of my fellow prisoners exactly as I wrote it. Many of my first impressions were inadequate or misleading. But corrections of these will appear later. (See especially entry for October 12th). So as long as these impressions are not taken as in any way final judgments, they may stand.

②

It is only fair to say that he was handicapped by rotten health, against which he fought very bravely, 'cantankerous' was a very hasty and unfitting judgment.

③

'Jessy' Ellis (the Australian), GB Jordan, and AW Bytheway.

④

At roll call we fell in in single file behind the room commander. The parade was called to attention when the German officer came up by Colonel Corfe, and then given 'Stand at ease'. Any notices on hand were given out, and then our names were called by rooms, every officer saluting, and being saluted in turn, when his name was called by the interpreter, and walking off the parade. The proceedings were attended by half a dozen bored sentries.

The rest of our discoveries will follow in due course. This night we go to bed rather gloomy. A few begin grouching, but common sense soon puts an end to that. Blessings are the old proverb about things that can't be cured! I think of Mark Tapley and try and infuse a little cheerfulness into the company, not without success. Our room is a high airy dormitory, with large double windows, looking south with quite a good view over the country round, and more immediately on to the recruits training ground below. There is another skipper in the room, and he (at my suggestion!) takes charge of the room while I take on various secondary jobs. He is Arnott, a tall well-featured fellow in the Wiltshires ①. His chief trouble at present is lack of anything to drink! He has a Military Cross and a good deal of service to his credit. With him is HC Reid, a thin, rather cantankerous ②, but interesting fellow, with a pixie face. Of the others, three are in the Cheshires ③, including a very decent Australian, the cheeriest of the party, who sleeps next to me. I have arranged to mess with the three remaining, HV Russell, a humorous silent fellow from the Northumberland Fusiliers; GA Broadbent, an ingenuous and amusing subaltern from the West Yorkshire; and HR Murray, who sleeps the other side of me and shares my cupboard. He is a lazy likeable boy, only 19, who was out at Gallipoli with the Royal Naval Division at 17, and has been serving in the ranks and then as an officer ever since. He is a public school boy and will make a good companion.

And now it is time to come to the end of this long day, followed for my part by a long sleep on a good bed under excellent blankets.

18 June 1918 Tuesday Graudenz

Up for roll-call at 9am (evening roll call is at 6pm) ④. We are organised by blocks, and I find my address is Block 2, room 81. We have only one orderly to three rooms just now, so we do our own sweeping and washing up. In the centre of each corridor are good washing places, and I get a wash and a shave before roll-call. Soap is very scarce, and several have none at all.

①

The remnants of the piece bought at Hirson. It was durable, is not very cleansing!

②

German cigarettes of course ('Salem Aleikum'). If I were a smoker I could dilate on their extreme worthlessness.

③

The best day's work I ever did. In nearly every case this wire was the first news that got home to our people; I had to bully most of the men to take the trouble to write the postcard, and then had to blarney Waydelin (the interpreter) to let them be sent! I attach my postcard, which was afterwards sent on home from Geneva.

[Postcard attached]

I still have a little left ① and determine to economise. Among my jobs I have taken on that of canteen representative for the room. At present there is no camp money, and no one has anything but slips of paper. Everything therefore coming into the canteen (no foodstuffs!) is issued on the ration system to blocks, floors, and rooms. I receive and distribute the first issue of cigarettes ② and send in a long list of 'wants'. I also interview the English interpreter and find that we shall be allowed to send two postcards each, one to Geneva, asking them to wire our address home, and the other to Copenhagen to order parcels of bread. I spend most of the afternoon going round with these and collecting them, having rashly made myself responsible for all our 14, and at the end I am somewhat tired ③. At 5pm I get out of the library Oscar Wilde's 'House of Pomegranates', a book of fables which does not keep me long. Later I see, much to my joy, Farquharson, one of the best of our 'syndicate' at Flixecourt. Follows an enthusiastic greeting and many reminiscences. Also I am recognized by one or two I don't know, from Flixecourt and Crookham. So, rather hungry, to bed.

19 June 1918 Wednesday

I begin to work out a scheme for my day's work and reading, which I mean to follow till classes start. Roughly it runs as follows: 9.15 to 10am, make my bed, sweep and wash up. 10 to 12 or 12.30 work at elementary German or, if inclined at my own writing. (The 'poem' has got a certain way, but is just now sticking badly, I am out of my depth.) After 'lunch', rest or write till 2 o'clock. Then read till 5pm, when I change my book. In the evening I generally play bridge or write. As a rough programme it works fairly well. Fortunately Murray has a German grammar, which I share or rather monopolise, as he is not very fit and not inclined for work. The day passes uneventfully, though the unusually

①

My parole card attached. The sentences struck out were deleted as a concession later on.
[Card attached]

②

This finding was confirmed about two months later from England, and the officer was deprived of his rank and sent to a private soldiers' camp.

③

I did not venture to express more definitely the exact resemblance of the 'Goose step' training to some of the more amusing of Heath Robinson's cartoons. It was a priceless sight.

good pea soup at lunch is worthy of mention. A few parcels have begun to come in, and great excitement prevails among all who have any hopes of them. At 5 o'clock I change my book for 'Captains Courageous', which I enjoy now (having forgotten it) as much as I did 12 years ago.

20 June 1918 Thursday

This afternoon I rashly put down my name to go with the 'walk' party, which goes (on parole) about two miles every day, with a German officer. We hand in our 'parole cards' ①, giving our names and our guarantee not to escape, at the gate, and have them returned on coming in again. We went round the camp and through a little wood to the river (the Vistula), where we rested nearly an hour before coming home again. Even with the rest I felt pretty 'done' when we got back; I am doubtful if the pleasure of getting just beyond the walls is worth the fatigue involved, which really is considerable. Today I sent in my name for 'elementary German' and 'advanced French' classes, if these ever materialise; I also put down my name for my classical subjects, but have little hope of them being taken.

21 June 1918 Friday

This morning I exchanged my book for an anthology of French poetry, and am making a very cursory study of the subject. Such a book is a rare and valuable find in our makeshift library. A rather unpleasant incident tonight was the reading out of the finding of a court of enquiry. One of the officers had been found stealing bread from an orderly, an offence almost without parallel in the circumstances. The recommendation was 'that he be dismissed from the service'; he found very few to pity him ②. One of our pastimes is watching the German recruits next door. It is very interesting, and has its lighter side. The training for the parade step is most detailed and reminds me of Heath Robinson! ③

I

The 'Kriegsgefangenenlager' from the south west, taken before conversion into a prisoners' camp.

[Photograph attached]

II

Another view from south west, also before conversion.

[Photograph attached]

III

Block 1, from the parade ground. This and following photos taken early in October.

[Photograph attached]

IV

Block 2.

[Photograph attached]

V

The Cookhouse; also (later) the theatre. Entrance to baths on extreme left.

[Photograph attached]

VI

The parade ground. Sports attempted included cricket, baseball, football (both codes), hockey, badminton, and 'tossing the caber'.

[Photograph attached, Lieutenant Farquharson is indicated bottom left]

VII

The 'Silence' Room, about the noisiest in camp. German papers, games, communiques etc. were obtainable here.

[Photograph attached]

VIII

Outside the tin-rooms. German orderlies enlarging the lockers. Here all parcels were stacked and issued and tins stored.

[Photograph attached]

①

Later corrected and title changed to 'By the waters of Babylon'.

②

The correspondence rule here is; four postcards and three letter cards every month. All my lettercards and about three quarters of my postcards were sent home.

③

In nothing else did the 'German authorities' so resemble our own 'the other side' as in their general panic on the occasion of the visit of any superior officer. 'A touch of nature'!

④

The common opinion of us Gefangenen was that he should have been allowed to taste the 'lunch'... It was a 'fish' day.

22 June 1918 Saturday

Spend the morning writing up my diary to date, and struggling with my long poem. In the afternoon a quantity of hardware, toilet articles, etc. come in to the camp, and I spend about an hour and a half getting things for our room. Most things have to be drawn for. I am rather lucky, getting the only frying pan on the floor and a coffee pot, both of which are also won later by our mess.

23 June 1918 Sunday

We celebrate the day of rest by having only one meal. By way of compensation we have an issue of cheese, jam and real butter. So it's worth it. In the morning I go to a short service in the reading room, quite pleasant, with well-known hymns as we have no books. Today I write 'What do you see from your window, friend?' ①, chiefly in one sitting. Also I get on with my French poetry. I go again to church in the evening, this time in the mess room. There is quite a crowd. A good simple sermon; 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. God will not blame you for not being good, only for not trying to be good.' Tonight we send off another postcard ②. I send mine home as usual, with a précis of the way I spend my time.

24 June 1918 Monday

General 'wind up' among the staff ③, as an inspection by some general is in the air. So everything is made particularly spotless. He eventually turns up about 12noon, but does not stay long, just standing with his staff to watch us go in to lunch ④. It is a cold blustering day with gusts of rain, and we are beginning to wonder what winter will be like. These few days, by dint of economy in bread, I have been feeding quite well. The canteen has supplied us with a small quantity of tinned mussels, not very appetising, but quite good cut up and cooked with potatoes; and the other evening we actually had a bottle of wine. I have had

A specimen weekly 'menu'. The jam issues were so small that they were put together and issued once a week. [Menu attached, contents as below]

Menu

Week ending Saturday June 22nd 1918

MONDAY	Barley and Meal	Peas and Potatoes
TUESDAY	Fish, potatoes, mustard Sauce	Semolina, sugar, cinnamon, jam
WEDNESDAY	Soup Ruben, meat and potatoes	Meal soup, margarine
THURSDAY	Barley and potatoes	Semolina, sugar, cinnamon, jam
FRIDAY	Dried vegetables, meat * and potatoes	Barley and meal, jam
SATURDAY	Barley, meat * and potatoes	Potato soup, margarine

* ie. A few bones put into the soup!

bread and butter and jam for tea twice running. But a truce to this everlasting subject, though I am comparatively a mild offender; there is one man who sits opposite me at meals who talks continuously, rapidly in an almost inaudible voice and has never yet strayed outside the one topic. It is becoming demoralising. With most people it monopolises even their dreams, and every rumour is on the subject of food parcels or rationing. Heaven be praised for my German work, my French poetry, even for my rotten verses; for these do at least distract me.

25 June 1918 Tuesday

A day like any other. I find my work filling my days very well. I have, moreover, taken on myself a number of jobs which afford mental distraction, and the strange but indubitable joy of concentrated physical occupation, such as washing up, for instance. We have a good deal of this as we are always having small impromptu 'snacks'. And ever and again my mind comes back to its dreams... Also we have recourse to 'patience'. One of us has just remarked (in a dismal tone rather peculiar to him, yet unjust to his real outlook on life): 'All we have to do is to play bridge and patience and punch fresh holes in our belts'. At 5 o'clock I go to a lecture on 'Bull fighting', given by a man who knows his subject inside out, having taken part himself in amateur shows. Interesting, if a little technical. At night we have a four days bread ration. Arnott and Reid at once fall on their shares and proceed to ensure famine before the next issue! Still they are cheerful for once, and we are relieved of their rather gloomy hunger.

26 June 1918 Wednesday

I work at German all morning, and find I am going a bit too fast, as I am forgetting past words. In our innocence and hunger we each invest in a ladleful of 'fish sauce' at two marks 75 the ladle. It is apparently a delicacy much appreciated by the Germans, unfortunately we do not share their taste! It



①

An 'officer's cookhouse' containing one small stove, was established above the kitchen. Every room was divided into two messes, and Hughes, the cookhouse merchant, struggled nobly to cook whatever a 'mess' had available twice a day. At this stage of course all we wanted cooking were strange concoctions of potatoes and vegetables or fish. When parcels arrived, the cookhouse was extended and became really valuable.

Is comprised of chiefly mussels and gherkins, a good deal over-seasoned. Most of us have very little. I spend one of my 'practical' hours picking out bits of gherkin to make a jar of pickles, afterwards used for seasoning. Our mess of four is now firmly and officially established and entitled to have one dish cooked at every meal ①. I am chef in chief, and thoroughly enjoy myself in consequence. I go again to a lecture, this time on 'forestry', once again a skilful exposition of a difficult subject.

I have started on Carlyle's 'Essays on Goethe', and am already immensely interested. I of course cannot tell whether or not the poet looms too large in the hero-worshipping eyes of his disciple, but it has filled me with the desire to be able to read and appreciate him in his own tongue.

In the evening I play bridge with most curious ill luck, cards grouping themselves with a persistent malignancy in the wrong hands. Russell, my partner, a really good player, is much angered; but I am as usual irritatingly philosophical, and read some translated extracts from 'Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre' before bed.

27 June 1918 Thursday

By all agreed to be a wonderful day; the wonders being of course eatable and drinkable. Our one and only Brigadier sent out a 'SOS' to three other prison camps, when this one was started, for 'emergency' parcels. Ruhleben has played the good Samaritan, and as a result we today have issues of biscuits, (15 per head), sugar (lump, fairly plentiful) and tea. Also tins of sardines, one between two, are forthcoming from the canteen. In the evening the Ruhleben cases actually disgorge Bully, and the mess gets 4/15 of a 7lb tin! 'Oh Bully, in our hours of ease, Too brackish dry and hard to please. When pangs of hunger rack the tum, Ambrosia thou art become!' So now, when feeling unusually hungry, we just throw open the cupboard and eat

①

In our private accounts the Germans were scrupulous and exact. The public accounts will be mentioned later! I attach here a specimen set of camp notes. I secured the addresses of all of our room on the backs of the various notes, by way of 'souvenir'.

[Bank notes attached]

bread or biscuit with no qualms of conscience. To revert to other subjects. Yesterday, I forgot to say, we were paid. I only got 20 marks, being all that was left over from the 70 I brought from Karlsruhe when rations for the month and extras en route had been deducted. As there is nothing to spend it on it doesn't much matter. The payment is in camp currency - cardboard variously coloured... ① minor details occur to me. Our door is beginning to creak horribly, with an almost human whine. And Broadbent has fallen into the habit of greeting every occurrence with the expression 'Splendid!' from a food issue to a 'Yarborough' in dummy. He is being suppressed. I exchange Carlyle for a slight fantasy of Blackwood's called 'Jimbo'. Variety indeed.

28 June 1918 Friday

Our only transport here is a cart drawn by two scraggy old horses, which is kept pretty busy. The rumbling of the wheels can be heard all over the square and the more persistent 'fooders' rush to doors and windows to see what is coming in. We might for all the world be lean hungry sans-culottes gloating over the tumbrils; and the rumour that sums sound of what has come in (generally coal!) might be the whispered names of the ci-devant comtes and comtesses on their last journey.

Jordan has an irritating habit of calling me 'Mr Lyons'! He also is being suppressed. The afternoon of this day was made fragrant by a bully and potato pie, which lingers in the memory... Almost did I forget to chronicle the hot bath we had today; a real good one, and most welcome. The indulgent reader will not turn back to see when I had the last! Today was sunny and quite warm. Our door is cured of its melancholy noises. I plunge a little further into the 'poem'.

29 June 1918 Saturday

A morning at German. I am now struggling with genders, a department of their grammar which seems strangely without rhyme or reason. Why is a wife neuter?

①

We experimented for some time before finding the quickest and most satisfactory way of running this really difficult business. A description of the final routine of the 'tin-staff' will be found further on.

The rules seem few and in most cases far outnumbered by their exceptions. Personally I leave the subject to chance and a lively imagination. I have now, by great good luck, got 'Adam Bede' from the library. I had just began it a year or so ago, and it's a great pleasure to make its acquaintance once more. I can lie down quite happily with it for an hour or so, and never feel the time pass. Just the book for the occasion. After roll-call I accept, with some hesitation, a job which is going to take a good deal of time, and means some responsibility. When parcels come in all tins are kept and put in a locker, a separate locker for each officer, and then issued and opened by the Germans when wanted. Arnott and I are taking half the alphabet each; we keep the tins from the parcels when they are opened, number and enter them in the ledger, take them to the parcels room, check and pigeon-hole them ①, this starting from 10am. Then from three we issue parcels and get receipts for the number of tins drawn. When they begin rolling up for every officer we shall have our hand full even with a large staff. But it's GREAT to be working again at one's own job. I love having something to 'run'! Time will show how it can be fitted into my classes.

30 June 1918 Sunday

A lovely day again, with a fresh breeze. We are all agog to start on our new work, but there is not much doing at present. There is a parade service at 10am, which we have to miss, as I have about a dozen parcels to issue. It is child's play marking and sorting the tins just now, and it is as well that the work is light at the start, as everyone is full of suggestions about everything. At 3 o'clock there is even less to do, only a few wanting tins. I go to a short evening service at 7pm (there being the usual Sunday evening fast!) and spend the rest of the evening with 'Adam Bede'. There is a concert on, the first of the series, but I can't get to it. I hear it is fair only, and that more performers are asked for. So I shall apply, in my role

①

Our 'good luck' could not be more clearly defined in my diary. As a matter of fact Jordan had discovered a 'Cheshire' orderly in the cook-house, whose duties included the drawing of the potatoes from the German's stock in the cellars. Being a regular, he naturally succeeded in pinching a considerable amount in addition to the ration. Jordan promptly made friends with the man, and as a result we were now and then (during this first month) disturbed about 11pm by a stealthy figure bringing us spuds in a bucket. Of course we made certain they did not come out of the camp's ration. That settled, we asked no further questions! They saved our lives.

of 'light comic' (Help!)

1 July 1918 Monday

In every way an excellent day. It is bright and warm to start with. Other excellencies are: 1) We take in all our sheets and pillow slips and get clean ones before night. A refreshing change. 2) A second consignment comes from Ruhleben, including sugar, bully, biscuits, and tea as before. Also English tobacco and cigarettes. I enjoyed watching them being smoked almost as much as if I had been one of the smokers, especially as the canteen had been very niggardly with German ones of late. 3) Good news of several successful local pushes in the paper. 4) Innumerable rumours on the usual subjects of food and the chance of transfer to a neutral country. Business in the parcel department is not very brisk, but we get on with the numbering of the lockers and the checking of the numbers and names for entry in the forthcoming ledgers. Murray is acting as my clerk, and is very quick and full of useful suggestions, once his laziness is overcome! I manage a little George Eliot, and some German, but don't worry about the latter. Can not sleep at night for some reason. It is sultry, and we are all pretty restless.

2 July 1918 Tuesday

The good day has its aftermath in a day of excellent feeding. We are unusually lucky with spuds ① and manage to make three meals out of these and some bully. I am becoming a master cook, learning to mix things properly with my hands, a delightfully 'podgy' sensation. We have another slack day with parcels. My days are pretty full just now, as the new ledger is taking up a lot of my time. Also, as I have hinted, there is a certain amount of extra cooking. I am getting well into the story of Adam and Hetty, which is almost dramatic in its quiet and inevitable sequence. A very wonderful work.

①

It was a sight for the gods, with scribbling away on the back of an envelope while I hummed into his ear!

3 July 1918 Wednesday

Up for a cold shower at 7.30. A most excellent experience, worth repeating. It is a lovely morning, though there is a good deal of thunder about and we have heavy showers in the afternoon and evening. Again very few parcels, and some hard work on the ledger, which is almost ready. They are starting a literary and debating society, which sounds promising, and I put my name down for it. I am being worried by a new short poem, which interferes with the longer one... I send another postcard home, and try and impress on them our improved circumstances.

4 July 1918 Thursday

'Independence Day'. What a chance for a philosopher. The words contain a whole sermon in our present condition... I have another 'shower' and mean to go on with them. A quiet day, not much doing. I spend most of it doing the last clerical job in connection with the parcels, getting out a complete nominal roll with the 'locker numbers' of all the officers and orderlies, 641 in all. I originally meant to do only my half, but they seem to think I can write them off quicker and neater than the others, so I accept the whole job. It takes about four hours. This evening I undertake to sing at the next concert. When I go to find my accompanist, blessed if it isn't PM With, late cadet of No. 20 OCB [Officer Cadet Battalion], who used to play for one or two of the 'Very Light' concerts at Crookham. It's extraordinary that we haven't met before. Its great luck, as he happens to know one or two songs of mine, and I can trust him to pick up the rest ①.

5 July 1918 Friday

More parcels in today, so there is a certain liveliness in our department. However the real rush hasn't begun yet, though it is overdue. I hope our own stuff is going to come through quicker than seems the rule at present. I buy a German dictionary, which may be useful later on. I am still busy one way

①

This appeared long after in the Westminster Gazette under the title 'Homeward Bound'.

②

He left a favourable impression as he was seen giving the Saturday a good 'telling off'. The Saturday very soon achieved unpopularity. He was not a regular soldier and didn't understand his job; very obstinate and inclined to treat us badly. I think he was really a little frightened!

③

I spoke too soon!

④

As a skipper, and OC [Officer Commanding] canteen etc. I took no regular turn at 'chores'.

and another. I am still troubled spasmodically with the short 'pome', which I call 'When wars are over' ①. Our emergency biscuits etc. are about exhausted and rumours of a fresh issue are as yet unfounded. So we may have to tighten our belts a bit. A big and most important Inspector-General-of-prisoners-camps came to visit us today, an old man in a new blue uniform ②. We are up half an hour earlier in his honour. The menu too is a bit better than usual. There may or may not be a connection between the two events!

6 July 1918 Saturday

This morning the orderlies had a large consignment of parcels. They are all included in my department, so I had a busy two hours, with less hitches than I might have had. Murray and Ellis are proving invaluable assistants, and get through the work very well. I am really fortunate in this respect, as Arnott has already had trouble next door, where several tins are missing ③. It is again a lovely day. Business is brisk again in the afternoon; I have an hour with With, and fix up two or three accompaniments with him for the concert tomorrow. We are a bit cheered in the evening by the issue of one bottle of wine to every two men, and some hard biscuits (two and a half each) from Rastatt. I go to a short evening service at 8.30.

7 July 1918 Sunday

I get up at 6.45 and go with Russell and Jordan to early service. We all have to take our own pieces of bread, rather a poignant sign of the times. It is a quiet and pleasant service in the silence room. I act as orderly for our room for once ④ and sweep out before roll-call. After roll-call I wash several underclothes and a pair of socks, boiling water and no soap, which is our economical habit nowadays! The result seems quite successful. Our mess has of late been rather inclined to squabble; our diet makes us all either irritable or obstinate. Russell and Murray (not to dilate on my own shortcomings) are quick-tempered and Broadbent peacefully but persistently obstinate. Pity the

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'James William Maconachie', a good humorous song. From this, and my connection with the tin department, I earned my nickname 'Maconachie' or 'Maconachie Bill'!

Cheque signed July 9th.

[Cheque attached]

poor cook, who starts off meaning to please everybody and ends by quarrelling with every view but his own! However we are all excellent friends at heart, so the necessary compromise is generally reached. I am booked for 'Maconachie' ① at the two concerts, 3pm for Block 1 and 7.45 for us. The afternoon one is a bit flat. I am on at the end and get my topical jokes home, though the pianist puts his accompaniment in too high a key, I don't raise an encore. The evening show is very different. The hall is packed and every turn (for the most part quite average) goes with a snap. I get a good encore, and give 'He misses his missus's kisses' which makes a good finale. I go to the evening service before the concert, rather spoilt by being held in the same hall only ¾ hour before, and thus attracting many people who simply come to get a good seat at the concert. Let's hope the arrangement is altered. Elwes, the Guardee captain who runs the concerts, seems a simple musical fellow without much idea of tact... A good innovation today has been the issue of Camembert cheese, one tin per man. It is really good, but makes the bread fly!

8 July 1918 Monday

A day off parcels today. I do a little German, and a lot of cooking with rather few things to cook. We get more Camembert and are elated. I have now finished 'Adam Bede' which has my very highest admiration. It is full of a quiet strength which is worth a gallon of declamation, and the way in which the tragedy of Hetty is followed by the idyll of Adam and Dinah is quite wonderful. Only a very great artist could so have woven the two stories together harmoniously, and only a very brave one would dare to try... Murray has had a 'bon' tea with a pal who is getting parcels, and has come rolling back to tell us all about it. He has lately been humming the chorus of 'Burlington Bertie from Bow' in and out of tune and season. It will shortly be a case for suppression. One of the perquisites of our job

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It is perhaps significant that at the time it seemed natural to do what afterwards we should have turned from in disgust. It was the German order that all meat, fish, vegetables etc. should be turned out of the tin and the tin left behind. Many things, especially puddings, really needed cooking in their tins, and the mere opening of the tin made this impossible. Naturally everyone wanted their tins out unopened when possible, and we became past masters in the art of passing tins out under the 'counter' or when the German NCO in charge was not looking; in this we were abetted, in as far as their fear of punishment allowed, by the German orderlies, who disliked very much the labour of tin-opening. On good days we would only open about one in six. Everything not turned out had to be opened, and stabbed with a knife, to see there were no compasses etc. hidden inside. Of course there never were. The authorities at home were very up to prison camp rules, and compasses were concealed in dates, maps as cake-paper etc. Of course we could get our own tins out, and did, when we liked, in our pockets!

②

The 'Rastatt cheque' became a proverb. The accounts at Rastatt seem to have been overlooked or lost, and I believe some cheques signed there are still due as I write!

is that when empty tins are left behind after being opened and turned out we can scrape the grease off them for use in cooking ①. It improves our pies immensely... Some bridge after dinner.

9 July 1918 Tuesday

A busy morning at German. I am now lost in the auxiliaries of mood, which intermingle in a confusing manner. Rubbing up my vocabulary I find my memory still pretty bad, though improving. A fairly slack afternoon, Russell doing most of the cooking. I try to read 'German Memories' by Whitman, but the smack of journalism is too strong and I give it a miss in baulk. In the evening I go to a short service, and buy afterwards for half a mark a small 'St Mark' with the camps stamp in it. I am feeling a bit fagged out just now, and my muscles are in very poor condition. But I'm not going to try taking much exercise till I get more food. I have written out another cheque for £5, though we have not yet got the money for those we signed at Rastatt ②. Still I have confidence that it will roll up some day, though the Boche must be in some trouble with his accounts.

10 July 1918 Wednesday

In the parcels department we have at last reached a development for which many of us have been agitating, ie the issue of the parcels themselves from the rooms in which the tins are kept. This halves our labour, as the tins can be handed straight back from the parcels and put together in a numbered parcel lid, ready to be entered and put straight away into their lockers. Before every tin had to be separately numbered, some job! Waydelin, the OC parcels, is in some ways a fussy old woman and is getting on our nerves! He and I lose tempers with each other periodically, though we both mean well. But if less people would buzz round when we are working we should get along better! There was a 'buckshee' white loaf (from

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I must mention, *honoris causa*, one of the German tin-room orderlies, a fat jolly little fellow we called 'Tweedledum'. He was a hard worker, and hand in glove with us in the matter of passing out unopened tins. He was always jeering at the offices for not being quick enough to get the tins into their pockets before the CSM [Company Sergeant Major] turned round. Once he actually passed out a complete unopened parcel to a man while the NCO's [Non-commissioned Officer] head was turned, a thing we should have hesitated to do!. We used, later on, to do useful trade with him, swapping tea for matches!

the bread parcel of some officer who had been sent home) for our floor. Representatives of the rooms drew for it, and I won it for 81. It was very stale, but we cut up our bits, soaked and then toasted them, with good results.

11 July 1918 Thursday

A pleasantly busy day. More parcels in the morning, which means a good hour and a half, the rest of the time before lunch going to German. From 1pm to 2.30 I doze, and at intervals discover that I cannot write blank verse! At 3pm we have another busy time issuing tins. The German staff are getting stricter, which is a pity ①. At 4.45 the Literary and Debating Society holds its first meeting. It is quite a sensible one, and we seem to have some good fellows running it. They decide to have one debate and one reading (when books are available) every week, which will be a nice change. The time, after much discussion, is fixed for the evenings, so as not to interfere with work. I am reading Dumas' 'Chevalier de Maison Rouge', which is easy French and a most engaging story.

12 July 1918 Friday

A fairly idle day. I do a bit of German and finish the first half of the 'Chevalier', only to find the second volume not in the library! I get out a Byron and start on 'Childe Harold', whether I shall ever finish it is another matter. I am not very fond of these luxurious and prolific poems, which seem capable of going on for ever; though of course it has some fine poetry in it. We are still without extra Red Cross food, and rather feel the want of it. Some men get 'buckshee' basins of soup etc. from orderlies who are getting parcels. Personally I am not on sufficiently familiar terms with the orderlies to benefit accordingly, and though I would do a lot of things to get more food, that is not one of them... Fortunately I have learnt to ration myself. Occasionally too we get at the parcel room mouldy loaves of bread, sent to and rejected by the orderlies, and find bits in it sufficiently good to soak and toast. What a life!

①

Lieutenant Pallas, a quiet very soldierly Prussian, who knew no English, quite won the hearts of all the officers of Block 2, by his scrupulous care for us. He was always ready to back us up, where had just cause, against the Saturday, whom he pretty cordially disliked. And as a result we tried not to let him down more than necessary. He took quite a sporting view of his job, and we were all sorry when he was relieved and went to the front.

②

These parcels existed only in our imagination! We had been wrongly informed at Karlsruhe. Still this decision was to be the beginning of our 'communism', so deserves mention.

13 July 1918 Saturday

More parcels than usual this morning. In the afternoon we have a big rush of work, as about 200 parcels come in for the orderlies, and we have to go back after our issue of tins at 3pm and dish out these. It takes us a couple of hours. They are all sent on together from their last camp. A lot of the bread is quite impossible, but the other things are all right. Some bridge after dinner.

14 July 1918 Sunday

A busy morning - we combine our two jobs and do everything before lunch, as all of us, British and German alike, like at least our Sunday afternoons off. We have a certain amount of assistance now in the tin-room, which is just as well, and everything is now ready for the time when all the rumours come true. Parcels are certainly rolling up in better numbers, and they are accumulating at the station. There are concerts again in the afternoon, our block at 3pm and Block 1 at 7.45. I give them 'I'm learning a song for Christmas', with an added verse (quite harmless though topical). Our own German block officer, whom we all like very much ① was at the concert and apparently was not quite sure that the laugh was not against him (speaking no English). Fortunately the interpreter, who had already censored the verse, was able to reassure him; but I was sorry there was even a momentary misunderstanding. My few jokes go quite decently, especially at night, when I introduce Block 1 to 'He misses his missus kisses'. An innovation is the introduction of a Sunday evening meal, prunes and semolina, at 5pm. The semolina tastes very well kept overnight and eaten with jam for breakfast. Before the evening concert there is a service, which I go to. Our 'tin' job involves our missing the morning parade service. This night we come to the important decision to pool all our 'emergency' parcels from Copenhagen, two of groceries and two of bread or biscuits ②. This system should serve to even out our

supplies till home parcels make us self-sufficing. We are to ration it all out mess-fashion, and for some reason I am elected OC distribution, a compliment I value the more as food is just now of more importance than usual. The excellent Ellis is my assistant, and between us I think we should do the trick all right.

15 July 1918 Monday

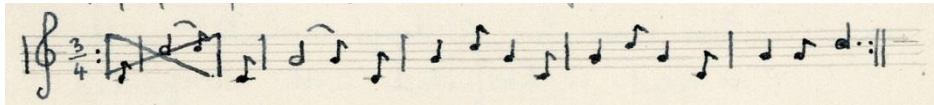
I wake full of beans at 5 o'clock, and suddenly decide to work two hours at my 'pome' the impulse is fairly fruitful and I cover four closely written sides of my notebook...but it is still very weak. I have my shower at 7am and my potato pie for breakfast with a clear conscience. This morning Reid, who has been for two days isolated with a bad throat, is sent to hospital with suspected 'dip' [diphtheria], and we are all put in quarantine. We are allowed to go out with the others in the open, but not to lectures or meals. As a result we feed in our own room, and get a little 'buckshee' in consequence. As long as Reid doesn't get it bad we don't mind! We are all as healthy as crickets, so we don't get 'wind-up' in consequence of the doctor's verdict. Reid was pretty bad for a day, but was convalescing rapidly when we last saw him. All our throats have been examined, with satisfactory results. The chief nuisance is being debarred from the library and the debates etc. Also for a time we have to hand over our jobs in the tin-rooms. This may be a blessing in disguise, as we shall certainly want reliefs later, and it is just as well to have people learn the job now. Before night we all move into an empty room in the next block, used as the orderlies hospital, while our room is being fumigated. It is a bit smaller, and the beds are not quite so comfortable, but for a day this is nothing.

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We didn't do badly out of our day's stay in the other room, bringing back with us a) six plates b) two extra sheets, for use as tablecloths, c) a ladle, eventually appropriated and brought home by me.

②

Roughly as follows - it tends to grow monotonous!



③

The origin of the expressions to 'bang' or to 'see off' a thing I do not know; but they very well express the reckless feeling of, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may have a parcel'.

16 July 1918 Tuesday

Our day in the strange room passes quite pleasantly. I have a good morning's work, our food supply (German variety) continues above the average, and we are all very chirpy. But I miss my work in the tin-room and shall be glad to get back to it. After tea, (which phrase implies a tea, this time consisting of some borrowed tea (simple, sans sucre et lait) dry bread and carrots saved from lunch) we move back to our room ①, Murray and Ellis having been sent ahead to sweep up and generally get things straight. At roll-call tonight a German bugler gives us the German 'alarm' call ② which is to be the signal for us to gather in the parade ground till further notice. I confess he doesn't remind me much of our own buglers!

17 July 1918 Wednesday

We are still isolated, but Arnott and I drift back to the tin-room and carry on the work, as we feel too ridiculously well to be doing nothing. But we continue to feed in our own room, as we do a good deal better out of it (!). For lunch we have a very horrible fish soup, served up in hot mustard oil and water. We send off another letter-card today; I send mine home as usual, carefully avoiding the subject of 'dip'. Semolina soup and bridge again in the evening. Rather a bad night.

18 July 1918 Thursday

A busy 'tin' morning, the average number of parcels daily having risen, to about 140. I spend a good 1½ hours' messing about in the afternoon, cooking a rissole, consisting of potato and brown bread and a little meat from lunch. In the evening we get a jam issue from the canteen, nearly a pound a man, at one mark apiece. Quite good stuff too, though highly fermented and very 'turnipy' and we rejoice greatly: ensues a 'banging' ③ of bread. Also we put lumps of jam into our barley soup, making a sweet porridge of it. Later on I take

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Postcard, which was forwarded to us as confirmation of the wire, attached. As a matter of fact, this was in my case (and I think in most cases) the first news our people had of our fate.

[Postcard attached]

②

Of the colonel, our block commander, it is sufficient to say that he was the most popular man in camp. More will be heard of him later on.

an opportunity of buying a compact little manual of four language words and phrases. French, German, English, Italian, superior to anything of the kind I have seen in England, and only two marks 20. Tonight we received a postcard from Geneva, saying that our wire had been sent off, dated July 9th. So we are certain of our people knowing our condition and address by that date; and the certainty is welcome, though the date is later than we hoped ①.

19 July 1918 Friday

* Observe the symbol! It denotes a red letter day in the food line, for the room as a whole and for me especially. I was asked out to tea by Waydelin, the OC parcels, who messes with Colonel Corfe ② and Major Jiminez. They were all getting parcels, and produced butter, English marmalade, 'Vi' cocoa, white bread, toast, and Garibaldi biscuits. They finished tea in about a quarter of an hour, and then sat round and delightedly watched me feed! I made a real pig of myself, and felt absolutely full for the first time since capture. It was an amazingly pleasant sensation. I then muttered my thanks incoherently and staggered off to my bed, to lie there for half an hour's repose. The second event was the winning by Broadbent of one out of a few 'Emergency Parcels' which were being drawn for. We had agreed that any parcel won in the room would be for the room as a whole, so we all rejoice immoderately. It works out at six biscuits each, and tea, dripping, bully (three tins), cheese (two tins), milk-cocoa, and milk to be shared among the room. Never have we had such a windfall. I send off another postcard this morning, this time to the Richardsons. I also get my hair cut for the second time since captivity. Altogether today has done me very well.

①

We eventually came to understand that, except on one or two exceptional cases, this parade was merely the result of an attack of liver on the part of the Saturday or some other incentive to displeasing energy. We had it on an average about once a week, generally on Saturdays.

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Renamed 'The Secret Playroom'.

20 July 1918 Saturday

For breakfast this morning I tried an extempore trifle. Recipe:

One Swiss biscuit, halved, and soaked till swollen; when dry spread with jam (German); then slice and place in hot semolina (German); leave overnight to 'settle' and eat after morning shower. Result, épatant [stunning]! A cup of tea and milk goes with it very well. At about 9.30am the 'alarm' goes, and we turn out according to instructions with books and stools onto the parade ground, while a large guard comes in from the barracks next door, and sentries are posted all round the square. We expect to have to wait two or three hours, while the rooms are being searched, but apparently this is only a dress rehearsal ①, for in three quarters of an hour we are counted and dismissed. Quite an event in our monotonous life... I put back my Byron tonight, after having completed the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold', and rather repented my previous hasty judgement. It deserves study as a whole, and of course the detail shows an amazing grip of and sympathy with South European history. But I think it has achieved a popularity far above its merits, especially on the continent. In places the narrative almost ceases to attempt poetry, and Byron is always at his best when he abandons himself to his imagination, which is sombre but magnificent. As a contrast I take out the 'Marriage of William Ashe', and make my first bow to the authoress.

Tonight I cannot sleep, probably owing to a late cup of tea, and in my thoughts find myself reverting insistently to my child friend, possibly because I was watching some dear little kiddies playing outside our walls earlier on. I think I miss child society more than anything except that of my people, above all of 'my own' Richardson family. The thoughts seem to shape themselves into words, and at 12.30am I am up at the windowsill, scribbling the greater part of 'To my beloved' ② by the light of the electric lamp on the barrier.

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See note ① July 11th.

21 July 1918 Sunday

Tins in the morning; we are getting quite attached to the two German orderlies in our tin-room; one is the very image of the Carpenter in 'Through the Looking Glass'. His job is to cut the strings of the parcels and to help clean up. The other, who has somehow got called 'Tweedledum' ①, is delightfully conscientious about seeing that every officer gets his very last lump of sugar or bit of biscuit before the box is thrown away. We have a rest from parcels for a day and a half, and find it hard to fill the time! Food predominates, as our isolation cuts us off from going either to church or to the concert. I get well into 'William Ashe' and finish 'To my beloved', which I confess I rather like. Rather a bad night.

22 July 1918 Monday

A hard morning's work at German, after a good breakfast. My temper gets quite short in the afternoon for some reason or other, and it is certainly not a good day. I have hitherto I think been fairly calm, even when Broadbent has been unusually contradictory, or Murray unusually self-centred. The latter is a funny boy. He has seen an amazing amount of service for his age. At 16 he was in hospital with 1) dysentery, 2) pyrrhea, 3) a knife wound in the head. So he has done his bit. But he seems to have learnt the 'old soldier' habit of looking after No 1, and hardly pulls his weight. But we learn here very quickly to look for the best points in one another.

23 July 1918 Tuesday

Another great day. A rumour for once comes true, and 1000 emergency parcels come up from the station, and one is issued to every officer who has not had a food parcel within a week. Hurroosh, what a grand way of celebrating Mother's birthday. All of us, except Broadbent, get one, and we have decided

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Though, on retrospect, this seems an obvious thing to do, I only know of one other room which messed together before we did, and some of them kept up small two or three messes to the end. Everyone acknowledged, even its most bitter opponents originally, that it made all the difference and kept us 'happy'. It is significant that when the mess broke up into 2, those were most distressed who had been most against it at first.

②

The lockers, about 1½ feet square, were built up against the walls, and to reach the top ones we had to clamber up the sides like monkeys.

after much discussion, to try and run a mess for seven of us (Arnott and Reid preferring to stand out) for all parcels, Red Cross and private. A decision I have been fighting for tooth and nail ①. So the six parcels are divided out among the seven of us, and Ellis and I take over everything except small biscuits. These work out at about 30 a man, some help to our bread rations. Also we have enough meat, tea, cocoa, cheese, and dripping to give us two meat meals a day in addition to the German rations, and cheese or dripping for tea, for a whole week. After which anything may happen! We all smile hugely. For the parcels staff it means a lot of work. We have been at it, coats and collars off, for two solid hours, and have only got about halfway through. And of course all the tins taken in mean much more work at our regular hours. At 8.40 this morning the alarm went again. This time we stayed out only 20 minutes, and it was probably just a dodge to see if we were out of bed in time! I have already mentioned Mother's birthday. It is wonderful to understand and be understood by people as well as I do and am by my own parents; it destroys distance.

24 July 1918 Wednesday

The new mess starts with great éclat, and except for one or two small and expected contretemps [mishaps], promises very well for the future. It is great to be all sitting round one table, and to be sharing the same food. We now write a menu for each day, which adds an official sanction to the proceedings! Work is very hard again today. We have breakfast at 7.30 and start at 8am, opening the rest of the emergency stuff. After roll-call we carry on with private parcels, and then have a record rush in the afternoon from 2 to 4pm. I get quite tired of chasing up and down the lockers ②, and my shoes are getting worn out. Boots in future! This is going to be some job. Our only perquisites,

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Messes had already been instituted and numbered for cookhouse purposes. The idea was that one man should draw all the tins needed for one mess, instead of every man having to come for his own. This plan was afterwards adopted.

Cheque signed July 24th.

[Cheque attached]

barring a few bits of biscuit in the morning, are the patches of grease we scrape out of the empty tins, providing quite a good substitute for butter for our tea.

25 July 1918 Thursday

Lighter work in the morning, but by way of compensation a lot of trouble with Waydelin. He really is getting rather impossible. I had decided with him on the rough outline of a scheme for drawing tins by messes ① instead of by individuals. I drew up a notice involving this and several other points. This was approved by him, and then I found out that he had approved and handed over to floor commanders a completely different scheme the night before. It really makes the thing very difficult, to say the least of it. I find my job as President of the Mess Committee somewhat a touchy one, and my store of tact is being continually drawn upon. The various elements do not mix well together, and I am rapidly qualifying for the higher diplomatic service. One of the 'difficult' people is Jordan, a young and rather spoilt fellow who has been too long an NCO. He is up in arms at every opportunity, and needs alternately crushing and soothing. Once again I thank my stars that I have a fairly placid temper.

26 July 1918 Friday

Another heavy morning, a whole number of orderlies parcels having come through. We do officers' parcels from 8 to 9am, and orderlies' from 9.30 to nearly 12. I find my reading getting crowded out, which is a pity. But I think that when we can persuade Waydelin into some system or other things will settle down. This evening one of the officers here, a Captain Herring, was officially told that he had won the Victoria Cross. Some news to get here. He was shouldered round the square and heartily cheered.

One of the first of the daily menus of 'Mess 94'.

Menu [attached]

Monday, July 29th

Breakfast

Tea, milk, sugar, and sausage pie.

Tea

Tea, milk, sugar and beef fat.

Supper

Cocoa, milk, sugar, and cold beef.

Bread and jam issued at 4pm daily.

27 July 1918 Saturday

The mess runs smoother every day. Murray and Broadbent are already among the prophets, and are even going beyond the 'mess committee's suggestions in the direction of unity. Ellis and Russell have rigged up a little shelf for our cups and cutlery, such as it is, and we have all got hold of empty tins of various shapes and sizes to hold odds and ends. The canteen has opened again, after a period of insolvency, 'for cash transactions only'. I am at present the proud possessor of 2d, though my assets in unpaid cheques are something like £18. However I borrow 20 marks off Farquharson, who is full of cash, having just been paid over 200. This buys a ration of jam for all of us who are 'broke' and leaves a little over for lemonade and wine ('half and half') at supper. The orderlies give a concert in the evening, but I have no time to go to it, being better employed in writing home. Letter days and card days seem to come along fairly frequently now, which shows that we are getting busier and happier.

28 July 1918 Sunday

I go with Russell to early service at 7.15, after he has boiled a little shaving water for us both on our stove; this last cannot be used properly, it is verboden (also we have no fuel!), but we can make little fires on the top to heat up water and very small dishes. The service was again a pleasant one, with about 30 communicants. We finish our parcels job in the morning, and thoroughly appreciate the rest we get in the afternoon. I had meant to do a little work, but find myself so disinclined for it that I just lie on my bed and read ('Gotty and the Guvnor', a typical 7d), sleep, doze, write, and do nothing. And very nice too. We have tea at 4.30, with butter and jam and one of two Berne biscuits we have been issued with from emergency boxes. Supper at 7.30pm and a couple of rubbers of bridge end a most welcome day of rest.

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A complete account of the parcel and tins system might help to interpret the text.

1. Arrival of parcels

Parcels came up from the station on a horse transport, and were fetched by one of our officers and a German guard. They were unloaded at the tin-room and disposed alphabetically A--J going into the right room, J--Z into the left. Here they were stacked in order and numbered consecutively by the sorters. These had a large printed list of the officers, and put against the name of any man with a parcel the number of that parcel. This list was then posted up and the time of distribution stated and the order. (Beginning with different letters of the alphabet in turn). All this was the work of the 'parcels' staff, so did not concern us. One of Waydelin's worst mistakes was not making the tin and parcel staffs into one, thus avoiding much mutual recrimination!

2. Distribution of parcels and storing of tins

Parcels were issued by the parcel staff, German orderlies opening every parcel, and allowing no boxes, paper etc. to be carried away. All tinned foods were kept in the tin room, and handed back together to the tin staff, three of whom were always on duty. The man receiving the parcel had to make his own list of tins while the parcel was being opened. He then gave us his 'locker number', and the number of his tins was checked and entered in the ledger, and the tins placed in his locker. The ledger (a real work of art!) showed under each man's name the number of tins received, with date, and against this the number drawn, the date, and the drawer's initials. All biscuits, sugar, etc. and untinned stuff the receiver was allowed to take with him; except a) books, which went first to the censor's office and were distributed when censored and stamped through the library, and b) civilian suits, which (unless smuggled out) were temporarily confiscated: civilian trousers could be worn after the insertion of a red stripe.

3. Tin-drawing

Every afternoon, representatives from every Mess came to draw whatever tins the mess required for the day. At first messes were only allowed to draw on alternate days, but eventually we were able to issue [continues page 114]

29 July 1918 Monday

This morning no parcels are issued, so we spend the time 'checking our lockers' ①. At first things are a bit tangled, but we find that with a little consideration and arrangement they straighten themselves out immensely. And after I have interviewed the various officers whom our books show as having lost tins, I find that in practically every case the fault is theirs, thanks to the jolly habit some of them have of forgetting to sign when they draw. Halfway through the morning Murray comes in with the great news that Reid and Bytheway are both down on the parcels list for the next morning, parcels of bread from Copenhagen. We rejoice exceedingly. As the canteen has unloosed practically as much jam as we want it will be most welcome not to have to eat most of it out of a spoon. We are very anxious to see what condition it is in. The parcels are dated 6th and 14th July, so they should be all right. This afternoon we carry out at last a suggestion which I have been trying to get adopted for some time, and have tins drawn by messes instead of individuals. The result is most satisfactory and we get through the work much quicker and more quietly than before. We still seem to have a much smoother passage than the room next door, I don't know why.

30 July 1918 Tuesday

This diary, until I can get a fresh notebook, will have to be contracted. It is just as well, as it is getting very longwinded. Bytheway's bread parcels yield two good loaves and two bad, the latter however having good enough bits in it to give us tea. My last suggestion at the tin room is now brought into effect, and tin drawing starts at 2.30pm instead of 3. The only drawback is that we ourselves were not warned, and so were late! But it means that we can now have tea at a Christian hour. Tonight Russell made a real piecrust with bread, biscuits, and dripping. It might have been pastry.

every day to everybody. The drawer first came to the man with the ledger, who entered the tins to be drawn under the various names with the date, and the entries were initialled. Then he passed on to the counter and handed in a slip with his mess number, the various locker numbers, and the tins required from each. These were collected and placed on the counter to be opened by the German orderly. Those that were opened were turned out by the drawer onto a plate, and the tins left behind. Generally, unless the officer or NCO in charge was unusually vigilant, the majority of the tins went off unopened in people's pockets.

4. Checking Lockers

The worst part of the tin staff's work came out of hours. The lockers were small and had no proper partitions, and so tins were continually slipping from one to another. This, combined with inevitable mistakes in putting in or taking out tins, led to considerable discrepancies between the book and the actual contents, and caused endless trouble, especially as we had very strong suspicions that some of the German sentries or orderlies had opportunity for theft. Some officers took the unavoidable loss of tins very badly, though most of them realised our difficulties. They used to come at stated times and 'check' their lockers by comparing their own private lists with the contents of their locker. Those were not always very agreeable hours! It was certainly one of the most thankless jobs ever undertaken; but the way my 'staff' (especially Ellis and 'Buster Brown') spent themselves on it and put up with every sort of inconvenience and labour to try and keep things straight made it in its way a very happy time for me.

31 July 1918 Wednesday

We fix up our stove so as to fry small dishes, and for breakfast have fried sausage, bully, potatoes, and bread: 'extra' as the 'lads' used to say. Tonight I get a private view of the parcels list for the next day (which was brought up for Waydelin's inspection and necessary action), and see MY OWN NAME down for an English parcel. It's wonderful. I always had a sort of conviction that my people would beat everyone else's for speed, and my confidence is justified. I don't yet know what it is, but clothing or food would either of them be very welcome.

1 August 1918 Thursday

Another busy day which passes very quickly. I finish 'Gotty and the Guvnor'. When the parcels come up I get a look at mine - it is FOOD!

2 August 1918 Friday

I draw my parcel this morning, an Irish [continues page 117]

Specimen Menus

Thursday, August 1st

Breakfast: Tea and milk, semolina pudding, dripping (Bread and jam)

Lunch: Pea and turnip soup.

Tea: Tea and milk, beef fat, white bread

Dinner: Barley Soup

Supper: Cocoa, sugar and milk, cold beef.

Sunday, August 4th

Breakfast 7.30am: Tea, milk and sugar. Barley and cheese. Bread and biscuits

Lunch 12.30pm: Meat and bean soup

Tea 4.30pm: Tea, milk, and sugar. Bread, butter and jam

Dinner 7.30pm: Beef rissoles, German cheese, biscuits and lemonade

①

News of my being a prisoner did not reach home till July 8th, so the parcel was already packed and waiting to be despatched. My mother was actually working at the IWA [Irish Women's Association] when the news came, but of course I could not know this.

②

These orderlies were selected from men at one of the 'working camps' near the line. I have never in my life seen such a pitiable sight. They were skeletons, their clothes dropping off, covered with lice, and physical wrecks. They must have been abominably treated. We at once set to to feed them up (those who had surplus parcels), give them clothes, and try and set them up again. They were 'medically boarded' by our own doctors, and the state in which they arrived reported to the Danish representative. We rubbed it in pretty thoroughly to our own German officers, who seemed very ashamed of their countrymen at that other camp.

③

The camp was unanimous in its verdict that the IWA looked after prisoners better than any other association or private organisation.

Women's Association, dated July 6th ①, almost certainly sent in answer to a wire from my people. It has cigarettes, tea, sugar, chocolate, oxo, condiments, crystalized fruits, jam, milk, a pudding, and three meat tins. Some parcel! I see I am down for two more on Sunday and Jordan has one. We are going ahead. We are all in excellent spirits. Once started on this game, and one is away, as they say in Durham. Tonight 41 new orderlies turn up ②, so we may get looked after for once. I feel this must be somebody's birthday!

3 August 1918 Saturday

I go to my first German class this morning. The teacher is a Lieutenant McMinn, an old hand at it, who is most interesting, starting us on the Berlitz method. Murray and Broadbent are in the same class, about 20 all told. We draw two more emergency parcels for the mess today, which gives us a new lease of life. We were turned out at 8am again for an impromptu roll-call. Our room (we have to breakfast daily at 7.30am because of parcels) was about the only one which got any breakfast.

4 August 1918 Sunday

The beginning of the 5th year of the war. Comment is needless. Russell and I go to a communion service at 10.40am. My two parcels are clothing, emergency ones from the IWA, who have treated me most handsomely ③. They are renowned in the camp for their parcels. But I am disappointed at not seeing any handwriting I know, and am just a little worried, probably quite without reason. The parcels are wonderful, and I get shaving, washing, and toilet sets complete (including 'Kolyos' and 'Pears') and a complete triple set of underclothing and towels. It is great, and I find myself able to lend things round a bit. This afternoon five of us go out on parole by a sudden

①

This effort was increased by Ellis' carpentry. He evolved the most wonderful shelves, cupboards, picture frames, and brackets, of which mention will be made hereafter, all with a pocket knife.

②

About 600 out of the 640 officers spent eight weeks at the 'Russian lager' at Rastatt, and all their earlier parcels were sent there, and only sent on after about 2½ months delay.

inspiration. It is a lovely day, and we bring home a lot of wild flowers, which makes the room quite home-like ①. At night a diversion is caused by quite a large fire in the town, which we watch from our windows with mixed feelings.

5 August 1918 Monday

The long expected rush of parcels has come. They are mostly overdue Rastatt ones ②, and so we are not represented. The sorters have the worst of it, but we are busy enough. Fortunately I have secured two extra helpers in Tolkein and Brown, which makes things easier. I start my French class, and promptly decide to exchange, either into the 'advanced', or into another 'intermediate', as the work here is very elementary, and no use to me. I want to work with people who know the language much better than I do. Murray and I work at issuing tins and parcels all afternoon. In the evening we have Willis, one of the 14 who came with us from Karlsruhe, over to dinner. Russell raises a wonderful three course dinner in his honour, meat pie, jam pudding (with a potato and biscuit crust), and Welsh rarebit. It was some feed and he thoroughly enjoyed himself. He is living in a room on his own in the other block and knows nobody; and we enjoyed ourselves all the more for having him. We finished up with wine, cigars (not for this child) and a rubber of bridge.

6 August 1918 Tuesday

Parcels begin at 7am, so we are glad of reliefs. Brown and Tolkien take from 7 to 8am, and we carry on afterwards. Two more lots come in during the day. We have a heavy job but the sorters have a worse. These are still all overdue Rastatt ones, and we are unrepresented. Our good start will probably not be so well followed up yet awhile.

①

An amusing notice from Bennett (a KC who organised classes and lectures and added considerably to the gaiety of life) was read out on parade, postponing classes for a week, 'by which time I hope, being myself now sufficiently provided for, this regrettable influx of parcels will have been moderated'.

7 August 1918 Wednesday

Parcels all day. Personally I am at it 7 to 8am, 9.15 to 11.45, and 3 to 4pm. So there is something doing. Cricket, with a tennis ball and stools for wickets, is in full swing in the square. Would we had time and strength for it. I am asked out to dinner with Lawe, one of the officers 'running' education here; with him was Cox, a Bradfield boy (about 21), a great friend of Bill Stephens at Oriel, who also knows several other friends of mine, including some officers who joined our battalion two years ago. The inner reason of my invitation is that Cox has to write a paper for our literary society on 'Greek drama', and thinks I may have forgotten less than he has about it! It is a 'bon little dinner', and then I have two glorious hours reaching back into my Oxford past, and bringing to life all forgotten things. It is like a visit to Oxford itself, but my ignorance is simply disgraceful.

8 August 1918 Thursday

Parcels again, three separate distributions. Classes are accordingly suspended, to be continued next week ①. After a talk with Lawe I decide to have a sporting shot at 'advanced' French and intermediate German. But if I find them too stiff I have reserved the right to drop back again. Tonight there was a group in a corner of the parade-ground round some Highlanders dancing a fling to the bagpipes, the contents of one of the parcels. The guards seemed much interested and a little alarmed.

9 August 1918 Friday

Father's birthday, signalled by Russell's first parcel, a Red Cross 'first capture' parcel, which comes just in time as our stores are about exhausted. And Bytheway is on tomorrow's list. So we are all happy.

①

[Envelope of letter attached]

10 August 1918 Saturday

Work from 7.30 to 9am, in beautiful weather. Business is pretty slack. We have a late breakfast and no work after roll-call. However the afternoon is very busy, as we have to check today, and also issue enough to carry people over Sunday, which is to be a day of rest. Checking reveals a number of discrepancies, almost inevitable in the rush we have had this week, and I foresee that the 'day of rest' will be a busy one for poor me, who must wander round and pacify the deficient. Supper is distinguished by our first milk pudding, well cooked and most acceptable. Can it be that I ever disliked tapioca?

Today I received a letter ① addressed to the Saturday here, sent from the Geneva Red Cross on the 3rd instance, though dated the 16th July. It was a German translation of a wire sent from home in answer to mine, reading 'Received welcome news, Lyon' A mysterious but most excellent communication.

11 August 1918 Sunday

Theoretically the day of rest, but I have to spend some part of it clearing up accounts as far as possible. I go to a short service in the silence room in the morning, which is very refreshing. Farquharson asks me to tea, and I have a very jolly tea with 10 of them, mostly Scottish, who all mess together and are as happy as schoolboys.

12 August 1918 Monday

Same old rush in the parcel department. I get my second IWA parcel, a most wonderful affair, and Murray gets two, his first, and is in very high spirits accordingly. We have a bumper supper, with pudding!

①

A large square biscuit, like a swollen 'breakfast biscuit'. The best way of using them was to bore a hole in the centre and squirt water into it from a tap. They then swelled up, and could be cut in half and toasted or just left to dry, making an excellent substitute for white bread.

②

This was to have been a great 'Tins and Parcels' match. But the day was cold and the 'Parcels' cried off, so we challenged the world instead.

13 August 1918 Tuesday

Classes have started again, but I am not competing at present. The worst of the parcel rush is over, but we are still pretty busy. Our routine is now: tin-drawing 7.30-9 am and 6.15-7 pm; parcels 9.15-11.30 am, and from anywhere between 1.30 and 3 to 4 or 5pm. Murray, Ellis and I work together in one relief, and Brown, Tolkien, and another fellow are there to relieve us. We have agreed to take the early mornings, and so have breakfast all together in peace.

14 August 1918 Wednesday

Russell gets a couple of parcels, one of them his longed for tobacco one, and Bytheway gets his first English one. Ellis and Broadbent are now the only ones in the mess who have not had parcels. Poor Broadbent is rather unhappy about it. But oh, we do want letters.

15 August 1918 Thursday

Tonight we have seven more parcels in the mess, all food! So we are well away. Everyone is very fit and happy. But the PMC and cook are finding their time very fully occupied!

16 August 1918 Friday

An issue of about 14 'Berne' biscuits ① per head fills the one large gap in our store cupboard. We have a great day on the strength of it.

17 August 1918 Saturday

The event of the day is our dinner, to which we invite Brown. Russell excels himself, as usual, and we all enjoy ourselves immensely. I smoke two cigarettes on the strength of the day of the month.

18 August 1918 Sunday

The tin-room staff turns out an XI [cricket] ② in the morning against a scratch team. The only ball available is a tennis ball minus its cover, but we have good fun. I get 24 (top score!) with more vigour than style. In the afternoon and

①

The chorus (a list of tins) ran as follows:

'Sardines, pork and beans,
Roast turkey, roast beef,
Golden syrup and pudding,
Maconachie ration and all,
Maconachie ration and all'

②

The adjutant of the 6th Battalion on the 27th May. One of the best.

evening I again perform at concerts, singing 'Little Novels' and a topical tin song to the tune of 'Widdecombe Fair' ①, which is very popular.

19 August 1918 Monday

We spend the morning finishing checking lockers, a job which kept 6 of us busy the whole of Saturday afternoon. Just before lunch I get my first letter, from Mary Trafford! Very welcome of course, as by implication all is right at home; but I wish I could hear direct from them. But it is a grand sensation to get news from England.

20 August 1918 Tuesday

Another parcel for me, and umpteen for Russell, while Bytheway and Jordan each get another. So we are well away! But poor Ellis and Broadbent are still without any, which makes them very unhappy. AT LAST, a letter from home - three quite delightful pages from Mother. It means that a great weight is lifted from my mind, for all this time I have not been absolutely certain that all was well. And now I know that in all essentials home is as I left it. There was plenty of news, all pleasant, and much affection in the letter, which is the best thing that has happened since capture.

21 August 1918 Wednesday

Four postcards today, two from the Irish Women's Association, including one from Lady MacDonnell herself. It is great to be in touch with the outside world once more.

22 August 1918 Thursday

Five letters, but no more from home. Ainsworth ② writes to say how glad the Battalion was to hear I was safe. Very nice of him, and it bucks me up immensely.

23 August 1918 Friday

A pair of pyjamas, or rather two pairs, one with blue stripes and one with mauve. Lovely! I go to bed at 9 o'clock on the strength of it. I find my people have been asking about me through the Queen Victoria

Jubilee Fund at Geneva, and I have been allowed to write and say I am well etc. They are really looking after me wonderfully. Two more letters today...

24 August 1918 Saturday

The days are still full of business. We have secured some quite decent pictures, bought at the canteen, and Ellis has already made one really jolly frame for a picture of a young girl in red. (I plumped for all the child pictures when choosing!). Today a large consignment of Red and clothing comes through, and all our room is now resplendent in pyjamas. So my suits lose half their splendour in the common eye! Jordan has a pair of an amazing pink, which suddenly loses its charm for him when he sees our orderly walking down the passage in an exactly similar suit... Another parcel today.

25 August 1918 Sunday

For the first time the Germans let us have the keys of the tin-room, so we spend three or four hours sorting and checking the tins at our leisure. Today it is amazingly hot, with a tropical wind. I wash some clothes and spend a few happy hours rereading 'The Man who was Thursday'. I go to a short evening service. Write a postcard to Mary Trafford.

26 August 1918 Monday

We get letter-cards today, and I am able to write home and thank them for their first letter. After dinner I play two games of badminton in the square, two sets of which have just come in.

I find I have not mentioned our Saturday dinner, which was so great a triumph for Russell that the menu must be recorded; Oxtail Soup; curry and rice, fried potatoes; chocolate shape; spaghetti and cheese! It was wonderful considering the limited materials and cooking apparatus. Tolkein came as our guest, and we had a jolly evening.

27 August 1918 Tuesday

A joint letter today from the 'Aunts', which

①

I don't think the ordinary German soldier got treated with any greater consideration than we received, 'Efficiency' was of course the motto, and certainly the rough and ready methods employed were very successful, besides saving time!

②

It was always the policy in German prison camps to put the management as far as possible into the hands of the British senior officers. On first arrival at Rastatt a committee of about 14 was formed to discuss matters with the commandant. This was not only an unwieldy body, but very unsatisfactory from the camp's point of view, since it was necessarily more or less run by the Brigadier, whom we always found more inclined to agree with the Saturday on principle than to make any effort to improve our conditions. Naturally this tendency was perceived by the Saturday and encouraged, and the Brigadier was always treated with the utmost consideration. But the moment Corfe came into the presidency everything was changed. From that moment we knew our cause could not be in better hands.

is most welcome. It brings back home very vividly to see their familiar writing. At 12 o'clock I go down with several others, escorted by the interpreter, to see the dentist, as two of my teeth are considerably in need of repair. Dental operations are carried on twice weekly in the local military hospital; they have one large room (with four operators) for fillings, and another for extractions. The dentists are expert, but naturally not very merciful ①, and mine makes me think hard for a minute or so. He finished one tooth and prepared another, all in about 10 minutes. We got back about 2.30.

Today, I had almost forgotten it, is the day of our 'block elections', this needs some explanation. The original Central Committee ② was dissolved by the Saturday as being large, and we have now to elect new members, two from each block, as well as a president (for which position Colonel Corfe is returned unopposed). The election and preliminary canvassing provide considerable entertainment. You should have seen me beating our sugar box (in lieu of a drum), accompanied by Ellis with a huge placard, Arnott with another, and Reid and Jordan with mouthorgan and bones! Eventually our candidate (Dight, an Australian, whom I didn't even know by sight!) is returned head of the poll... Two days later we are told on parade that 'Bands and processions are forbidden'. I am told I blushed!

28 August 1918 Wednesday

A sad but inevitable split has come in our hitherto contented family. Russell, who has rather a sharp temper and who does emphatically not suffer fools gladly, has struck at doing 50% of the work, while the three younger ones do little more than argue and occasionally grouse. He exaggerates the matter, but in the main Ellis and I, after talking it over all day, agree that he is in the right, and that it will be better for all concerned if he, Russell, Bytheway, and myself mess together and let the other three run a separate

①

As a matter of fact, it was as well this split came when it did. It is so much easier to keep on good terms with someone temperamentally opposed to you if you aren't brooding over the fact that he hasn't washed up once in two days! The fewer the points of contact, the less chance of trouble. The two new messes, being at harmony within themselves, worked excellently, though poor Broadbent was never I think quite reconciled to it. In any case the original single mess was invaluable, as it tided us over the worst period, and accustomed everyone to sharing alike.

②

Jerry Ellis, in apparent ignorance of the proverb about fools and angels, attributed my temerity to a base desire to show off my new tunic! I need hardly say that I succeeded in losing the motion. A feature of the debate was a very fine speech in broken but forcible English by one of the camp officers against the motion; a decent fellow, with a mind, who attended several debates.

mess. I spend the first half of the day trying to avoid the split, and all the rest of it trying to break it gently to Broadbent, Murray and Jordan. They are a bit upset, as they have always relied on my being able to smooth over all differences! Broadbent especially I should like to have kept with us; but if we are to have a split, the only possible way to do it is to make the division along the natural line of cleavage ①.

29 August 1918 Thursday

The last day, by common agreement, of our joint mess. Broadbent and I split up our stores; and it seems like a funeral. Another parcel tonight. Toothache - 'orrid.

30 August 1918 Friday

I visit the dentist again, and get my other tooth finished, thus relieving the pain, Also Coxe asks me, to my joy, to form one of a trio that Blower (a Mus: Doc: [Doctor of Music] in the other block) has ready written out, if anyone cares to sing it. So he and I and Gladding (a 'bon' bass) have a happy 20 minutes at it, though I have to take the top part, which is really beyond me. In the evening I get three parcels, one food and two clothing, the latter containing a new suit (tunic, slacks and breeches), and my overcoat. After dinner Ellis and I make our first appearance at the Debating Society. An impromptu debate. The subject announced is the old one of Capital Punishment. After two or three minutes of horrible silence I can stand it no longer, and proceed to propose the motion, ie for Abolition. Great fun. I always was that sort of a goat ②.

31 August 1918 Saturday

McCann, the Canadian Flying Corps sub. who messes with Arnott and Reid, and a great fellow too, is made OC Baseball, and is given a couple of indoor baseball sets to play with. We are initiated into the game in the afternoon. Another 'alarm' roll-call in the morning, short and sweet.

①

Here and hereafter meaning, of course, the 'indoor' game with a very large soft ball; very different from the real game which demands more room than we could command.

②

I was optimistic. He loathed it in a week.

③

This performance never materialised, for reasons to be mentioned later. But the prospect of it and our rehearsals provided much entertainment and blessed occupation.

1 September 1918 Sunday

Russell and I go to Communion at 7.15; it is by far the happiest service here. After breakfast the tin-staff plays the 'parcels' at baseball ① instead of cricket, the only ball available for the latter being a very soft fluffy one!. After the difficulty involved in the difference between this game and 'rounders' is overcome, it is quite easy to see its good points. One can even understand the intense excitement the real game raises, with a man on each 'base' and two men out it becomes quite thrilling. Later I spend an hour in the music room, perfecting our trio and listening to Blower play some delightful things.

2 September 1918 Monday

More baseball in the morning. Today I finally hand over my tin-room job to Davison, a thing I have been contemplating doing for some time. He is a cheery competent captain, a great pal of Ellis, he takes it over with a light heart (to repent at leisure?) ②. Now I am free for my various other activities. I was beginning to find that my brain was revolting against 'serving tables' indefinitely. And very soon I hope for my books. Another parcel.

3 September 1918 Tuesday

I have undertaken to produce a 'mad band' for the 'Graudenz Gaiety', our new variety theatre (at present in course of construction in the mess room), and am busy with the preliminaries. My troupe consists of Reid, Ellis, Davison, Taylor, Natrass and Foster (two captains (Royal Army Medical Corps)), and with the wonderful ③. Our mess of four is working very well, the other three seem to be equally happy, so we have reason to hope that the change is really an advantage. Russell gets more amazing every day as a cook. It can be assumed that the less mention of food there is in this diary, the greater the quantity!

4 September 1918 Wednesday

Still no more letters, it is perfectly sickening having to wait so long again, though of course our having had some is a great thing to be thankful for. Two food

①

Of course the escape had been the one theme of conversation in the camp for a week before. The moving spirit was Clinton, one of the best fellows who ever lived; he had already attempted to escape five times and had been moved from camp to camp in the vain hope of keeping him in. He soon got to work at Graudenz, enlisting six Australians and 10 flying corps boys, and one or two others in the actual escape party; while the whole question of escapes was taken in hand by the excellent Corfe, who used all the best brains and technical skill of the camp in the work. For this escape entrance was gained by a duplicate key to the cellars beneath Block 2. From the far end of this they proceeded to dig outwards, chiefly just with pocket knives, though on pretence of making a tennis court in the compound one or two picks were secured later. The work was full of hazard, and was kept secret from everyone not actually engaged till the tunnel was finished. It was boarded throughout with 'bed-boards' and eventually had an exit about 20 yards beyond the outer wall. It was a really fine exploit. Everyone had been provided, the Secret Service was wonderful, with maps, food, and compasses, and as far as escape from such a remote corner of Europe was practicable there was no detail omitted to make it probable. Once the diggers were interrupted by a German search party, but crouched down in a corner and were not seen! But the nearest haven of safety was so far away that they were all caught in the end, some beyond Danzig, Clinton and his friend Strong driving a farm cart almost on the Polish frontier. Three of them ran straight into some Boche soldiers, but secured a good start for the others by successfully passing for three hours as British tommies from a camp north of Berlin!

②

Some splendid incidents occurred. Tempers were lost, and at the most critical moment in the Saturday's tirade a searcher appeared carrying triumphantly a pair of socks and a loaf of bread tied up with string, dropped by one of the 'evades'. The square rocked with laughter. A most entertaining morning.

parcels today. I am about the only one in the mess getting them now, so their amazing regularity is doubly welcome. I read 'Rebellion', a rather inconsecutive book by Mais, interesting but unsatisfying. I send a postcard today to Denmark for butter, eggs, and cheese, for the mess.

5 September 1918 Thursday

Nothing of note. I send a letter home. Start 'The Inside of the Cup', which promises well. Continue preparation for the mad band.

7 September 1918 Saturday (No entry for September 6)

Busy all morning on various housemaid jobs. Still no letters. At night 18 officers escaped as soon as it was dark. We all knew the rough outlines of the scheme, but I heard of it much too late to have a chance of being one of the party. Three of them were caught almost at once. They came round accordingly about midnight and called the roll. We rather expected to be turned out of bed but they spared us ①.

8 September 1918 Sunday

We are out on the square from 9 to 11am, while the sensation caused by the escape runs its due course②. At first we thought the majority of our captors were inclined to take it as a move in the game, and were accordingly rather unpleasantly surprised by being told that we were to be confined to our blocks, except for meals, and that parcels were to be held up till further notice. A number of officers try to express their indignation by walking round the square after evening roll-call singing and dodging the sentries. Eventually the latter begin using their butts and the square is cleared. Tempers are very brittle, and though natural, it is pretty useless to behave in a way which merely irritates. In fact the more sober part of the community is rather annoyed, as we have now forfeited all ground of complaint.

Note

Pallas, our block officer, behaved splendidly. Though he came in for all the Saturday's wrath he took a thoroughly sporting view of the matter, and grinned broadly when the absentees did not answer to their names. O si sic omnes [if everything was thus].

①

For about a week after this we had regulars guarding us, instead of the paternal Landsturmen who had done duty hitherto.

②

Menu appended, to witness if I lie. French homemade.

Menu

Graudenz, 13 September 1918

Hors d'oeuvres

~

Curry de poulet au riz

~

Chateaubriand aux oignons

~

Compote de pommes au flan

~

Pate de foie gras

~

Fruites

9 September 1918 Monday

Matters have got more or less settled, and there is no disturbance today, though the guards are doubled at roll-call ①. I spend most of the day reading. Finish 'The Inside of the Cup', which in the end rather disappointed me. Get out 'Almayer's Folly', by Conrad, and once more delight in his brilliant command of language.

10 September 1918 Tuesday

Restrictions still on, we are about at the end of our resources and shall not be sorry when we can get into the tin-room once again. We understand that if we behave we shall be allowed out again the next day. We accordingly behave! Various attempts to get on with my writing prove abortive. I must be in the mood, or I find every noise distracts me.

11 September 1918 Wednesday

Out again. A fine day, though with a heavy wind. Parcels and tins are released and all the room find biscuits waiting for them, while most of us have food parcels as well! So we are quite well off once again. I finish 'Almayer's Folly' (good though gloomy, in the usual [Joseph] Conrad manner) and get out 'Villette', which I have been looking for for years. This evening Abbott, a friend of classical and poetic tastes, lends me some verses he has written to look over. They are not bad, though uneven, and here and then approach poetry. He certainly has the spirit in him, and writes with amazing and dangerous facility.

12 September 1918 Thursday

Only five of the 'evade's' are now at liberty, the others having been caught at various distances (up to 60 kilometres) away. More food parcels.

14 September 1918 Saturday (No entry September 13)

We have got a number of fairly efficient coloured plates, which we stick up all over the room. They range from the 'Madonna del Foligno' downwards! These and another framed picture (the fourth frame Ellis has made for us, not counting innumerable small ones) make our room quite presentable. I complete the decoration by putting up yellow shades (paper) on our two lamps. The effect is quite pleasant. These last few days I have been getting letters again; four from Father, another from Mother etc. It makes all the difference. Another 'swank' dinner last night! ②

①

Life inside the walls became more monotonous just when it was becoming very moving in France. Naturally I could not in my diary comment on the daily communiques. But we spent much time in front of the war map, which was put up in the reading room and altered daily. The German communiques were on the whole reliable. They seldom lied, except indirectly by holding up news a day or two.

②

Four astride a pole, moving backwards, coxed by a fifth round a post and home again. Very painful, especially if the man in front of you wears boots.

③

The said collaborator was a 'dud', and the revue never materialised; in any case we went away too soon. But I was rather proud of my lyrics! I parodied everything I could think of with admirable impartiality.

④

No one paid any attention to this order, and it was 'washed out' two days after. The authorities tried to stop our habit of chucking away our 'ration' food when it was more uneatable than usual.

15 September 1918 Sunday

Spend the morning reading and writing. Church in the evening. Letter home. Cold day. Three of the five are captured.

16 September 1918 Monday

Some baseball in the morning. Summer weather again. Clock put back an hour in the night.

17 September 1918 Tuesday

Baseball in the morning. Get seven letters! I have now all my July letters from home.

18 September 1918 Wednesday

Letter from N, and therefore a red letter day... Rather more inclined to write. A very hot day ①.

19 September 1918 Thursday

The last 2 are captured, worse luck. More writing. Finish Villette, most interesting though occasionally irritating. Read 'Sesame and Lilies', which gives food for thought as well as enjoyment.

20 September 1918 Friday

Weather changes. Cold and rain. Still in writing mood.

21 September 1918 Saturday

Postcard home. Letter from Phelps. Clear colder weather, very delightful. Tea and ping pong (!) with Brown and Tolkein.

22 September 1918 Sunday

Today there are sports, organised by floors. My only contribution is partaking extempore in the 'boat race' ②. Our floor does very well, winning practically everything. Ellis and Cann win the three-legged, and they and Jordan help to carry off the 'Relay'. Quite an amusing day. Have started 'Hypatia'. Not bad (!)

23 September 1918 Monday

I am now engaged in writing part of a revue to be given at the Gaiety. I confine myself to the lyrics, as my collaborator seems more au fait with dialogue ③.

24 September 1918 Tuesday

First August letter from home. Baseball in the morning, followed by a hot bath. We now return (by order) to the old method of eating our food in the mess-rooms ④.

25 September 1918 Wednesday

First rehearsal of our mad band. A bit of a farce, as no properties are yet ready. But it will go all right. First book parcel.

①

We were rather more fortunate than most, having a decent officer, and a thoroughly fed up squad. Everything that was taken away was kept and returned to us later. An amusing incident was the discovery of the secret drawers for unopened tins which we had made under each table. They would never have been found, (though in most rooms they turned up all the tables), had not they tried to move a table and found it unconscionably heavy! The look on the man's face when he felt underneath and found about 20 tins was worth everything. They did not confiscate them, but just made us open them all, so that they could not be kept. But we were so hungry we finished off the lot! Several people hid tins in the heaps of gravel by the unfinished tennis court. But one was not buried well enough, and caught the sentry's eye; with the result that the guards must have had a square meal for once.

②

Several entertaining mornings were spent carpentering and painting and inventing; generally with someone banging the piano two feet away, and the rest of the room filled with patrons of the roulette board, 'Crown and Anchor' board, or Wet Canteen!

③

McCann, the Canadian whom our room had adopted.

④

This splendid fellow got right away to Poland, where he was taken badly ill. However he insisted on going on to rejoin the allies in Serbia, and reached Belgrade about a month after his escape, only to die there of pneumonia.

26 September 1918 Thursday

Nothing of importance. Good news comes in continually from all the battle fronts. Send a letter home.

27 September 1918 Friday

At 5.30 am the alarm went. With many imprecations we got up and dressed and went out. It was about the coldest day we have had. This time it was the genuine search. After having our names called we went out and waited, in occasional showers of rain; while the search parties, each containing one officer, one interpreter, one plain clothes man, and three or four men, went through the rooms one at a time. Eventually we were called up at 2 o'clock, being almost the last room to be taken. The search party was very considerate, and left us many things they might have been justified in taking away ①. The moment they had gone we had an immense meal.

28 September 1918 Saturday

Postcard home. Altogether today, I get four Irish Women's parcels, and an 'Invalid Comforts Parcel' of excellent quality from Hove, sent by Father's orders.

29 September 1918 Sunday

To early service at 7.15 with Russell. Exchange 'Hypatia' for a translation of 'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship'.

30 September 1918 Monday

With Ellis and I start making 'props' for the band show, with fair success ②.

1 October 1918 Tuesday

My books come from the censor. Nettleship, Bosanquet, and Green (on Political Obligation). Mac ③ comes to dinner, and we have a spread of no small order.

2-7 October 1918 Wednesday to Monday

This lazier and more suitable method of writing a diary was inevitable! Good news keeps coming in all the week, culminating today in a reported request for an armistice by all the Central Powers. Clinton gets away again, and is still at large. ④ I spend quite a lot of time on my 'props' for the band show, though the date of the first performance is as indefinite as ever... I have read 'Literature and Dogma' by M Arnold ...several letters... The rasher spirits are beginning to talk of being home by Xmas! O

①

ie of the original notebook, started at Rastatt.

②

Here we all are.

[Photograph attached, captioned]

Broadbent, Reid, Arnott, Murray, Ellis

Russell, PHBL, Bytheway, McCann, Jordan

utinam!. More books come in, all I want for starting 'Greats', but the censor still has them. We had another alarm on Saturday, and Jerry cooked the breakfast. Quite a double event! This morning Murray got up early and had a cold shower, which is an even greater event!!

12 October 1918 Saturday

The last page ① seems too sacred to use for a mere record of trivialities! I find, on rereading, that many of my first judgments have been falsified by events. The best I can say is that I was at least moderately optimistic, when most of the rest were gloomy. And the picture I drew in my mind of this camp as it would be in three months was not so very false. We have shaken together now, the ten of us, and have learnt to avoid one another's weak points ②. Arnott spends very little time here; his friends are mostly elsewhere. Reid is a good fellow, clever, eccentric, of a droll humour, with fits of energy. 'Mac' is good natured without much originality. Broadbent I have grown to like very much; he is unselfish and hardworking, though much oppressed by confinement and at a loss for settled occupation. Jordan is a simple country fellow, with many obvious roughnesses atoned for by real good nature. Murray is a queer mixture of enterprise and laziness, very young and at times rather a nuisance, but likeable as a noisy child. Of our own four; Bytheway is a humdrum quiet fellow who does some thinking; Russell, rather self-centred but conscientious, with a quick temper and decided opinions; Ellis the pick of the bunch, genuine, full of keenness and interest, cheery and indefatigable. Myself I am on excellent terms with them all, and have begun to find new friends (some of them old friends met again) in my books. I started Plato's Republic yesterday, and have enough philosophy here to last all winter. But I have learnt more than is in books these last 4 months. It is very instructive seeing what men can become in physical hardships, and which characters best stand the strain. I shall not start a new book till circumstances call for it. That may be soon, as the news outside is better every day. Till then I shall merely keep a mental record of all that matters.

*About this time a new escape party, including Mac and Murray, was at work on a fresh tunnel, under the cookhouse. But on the last day one of the sentries stood on a soft bit and went in to his waist. Two men were working in it but escaped unrecognised. Rotten luck. One or two other people tried various ways of escape, but only Clinton (as recorded) got away.

①

I wrote 'Camp Notes' and a couple of poems for each of the only two 'weekly' numbers of the 'Vistula', which will be found at the end of the diary. Beyond a disastrous misquotation from Brooke's most famous sonnet, the articles at least were blameless, if nothing more.

②

My ticket for same.

[Ticket attached]

③

Much to the amusement and dismay of the rest of the room, Jerry and I would read parts aloud alternately from a huge Shakespeare in the camp library! I have hardly ever met anyone so keen to make up for lost time in the matter of literature.

13 October 1918 Sunday

I cannot refrain from starting a new book, as the news has just come through that Germany is willing to evacuate all occupied territory as a preliminary to peace negotiations. It is unexpected news and most welcome, and most of us, I think with justice, are beginning to think of peace, no more as a distant almost impossible event, but as a very near reality.

14 October 1918 Monday

My 25th birthday. I go out to dinner and tea on the strength of it, and the room drinks my health in the local wine. I undertake to write a column in the weekly paper to be started here, calling it 'Camp notes' ①. Yet another distraction from philosophy.

15-19 October 1918 Tuesday-Saturday

The days are full of news, as absorbing as news ever has been. Our own life continues much as usual. I get a number of back letters altogether, including five from home, telling me among other things of another good review of my book in the Literary Supplement. We have an 'alarm' on Tuesday morning, and today I have two parcels after a long gap, even more welcome than usual.

19-25 October 1918 Saturday-Friday

This week sees the opening of the 'Graudenz Gaiety', the first performance of which took place on the 24th ②. I am going to the show, which I am told is very good, tonight. Our 'mad band' was billed to appear, but has been put off for a week or two, as we are not quite ready. More negotiations pass between Germany and the allies, and the former certainly seems to be feeling her way to peace. I have written my 'Camp Notes' for the first number of the 'Vistula', which is to appear shortly. Altogether we are becoming what Plato (whom I still study regularly) would call a τροφῶσα πόλις a luxurious community. The parcel business looks up, and we are once more 'away'. I have read lately Pater's 'Renaissance' and SPB Mais' 'A Schoolmaster's Diary', besides initiating Ellis into the mysteries of Shakespeare! ③ He is writing me a paper

①
Never read, as no more meetings were held.

②
Programme attached. Our item was number two, but as already said, it never came off for various reasons.

[Copy of programme attached]

③
The complete series (October 27 to November 20) is collected in the 'Appendix' to this book.

④
This appeared in the first 'Vistula'. Afterwards I cut out two verses and polished it a little.

⑤
Everyone in the room felt the disease, but no one was allowed to stay too long in bed and imagine himself ill. We always kept windows open, and made everybody do lots of square walking. Jerry was invaluable, and put heart into all of us. As a result, we were the only room which kept a clean bill of health.

on 'Macbeth' just now. Also I have completed a paper for the literary society called 'Discipline and the Poet', in which I have aired my views with perhaps too little modesty ①. We have a new orderly in the room, one Price, a great improvement on the amazing Pincombe, though the latter certainly provided considerable amusement. I have been feeling a bit seedy all the week, probably because of the change in weather.

26-28 October 1918 Saturday-Monday

The 'Gaiety' is an amazingly efficient institution. It has all the atmosphere of a provincial music hall, and the turns are really not at all bad. The best thing in the first show ② was a topical sketch of Pack's writing, in which he himself took a double part with great skill. The allusions were very clever. And we have most ambitious things promised for the future. On Saturday night I went to bed feeling rather feverish and spent all the next day there. Today I am up again a bit weak but fitter than I have been for some time. The first daily issue of the Vistula ③ appeared on Sunday, consisting of a double foolscap sheet with war bulletins and general news. On Saturday night my sleeplessness produced the best part of 'Prisoners of War', which I had had in me for some time ④.

29-31 October 1918 Tuesday-Thursday

'Grippe' of a more or less advanced form seems to have established itself pretty thoroughly in the camp. Most rooms have at least half their occupants in bed. In our room we have determined to fight it, though we all feel pretty brittle. By fresh air and exercise and a determined optimism we have kept the worst of it off ⑤. Everything seems postponed by the prevailing malady. I got myself put up as a candidate for the Central Committee (two members from each block and a president, two months tenure of office) for the sake of having the joy of any election fight. Much to the disgust of us all only one other man was put up, so

①

Afterwards pulled to pieces and reshaped into 'Innocence'.

②

Some wonderful voluntary work was done by some officers. Our own doctors were splendid, and saved innumerable lives, as the camp medical arrangements were ridiculously inadequate. At first, when there was most needs, there was no supply of special foods or of medicines, and no light was allowed in the hospital at night. Men died by the light of matches. Fry (photo appears further on) took in hand the organisation of night nursing, and did splendid work himself. The most devoted service of all, however, was that of Lieutenant Oliver, who went into the hospital with his friend McQuaid, (who was dangerously ill for weeks on end), and slept and lived with him there; in the existing conditions this was real heroism, and certainly saved McQuaid's life. All milks and jellies and custards which came out in parcels were given over to the use of the sick men, and after the first week things were more or less in order. But with proper precautionary arrangements we might have avoided any loss of life.

we were both returned unopposed. The daily Vistula continues, but the weekly one has been put off till Sunday week.

1-5 November 1918 Friday-Tuesday

Second Lieutenant Johnston of the KRRC [King's Royal Rifle Corps] died of the grippe on the 2nd November, and Second Lieutenant Craig of my regiment died today. Many others are pretty bad, but the camp as a whole seems free of it. Death seems so tragic here, where we thought ourselves withdrawn from the great pestilence of war. It reminds me of death at school, it is so unexpected and shocking a visitor. In this room we are all quite fit. McCann (who sleeps in another room) has been pretty bad, and has been in the hospital in the town. But we hear he is much better. The news is splendid, the terms of the Turkish and Austrian armistices have been published, and are better than we could have expected. We are now all waiting restlessly, wondering what is to come. I wrote The 'Song of her Love' between 4.30 and 7am one morning. I have been reading 'Fortitude' by Hugh Walpole, a really fine novel, which has taken me miles away from Germany. The weather is colder, but clear and healthy. The central committee election has been postponed a week, after the results had been announced! So I am now only a candidate once more.

6-7 November 1918 Wednesday-Thursday

Two more officers, Bandy and Dunscombe, have died in hospital. There are now only one or two in danger. I have volunteered to do night duty; no technical knowledge needed, and spent two hours (4-6am) in the camp hospital this morning. Not a pleasant job, but it is useful ②. I shall probably take a turn every three or four nights. We have now heard definitely that a German commission is to cross the lines to discuss the armistice terms. We are counting now by weeks, almost by days. Meanwhile I have on hand two songs for a smoking concert tomorrow, my weakly 'Vistula' article, a debate on Monday and the election. Some life!

①

Our Brigadier was full up at this time with a wonderful plan for breaking our way out of Germany on motor lorries, and all sorts of councils of war were held. Corfe told me about it all afterwards; he confesses to have been merely amused at the project!

②

We had little doubt of this. Fleming, our more or less cosmopolitan interpreter had told us that Germany would have to assent to whatever terms were proposed.

8-10 November 1918 Friday-Sunday

News changes every hour. We know that the German deputation to Foch crossed the lines on Friday or Saturday and today or tomorrow we should hear the result. Rumour is rife, not only in the camp but in the town outside as well, so that we cannot even rely on news brought by our guards. This crisis is certainly not unaccompanied by disturbances inside Germany, though of course we hear less of this than we might. But we hear enough to increase our restlessness and uncertainty tenfold. Our considerations are naturally perhaps, rather selfish, and riots and suchlike do not seem to favour a speedy homecoming ①. However we must first see what the armistice terms are going to be, and if they are accepted ②. I sang the 'Company Sergeant Major' on Friday and Saturday nights in the 'Gaiety', with 'Christmas' for an encore, and the '5.15' as a second encore, which was necessary both nights, the audience being cheerful. On Saturday afternoon I went down in a party of about 150 to see the funeral of the dead officers. The Germans provided a guard of honour and a band, while one of our buglers blew the 'Last Post'. It was a simple impressive ceremony in a lovely woodland cemetery about an hour's walk from here. The children, who clamour outside our windows day and night for biscuits, etc. and who are being continually driven away by the exasperated sentry, are this afternoon even more turbulent than usual, and seem to be holding a sort of minor imitation of the socialist meeting which is being held in the town.

(Later)

One of the interpreters has just brought in strange news. The soldiers in the town are wearing red cockades instead of their 'eagles', and a republic seems well on the way. The Kaiser appears to have abdicated and Ebert, the Social Democrat, is the new Chancellor. Hardly any trains are running, and a 'Soldiers and Workmen's Committee' has been formed. Aeroplanes have been flying

①

I copy down the 'news' as received and the thoughts they suggested without in the least vouching for the truth of the former, or the permanence of the latter. But this is the only way to give some idea of the unique situation in which we were placed, vitally concerned yet completely isolated.

②

I got one.

over with red flags flying. Prisoners in the town have been released. What will happen to us? We seem backwatered in a curious way while all these things are happening. But we may yet have to take active part. Bavaria and Brunswick have proclaimed themselves republics and the fever is well abroad. Will it cross the channel? ①

11 November 1918 Monday

Last night rumours grew more frequent and more ominous every hour. Most of them have since proved false, noticeably that which said that the people had revolted and among other things pinched 600 of our parcels! There certainly seems to have been disturbances, but none of them were serious, and this morning things are quiet again, most of the sentries have taken down their 'eagles' and there is great competition to secure them, soap and tea being offered in exchange! ② The officers half camp have mostly taken down their badges, some under compulsion, and the new committee seems definitely in power. The Armistice appears to have been at last signed, and all we know really about it is that it provides for the immediate return of allied prisoners. The feeling here is absolutely indescribable. It is like a dream come true. All our forebodings vanish at the appearance of about 500 parcels early in the morning. The general has just posted a memorandum, stating roughly that:

- 1) The present German officers will carry on (by order of the Soldiers and Workmen's Committee) until they are confirmed or suspended.
- 2) Roll-calls will be reduced to one a day.
- 3) The parcel-room has been handed over to our authorities (All lockers are being cleared, and parcels issued whole).
- 4) Letters will come in uncensored.
- 5) Officers are requested not to make injudicious remarks or disturbances, in order that the work of repatriation may not be hindered. (Yum yum!)
- 6) They are also requested not to drink too much (!) and not to throw out of the windows food we may want.

①

He was back again next day in charge, being appointed by the Committee to wind up our affairs. He was absolutely heartbroken by the collapse of his beloved Empire, and almost cried on Corfe's neck. Poor old blighter.

②

These are some of them.

[Photograph with names attached]

There will be more news later. This morning the Saturday walked into the camp in 'civvies' and raised a trilby hat to the sentry ①. O Gilbert, O Sullivan!

12 November 1918 Tuesday

The situation has settled down. Detailed terms of the armistice are to hand; they are almost terribly crushing, and yet have been signed practically without hesitation; though the new German government, according to tonight's 'Vistula', has addressed an appeal to Wilson to try and secure mitigation. Rumour is now concerned almost entirely with our date of return. The Brigadier has announced that we are to be sent home as soon as the necessary rolling stock can be freed. Debts are being settled and clothes sorted! The central committee, election proceeded without incident, save the strenuous canvassing of the room as a whole and the strident electioneering of Tully Reid. The voting eventually was: Lyon 171, Rudd 93, Womersley 89; so Rudd and I are members of a committee which we trust will be very shortlived, for we are reckoning by days just now. I have read Wilde's 'De Profundis' which seems very true to his peculiar genius, and in parts quite beautiful; though I doubt if he really ceased to pose a little, even in his greatest sorrow. I went up last night and again tonight to see Thomas and his friend ② a cheery and intelligent crowd in the other block. I borrowed from them a new anthology called 'A Pageant of English Poetry', which has introduced me to several good new things. I have nearly finished the 'Republic' now, and am starting on 'Wuthering Heights'.

13 November 1918 Wednesday

I start the day with 3 hours' duty in the hospital (8am to 11am). All the cases are improving, though three fellows with mumps are having a pretty painful time. There is practically nothing to do there except hand books round, give them drinks etc. I go straight on to a central committee meeting; our business now seems chiefly the winding up of all our affairs

①

The real situation was as follows:

The German staff made an immense profit out of the messing allowance which they were by agreement permitted to take out of our pay. Corfe demanded to see the accounts; they foolishly let him see them and he discovered the fact. So he at once set about trying to get this money returned. At first he met with a direct refusal, and if it had not been for the revolution might have got nothing better. But the 'Soldiers and Workmen's Committee was diplomatically very anxious to send us back with a good impression of the new regime in Germany, and so put pressure on the Saturday, with the result that he had eventually to pay, as the sequel will disclose. Meanwhile the surplus had been spent, either by the Saturday or his subordinates, in stocking the canteens. As we were in charge of the canteen we of course at once pocketed the money we had taken there (which formerly we believed we owed the Saturday, since the goods were nominally his); but this left the balance very large.

②

All these were confiscated out of parcels as being useful aids to escape.

before we go. There are a number of complicated accounts, the general drift of which seems to be that the Saturday has a lot of our money and won't 'loose up' ①. However we have now the Committee to appeal to over his head, and we hope that the threat of this will be sufficient. Other matters include the disposition of library books, surplus stock of food etc. Corfe is most level-headed and it is a pleasure to work under him. We hear today that Lieutenant Cinnamon has died in hospital; he was reported a few days ago to be recovering, so it is something of a shock. This is our fifth casualty. An amazing number of rumours have come in. They are all heavily backed, but appear a little irreconcilable. I append six specimens:

- a) A Polish army is marching on Graudenz.
- b) We move tomorrow, or if not, certainly the day after.
- c) The barracks are needed by the German army on Friday week.
- d) We can't POSSIBLY leave for a fortnight.
- e) Four trains have been ordered for today week.
- f) Three battleships are now waiting for us in Danzig harbour.

16 November 1918 Saturday

We still live on from day to day, and still have no idea when we are going. The KG's, a concert party run by our premier comedian, Entwhistle, have given some first rate shows. We have had another committee meeting, this time with the commandant himself. By masterly diplomacy Corfe got him to promise all accounts by this afternoon; also to give us back all civilian clothes ② and get an estimate of barrack damages before we go. I am detailed to go round with them on this job for our block, and it will be a good day's work. The revolution seems to be going well, and the new government keeps order. Parcels continue to come in regularly, but we have had no letters for 10 days or more. The children outside grow more clamorous every day, and two days ago were dispersed by the sentries with a hose, though most of them

①

The sweep was a droll creature who used to give acrobatic performances on the roof, and pretend to fall off them, while we were on parade. He really was rather funny.

②

Fry told me, long afterwards, that that same dressing gown alone was sold next day for 100 marks; so I was properly had. But we had nothing to pack things in, and it was better than leaving it behind.

③

For photo see overleaf, also for menu.

seemed rather to like a bath! Rumours continue to circle round the camp with every possible authority from the quartermaster to the sergeant-major's wife and the sweep ①. Most people are betting on the end of next week.

PS Late at night comes the official news that we cannot go for eight days at least!

17 November 1918 Sunday

Nan's birthday... the thought of the 'family' is always a great solace, and is now mixed with happy anticipations. We have had no letters now for some time, which greatly distresses us. I spend a lot of time today rigging up a fancy costume for the theatrical dinner tomorrow night; I am going as 'Sir Morton Maconochie', in a concoction of pyjamas, jaeger pants, labels off tins, and coloured handkerchiefs! I also wash some more clothes, a labour and sorrow. I have disposed of several things to the 'purchase committee', some officers (headed by Fry and Rodwell), who are buying up spare stuff and taking the risk of selling it before we go. I got 70 marks in all for my dressing gown, old tunic, old boots and one or two odds and ends ②. I go to church in the evening, and continue my dressmaking after supper.

18 November 1918 Monday

I spend from 10am to 12.30, and 3 to 5.30pm, on the most uninteresting job of going all round the block with the barrack-warden and Pallas, assessing damages. At 7 o'clock I go to the dinner in all my finery. The costume is voted a success, and as a whole the dresses are really clever ③. The dinner was very bad, but everyone was very merry, and I thoroughly enjoyed it; though I took care to leave before it was spoilt by the usual crowd getting fool-drunk. It quite reminded me of some of our Oxford rags, and was a pleasant escape from war. Today we had our first snow, just a light fall, but enough to transform the whole country.

Here is the photo, taken after dinner. I am completely invisible, except for one ear and one eyebrow, on the floor at the back. Beneath is the menu.

[Photograph and menu attached]

19 November 1918 Tuesday

Today there was to have been a semi-mock trial, the Theatre suing the 'Vistula' for libel; the charge being founded on some very mild criticisms I had myself written in the 'Camp Notes'. However, it was discovered that, if certain awkward questions were asked, the reputations of several senior officers might be in question, and so it was eventually decided to wash no dirty linen in public. Hot baths again today, after an unclean interval! I take one or two 'grouses' to Corfe, who does his best in the matters in question.

20 November 1918 Wednesday

News comes today that 200 officers are leaving the camp on Saturday. There is great speculation as to who will be lucky ones. The general and his advisers begin well by putting down all colonials (Mac and Jerry come under this heading), and go on badly by filling up the list in a purely arbitrary fashion. So none of the rest of us are on it, not being in such high favour. Not that we care, as we have no right to go first, and the next draft should come soon; but the principle on which the thing is worked is only another illustration of the way some of the senior officers here have abused their power. Corfe is worth 50 of the rest. We have made arrangements to have a room dinner on Friday night, and extensive preparations are being made for it. I go on parole with Jerry and Russell today. It is a lovely frosty day, and it does me real good. I want to write just now, but can't for nuts. I'm too unsettled altogether.

21 November 1918 Thursday

I go on parole again, and finish Plato. It is an even more lovely day than yesterday, with no wind, and I come half the way back with a little German girl, who exchanges a very mixed conversation with me about life in general. It makes me long to get

The verses are all topical, and incomprehensible except to the initiated. They refer to the members of the room in the order of their names.

[Menu attached]

back to my children! I treated the whole room to seats at the theatre tonight; a drama, or rather melodrama, by Pack and Thomas; quite effective in a not very subtle fashion. I then take on hospital duty from 10am to 12.

22 November 1918 Friday

The weekly 'Vistula' (second number) comes out, with two of my poems (old ones), in it, and a clever but rather too faithful parody of my 'Prisoners of War' in the first number. We have another meeting of the central committee, and as the result of certain difficulties decide to take over the booking of the seats in the theatre, hitherto somewhat abused by the theatre clique. Of course I 'click' for the job, thus adding another to my various duties. In the evening we have our room dinner, an excellent affair. We have specially printed menus ①, for which I am responsible, and the three cooks excel themselves. A considerable amount of wine is disposed of, but only one or two of the less responsible can be said to be any the worse for it! We all make speeches, and most of us sing songs. A most merry evening.

23 November 1918 Saturday

We hear today that the first party is not going till Tuesday, much to their disappointment. I have an hour at the theatre job, which is simple, though the accounts are in a bit of a muddle. In the evening we all go to the show; not bad. I distinguish myself by sending round a note to the leading lady, (in private life a profane babe in the Flying Corps), and by shouting choruses with great vigour.

24 November 1918 Sunday

I borrow a Times Literary Supplement and find in it an advertisement of my book. Quaint. I am reading 'Stella Maris', which is quite delightful, and full of real characters.

①

Ice floes on the Vistula nearer its mouth.

[Photograph attached]

②

The hotel serviette!

[Attached]

③

To an unknown child.

25 November 1918 Monday

For the first time we are allowed out between 10am and 9pm into the town without sentries and without having to give our parole. It is splendid to be able to go out and feel a free man. The people all seem friendly, and the children look up and laugh in our faces as if they had never in their young lives been taught to curse England. We saw the Vistula with ice floating down it ① and then by way of experiment the four of us (Russell, Reid, Brown and self) had 'mittagessen' at a hotel ②, including glasses of real English whiskey, to the others an EVENT. Then we walked through the town, bought a few 'souvenirs', and had a good haircut and shampoo, coming back for tea. Many of them went out again after tea. The show at night, to which several of the French officers in the neighbouring prison camp had been invited, was cut short by a telegram saying that the first party of 200 was to leave at once! This is eventually found to mean 4.30am, so Jerry and Mac start packing vigorously. The rest of us write letters for them to take home and wish we were of their party. And then of course the draft is postponed till 8am the next evening!

I have just completed some verses to the picture of the little girl which is in our room. It has been simmering for some time and crystallised today ③.

26 November 1918 Tuesday

Quiet morning. Hot bath in the afternoon. After an early tea, Reid, Broadbent, Murray and I visit various cafes. A harmless pub-crawl ends up at a dancing saloon which is too crowded to be very amusing. We come back at 8 o'clock to see the draft off, we are glad they really are going at last; we were so used to hearing it put off that we had begun to be incredulous. But it is sad losing Jerry, who has become a most indispensable member of the party. However he and I have fixed

①

The attached photo was taken by another prisoner just before the first draft went away. The group was taken on my bed and the two tiny pictures each side of my bracket are photos of Diana and Peter! Note the plant on the bracket!

[Photograph attached with names written around]

Clockwise from top left:

Murray, Arnott, Broadbent, PHBL, Bytheway, Macon, Jordan, Reid, Ellis, Russell

up a meeting 'over yonder', so I don't mind so much. Then supper, and so to bed ①.

29 November 1918 Wednesday

A lovely frosty day. After roll-call, which has now become the general's parade, we have a 'final' meeting with the commandant. He now asserts that he personally knew nothing of the use of our surplus messing money to stock the canteen, and, while saying that he has to accept responsibility, declares that he has been let down by his junior officers, and throws himself on our mercy. This is very different from his former attitude, and whether true or not shows that he is beginning to realize his position. The total debt is now about 55000 marks. Against this he has the canteen stock, which should realize all of this. But we need a settlement at once, and he states that he cannot dispose of the goods immediately and has not the money to pay. He suggests that the officer prisoners could bear the loss better than he could. This at once brings matters to a head. Corfe eventually offers to accept a payment of 25000 down (we already held about 15000 marks of money owed to the Saturday, so that would make 40,000 of our 55,000). The old man refuses, and so we say that the only course left is to put the whole matter in a report to the War Office, thus the affair is left. I seize the opportunity of going a long walk up the Vistula, away from the town. Keeping to a little woodland path high above the river, I push on to a little village, lying at the head of a small creek. I wander up and down the village, everyone looking at me as if I have dropped from heaven, or come up from the other place. I then walk back along a lower path, beside the river up which the sun was shining, with beautiful light effects. No word can describe the joy of being alone and at liberty out in the country. Those who know me can imagine it. While watching the ice floes on the river I am hailed by Rodwell, one of the very few of my friends who could be welcome

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I attach here, for want of a more suitable place, one of the tram tickets I used. Also, a specimen of local 'money', bits of dirty paper good only for a fortnight, and only inside the town. The ticket is much the more imposing of the two!

[Money and ticket attached]

just then. I walk up the river again with him, and then return, reaching the barracks at 4 o'clock, just after sunset. Rodwell comes in to tea, and I go out to dinner with him and Coxe and Thomas, having quickly tired of the cabaret 'night life' which still attracts everyone else in the room. We chat away with great zest on all the good old real subjects, and I come to bed quite happy. The room comes back by driblets between 10pm and 2am!

28 November 1918 Thursday

Not feeling quite up to scratch today, so I stay in and read all morning. 'Ransom's Folly', some quite good short stories.

29 November 1918 Friday

Feeling distinctly like a day in bed, so I take one. At last I get a whole bunch of letters, including all home ones for October, and another from Nan. I can still eat pretty heartily, so I don't think there's really much wrong with me!

30 November 1918 Saturday

Fit as a fiddle again, so I go down town ① and do some shopping in the morning. You should have seen me trying to buy sock suspenders in an unknown language. Da's birthday. Her photo and Peter's on my wall are much admired. Still no news as to when we are going. We are getting restless. Some bridge in the evening.

1 December 1918 Sunday

Quite a good day. A good deal more snow has fallen, and it looks as if it might 'get out' quite well. I persuade Broadbent to come for a country walk and we have a great tramp. About four miles down the road, then along a track following a small stream to the Vistula, and back along the river. The sun struggles out just as we reach a high wooded hill above and facing a long stretch of the ice-crowded river; the mists and colours are beautiful. Grand day. Ended by a quiet evening.

①

Both very well! But I left the onions at the back of a cold store, and in the interval someone heated it up and my onions were reduced to cinders. I can feel the anguish of the discovery even now!

②

View as attached.

[Photographs attached]

2 December 1918 Monday

Russell has struck for the moment, and stays in bed reading 'Septimus', so I start the day by frying bacon and end it by frying onions ①. In between I wash up, empty the bucket and empty tins and rubbish, clear out the fireplace, help sweep up (Price having struck for the moment also), fetch coal, and do various odd jobs. Then I walk with Broadbent and Bytheway up to the tower and old castle, where we get a fine view over the Vistula ②, and then on along the cliff, returning through a massive low-lying fortress, and right across the town. A good walk. I then read a little Hobbs, that brave old fighter against the truth, whose style and unaffected contempt for Kant are equally delightful. Also I begin an adventure novel by Masefield, 'Lost Endeavour'.

3 December 1918 Tuesday

Still no parcels; we are getting anxious. And home seems as far away as ever. More people seem to stay in bed from sheer laziness every day. It certainly is a rotten day. I stay indoors till after tea, and then go down with the two B's to the local cinema. A very poor show.

4 December 1918 Wednesday

The bed habit is becoming a scandal. I resolutely get up and do the chores, though hardly anyone else is out before noon. Another really busy morning doing everybody's work. A 'mot' of Broadbent rather hits off our existence at present: 'I won't make coffee for breakfast, or we shan't sleep'. A pretty beastly day. In the evening I play bridge with Corfe, Rodwell, and Coxe. Rotten luck.

5 December 1918 Thursday

Quite a good day. After lighting the fire at an early hour, I get fed up with the general sleepiness, shake Broadbent out of bed, have breakfast, and go off with him for a real bonza walk, past the lake, onto the hills, and a bit beyond, coming back

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We looked back on Graudenz from this point of view.

[Photographed attached]

②

This was soon revoked.

along the crest and through the town. About 14 miles in all. More bridge in the evening. Better games, though I am still a loser.

6 December 1918 Friday

I succumb temporarily to the prevailing malady, and after emptying the ash tins and cleaning up the fireplace and scrubbing the spuds, I read by the fire in my pyjamas till 12.30. Then I walk down town, with Tully and do some desultory shopping. Hot bath. Down again to a cinema, another one, rather better than the other, with Broadbent. Quiet evening.

7 December 1918 Saturday

A glorious frosty day. Russell, Broadbent and I get our breakfast and chores done quickly and get out about 10.30am. We go out over the Vistula bridge, 1200 yards long, and out across the plain to a little village on a hill ① about four miles away (Beer!). From here we strike a good country road through some woods, and then over a large tract of sandy country used as a training ground. Then we reach a pretty straggling village where they have never seen an Englishman, and have half an hour at a Gasthaus, two hot grogs apiece, we present the infant daughter of the house with 50 pfennigs to buy sweets with, and buy ½ lb of sugar for 3! Then we come tramping home, three cheery and rather incongruous figures without hats or sticks, about 15 or 16 miles, grand walk. (By the way, officers have now been forbidden to carry sticks and have to be in by 9pm ②). The 'Soldatenrat' seem to think there may be trouble between us and the troops coming back from the front). Later I go out and have more bridge with Corfe and the other two. I lose again, being a bit sleepy! However Corfe talks of scandal of the camp so alluringly that we eventually do not go to bed till 1.30am!

8 December 1918 Sunday

We have been latterly buoyed up in the hope that we were going off on Tuesday. Now this seems to be a wash-out, and things relapse into their old state

①

'Corfe the invaluable'.

[Photograph attached]

②

Of the Danish YMCA. Both now and all through our captivity this institution did splendid work and was our best friend.

of uncertainty. We are getting desperate and sick with hope deferred. Bridge again in the evening; I lose once more.

9 December 1918 Monday

Fleming came in this morning with the news that Monday a wire has come saying that a boat is waiting for us at Danzig to take us away tomorrow. We go wild with joy, and I spend all the morning packing my books into two Berne biscuit boxes, and trying to squeeze everything else into my suitcase. We have hurried meal, sell what remains of our food or give it away to the French officers, who are pretty badly off. And then came the news that the move is cancelled! Eight tempers were lost in about as many minutes. When we have recovered, we sadly count over the small stock of food remaining and once more drift back to conjecture. Things are certainly more hopeful than they were two days ago, but the sudden disappointment has soured the outlook, and we are all gloomy. I play bridge with Reid Russell and Buster Brown till 1am. For once I win, but not much.

10 December 1918 Tuesday

Corfe the invaluable ①, after a stormy scene with the general, (so chants the muse rumour) goes to Danzig and interviews the commissioners ② there, to find out why we never went away, to tell them we have no food left. He comes back late at night to tell us that he has been finally promised that a boat is coming in for us on the 12th. This more-or-less certainty cheers us up immensely. He also tells us that there are two British cruisers at Danzig, and that the 'snotties' have been painting the town red. During the day Broadbent and I go down and have a real bath in the town, at quite a good little place, where the daughter of the house (about six [years old]) beguiled the hours of waiting by playing with a kitten in a most English fashion. More bridge in the evening but my bad luck has returned, and Reid and I go down badly.

①

I distinctly saw Russell putting pear-drops and jam into the stew.

②

Broadbent (who was later my 'best man').

[Photograph attached]

11 December 1918 Wednesday

We stay in bed late as usual. I don't go out. As Wednesday food is more or less at its vanishing point we now concentrate on two meals a day, one about 2 o'clock [in the afternoon], and the other at night. They are generally weird but delicious mixtures! ① Rodwell comes in to bridge and I lose again, not very much. The children come in late, quite messy, after a good time in town.

12 December 1918 Thursday

We hear that the boat is delayed a day by fogs. Another committee meeting in the morning. We seem to be on the verge of getting our 21000 marks, but there are some signatures wanted on both sides before the thing can be completed. A day of great frost. It is colder here now than I have known it in England, but a healthy dry cold, not unpleasant. We play bridge again at night, and I lose once more. What a life! We had some good Madeira to spin out the hours. The first good wine I have had in Germany.

13 December 1918 Friday

The SS Mitau has arrived in Danzig. We are chased early out of bed by a rumour that we are going at 10am; but we are still 'standing by' at noon. Our heavy baggage goes down to the station, which is a good sign. Pallas (our German block officer) comes in to say goodbye; he has been a good officer to us, and we are really sorry to see the last of him. Corfe tells us the situation and we give him three cheers. We mean to make him a presentation when we get home. It is about the only way we can show our gratitude. Later we hear that we are to parade at 11.15pm. The definite news is comforting. I go down with Broadbent ②, who has been my best pal in camp this last fortnight, and some of the others for a last look at the town. Then we have our last meal in Room 81, and do NOT wash up... Instead Tully 'clears' the table. Crash goes the crockery. Bridge for two hours, and then we take our bags and leave the room (without stopping to moralise) though it is tempting, to do so, thus; 'Here have we lived

①

The 'Mitau', as it was when it was being used by the Russians during the war.

[Photograph attached]

together six months, and how soon shall we be to each other anything more than a name? etc. etc.). We parade and trail off to the station in any old order. It is a lovely night, though a bit cold. The last that Graudenz hears of us is 'Goodbye-ee' (horrible song) drifting out of the windows of the long train. I dare say they heaved a sigh of relief, for we must have given them some anxious moments; even though they have made enormous fortunes out of the camp. Quite apart from legitimate profit on sale of wines etc. they have been giving us only 30 or 35 marks to the pound, whereas the exchange (we learn later) now stand at 50. Reid Russell, Bytheway, Brown and I get into a carriage, and are joined by Stephen, whom I know slightly, just as the train goes out. We discover too late that one of the windows is Kaput. The journey is cold, but who cares? We take about 11 hours over the 60 miles to Danzig.

14 December 1918 Saturday

At 12.30pm we are on board the Mitau ①, late 'Arundel Castle', now a Danish hospital ship. All captains go on board first, so I am separated from the rest. However I luckily find Rodwell, and get with him and two others I know slightly into quite a good little cabin. We are exceptionally lucky, as most of the officers are crowded together in large wards underdecks. We have lunch (cooked by others and washed up for by others and containing a real cut from the joint!). We start at about 1.30 and are told we may be home in three and a half days. Also that from Leith we go for a night to Ripon, and then straight home; we seem safe to be there for Christmas. I sleep in the afternoon and then walk round with Broadbent. It is a good night, not too cold, with quite a peaceful sea. I sleep like a log, with both ports open.

15 December 1918 Sunday

Breakfast before 8am, a thing unheard of. The weather is still very good. About noon I find I can send home a wireless message, and promptly do so. We reach

①

This was the first suggestion of the splendid welcome which was waiting for us. As we entered Leith on Wednesday morning all the bells and whistles and hooters on every boat in the place sounded in our honour.

Copenhagen about 1pm and anchor outside the harbour for an hour or so. There are three of our cruises outside the harbour, and we cheer each other frantically as we pass ①. We make steady progress northwards; rain falls later but the sea is still very calm. During the afternoon I help Rodwell to collect the money for the presentation to Corfe. We amass about £50 between us. Bridge in the evening. Another excellent night.

16 December 1918 Monday

The sea is even calmer, though we are now going due west and are almost in the North Sea. Long may it last. We are of course all immensely happy just now, and I need not enlarge on my own feelings. We are now more than halfway home. Just finished 'Tristram Shandy' for the second time. A most wonderful mad and humorous book, which has really entertained me. In the afternoon the sea freshens up a bit, and a number of folk succumb. I keep fit, though feeling a little wobbly inside. We have a concert in the evening. I sing 'Take a pair of sparkling eyes' and 'The little Irish Girl' for my own pleasure, having sung comic songs for two years to please other people. Much speechifying and general frivolity.

17 December 1918 Tuesday

Still fresher, but I keep very fit all day. On deck most of the morning; later I finish rereading my beloved 'Septimus', and start on my second trip with 'Simon the Jester'. Bridge in the afternoon, and another, and final concert, in the evening when I conciliate public opinion by giving 'Six Short Soldiers' and 'Christmas' after my 'straight' songs. More speeches, and a presentation of various Danish YMCA 'medals' as mementoes to various promiscuously chosen officers. Broadbent and Jordan get them, much to their amusement. Some French officers, who came with us from their lager disguised in British uniforms, have blossomed out in their own uniforms again, and there is much international cordiality. The Danes are all very hospitable, and their

A message from the King attached. This was given to each of us on arrival at Ripon.

[Message attached]

captain is a first rate fellow.

18 December 1918 Wednesday

We wake to see Scotland, and pass beyond the first of the great booms outside Leith before 10 o'clock. We then anchor and wait for the tide, with many other boats, some of these also laden with prisoners. Then the pilot takes us in. It is amusing to see our little general fussing (to the last) up and down the bridge as if he were doing all the work. Soon after noon we are docked! I am lucky enough to get away with Corfe as his 'adjutant' on the first party. Rodwell, Arnott, and six others come with us. They give us a good lunch at Leith (Corfe sees a couple of reporters and tells them how he did the commandant down for the cash. The tale appears in the 'Daily Mail' next morning with only four misprints) and send us straight on to Ripon. Bridge on the train. We arrive at about 10pm, are shown the most comfortable of beds and given a slap-up dinner, band included; and then let loose in a Mess with gramophones, billiard tables, etc. and all the illustrated papers. England!