

**Ken Lucas:**

**stories and observations, 1916-18**

## **Preface**

During his two and a half years of overseas service between 1916 and 1918, Ken Lucas, a young officer from the town of Markdale in Grey County, Ontario, recorded more than sixty stories and observations in a stitched notebook. Entries are often undated and vary greatly in length: some are several pages long, others so brief they appear two or three to a page. Some sheets have been torn from their binding, and many titles seem to have been added at a later date, often in red ink. I have bolded the titles. Any comments on my part are italicized.

Most of the notebook's pages are intact, but some are fragmentary or missing words. Where text is lost, illegible, or uncertain, I've inserted a [?] or [ . . . ]. As for the order in which the entries appear, I've followed Ken's page numbering and the order used by Library and Archives Canada (LAC). In 1984, Betty Stewart, one of Ken's daughters, donated her father's notebook to LAC after transcribing the entries.

I've assembled this document in collaboration with Betty, her sister Joan Harcourt, and historian John Butler of Port Law in Grey County. John brought Ken to the attention of the South Grey County Museum and Historical Library in the municipality of Grey Highlands and spoke in his memory at the county's First Annual Peace Lunch in November 2018.

Ken served first with the Canadian Army Medical Corps at the Ontario Military Hospital in Orpington, now a town in the London Borough of

Bromley but then just a village on the outskirts of the city. Founded in early 1916, the immense O.M.H., which treated more than 30,000 of the British Empire's wounded, was soon renamed No. 16 Canadian General Hospital. One of its surgeons, Thomas McCrae, was the older brother of John McCrae, author of "In Flanders Fields."

Ken enlisted in February 1916 and joined the staff at Orpington in April. His earliest stories and observations date from that first year in England and focus not on the war but his social and personal life. With the death of friends, the focus shifts.

In late 1917, Ken resigned his commission with the CAMC and trained as a pilot with Britain's Royal Naval Air Service. On April 1, 1918, the RNAS merged with the British Army's Royal Flying Corps to form the Royal Air Force. Ken served as a naval pilot, training on land planes in France before seeing active service with a seaplane unit in southern Italy.

There's no reason to think he sent these entries home while still overseas, with one remarkable exception: "A Busy Day." This account of a novice aviator's ups and downs in France on March 27, 1918 exists in two versions: there's the original handwritten account held at LAC, as well as an expanded version he mailed to his parents. In May 1918 the latter was printed in Markdale's weekly newspaper, *The Markdale Standard*. I draw on both accounts in *"And so ended a Perfect Day": The short, brave life of George Kendall Lucas (1895-1932)*.

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## STORIES & OBSERVATIONS

### Facts Unadorned.

Leaving all “padding” aside and confining myself solely to facts, I wish to state that the Sub.<sup>1</sup> has got an awful “case” on Miss Partridge. This has been a matter of slow but steady growth. I take part of the credit or responsibility, which may even be the case [ . . . ] in that I have aided, abetted and in every possible manner assisted this charming little affair. In fact it was I who originated the little scheme and fathered it through some of its early vicissitudes, which were however few and far between. It has been like unto the little mustard seed planted in fertile soil – a small and modest beginning but with a minimum of cultivation it has waxed exceeding great and prospereth mightily.

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<sup>1</sup> *We never learn who the Sub. is – he’s mentioned in later stories as well – just that he’s a colleague and friend at the Military Hospital in Orpington.*

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### **Disillusionment.**

I am Assistant Quartermaster to this hospital. I am taking an inventory of the hospital. This morning I took the Sisters' Sleeping Quarters.

### **Silk Stockings.**

Isn't it remarkable the number of silk stockings enclosing "cotton" legs!

### **A Sidelight.**

One gets to know a girl when playing tennis with her as you would never get to know her otherwise.

### **Gallantness.**

Isn't it a tough proposition to carry on indefinitely the part of the gallant gentleman to an ugly woman who is persistently attempting to "woo" you.

### **The Tonsorial Art.**

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the young Englishman is the sublime way in which he studiously neglects to have his hair cut.

## **Playing House.**

*[Part of this page is gone, but the following is legible:]*

It seems ridiculous to me the way that the R.N.A.S. ashore carry on the farce of living at sea especially when you consider [ . . . ] only a very small percentage [ . . . ] R.N.A.S. really ever see [ . . . ] rise at "six bells" [ . . . ] "roll" out of our "cabin" down to breakfast in the Gunroom [ . . . ] and then take a walk on the "quarter deck" [ . . . ]. *[Gunroom: the junior officers' mess; quarter deck: the officers' section of a ship's upper deck.]*

## **The Successful Pursuit.**

It is the chase, seldom the prize, that is worthwhile.

## **The Gentler Sex.**

It is quite noticeable the change that has taken place in the "Bhoys" table manners, since the Wrens have replaced the stewards. *[Bhoys: rough fellows; Wrens: women's naval personnel]*

## **"Two for One"**

*[A broken entry, but the following is legible:]*

Why is it that the English tailor insists upon attempting to combine the dual qualities of chest [ . . . ] trousers [ . . . ]

### **Romance.**

*[Also torn away, but most of it is legible:]*

Last Xmas, one of our nurses travelling between Southampton and Portsmouth got into conversation with an officer in the K.R.R. [*King's Royal Rifles?*] who immediately fell in love with her. This officer apparently gathered the information that the nurse was engaged to another officer whose name he also got but either neglected to get the nurse's name or has since forgotten it. The nurse's fiancé has since been killed. The English officer, seeing that the way is clear now, is moving heaven and earth searching for the girl of his dreams. He [ . . . ] getting all the [ . . . ] to put up [ . . . ]

### **Self-Confidence.**

A very noticeable difference between the English and Canadian girls is the freedom with which the English girl appears in public and the excellency of her performance.

## **Faint.**

Miss Balsen [?] rather startled a little dinner party of ten at the Troc. [*Trocadero Restaurant, London*] by throwing a faint at the conclusion of the meal. It was of but momentary duration and passed off unobserved with the exception of several tables in our immediate vicinity.

## **[Title indecipherable]**

*[All that's left of the first paragraph is:]* artist attached . . . bears a very . . . resemblance to Christmas – à la guide book). Piccadilly at midnight contained much more of interest to me. *[The second and final paragraph is intact:]* The one redeeming feature of these little jaunts was the guides. The guides were all of the same type – all wore the same semi-clinical garb – talked in the same monotone – looked very old and wizened up and seemed to live in the past along with the Dukes and Lords upon whom they lectured.

## **Rag-time in England: An uphill climb, but getting there just the same.**

It has been very interesting and amusing to watch the growth of Ragtime in England, despite the frowns of Official England.

Until quite recently there was no real rag-time in England. It was first introduced by Lyons, one of the up-to-date caterers, who brought an

orchestra from the States. This orchestra proved a great success and filled both the tea-room at Lyons on Oxford Street and the Trocadero Restaurant after the theatre.

In the meantime a certain restaurant, "Ciros," was closed by the police. The papers dilated to a great extent upon the type of music played there – much more so than the fact of the management selling liquor after hours, for of course every Englishman drinks, but it is only the perverted, unpatriotic Englishman who will so drag the name of Englishman in the mud by dancing to the broken rhythm of a "Negro Banjo Orchestra" playing syncopated music. All such words as "syncopated," "ragtime," "Negro orchestra," etc., were always put in quotations.

It was often very funny to note the expressions of bewilderment that would appear on the typical English matron's face, who had accidentally dropped into Lyons Ragtime Tearoom. When the "Trap Drummer" started hitting pans, yelling, or blowing horns, she would look startled – wondered what kind of a "place" she had got into – what her friends would say. A minute or so later, when she was assured that the place was as it seemed, quite respectable, the rhythm would kind of catch her, and slowly a broad smile would appear on her face. This was a new sensation – rather pleasant. She must tell her friends about the "Crazy Americans" who hit pans in making music.

### **The Summer House.**

[*March 18, 1917:*] Miss MacKenna leaves us tomorrow for a hospital in Brighton. Doc., Partridge, Mac, & I left the concert early and talked

things over in the Summer House. Things have surely come to a pretty pass when we have to use the Summer House in winter.

### **Company Officer.**

*[same date:]* The "Irony of Fate" certainly was demonstrated today when I was chosen to take Capt. Currie's position as Company Officer on his departure from here. I have always had a supreme contempt for the red-tape, brass button end of the army, and here if I am not the very man chosen to enforce it in this unit.

### **Reflections On My Appointment.**

To the Col. – Out of a unit of thirty-five officers – Oh why did you pick on me.

### **The Sub's Birthday Party.**

*[September 4, 1917]* The Sub, Miss Partridge, Miss MacKenna and myself celebrated the Sub's birthday by a trip to Tunbridge and a picnic up the "Medway River." He received a very nice cigarette box from Miss P.

## **Lost In London: On the water-wagon down the Strand at midnight.**

I missed the last train to Orpington one night this spring on account of lingering too long at Paddington seeing a friend off to Taplow. Upon my arrival at Victoria a few minutes late, one of the bright S.E.&C. employees informed me that I could get a train at Holburn, whither I immediately betook myself. Arriving at Holburn, I discovered that I had been given wrong information, a little habit the S.E.&C. officials have.

The thing to do now was to find a hotel in which to put up for the night. To make a decision and to put that decision into effect proved to be two entirely different things. Holburn is in the downtown section of the city where there are absolutely no hotels – moreover, there was no one on the streets from whom to ask directions. After vainly wandering around for some time, I hailed a motor sprinkling cart, which I boarded. The driver and I made several attempts to get into a number of dubious looking hotels but failed. However we finally ran across a Y.M.C.A. which certainly looked good to me.

I paid off my motor friend and entered the Y.M.C.A. building, where I startled the officials by the fact of my being an officer. However, no questions were asked and after having some cocoa, I was given a room.

In the morning I rose early, hustled out to get some breakfast and catch an early train home. Upon arriving home, I had considerable kidding to put up with, everybody apparently being wise to the fact that I had not got home the night before.

## **The Punchestown Races: Ireland's national race-meet held despite war.**

Doc. and I were very lucky in the choice of our time to visit Ireland, in that we arrived there during the Punchestown Races. These races take place once a year and are the best races held in Ireland and consequently in the world. Foreign buyers from all parts are always in attendance. It is from this blood that the German Cavalry is largely composed.

The racing was all steeple-chasing and the crowd typically Irish. Doc. & I, unaware of these races, missed the train and so went out in a taxi, which we shared with an English cavalry officer and his wife. We enjoyed ourselves very much knocking about in the crowd – listening to the Bookies – sizing up the horses for the next race and getting our money up on our choice. We picked two winners out of the six races – one 6-1 shot and the other 3-1. The money we won on these races helped defray our losses. However on the whole we came out about five dollars to the bad. The trouble was that our wins took place early when we were cautious and our losses later when we were flushed with the success of our early wins.

## **“Fools Rush In Where Angels Fear”: Walked down Sackville Street on anniversary of Rising.**

Doc. and I arrived in Dublin on the anniversary of the “Sein Fein Rising.” Unaware of this, we took a stroll down Grafton and Sackville Streets at about 10:30 pm to look at the ruins. During our walk, I noticed the unusually large number of people on these streets and their surly attitude

towards us. Upon arriving back at our hotel, we learned that for days past the air had been full of dark rumours of the disturbances that were going to take place that night. The crowds had doubtless gathered to either partake in or watch these disturbances. Sackville Street would hardly have been a healthy place for a couple of soldiers.

### **A Successful Lead-Swinger: Genuine T.B. patient spits in lead-swinger's bottle.**

No doubt this hospital has been the scene of a certain amount of "lead-swinging" both on the part of patients and staff. There has, however, been only one case of the guilty party openly rejoicing at and boasting of his success in swinging the lead.

The party to whom I am referring was a patient in ward twenty, who had been boarded home and whom Staff Matthews and I met as a civvie in the canteen some months later. The man asked some questions about certain members of the staff that showed he knew what he was talking about. He then told us that he had been a patient here but had obtained his discharge to Canada, whence he had returned to England again in the employ of the C.P.R. He had got another patient to spit in his sputum cup – hence a "positive T.B." analysis. As for the T.B. symptoms, he was intelligent enough to read them up and cute enough to successfully fake them all. The man now has his permanent discharge, a pension, a good job and last but not least his health.

P.S. This case shows great slackness on the other side. He should have been kept in hospital for six months and then reboarded. There is again the possibility that the man really has T.B. but won't admit it even to

himself. However, he claims to have got the other patient to use his sputum cup.

**A Few Impressions of Ireland: Was formerly possessed of many erroneous impressions.**

During my short trip to Ireland, travelling as I was and the way I was, I naturally would be unable to form any very accurate ideas of the country. However the general impression I gathered was that the country was very similar to the province of Quebec – not very progressive – the people for the most part ignorant and careless – priest ridden and the ignorances and prejudices of the people exploited by political demagogues. This later part was particularly brought out by the newspapers and various bills. For instance, a mass meeting to protest against the compulsory vaccinating of the Irish school-children, “poisoning their blood,” while the English children in the same schools were allowed “to go free and enjoy good health,” was being held in Dublin under the auspices of some Irish society. The meeting was to be addressed by an MP, a member of the Council and a representative of the R.C. Church.

The notion that every Irishman is a humourist and keeps a pig is exploded as far as I am concerned. I noticed nothing particularly funny about them, while I fail to remember having seen a pig or even noticing pork on any menu. The one impression that was however confirmed was that of the dirt. The streets were very dirty and the houses might have been cleaner.

The war seems to be more or less of secondary importance; Home Rule being the all absorbing topic. The people seem to be good-hearted and generous, while the colleens certainly live up to their reputation as regards complexion, looks and general good appearance.

### **“Perspective”**

The “Loss of Perspective” in any case and especially in matters appertaining to our Lady-Friends is a very serious loss. It unfortunately is seldom given its true value.

### **“The Clutching Hand”: Or “The drink that wasn’t there.”**

’Twas a summer’s evening in the middle of July. Day after day for weeks past, the sun had shone down upon a parched and scorched earth, with all the dazzling brilliancy and shimmering heat of the tropics. England, normally a wet, damp country, was in the grip of an unprecedented drought. The people complainingly and perspiringly continued with their gigantic task of carrying on the world war in which they were now engaged. Scientists hinted at some serious dislocation in nature, which might possibly change the future course of English History. The newspapers daily published accounts of heat records for England being smashed and all the world stood agape at this new mantle which foggy, muggy old England had assumed.

On an evening following one of these record-breaking days, the figures of three Canadian soldiers, two officers and a sergeant, might have been seen listlessly pushing three bicycles up a hill near the hamlet of Chislehurst. Arriving on the crest of the hill, they laid their machines down and dropped exhausted to the ground. A little later, somewhat refreshed by their rest and a gentle breeze which commenced to whisper through the trees, they again began to evince some interest in life. One of the officers sat up, stretched, yawned and then turned and asked the others a question. The remaining two sat up and glanced at their watches. Had you been near, you might have heard the muttered reply, "Not until nine-thirty. We have just got time."

Upon receipt of this answer a startling change took place. Instead of three tired, worn out, exhausted soldiers, we have in the twinkling of an eye, three alert, live young men hustling about in a most soldierly manner. The three bicycles were mounted simultaneously and away the three of them went, quite oblivious to the clouds of dust, their wilted collars and the heat of the dying sun, intent only on the objective in mind.

At nine-twenty-eight, the three of them drew up with a jerk before a typical, ivy-covered, old English tavern. Within the gloom of the tap-room could be heard the sounds of laughter, the clink of glasses, and all the other sounds that go hand in hand with a well managed English inn. John Bull was spending an evening over a tankard of ale and a game of checkers.

In upon this peaceful company burst our three exhausted, sweat-stained soldiers. Making their way to the bar, they breathlessly ordered three pints of beer. The pretty bar-maid, all smiles, hastened to fulfill the order. As each tankard was filled, she handed it to the nearest officer,

who politely passed it on. Two tankards were thus filled and passed on. With the third mug in her hand and already partly stooping over the keg, she glanced at the clock, the hands of which stood at nine and twenty to ten. Straightening up and turning to the remaining officer, she smiled sweetly and said, "I'm sorry Sir but I can't serve you as it is after half-past nine.

Epilogue – To loud and continued expostulation – "But," the little maid replied, "Kind Sir, it's past nine-thirty."

### **The Everlasting Question: Whether 'tis better for a busy-bee to flit or settle.**

The world of youth is filled with flowers, flowering weeds, busy bees and drones. The flowers range all the way from the frail, delicate slips of violets with their faint, haunting perfume to the full-blooded fragrance of the rose. Both are flowers and as such possess the fine sensibilities and attractions of flowers.

The flowering weeds are more or less of a kind, usually fashioned somewhat after the manner of the dandelion and possessing all the qualities thereof, namely the qualities of endurance, a certain coarseness of fibre, a lack of fine perceptions and beauty. They flourish in rank luxuriousness and are incapable of appreciating the difference between the early morning dew and dirty dish-water.

The "busy bee" is a knowing little fellow who collects honey. The "drone" is a heavy, stupid chap that thinks he is getting honey, but the

sweetness is lacking. He gets quantity, not quality – anything to fill his stomach.

Nothing presents a more piteous spectacle than a drone with a perverted idea that he is a busy bee. However, you can save your sympathy because as a rule the drone is unaware of his laughable appearance. Where there is no sense there is no feeling.

Considering the number of flowers, flowering weeds, busy-bees, and drones there are in the world and the more or less similar appearance they all present at first sight, it is remarkable that so few mistakes are made. The busy-bee has an unerring instinct for the flower and is usually received with drops of honey-dew. Should the busy-bee make a mistake and alight upon a flowering weed, he very soon discovers his error and pops off with an angry buzz and hies him away to find a flower. Similarly a flower, when settled upon by an ambitious drone, withholds her honey so long and so consistently that the fact that he is unwelcome penetrates even the understanding of this stupid fellow. He in his turn leaves and eventually alights upon a flowering weed – his true mate.

Sometimes the busy-bee is puzzled by his inability to extract honey from what is unquestionably a flower. He should not worry over this but should leave and seek a new flower. There is no remedy for this state of affairs but the cause is quite evident. Another busy-bee has got right into the very heart of the flower and is draining her of all her honey. “Don’t waste your time little busy-bee on a flower that does not produce honey.”

The busy-bee is often in a quandary as to whether he should lead a flitting existence or settle on some flower, the honey of which he most admires. The honey acquired by a flitting existence blends into a more

perfect whole than the honey got from a single flower, no matter how fine its quality. However, this perfect honey is very uncertain as to quantity and often on fine, sun-shiny days the little busy-bee is left hovering above a patch of the non-honey producing flowers, living solely on the memories of past feasts, while his less ambitious brothers nestle in the hearts of the flowers below him, drinking their fill of [ . . . ]

### **New Wing of O.M.H. Opened: Very “Staffy” affair pulled off with flying colors.**

The new wing of the Ontario Military Hospital was officially opened by Sir Walter Long, the Colonial Secretary, on Thursday afternoon, July 5th, 1917. The weather was very auspicious for such an occasion and the entire affair might be [ . . . ] for this occasion. The daily routine work of the Quarter-Master’s department had practically been suspended. The smartest soldiers of our staff had been picked out and given special drill for the occasion under the capable command of the Company Officer, Major Alex McKay. Everyone had been keyed up for days and it was indeed with a feeling of relief that we saw the morning of the fifth dawn with but a few feathery wisps of clouds in an azure sky.

The ceremonies were timed for three-thirty. Long before this hour however the officers and Guard of Honor assembled in front of the reception hall. Major Crawford, with the true eye of a photographer, arranged and rearranged the officers in various-sized groups, until the general scheme and color effect satisfied his artist’s eye. The effect was indeed striking. It might even have been favorably compared to those old anti-war recruiting prints. As the appropriate hour approached, greater became the ease

with which the officers lounged at their respective stations – the more nonchalantly did they blow tobacco smoke into the unoffending atmosphere. We were blasé army men if nothing else.

By the time the guest of honour arrived, the hall was filled with the elite of the countryside and a large representation of staff officers. The band played “The Maple Leaf,” the people clapped and the oratory began. Numerous old gentlemen, high in either the civil or military services, extolled one another – the Imperial Govt. thanked the Ontario Govt. – the Ontario Govt. said “Don’t mention it” etc. etc. The fact that the oratory was not heard further back than the first six rows was a mere incidental and hardly worthy of note. The point to be remembered is that it was a very classy function.

Tea was served on the lawn after the completion of the ceremonies. This also was in keeping with the rest of the affair. A dance in the evening was a fitting climax to what might properly be termed an unqualified successful opening.

### **Tennis.**

Two tennis-courts for the officers and nurses have been built. They are being used quite a bit and are much appreciated.

**Nurses' Party Penetrated.** *[dated June 28 but the year isn't specified]*

The nurses held their annual exclusive party the other night and hung out the old challenge to the officers to get in. Profiting by last year's experience, when the party was "rushed" by the M.O.s [*Medical Officers*], arrangements were made to prevent a reoccurrence of this. All doors, with the exception of the one leading into their own private quarters, were locked and barred.

Bill Trelford and I accepted the challenge thus thrown out by the nurses. Realizing the futility, not to mention the crudity, of breaking our way in, we had to contrive some schemes of "peaceful penetration." With this end in view we enlisted the sympathy and aid of Sisters Bennett, Partridge and Baker. The result of our joint conference was that we should disguise ourselves as children (it was to be a children's party) and piloted by our accomplices enter by the forbidden door.

To make a long story short, we were dressed, perfumed, powdered, and rouged, I as a "Basketball-Ball Girl," Trelford as Topsy, in the Dispensary, under the critical eye of Maj. Fisher and the Sub. Thus attired we ventured into the forbidden precincts of the Nurses night-quarters. Major Fisher thoughtfully turned the lights off from the Power House for a few seconds and we entered unobserved during the momentary excitement.

At first all went well. However, it was quite impossible to remain undetected long on account of the suspicions aroused by the turning off of the lights, the lateness of the hour of our entry, Trelford's hideous get-up but principally the fact of no one wearing masks. We had to depend largely upon our make-up and hats well pulled down.

Trelford was first exposed. Words fail to describe the pandemonium that now broke loose. Suffice to say that it was a revelation to me with regards to women. To say that Bill was mobbed is putting it very mildly. He was literally torn to pieces.

I joined the shrieking mob, thinking this the best way to escape detection. However I was soon exposed by someone pulling my hat off. Remembering the old adage, "He who fights and runs away etc," I acted upon it and succeeded in making a getaway.

Bill appeared about twenty minutes later, a tattered wreck but smiling. After wreaking vengeance upon him he was fed upon strawberries and cream. A messenger sent out to bring me into the feast failed in her mission.

The whole affair was taken in good part by everyone and I think helped to liven things up a little. Hen Parties are notorious I believe for a certain falling off of interest about 10 p.m.

### **Mess Meetings –**

Assemblies of the officers of the mess, called every once in so often. We start off with a clear issue but soon get hopelessly balled up with amendments and amendments to the amendments.

## **Obsessions.**

Obsession à la dictionnaire – complete occupation of the mind by an idea.

Maj. Smith – Alcohol

Maj. N.K. Wilson – The promotion of officers other than himself. The superiority of the R.A.M.C. over the C.A.M.C.

Capt. Chadwick – That with assiduous cultivation, he will eventually get his hair as smooth and glossy as the Swiss waiter at the Trocadero.

Maj. Arthur – That he is a “Heavy-Weight” in the mess.

Capt. [?] – That he possesses the same true blaséness and cosmopolitan air as possessed by Capts. Conover and MacFarlane. It isn’t Cosmopolitanism Cyril, old thing, merely Provincialism feeling its oats.

The Sub. – That the stars would stop in their course did he remove his steady hand from the helm of the O.M.H. Dispensary. That he is an Indispensable. (Much improvement since falling in love.)

Lieut. Frain – That all and sundry are staggered by his references to “A.T.B.179.” Choose a less common form next time Charlie.

Sister Stronach – That she possesses a rippling, musical laugh.

Billy Fox – The loquacity of the “The Sphinx.”

Capt. W. Taylor – That blood eruptions can be cured, while at the same time consuming his wonted amount of alcohol. “Can’t be done Walter. It’s been tried before but never with success.”

Moe [?] Crawford – To stay in England and that he is funny.

Mabel – The idea that the entire mess is taking a breathless and absorbing interest in “her little affair,” with the consequent need of secretiveness.

Dick Richardson – That he is pretty smooth and gets away with a lot of stuff.

Lieut. Brown – That his conversation is of such a sparkling and scintillating nature as to give him a license to monopolize the conversation.

Myself – That the whole world is aware of and concerning itself with my rather unheroic role in the present war.

### **The Theatrical-Garden Party: Young “O.M.H.ites” attend annual theatrical function in a body.**

The young fry of the hospital, to the number of ten, took in the Theatrical Garden Party which is held yearly in Chelsea Gardens, sometime during the first two weeks in July. Departing from his habit of the previous four years, old Sol smiled down from an unclouded sky; hence the record crowd and the brilliant success of the affair.

The ten of us after the requisite number of shekels had been duly plunked down, filed into the Gardens to be immediately pounced upon by hawkers and vendors of all descriptions. These flower-girls ranged all the way from the chorus-girls of “High Jinks” selling that wonderful perfume, to the veiled ladies of “Chu Chin Chow’s” harem, disposing of a special brand of aromatic Egyptian cigarettes, redolent of the mysterious East, from whence they had been imported direct. One of our members was so reckless as to tender a ten shilling note when buying some of these cigarettes. The lady concerned had apparently become so accustomed in her Eastern Home to treat golden fret-work as but plaster and precious gems as mere baubles, that she quite overlooked the need to

return any change but continued her gliding, unseeing way amongst the crowd. This was one of those occasions when one really can't say anything – aloud.

After meandering through the crowd for awhile, trying our luck on the Roulette Wheel and prying into “Gaby Deslys’s Secret,”<sup>1</sup> we eventually landed in the dancing pavillion. The next hour and a half was spent showing the “Gaiety” girls how the Fox-Trot should really be done. Miss MacKenna and I broke the ice for our party but the shock of “dancing in public” was so great for her that she only lasted for the first dance. The rest however immediately stepped into the breach.

The Trocadero was the next place to claim our attention. Here, Miss Elliott showed us how to order strawberries and cream at two and six a throw with true nonchalance, while Sparks demonstrated how to tip a waiter in a high-class restaurant who had had a table especially set up for our party, at the rate of three-pence per head and still withdraw with dignity.

A show at the “Playhouse” finished up the day.

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<sup>1</sup>*Gaby Deslys (1881-1920), a singer, dancer, and actress from Marseilles, was famed for her beauty and charm. When she died of infection from the Spanish flu, she left a fortune to the poor of Marseilles.*

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## **Captain Paterson Suicides: Lies on track whilst temporarily insane.**

Captain Paterson, for a short time on the staff of this hospital while "under observation," committed suicide last night, September 14<sup>th</sup>, during a fit of melancholy, by lying on the railway track before an oncoming train. The unfortunate officer had been on this staff for a few weeks early in the summer but had been admitted into an officers' shell shock hospital in London. He had just returned to duty a few days before the unhappy occurrence took place.

The last person to see Capt. Paterson alive was his room-mate Mr. [?], who failed to notice anything unusual in his appearance. Capt. Paterson then apparently "booked out" to Orpington and nothing further was seen or heard of him until the mangled body was discovered this morning by some railway men on the track back of the hospital. It is concluded that this is a plain case of suicide judging from the position of the body, the nature of the wounds, the condition of the man and statements he had previously made.

Capt. Paterson had seen two years service in France and was the holder of a Military Cross. He was invalided back to England on account of his health.

**Spanked By The Colonel: “Sit up and eat your mush,”  
said he.**

After a stomach-gnawing, heart-searching week of introspection, we have emerged a much-chastened and subdued mess. No more shall we grouch and growl at the plain and substantial food given us, but “eat what’s set afore us” without a complaint. One week of having our sugar dished out to us in egg-cups has cured us of our former little peculiarities. You can live on rations alone – also, a camel can go eight days without water, but who wants to be a camel?.

This sad state of affairs lasted but a week, when the Colonel, noticing our paling cheeks and lack-luster eyes, revoked his order and we are once again wandering carefree in the land that is flowing with milk and honey.

**Persecution.**

The Matron is a terror “to break up cliques” – night duty – on command. Take Miss [?] as an example.

**A Freeze-Out: Captain [?] seals his doom in a burst of  
confidence.**

It was indeed a sad night for Captain [?], when in a burst of confidence whilst slightly inebriated, he out-lined to Mr. Nicklin his intention of

adding the scalp of the fair Miss Acheson to the many trophies which already hung from his girdle – all souvenirs of former tender conquests.

Mr. Nicklin imparted the above information to Mr. Elliot and myself. Whilst being told of the little plan, we all three became imbued with the idea that we didn't like Capt. [?]. He was a rude man. Moreover we didn't admire his nose nor the manner in which he combed his hair. We decided to put a spoke in his wheel.

Realizing Captain [?]'s reputation as a "Lady Killer" and our own rather uncertain ground, we decided to pull together. After due deliberation, I was chosen as the "Storm-Troops." Nick was to follow on, whilst Alec was to consolidate the ground thus gained.

At the present stage of the battle (merely the storming period) all goes well. The enemy has retired with scarcely a show of fight. Our original objective has been gained and, as is always the case, an easy victory fires the blood of the troops with ambition, who, probably over-estimating their strength on account of the easy victory, wish to advance further than the objective detailed to them in General Headquarter Orders. This is generally a mistake and ends with a smashing victory or a crushing defeat.

I am sorry to say however that the hour is fast approaching when I will have to withdraw and leave the field to the second-line troops. This retirement is not to my liking but is unavoidable on account of the naïve belief of certain little birds that there are still birds in last year's nest. French birds are peculiarly susceptible to such beliefs, and have a disconcerting habit of migrating England's way at inopportune times. Comprenez-vous?

## **Mark Killed While Flying: Collision in air at a height of 1000 feet.**

Mark was the first member of our little Markdale gang to be killed at the war when in Nov. he collided with another machine at a height of over a thousand feet. Both machines immediately collapsed and both pilots were killed. The other pilot was an Australian named Hughes.

Although no one knows the actual reasons of this accident, it is supposed to have occurred owing to the fact that Mark was flying into the sun and the other pilot was practicing Bomb-Dropping and was probably "sighting" at the time of the collision. Both Mark and Hughes were very badly smashed up.

The Sub. received word of the accident in the afternoon and we took the night train up to Edinburgh. The aerodrome at which Mark was stationed was at Turnhouse, a few miles from Edinburgh.

We were treated with every consideration at the station. The O.C. couldn't do too much for us. He arranged all about the funeral, packing of clothing etc.

I won't describe the funeral but will merely say that it was a very impressive Military Funeral. Poor old Mark was always a swanky sort of a chap. He put up a bold front while on earth and departed from it with a great bang and clash of symbols. He couldn't have wished for a better or more impressive send-off.

The Sub. sent a wreath from the family, his brother officers sent a wreath, while I sent one from his Old Pals.

**Gal. Killed at Passchendaele: Was In Signal Section. Other Details Lacking.**

Within a week of Mark's death, the second member of the old Markdale Gang went West. I have no details of this occurrence, merely the bald statement in "The Canada."

Gal. used to be quite a chum of mine. We used to have many a good time together – but why continue.

Cheerio Gal. The Best of Luck.

**More Deaths:**

Grandmother – died about six months ago – was expected.

Grandfather – died early in December – was also expected.

*[Then there are three upper case initials – another person? – and the word Toronto.]*

I started my career in the army two years, three days ago tonight. There were nine of us in our room. Four of these are now dead. I have lost track of the other four.

**Xmas Holidays 1917: Very successful from every point of view.**

Xmas holidays this year were very successful, viewed from any angle. We celebrated for an entire week and not for a moment did time hang heavy on our hands.

The Sub., Nick, Alec, & I were the celebrating "we."

On Sat. Dec. 22, the Sub. and I took Miss [?] and Partridge to dinner and a show. On Sunday, we again visited them in London.

On Monday, Xmas Eve, we sat in the rotunda of the Savoy and enjoyed the Jazz Band. Xmas day was spent in the wards – tea and dinner. The evening was spent at Harlows [?]. Boxer Day was the Xmas day of the officers of the O.M.H. We dined with the nurses and then danced. On Thursday there was a dance at Bromley. Friday we went to a show at the local V.A.D, "V.A.D. Recruits," hence to [?]. Saturday evening was spent at Mrs. Mary's residence at [?]. Sunday I returned to Greenwich.

Nick has become rather fascinated by Miss Harlow. She certainly is a very charming girl.

In my resume of the Holidays I have merely put in the bare skeleton of events. A story hangs on each peg.

**Instructor at Greenwich (after taking the names of a new draft of Canadians).**

- Ah! yes! – you are all Colonials then.
- Canadian (jumping up) – No Sir – we are all Canadians.

**Musings On New Year's Eve.**

I am spending New Year's Eve, 1917, under decidedly less happy conditions than last year. However I made my nest and am not sorry for the changed conditions in which I now find myself. It was to be expected.

As I sit here and write away, I can't help but wonder, as I did last year, where and under what circumstances the next New Year's Eve will find me. I certainly hope that it will be at home. Home certainly seems a pretty fine place these days.

The coming year will probably be the most critical in my life. I will probably see and take part in events which will always be with me. Here's hoping that these pending events are going to be with me for a considerable period too. If I get through the next year or eighteen months, I will be Jakaloo *[all well]*.

Epilogue

They can't declare Peace too soon for me.

**R.N. College, Greenwich.** [*Royal Naval College, London*]

Life at Greenwich College was very similar to that of a Boarding School shortly before some military function – lectures interspersed with many drill periods. The lectures all had a more or less distant bearing on flying. The drill was the ordinary infantry drill slightly rehashed for naval consumption. It would never do to “shoulder arms” as it was done in the army – for did we not belong to the senior service and must not copy anyone, even though we bruised our shoulders in preserving our distinctiveness.

When I went to Greenwich, the powers that be had decided to largely increase the personnel of this service. They were training three hundred then where two months before they had fifty. Canadians constituted at least fifty per cent of those under training – some of these were transfers from the army, while quite a number arrived on weekly drafts from Canada. Some of the “old army” chaps tried to pull the “Conscientious Objector” stuff on the new arrivals but didn’t get very far with it.

Although the Canadians constituted but fifty per cent of the total, they practically ran things. One explanation for this is that they were slightly older as a rule than the Englishmen. There was a slight undercurrent of resentment among the English as to the way we dominated in what was technically a British Service. However on the whole we got on very well with everyone.

We were given every week-end off. On these occasions I went down to Orpington. A month’s leave was also given us (Jan 12–Feb 10) on account of an outbreak of mumps. I spent this leave at Orpington with the exception of ten days spent with the Wilkinsons at Culgaith.

Some names to be remembered should be Wyatt, Wells, Blanche [?], all of whom were on the staff.

### **Life At A Flying School: Early to bed, early to rise, with a filling in of hard work.**

The British Flying School is situated five miles from the French town of Vendome, which is about a hundred miles south of Paris. It is a very large, level tract of land, free from trees or buildings. It was a private flying school before the war, but was taken over by the British Govt. in August 1914. Since then the school has been largely added to, until now it is one of the largest aviation schools in the world.

It is at Vendome that the pilots get their first insight into practical aviation. We must do ten hours solo [ . . . ] and four hours solo "Curtiss." On non flying days and at non flying periods every day, we attend lectures. Most of the flying is done before breakfast and after five o'clock in the evening.

The popular impression that the spirit prevailing about a flying station is one of "eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die," is, like most other popular beliefs, false. On the other hand we had a most simple life. We may branch out a bit on our holidays, but that is merely a reaction from our former Spartan-like existence.

The average period of the course at Vendome is from a month to six weeks – depending largely upon the weather conditions.

“Crashes” are not treated seriously. Only about one crash in every dozen results even in a hospital case. There has been one fatal crash, four hospital crashes and fifty some inconsequential crashes during my course here.

### **My First Solo Flight. The “Great Divide” of the flying-game; passed successfully.<sup>1</sup>**

I was pushed off the dock into the black, cold waters of my first “solo” before breakfast on the morning of March 1 [1918]. For four and a quarter hours of dual, I had been standing shivering on the edge, waiting for the push that I knew must come. On this occasion, as in all such cases, I discovered that the thing so much dreaded faded away into insignificance when once faced. The black waters took on a sunnier hue and instead of the benumbing plunge into the depths beneath, it was nothing more than a gentle immersion into a warm bath.

My first flight was for only nine minutes – simply one circuit. It was successful in every way – a good take-off and landing. The Flt. Com. seemed to be quite pleased. I wasn’t very nervous and didn’t experience any of those “never to be forgotten” sensations of which so many first solos speak.

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<sup>1</sup> *At this point Ken was training at Royal Naval Air Station Lee-on-Solent (HMS Daedalus), a shore airfield of Britain’s Fleet Air Arm. In 1917 it was a seaplane base.*

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## **A Busy Day: Got lost – dined with German prisoner – Crashed**

*[Again, there are two versions of "A Busy Day." Ken must have rewritten the account recorded in his notebook, then sent the second version to his parents. Where that version – published in The Markdale Standard (May 2, 1918) – differs from the notebook original, I've appended the later passages in italics.]*

I left the drome before breakfast on the morning of March 27<sup>th</sup> [1918] to do the Big Triangle (Tours, Blois, Vendome) in company with two other chaps. We intended to make the flight in formation but I lost sight of them almost immediately.

I succeeded in locating Tours, turned to the left and followed the river to Blois and started across country to Vendome. I had done the Blois, Vendome trip before and had no hesitation as to the correct direction in which to steer. In the light of after events, I find that I steered alright but didn't make due allowance for the wind.

About nine o'clock, I decided that I was hopelessly lost and might as well land. I chose a decent looking pasture field and made a good landing thereon. Half the countryside now assembled but as they couldn't understand my particular brand of French and I was entirely at sea with their jabber, I simply packed up and hoofed it to the nearest town, Neuille Pont Pierre, about two miles away.

I went to the Post Office at once and notified the camp as to my whereabouts. They would have come out after me but I assured them that I would be able to handle the situation. I then got some breakfast and knocked around the town for a short time.

When I arrived back at the machine the crowd was still there – augmented if anything. I started her up and got off at about noon, accompanied by the cheers etc. of the crowd. I discovered however that it was much too bumpy for me and landed again in a few minutes. I didn't make so good a landing this time – I taxied out into a plowed field. The usual crowd quickly assembled and we soon had her out on the grass again.

I then adjourned for lunch to the nearest farm house, accompanied by most of the crowd, who apparently belonged to the same family. We all sat down together at a big table in the kitchen. It was a typical French peasant's house of the better class in which I found myself. Everything was quite clean – an open fire-place in which “twigs” were burnt – blackened stone walls and benches and stools in place of chairs. There were several children, a couple of fairly old men, two French soldiers, one on leave, the other convalescent, a young laborer, a very wizened up woman and another shrewish sort of woman. The meal consisted of soup in which bread was boiled, boiled vegetables, boiled pork, and dry bread that was cut off the loaf as wanted. There were a number of bottles of wine on the table – white and red – some of the red being put on especially in honour of the occasion. The shrewish sort of woman didn't like this extra display but was laughed at.

We talked a bit but it wasn't very successful. The young looking laborer volunteered the information that he was a German – captured at Monastir in 1914. He appeared quite happy and was treated as one of the family. He was a very pleasant, good-natured sort of a chap. We didn't discuss the ethics of the war but he said that he was mighty lucky to be out of it.

After dinner, I looked over the farm. Four American three furrow tractor plows were in use. I don't think that these were private property but worked sort of on the municipal system.

I next ran into a French Transport driver and spent the rest of the afternoon touring the countryside with him. On this trip, we accidentally ran across Mills – one of the morning's party. He had got lost, landed and was then on his way home in a R.N. car.

The two mechanics with Mills accompanied me to my machine to see that I got away properly. We were late getting to the machine and then discovered some engine trouble, consequently I got a late start. I flew in the general direction of the camp but I wasn't very sure of myself. The sun had set now, so I thought I had better get back soon or else land. I saw a town in the distance – flew to it – circled around and failed to recognize it. I picked out a likely looking spot to land, in the outskirts – glided down – overshot my mark but landed straight – taxied very fast across the field – hit a pile of dirt and turned up on my nose as nicely as you could wish for. I was about the most surprised person you would find in a week's march. I unbuckled myself and jumped out, much to the relief of the crowd which was rushing to the spot. I wasn't a bit hurt or even shook up, merely very much surprised.

After I had assured everyone that I was O.K. and refused a bunch of drinks, I made enquiries as to my whereabouts and found that I had crashed at Vendome – right at my own door-step. Wouldn't that freeze you?

And so ended a Perfect Day.

...

*[Revised or additional text published in The Markdale Standard:]*

*I spent a very busy day last Wednesday. I have already spoken to you of the big triangle that we all must do before leaving Vendome. The big triangle is a cross-country flight from the Drome to Tours – to Blois – to Vendome – to the Drome. It is about one hundred miles and takes practically two hours to do in our “School busses.”*

*I, along with two other chaps, left before breakfast on Wednesday morning to make the above flight. It was our intention to fly in formation if possible, but soon after starting, we found this to be impossible on account of the different speeds of our respective machines. In flying you always fly “full-out”; it is very hard to throttle down and still maintain your height, and with our school machines there is a variation sometimes of fifteen miles per hour in the same make of machine . . .*

*I succeeded in locating Tours quite easily; then turned to the left and followed the river Loire until I saw the red roofs of the railway sheds at Blois. I now considered that the rest was a “cinch” as I had previously flown from Blois to Vendome, and had no hesitation as to the correct direction in which to steer. However I failed to take into consideration the moderate breeze that was blowing, and hence, although I was steering alright, I was being blown out of my course. About nine o’clock I decided that I was lost and might as well land. I chose a pasturefield in which cows were grazing and made a good landing. I chose the field in which the cows were, because I knew the earth there would be solid. A lot of other fields looked inviting but it is very hard to tell from the air whether it is a pasture or merely ploughed field in which the young crops are just sprouting . . .*

*Half the country-side quickly assembled, but as they talk very fast and did not understand my particular brand of French, I simply packed up and “hoofed” it*

*about a mile and a half to the nearest town, Neuille Pont Pierre. [The published version misspelled this as Neville Pont Pierre] Here I could make myself understood. I went to the Post Office and notified the camp as to my whereabouts. They would have come after me only I told them it was unnecessary. I then got breakfast and knocked about the town for a while. When I arrived back at the machine the crowd was still there, more if anything. I started up the engine and got off accompanied by the cheers of the crowd. I was only up a few minutes before I discovered that it was too bumpy for flying and landed again on the other side of the town. A "bump" is a most disconcerting thing for the inexperienced air-man. It is like rowing in a choppy sea – first your nose shoots up – a wing drops – or perhaps the entire machine will drop some feet, or you are lifted bodily by the same unseen forces. "Bumps" are currents, pockets and haphazard movements of the ocean of air, caused by heat or unsettled weather . . .*

*On landing the second time the usual crowd soon assembled. I turned to the nearest farm house for lunch, accompanied by most of the crowd who apparently belonged to the same family. It was a typical French Peasant's house of the better class in which I now found myself. Everything was fairly clean; an open fireplace in which "twigs" were burning – blackened stone walls and benches and stools in place of chairs. This was the kitchen and living-room combined. After a French soldier, who saw my descent, had accounted for my presence to the rest of the family, we all sat down at a big wooden table. There were several children, a couple of fairly old men, two French soldiers, one on leave and the other convalescing – a young laborer, a very wizened up grandmother who sat in a corner by herself, and another shrewish-looking woman. The meal consisted of soup, in which bread was boiled, a plate of boiled mixed vegetables, boiled pork and dry bread cut off the loaf in any old way as wanted. There were several bottles of both red and white wine on the table. One bottle of special quality red wine was*

*brought in specially in honor of the occasion. The shrewish woman did not like this extra display as this particular wine was used only on Sunday, but she was overruled. We talked a bit but it was pretty laborious. I find that lack of idioms is my greatest trouble. The young laborer whom I had noted and thought should be in the army presently volunteered the information that he was a German – “Je suis un prisonaire” [sic] – a captive (crossing his hands), he said, and seemed tickled at my surprise. He was captured at Monastir, Serbia, in 1914. He seemed quite happy and was treated as one of the family. He was a pleasant, good-natured sort of chap – not the devil incarnate as all Germans are supposed to be. After lunch I looked over the farm with the French soldier. Four American three-furrow tractor ploughs were in use. I don’t think these ploughs were private property but were worked sort of on the municipal system.*

*I next ran into a French Transport Driver and spent the rest of the afternoon touring the country-side with him. His duties were apparently to convey mechanics from farm to farm where these tractor ploughs were in use.*

*On this trip we accidentally ran across Mills, one of the morning’s party. He had also got lost and landed within five miles of my original land-ground. This shows that we were both fooled by the same wind. He was then on his way home in an R.N. car along with two mechanics. I made a date with the mechanics to meet me at my machine at six o’clock, and then I continued my journey with the Frenchman.*

*When I arrived back at the machine there was some delay in getting away. However I finally got started and flew in a general direction for the Camp. I flew until sunset and as I did not recognize the country I decided to land again for the night, this time on the outskirts of a fairly large town that looked strange to me in the dusk. I shut off the engine, glided down, landed all right and immediately taxied across the field plump into a pile of dirt and turned up on my nose*

*as nicely as you please. My feelings as I analyzed them afterwards were those of intense surprise intermingled with disgust at having hit the pile. I had been thrown into my belt, which I immediately unbuckled and jumped up after having turned the petrol off. I then asked where I was and you can imagine my disgust at learning that I was in Vendome. Crashed, by jove! right on my own doorstep. I did not recognize the town in the dusk when approaching from a new angle. I got a car back to the camp and reported to my Flight Commander . . .*

*You need not get excited about my upset. Never a day passes here without four or five occurring. As many as seventeen have occurred in one day here. You must distinguish between a "fall" and "upset" after reaching the ground. Actual falls are serious, but are of rare occurrence. I am liable to have a dozen upsets. You see almost any sort of ridge will upset an aeroplane on account of its lightness, the large air surface and the speed with which it scuds along the ground.*

### **A Few Random Remarks. Flying, Love, War and Politics as seen by a P.F.O.<sup>1</sup>**

It is several months now since I last gave vent to my pent-up feelings on these pages. I am now on the verge of becoming a fully-fledged second lieutenant, and before shouldering the very heavy responsibility of this very responsible position, I had better make use of the few care-free days still left to me in jotting down the following uncensored remarks.

Flying is a very much misunderstood art. It possesses very few of the pleasant sensations attributed to it and a lot of darned unpleasant sensations. Personally, I didn't expect much so am not disappointed. The

newspapers are full of special articles by "pilots" who have never flown about "the cavalry of the air," "our super-men," "the freedom of the blue" etc. etc. It's all bunkum, merely an advertising dodge.

I crashed a Rearo Merc [?] Seaplane at Lee – didn't flatten out soon enough. We turned up on our nose, so I climbed out on the top of the wing and waited for the Rescue Party. Nobody was very peeved, just a little nervous lest I should get the "Wind-Up." I wasn't hurt and was flying again next morning.

I don't suppose I am what you would call a full-out pilot; still, I have put in more hours than the average fellow that joined up with me and my instructors always seem to be satisfied.

There are more heavers of fertilizer in the Air Service than any place I ever struck. Listen to those fellows who were crazy to get on Seaplanes when it was doubtful as to where they would be sent. "I wish to Heaven I had got land machines," "God knows, I didn't want seaplanes." They are merely attempting the heroic role now that they know there is practically no chance of their being put on land machines.

Turning now for a moment to the softer side of the war. I am reported to be engaged to two girls – both charming. However as one of the parties concerned said when I told her the news, "the report is very much exaggerated."

The war is still plugging along in the same old way – every German is a human monstrosity – Germany is on the verge of starvation – the subject races in Austria-Hungary are ripe for revolt – the decisive battle of the war is about to take place and Mr. Lloyd George can do no wrong. But

why probe further into the delightful inconsistencies of our free, unfettered press? It would be cruel.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pilot Flying Officer? Probationary Flying Officer? By the time Ken reached southern Italy, he was a Royal Air Force flight-lieutenant.*

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### **Under The Spreading Fig-Tree:**

**A Paradox.** Isn't it curious that in the country that supplies the world's barbers the male population is invariably in need of a shave?

**Ignorance.** The average Englishman's idea of Canada and the United States is as hazy as a child's impression of the Promised Land.

**Effeminate?** So, Captain A. Lloyd Taylor, you think the fashion advertisements in the American magazines are effeminate. Oh, Lloyd, don't make those unkind remarks – they cut me to the quick. Good Heavens, man, don't you own a mirror?

## **Appointed To Italy. Pleasant and interesting journey through France and Italy.**

I left Southampton on my birthday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, for Taranto, Southern Italy. I was in charge of a draft of twenty-three men who were bound for Corfu.

The journey throughout was most pleasant. I was appointed Boat and Train Adjutant. This entailed a certain amount of work but the privileges that went along with it far outweighed any disadvantages. I shared the best cabin on the Boat with the O.C. and a first class coach on the train.

We stopped for a day each at three Rest Camps during the journey. Cherbourg, at the port of disembarkation, St. Germain in Southern France and Firenze in Northern Italy. At these Rest Camps we could get a bath, a couple of good meals and restock our own larder. Between these Rest Camps there were "Halt Repos," where we could get a wash, hot tea and have time to stretch our legs. We were often able to get a meal at a café near the Halt Repos.

There were slightly over seven hundred on board the train, divided about equally between Military and Naval parties. There were half a dozen R.A.F. officers on board, most of whom I had known before. We had the job of censoring mail at the Rest Camps.

We arrived at the Rest Camp at Taranto in eight days. This camp was in a terrible state of disorganization. It was a case of each man shifting for himself. Certain troop movements from the East caused the camp to be greatly overcrowded.

Lewiston and I reported at the R.A.F. Station at Taranto and were appointed to the seaplane station at Otranto. We left Taranto at five o'clock in the morning for Otranto, arriving there at six in the evening. We were met at the station by a car and taken to the Airstrip, which looked pretty good to us. We were treated to a pretty hot Air Raid the first night.

### **First Patrol.**

I did my first patrol accompanied by Davenport. It is quite easy. You are in sight of land except on misty days. We did a 3 hour 45 minute patrol.

### **"Allo Patrol."**

Did a three hour and a half "Allo" patrol on 21-7-18. Didn't see anything. Communicated with Destroyer. There were enough Trawlers, Destroyers etc. knocking about to eat a Sub.

### **"Spys."**

Someone has been tampering with the machines. On two consecutive mornings we found the guns jammed and the wireless apparatus put out of business. One machine was taken up with the elevating controls holding by but two strands. Although special guards have been placed, no one has been caught. It is believed that someone working on the

machines is responsible because in each case it was the “duty machine” that had been tampered with.

### **Air Raid.**

The French aerodrome was “seen off” last night. It was simply wiped off the map by means of incendiary bombs. We were all tucked safely away in our dug-out. There were two waves, the interval between them being just long enough to let you get back into bed again. *[This is dated 25-7-18.]*

### **Captured and Recaptured.**

During the recent Italian offensive in Albania, two of our D.H. men, [?] and Anderson, were brought down and taken prisoner. Two days later they were recaptured by the Italians. They report fairly good treatment. [?] was rather seriously wounded. *[I think D.H. signifies an Airco DH, a series of biplane bombers designed by Geoffrey de Havilland.]*

### **Bragg And Linden Missing.**

Bragg and Linden were brought down during the last raid on Cattano. No one is absolutely positive as to their fate, but as “a machine” was seen to go down in flames, it is supposed that it was their machine.

### **Oakley And Rating Killed.**

Oakley and his Rating Observer were accidentally killed on July 12, when the D.H. that Oakley was flying side-slipped into the ground from about a hundred feet, immediately bursting into flames. Both of the occupants were badly chewed up before they could be extracted from the wreckage. The funeral took place at the local cemetery two days later.

### **Redfern Wounded.**

During the recent fighting in Albania, Redfern, the senior Observer, was rather badly wounded when bombing [?] Bridge. He goes back to England.

### **False Alarm. (Aug 1)**

We were all turned out at 3:45 a.m. this morning on hearing the Raid warning go. This was quite unexpected because the "Raiding Moon" has disappeared now. However we didn't stop to argue the question, but grabbed a coat and did a bunk to the dug-out.

Arriving at the mouth of the dug-out, some of us stopped to have a look around. The barrage was as per usual – shoot as many shells in the general direction of the engine's hum as possible. While trying to locate something, we spotted the machine attempting to signal by means of Aldis lamp. This nearly proved fatal to it, because the entire barrage now

shot in the direction from whence the signaling had come, but with no apparent result. Gradually the hum of the engines faded away, the barrage died down and the Raid was over.

Next morning we awakened to the information that we had been firing on an Italian Airship. This Airship which was from Brindisi, for some unknown reason crossed our coast at the unheard of hour of 3:45 a.m. without first indicating either its presence or nationality. Upon receiving a hot reception, it tried to signal but as this merely drew the fire, they made the best of a bad job, went inland and crossed the coast again at a less warm spot. With the coming of daylight they returned and viewed the scene of their adventure, this time in safety.

### **“Hope Dwells Eternal.” etc.**

I am now the proud possessor of a five-day mustache. Thus far I have passed quite unnoticed. I am feeling quite hurt about it.

### **“Try And Try Again.”**

The above-mentioned mustache was unfortunately shaved off by an absent-minded barber at Brindisi. It was then ten days old and I was beginning to feel quite chirpy about it.

## **Forced Landing At Sea. Rescued by Destroyer and landed at Brindisi.**

A raid on Durazzo<sup>1</sup> was scheduled to take place on the morning of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1918. The D.H.s were to do the actual bombing and were to be escorted by some Camels and two Short seaplanes. I was appointed pilot of one of the seaplanes. My duty was to pick up the occupants of any of the land machines should they be obliged to alight in the sea. The seaplanes were to start early on account of their slowness, proceed to the mouth of the Durazzo harbor, stay there five minutes and then beat it for home in the trail of the land machines.

According to the prearranged timetable, I left the water at 5:30 a.m. Everything went along merrily until we were nicely in the middle of the Adriatic, when the Observer started handing me notes back re the heat of the water. I soon discovered that we were in for trouble. The revs started to drop and we commenced losing height. I had sighted some Destroyers about ten miles away and had veered off in their direction at the first signs of trouble; consequently when I was absolutely obliged to shut off the engine, I was able to make a landing quite near them.

Upon landing, we immediately signalled the other machine to carry on, asked the Destroyer to pick us up and loosed a pigeon with a message. I went on board the Destroyer because I was beginning to feel a bit seasick in the heavy swell, while St. John stayed with the seaplane. He was an old sailor and thought he could stand any amount of rocking around. I reported to the Captain of the Destroyer, who said that he would tow us to Brindisi. I then went below to partake of another breakfast.

When I arrived on deck again, I was handed a signal from St. John saying that he couldn't stand the sea and besides he was sick. I could see that she was getting pulled and wrenched about considerably and as I knew we wouldn't get any thanks for towing the machine back, I recommended the Captain destroy her. After some hesitation he agreed to do this.

We wanted to save some of the gear before sinking the machine so we had her pulled up alongside and a demolition party sent aboard. The way in which that party went to work proves that the British Navy still retains the taint of the buccaneering days of long ago. St. John and I were on board over-seeing the work. They broke off, sawed off and pulled off everything detachable. Up went dash-board instruments, wireless gear, pails of petrol, half the propeller, signalling apparatus etc., etc. However – upon returning to the ship, instead of a huge heap of miscellaneous articles lying on the deck, there was only part of our wireless gear visible. Everything else had disappeared as souvenirs. It took considerable persuasion at Brindisi to even coax the more valuable part of our gear out of the various hiding places. The machine gun for instance was recovered from beneath the floor of the First Lieutenant's cabin.

After we had abandoned the remains of our old Short, the Captain thought that this would be a grand opportunity for a little target practice. Consequently we drew off a bit and cleared the decks for action. The preliminary preparation being completed, the firing began. The first shots missed the mark by a hundred yards and even those that did eventually hit merely tore large holes in the canvas. Our target practice was the occasion for much ironical cheering from the Australian Destroyer that had stood by to see the fun.

The Captain, nettled by the attention of our Australian friends, decided to turn heavier guns on poor old Short and blow the \_\_\_ thing out of the water. He'd show them. This was accordingly done but with the same results.

The Australians were now giving us advice on "how to sink a seaplane." Our Captain now sent out his redoubtable wrecking party in a small boat with orders to fire the machine. After much promiscuous pouring of petrol about, the conflagration was finally started and finally consumed all the canvas on one wing. Wild cheers from Australia. The wrecking gang, after being properly slanged as befitting the occasion, were provided with axes and hatchets to chop her in pieces if necessary. This they did in a truly professional manner, but still she floated – upside down. The Captain, now thoroughly out of patience, drew the ship off about half a mile and amid the hat waving and cheers from Australia, rammed old man Short at full speed. This was too much, and with a last saucy flip of her toes she gurglingly gave up the ghost.

The rest of our journey was comparatively quiet. We knocked around Brindisi for a night and a day before we were sent for. As I expected, nothing was said about the loss of the machine. I reported to Col. Oliver on my return, and the following conversation took place:

"Ah, you're back, Lucas."

"Yes, Sir."

"Have a good time?"

"Not so bad, Sir."

"Did you bring St. John with you?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Has he had supper?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, go get him and ask him to play a stag."<sup>2</sup>

"Yes, sir."

P.S. Upon describing the engine symptoms to the engineer, he said that one of the cylinders cracked. The fault, it appears, is fairly common in Sunbeam engines.

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<sup>1</sup> *Durazzo (Durrës) is an Adriatic port in Albania. At this stage of the war, most of Albania was occupied by Austro-Hungarian forces.*

<sup>2</sup> *Joan Harcourt points out that "stag" is military slang for sentry duty. "Stagging on" or "doing stag" comes from "standing guard."*

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### **Corkery & My Observer Killed:**

Corkery and his Observer were killed Thursday during a raid on Cattano. Corkery was in my squad at Greenwich. His Observer Pettit really belonged to me but had been loaned for that particular stunt. Tough luck.

### **Hodgkins & Pickett Killed.**

Shot down over Cattano. Hodgkins used to be at our mess before going to [?].

### **Good Intentions.**

A patient at the O.M.H. suffering from shell-shock wished to make a present of flowers to his nurse upon his departure. He went into the village with this end in view but on account of his condition he couldn't make himself very well understood. He managed to give the nurse's name but couldn't make himself understood about the flowers. However looking through a book he came across a picture of flowers in the form of a wreath. This was an inspiration to him and by means of pointing he managed to convey the meaning, as he thought, that they should send flowers to his nurse. The nurse in question duly received a huge wreath of white flowers with the former patient's card attached. To put it mildly, she was rather taken aback.

### **Search For Austrian Fleet.**

Upon returning from our afternoon swim, we met the Orderly Officer on the run with the information that a wireless had just been received that the Austrian Fleet had at last come out into the open – that our Fleet had started out to meet them and that they wanted a couple of our machines

to pick them up at a named point and to proceed to scout ahead and make ourselves useful.

Capt. Taylor and I were chosen to take up the two machines. There was great excitement. I had hardly time to get my helmet and goggles, not to mention getting anything to eat, before my machine was ready for me. Taylor and I got in touch with our outfit – went away ahead but could see nothing. Apparently our Austrian friends had scuttled back again after getting a breath of air.

It was almost dark when we turned to go home and was quite dark with the exception of a full moon by the time we reached home. I had had no training in night landing and was afraid I would crash. It isn't a pleasant sensation to circle the harbor waiting for your partner to land and rather expecting to smash things when your turn came. However I managed with nothing more serious than a few hard bumps.

The next day the Admiral in charge of the Fleet in that section wirelessed congratulations to Taylor and myself – probably for having got home.

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