

From Acton to the trenches in France...

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of firing on the rifle range. Every time we went to the range it meant a route march. Every time we went for a medical examination (which I can assure you was not a few times) it meant a route march. And how many times we changed camp I am sure I cannot tell you. One day we were in the 1st Battalion the next day we were in the 14th Battalion the next in the 3rd with the Queen's Gun until at last they decided that our place was with the 4th Battalion.

Then came the final organization. Some battalions were over strength and others were below strength. The men were paraded and those who were to make up the different battalions were told to step out as their names were called. Without giving the whole history of this affair, I will say that I at last found myself with the 5th Battalion and promoted from private to Sergeant in one jump.

The 5th Battalion was supposed to be a cavalry battalion but their ranks had been so depleted in order to bring Strathcona's Horse up to strength that they did not take horses with them but ever afterwards worked as an infantry battalion. We were commanded by Lt. Col. Luxford with Major Dwyer as second in command and an ex 9th Lancer Corporal as Adjutant.

After all this organization and reorganization we were reviewed by HRH Duke of Connaught and shortly after we left Valcartier.

Embarkation

On September 26 we embarked at Quebec and, after laying in the river for 3 days, steamed as far as Gaspé Bay, which is at the mouth of the St Lawrence away back out of sight of the shipping route. When we arrived we found our escort.

The escort consisted of 6 battleships the names of which I am unable to tell you. I know that three of them were the Princess Royal, Glory and Lion. These men-o-war took up their positions, two on each horizon and one before and one behind the fleet of transports.

The fleet consisted of 33 ships and we left Gaspé Bay in three long lines. Each line a half-mile apart and each transport about 500 yards behind each other.

The voyage was an uneventful one. The sea was perfectly calm all the way over and the sight that met our eyes each morning as we saw the fleet in the sunshine was a glorious one. Everybody seemed to know where we were going to land. Liverpool, Bristol and South Lampton were all mentioned as the port of disembarkation. The course we took was very zigzag and by looking at the chart on the second last day it looked very much as if we were running into Bristol.

But we didn't and one fine morning we saw the town of Plymouth in front of us. It took a long time to run into the harbour - the whole day. Everybody has to admit that it was a wonderful piece of work to bring such a large number of troops across the ocean at one time with only 1 casualty.

The reception accorded us was a magnificent one. An officer of the 4th Battalion said that all the English people were fit for was to do a lot of flag waving. If he had only looked around him a little to see what men his battalion was made up of he might have had a different opinion. You all know the percentage of Canadians among the first contingent. I tell you there was something more than flag waving at this time in England, especially in the feeling of the people towards the Canadians or the men from Canada. Many were the thanks showered upon us on every hand. The English people appreciated our coming and showed it in a fanatical way.

The work of landing the troops was hard, of course, and took quite a long time, more than a week. But it was done and one evening the 5th Battalion found itself lined up on the wharf and ready for their march through the streets of Plymouth. I shall not attempt to describe that march. The crowd was so thick that we could not march. At the station we were met by ladies who distributed smokes, candies, fruit, and newspapers.

March to Salisbury

The journey from Plymouth to Salisbury was done partly on the Great Western Railway and partly on Shanks Pony. At every station huge crowds greeted us and showered upon us all kinds of delicacies until we arrived at a place called Lavington.

Lavington is a little village about 10 miles from Salisbury Plain. Here we detrained and started our march to the plain. What the people thought as they heard us going through their village I don't know, but we were anything but quiet. This was a very trying march. Those of you who know about England know that the roads there are good hard roads and our feet, after nearly a month on board ship, were very hard and when we arrived on the plain we were just about done up. We arrived at our destination about 8am and, on enquiring found we were at West Down South.

We really did not care which 'Down' it was even suppos-

ing it had been 'Upside Down.' The most of us at once made for the YMCA where we were able to buy a decent breakfast at a decent price.

We hear a lot of exorbitant prices being charged by this organization but I have had no experience that way. It has often surprised me how they can manage to give so much stuff away. I am in no way connected with the YMCA, but I think it's up to any soldier to show his appreciation of the work of this organization whenever he has the chance for so doing.

The Plains of Salisbury

You have all heard a great deal about the weather we had while on the plain. How it rained for 63 days, actual count. How we waddled around in mud over our boot tops. There was some disease owing to these conditions but not half so much as some of the papers would have you think. There were only seven deaths from Spinal Meningitis. The papers published reports by far untrue. Every man on the plain was examined in order that any disease may be arrested in time.

To France and the front

During the first week in February the 5th Battalion packed up and left Salisbury Plain. The 1st Brigade left during the last few days of January. Many were the guesses as to where we were going to get our ship. Those of us who were acquainted with the West of England were able to determine

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