

**The War Diaries of Frances James [Whiting](#)  
Diary 4  
October 9, 1916 to May 19, 1917**

**October 9**

Relieved in late afternoon.<sup>1</sup> Came down to Tara Hill where we bivouacked the night. Learned that [P.W.] "Moose" [Carleton](#) (minor) while coming out wounded was struck by a shell on the Bapaume – Albert road and blown to bits. His brother [L. [Carleton](#)] died of wounds on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June after getting down to Poperinghe.<sup>2</sup> Parcel from home, also two letters. P.C. [postcard] from H.C. [Walker](#), wounded at Courcelette in left calf on the 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. Mail from nearly everyone else but Harry Beaumont.

**October 10**

Batt. moved to Warloy. No place to sleep so bivouacked in an orchard.

**October 11**

C.O.'s called for volunteers to go on bombing and Lewis machine gun course. Offered to go on the gun course. Transported to Lanches<sup>3</sup> in lorries. Camped in pleasant valley in good tents.

**October 12**

Reveille at 6 A.M. First parade 7. Breakfast 8. Second parade 9-12. Dinner 1. Parade 2-5. Supper 5:30. Concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut 7. Spent 6 days there and on the seventh rejoined batt at Berneville some three kilometres away.<sup>4</sup> Since being away the oldest men in the company were sent to some seaside place in

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<sup>1</sup> On 11 October 1916, Lt.-Col. Agar [Adamson](#) wrote, "In the early morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> we retired in twos and threes leaving our Lewis gunners and bombers to the last and got back to our original trench without a single casualty which was wonderfully lucky." On the same day, Adamson also wrote, "On the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> both sides went out with stretchers and carried in their own dead and wounded. Not a shot being fired on either side, except by Artillery." See N. M. Christie, ed., [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919: Lieutenant Colonel, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry](#), (Nepean, Ontario: CEF Books, 1997), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Frank was ill informed. Percy Wainwright Carleton was wounded on October 8, but recovered to fight again with the PPCLI. Unfortunately, he was killed by a sniper during the advance to Mons on 10 Nov 1918, just a day prior to the end of the war. Frank correctly recorded that Percy's brother Lionel Granville Carleton had died of his wounds during the Battle of Sanctuary Wood. See Stephen K. Newman, *With the Patricia's in Flanders 1914-1918*, .162, 197.

<sup>3</sup> Lanches-Saint-Hilaire was about 40 km northwest of Albert and 3 km south of Bernaville, where Frank rejoined the battalion on October 18.

<sup>4</sup> While Frank was training, the battalion was on the march, moving on October 12 about 25 km northwest of Warloy to La Vicogne, which was about 13 km directly north of Amiens. On October 13, the battalion moved about 14 km west to Berteaucourt where it remained for three days. On October 16, it moved west again 6 km to Saint Léger-les-Domart, then turned to the northeast 10 km, where it billeted in Gorges and Vacquerie.

the south of France for seven days rest. Also lots of good jobs have gone begging.

### **October 17**

Tonight Lt. [G.M.] [Smith](#) asked me to his machine gun outfit. Promised to try. Billeted in good barn.

### **October 18**

Tonight went to a nearby town named Berneville [Bernaville].<sup>5</sup> No 2 machine gun crews are all filled up.

### **October 19**

Drill parades today.

### **October 20**

Moved off today and marched 14 kilos. Stayed overnight in small village.<sup>6</sup>

### **October 21**

Moved north today about 14 kilos.<sup>7</sup>

### **October 22**

Moved east today about 22 kilos. This camp is to be on transport lines during our operations in these trenches.<sup>8</sup>

### **October 23**

Worked today and tonight a few things to take into trenches. At 6:30 tonight we moved 6 kilos to Neuville St. Vaast and spent the night in cellars. Town is practically razed to the ground even the trees being all killed by shell fire. At noon moved into our trenches.<sup>9</sup>

### **October 24**

Our company is guarding a row of mine craters outposts being situated on the

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<sup>5</sup> Frank said he rejoined the battalion at Bernaville, but the billets were actually a kilometre south of there at Vacquerie.

<sup>6</sup> They stayed overnight at Noeux-lès-Auxi, which was 12-14 km north of Bernaville.

<sup>7</sup> They moved in a north-north-east direction to Monts-en-Ternois, a distance of about 17 km.

<sup>8</sup> The battalion moved to Ecoivres, which was on the rail line just 4 km northwest of Arras. [Adamson](#) said that the transport lines would be at Mont St. Eloi. [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 227.

<sup>9</sup> [Neuville-Saint-Vaast](#) was 8 km northeast of Arras and about 6 km west of Vimy. On October 23, Adamson wrote, "Our trench line runs from a point S.E. of Souchez to west of Vimy and then back to east of Neuville-St. Vaast. The line is generally known as 'Vimy Ridge.' The Boche is holding the ridge, we are on the downward slopes." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 227.

western crests.<sup>10</sup> Things very quiet. No cannonading from the Germans and only a few grenades and minnewerfers [minenwerfers] and machine gun bullets.<sup>11</sup>

### **October 25**

Sleep in day time in deep dugout 20 feet down. Our cooks are up here and they serve us up good mulligan and tea twice daily.

### **October 27 [26]**

Today [Albert] [Kane](#) was struck in the groin by a fragment and died in ten minutes. No one knows exactly what hit him as there was nothing going on at the time except a plane being shelled. The suddenness of this incident made more impression on us in a quiet place like this than if half a dozen had got down in the Somme.<sup>12</sup>

### **October 28**

My cough is still bad and Fritz throws over two hand grenades every time I have a spasm. However they all fall short.

### **October 29**

Relieved today at noon by 42<sup>nd</sup> and came back to N. St. V. [Neuville-Saint-Vaast] for tea and came back to Mont St. Eloy [Mont-Saint-Eloi] where we are now billeted in huts with wire beds. Spent the night rather chilled as a cold raw wind is blowing.<sup>13</sup>

### **October 30**

Wrote letters to home, Jean Irving, H. E. Wood, Ramsgate and Hilda.

### **November 3**

Moved up to the same trenches we occupied before.<sup>14</sup> On post with [J.W.]

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<sup>10</sup> Of those craters, [Adamson](#) wrote, "Besides our actual front line trench, we have to hold at night with a machine gun and 10 men to each crater in a line of crater holes, 80 to 100 yards in front of front line." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 227.

<sup>11</sup> The PPCLI was on the front line northeast of Neuville-Saint-Vaast from October 24 to 28. No. 2 Company was in the centre of the line with No 1 to the right and No. 4 to the left. No 3 Company was in support and on work fatigues revetting, or reinforcing, the walls of the communication trenches. The line was relatively quiet at this time.

<sup>12</sup> This incident dramatically illustrated how vulnerable the soldiers were, even when the trenches were relatively "quiet." Frank must have thought about this a great deal during the coming weeks. In earlier months, he had expressed a dark foreboding about his own impending death, but acted as if fate would decide. This passive response was about to end. In the upcoming weeks and months, Frank took his fate into his own hands and did everything he could to avoid the frontlines. He had miraculously escaped injury and death on two horrendous battlefields, and knew the odds were against his surviving a third. He also knew from sad experience that no one was going to intervene to save him; he had to do it himself.

<sup>13</sup> The PPCLI was at the rest camp of Mont-Saint-Eloi, which was 4 km west of Neuville-Saint-Vaast. They remained at the camp until November 7.

<sup>14</sup> The PPCLI relieved the 42 Bn. at La Folie, which was on the left hand sector of the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade line.

McMeichen [[Macmeeken](#)] and [A.H.H.] [Good](#). McM very jumpy, seems to be given to seeing things.<sup>15</sup>

### November 5

Tonight we suffered a casualty. [J.H.] Cavasser [[Carvosso](#)] our sole remaining subaltern,<sup>16</sup> the rest are away, got snooping around where he had no business to be and McMeichen [Macmeeken] shot him, thinking he was a German. Bullet went through flesh under arm.<sup>17</sup>

### November 6

Weather very rotten. Rain windy and cold. Trenches simply dissolving.<sup>18</sup>

### November 8

[Gibson](#), [C.J.D.] [McGahey](#) and myself appointed to rations guard at Neuville St. Vaast. Moved back and relieved at 2 P.M.<sup>19</sup> Interesting place. Found three skulls and innumerable skeletons around.<sup>20</sup>

### November 9

Explored ruins of town. Having a whale of a time. Weather changed for fine.

### November 10

Parcel from Ramsgate tonight. Send down to Mont St. Eloy for bag of food such as tinned milk, Quaker oats, etc. Came up tonight. Wrote home and to Vivian. Thanked Aunt Jennie for parcel.

### November 11 & 12

Loafed all the time.

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<sup>15</sup> Jumpiness was an issue on the frontlines. On November 6, [Adamson](#) wrote, "A good many of the new men, who have joined us since we left the Somme district, require a good deal of encouragement being rather inclined to get jumpy, if left without constant visits from officers and the more Senior the better." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 232. However, jumpiness was not just confined to the "new men," and Adamson was well aware of it. Macmeeken, a civil engineer prior to the war, had joined the PPCLI from the 1<sup>st</sup> University Co. on 28 July 1915, and had undoubtedly been affected by more than a year of horrors. It was the encouragement and example of their officers, loyalty to their country and to comrades, and iron will that kept most men from bolting after months, then years in the trenches. Under such circumstances, it is little wonder that some became "jumpy" and others completely incapacitated by the effects of the trauma they had endured.

<sup>16</sup> A subaltern was a junior officer, usually some grade of lieutenant, below the rank of captain.

<sup>17</sup> The following night, November 6, Carvosso was wounded in the leg by a sniper. *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 232.

<sup>18</sup> On October 26, Adamson had written, "The Regiments who have been here did a lot of building of trenches, but as of old, they did not build them to last during the wet season. The consequence is they are falling in. We have a big job of revetting before us." *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 229.

<sup>19</sup> The PPCLI went into reserve at Neuville-St.Vaast from November 8-13, supplying work parties or fatigues for the front lines.

<sup>20</sup> This may be where he found "Alphonse," a skull (probably of a horse or mule) with a bullet hole through it. "Alphonse" was mentioned on 6 December 1916 and again on 24 February 1917.

### **November 13**

Relieved reluctantly at noon. Five and six platoons in dugout on mail trolley line – supports. Ration party to No. 4 company tonight.<sup>21</sup>

### **November 14**

On fatigue repairing trenches in front line during forenoon. Slept afternoon.

### **November 15**

Fatigue in Duffield trench in forenoon. Also in the afternoon worked an hour on sunken road near Black-heath dump. Many dead Germans lying around. Cannot dig anywhere without finding them. In the evening on ration party to 3 Coy. on right of Grange and Duffield. On the way back [A.H.H.] [Good](#), myself and another fellow was caught between an advancing lorry and the side of the trench and I was scraped on the knee and right thigh. Walked down to Bath dressing station and got tied up. Sent down to 9<sup>th</sup> field aid station a mile down the trench. Stayed there overnight.<sup>22</sup>

### **November 16**

Got a shot of anti tetanus serum and ride down to Ecoivres station. Parcel from R. Beaumont, Ambleside, Westmoreland and a letter from home.<sup>23</sup> Wheat \$1.78. Came to Div Rest Station and allotted a stretcher by a new man named Jim Gray of Winnipeg.<sup>24</sup> Lots of blankets and very comfortable after the trenches.

### **November 17-26**

Had a glorious rest, read slept and played cards for ten days. Wound getting on nicely. Today the 26<sup>th</sup>, Sunday moved down to Div. Convalescent Camp with Gray. Bunked on the floor.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> According to the War Diary of the PPCLI, work parties were actively repairing and revetting, or reinforcing, the sides of the trenches. The enemy was more active than previously, but the front was still relatively quiet.

<sup>22</sup> His personnel file indicted that Frank was treated on November 16 at the No. 9. Canadian Field Ambulance. On December 6, the No. 10 Canadian Field Ambulance noted that he was "[transferred to Town Major Ecoivres for Light Duty.](#)"

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Beaumont may have had greater interest in Frank, now that he was writing to her niece Jean Irving, who had been raised by her maiden aunts, Ruth, Clara, and Isa, in the Lake District of Northern England. The three Beaumont sisters had a lucrative dressmaking and millinery business at Ambleside that catered to the wives of wealthy businessmen and industrialists who had established country estates in this scenic region of rural England.

<sup>24</sup> In November 1916, the Divisional Rest Station was at Haute Avesnes, which was about 4 km southwest of Ecoivres. On 28 November 1916, the Assistant Director of Medical Services "Visited Convalescent Camp, at Hermaville, the 8<sup>th</sup> Cdn Field Ambulance, and the Divisional Rest Station, at Haute Avesnes, going on to the 9<sup>th</sup> Cdn Field Ambulance, at Ecoivres." Diary of the Assistant Director of Medical Services, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, November 1916, [p. 9](#).

<sup>25</sup> The Convalescent Camp was at Hermaville. In the meantime, the battalion had gone into the frontlines on Nov 25. At 9:30 p.m. on Nov. 27, [Adamson](#) reported, "At a signal by a coloured rocket we blew off quite a large mine, at the same moment a very intense artillery fire opened on the German second line, at the same moment two fairly large raiding parties started over No. Man's land, doing very considerable damage and getting prisoners ... The Germans all along the line sent up many red rockets bursting into two, shooting out in opposite directions, which must have been their signal for their artillery to open fire, which they did mostly

### **November 26-30**

Went to Aubigny [Aubigny-en-Artois]<sup>26</sup> and interviewed Capt Clap [H.S. [Clapp](#)] of 3<sup>rd</sup> Mobile Section of C.O.V.C. [Canadian Overseas Veterinary Corps] regarding a transfer. Says he will write to Co. O.C. for me. Today detailed with four others to Div. Sanitary Staff for fatigue.<sup>27</sup> Work likely to last a couple of months. Luck seems to be coming my way.<sup>28</sup> Written to Batt for mail to be sent on.<sup>29</sup>

### **December 1**

Wrote home the good news. Working at a model kitchen being erected in the training school trenches.

### **December 2**

Leslie [Hancock](#) down here as Corporal Instructor. Also George [Woolmer](#) as medical orderly. Helping around generally. Work only five hours daily on trenches so have pretty fair time.

### **December 3**

Sunday; worked only an hour this morning. Caught a motor lorry going to Ecoivres and rode down. Only got one letter but it was from Mr. Coffin and registered. Enclosed 25 F. He says his boy was killed. Could get no other mail for myself but went down to Bruay [Bray]<sup>30</sup> and got Gray's from his Battalion. Rode lorry back to Aubigny. Bought presents for home Harry B[eaumont], Muriel, Jean [Irving] and a few others I cannot think of now. Wrote letters to Mr. Coffin, cousin Ethel, and Jean Irving.

### **December 6**

Today I had to parade sick again and was marked L.D. [light duty] but the O.S. [O.C.? Officer Commanding?] put me on a party going to the town major [Bethune] of Ecoivres. So after arranging for the mailing of "Alphonse" to Alex

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on the back lines. One of their lucky shots hit a magazine dump of ours. The explosion was horrific, the ground shaking for miles. After about an hour things quieted down, the actual time of the raid only occupied 15 minutes. The casualties were few and I gather fairly heavy on the Germans ... Four Regiments in all took part." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 240.

<sup>26</sup> Aubigny-en-Artois was about 17 km northwest of Arras.

<sup>27</sup> The divisional sanitary section was not quite as dangerous as the front line. On 17 July 1916, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division recorded that "A Provisional Salvage Coy. had been formed to assist in clearing the battlefield etc & in supervising the sanitary arrangements in the front area. The Camp Commandant of the Forward Area commands this company. Personnel 2 N.C.O.s & 82 O.R's found from the Brigade holding the front line." War Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, Administrative Branches of the Staff, November 1916, [p. 8](#).

<sup>28</sup> Frank had spoken up on his own behalf and it was already paying off.

<sup>29</sup> Since Frank was now stationed at Aubigny away from the trenches, his mail would have to be transferred there.

<sup>30</sup> Bray was about 1 km south of Ecoivres.

McWilliams I bade my job and two friends Gray and [Woolmer](#) goodbye.<sup>31</sup> Got as far as Haute Avesnes and told the D.R.S. [divisional rest station] we could go no further.<sup>32</sup> After a good deal of humming and hawing on the part of the M.O. [medical officer] in charge he at length procured two motor ambulances for us and drove us the rest of the way. Reported to S.M. [Sergeant-Major] (I was in charge) and turned in to dismal billets in some old barn. Very cold and draughty. Feel sore because of the loss of my good job. Went to Batt. O.O. [Ordnance Office?] but no mail is there for me.<sup>33</sup>

## December 7

Bad war news these day. Are we winning? It seems doubtful sometimes. The Germans are into Roumania, have seized our wheat and oil- also the capital – Bucharest.<sup>34</sup> Worked in drying room of third Div. laundry.<sup>35</sup> Boss is a regular slave driver – a second Legree<sup>36</sup> in fact. Have to work nearly ten hours a day and he keeps us at it all the time. The hell of it is the whole ten of us are sick and marked light duty. My cough is getting a regular tearer.<sup>37</sup>

## December 8

Went sick today. Did not work all forenoon and very little in afternoon. Letter from

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<sup>31</sup> Frank never identified Alphonse precisely, but it was a skull of some kind, possibly a horse or a mule with a bullet through its head, which he sent to Alex MacWilliam at the Manitoba Agricultural College. See February 24 for Frank's comment on its safe arrival.

<sup>32</sup> Haute Avesnes was about 5 km from Aubigny-en-Artois. Frank was ill and angry about the loss of his job, so he was in no mood to endure the long walk back to his battalion.

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, he was in better circumstances than the men on the front lines. On Nov. 5, [Adamson](#) wrote, "The weather continues very cold. We have as an army, almost run out of oil and are on quarter ration of fuel. The dugouts are becoming flooded, the sick lists are increasingly alarmingly. The strongest fellows are beginning to show the strain ... [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 242.

<sup>34</sup> News travelled quickly, as Bucharest had fallen to the enemy on the previous day. It was a blow to the Allied Forces because they relied on Romanian oil and wheat to support the war effort. The acquisition of these important resources enabled the Germans to carry on the war almost to the end of 1918.

<sup>35</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisional laundry had been established at Ecoivres on 24 November 1916. War Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, Administrative Branches of the Staff, November 1917, [p. 10](#).

<sup>36</sup> "Legree" is a term meaning "brutal taskmaster." It is derived from Simon Legree, a cruel slave dealer in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The novel was popular in the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, Frank did not have to worry about "Legree" shooting him. It was a far different story for his mates at the front. On Dec. 8, Adamson wrote from Crater line, "... we have been constantly pulling off small crater post raids, both by day and night. None of which was a failure, although some did not get all they went after ... On Monday night we pulled off a raid killing all the post and destroying it. Lieutenant McLean [D. [Maclean](#)], one of my old Sergeants, 6 feet, 6 inches high was badly shot in the arm, one Corporal killed. On Thursday in broad daylight six snipers and 4 bombers rushed a German post killing all in it, destroying their loop holes and blowing it up all within 15 minutes, returning to our lines without casualties. The same evening we scuppered another post. Last night (Friday) 10 men and Lieutenant McDougall of Vancouver, at 3 a.m. pushed off from a crater post, crawled up to the German post, four of them rushed at the six sentries with revolvers, telling them to hold up their hands. One threw a bomb, which took off McDougall's leg below the knee, one bomber was hit in the hand, all six Germans were killed ..." *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 243.

home tonight. Hear Allan [Bell](#) is dead.

### **December 9**

Feeling better today. Boss put me in charge of drying room. Wonder if I will become a "Legree" the second in time if I hold the job long enough. Mail tonight from Alex McWilliam and A.E.A.

### **December 10**

Sunday. Work just the same all day. Mail tonight from London. Also a parcel from Betty B[eaumont].<sup>38</sup>

### **December 11**

Working night shift this week. Drew 50 F Xmas pay this morning.

### **December 15**

Went down to Aubigny to see Dick [Beaumont](#). Had dinner together.<sup>39</sup>

### **December 18**

Xmas parcels arriving from H.A.R., Betty B[eaumont]., Ramsgate, Ethel, home, and Harry's people up in Westmoreland. Great peace talks these days but allies reject German's offer to get together and arrange terms. Cough getting better the last week but has taken a bad turn again at this date.

### **December 20**

Today rumoured that our brigade "went over" and have taken a number of prisoners. Glad I am out of it.<sup>40</sup>

### **December 21**

No confirmation of rumor. Tonight understand that in spite of efforts of O.C. [Officer Commanding] Laundry all fit men are to return to unit & I was marked fit a day or two ago. Received ticket to give to regiment tonight but I have 26 hours grace. A day is a day and a lot of shells fall in that time so I will not report until tomorrow night. Big mail tonight. Coz. Mabel married to Roy Emery. Don bought a Studebaker. My wheat on stubble went 18 bushels to the acre, invitation to Bedford to see Miss Meachman's sister, letters from Jean [Irving] and Hilda – also Floss.

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<sup>38</sup> Betty or Libbie Beaumont was Dick's youngest sister and was living on the family farm at that time near Minnedosa, Manitoba.

<sup>39</sup> Dick was no longer with any of the companies on the frontlines. He had been attached to the Provost Marshall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, in August 1916 and was still functioning as a control policeman.

<sup>40</sup> Frank was now too far removed from his regiment to be well-informed, but the PPCLI was certainly active, being in the front lines from December 13-19. [Adamson](#) wrote from Crater line, 20 December 1916, "Our three mines went up [Dec. 19, 1:30-1:45 a.m.] making a wonderful crater composed of three, much higher than the original ones. We have asked to have it named Patricia Crater. One officer wounded, 2 men killed, 7 wounded. We consolidated and held craters that night. The mines went off at 1:40 A.M." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 247-248.

## December 22

Peace advances by Germany seem to be squashed by Lloyd George's attitude. Lt. Bethune, O.C. Bath & Acting Town Major today gave me a recommendation for a commission. Will write Major [H.W.] Nevin [[Niven](#)] and Lt. [C.R.] [Hopper](#) also for one and then we'll see what can be done.<sup>41</sup> Wrote home, Floss, Jean. Marked fit for duty by Major in 9<sup>th</sup> Field Amb.

## December 23

Went to R.T.O. [railway transport officer] this morning and enquired if anything could be found for me to do as cough was bad. T.O. [transport officer] advised reporting sick again. Did so and got light duty.

## December 24

T.O. sent me to transports to report for duty there. This only proves that it pays to kick better than it pays to wait.<sup>42</sup> Tonight shared a bottle with George [Marchbank](#).

## December 25

Did not do much all day but went to concert in Bray Y.M.C.A. hut with G.M. [George [Marchbank](#)] Returning found boys pretty well tanked.

## December 26

Xmas over for another year thank goodness. If I had not kicked to the T.O. [Transport Officer] I would most certainly have spent the festive season in the trenches.<sup>43</sup> As it is I seem to have speared a staff job.

## December 28

Deputed to look after a team [of horses]. This practically comprises all I have to

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<sup>41</sup> Many men wanted commissions, and commanding officers had to weigh the merits of each application. On 9 January 1917, Lt. Col. [Adamson](#) wrote, "I have twenty commissions to suggest today and find it very difficult to choose. The Company Commanders are poor judges and I am worse. It is so hard to hit a line to go on. I have decided to go on guts and not gamble manners so we will probably have some queer fish but the side will be the stronger for it." On March 4, he wrote, "Every man in England wants a commission. I get about 15 letters a day. The last is from Campbell, Pelly's old servant, who has avoided coming back to France for over a year, on some pretext or other. I am afraid my answers to these wretches will not please them. Fathers write me, M.P.s write me and Mothers and Sisters, and in nearly every case the men are not worth considering and I cannot help telling them that the men out here who have stuck it and are sticking it, are the only ones I can consider. The Corps Commander has allowed me to send in the names of 20 N.C.O.s and men for commissions which looks as if he expected we would need them fairly soon....The power of leadership, which I think is born rather than acquired, I consider first. After that, quick decision and, even in training, quick action and the ability to realize the situation he finds himself in." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 252, 268.

<sup>42</sup> Frank was becoming increasingly assertive in his efforts to survive the war. He was now with P.P.C.L.I. Transport.

<sup>43</sup> The PPCLI was indeed in the trenches between December 24 and 29. However, it was quiet. The entry for December 25 in the War Diary reads, "Situation quiet throughout the day. Numbers of the enemy showed signs of wishing to fraternize and appeared in No Man's Land. They were not fired on – every opportunity was given that some of them might come in to our lines – none of them did so however."

do though the amount of messing around attendant upon the job makes it rather unsatisfactory to one who prefers to work while he works.

### **December 31**

Today we had what we took for our Christmas dinner, comprised of a small piece of roast veal a small potato or two and a fragment of turnip.<sup>44</sup> The usual cigarettes and small tins of pudding were also much in evidence. Tonight I went up to the Battalion at St. Eloy [St. Eloi]. Met Jack [Dickson](#) who was visiting [C.H.] [LeGallais](#) and [H.C.] Shummerly [[Schermuly](#)]. At 10 o'clock went to concert given by comedy party in concert hut.<sup>45</sup> Kept it up until midnight. Dismissed after the usual speeches.

## **1917**

### **January 1**

Five grooms were sent back to their companies today owing to the recent order regarding grooms. Rumor that three packmen will also be returned.<sup>46</sup> In that case I will almost certainly go with them. Cough little better but chest hurting considerably. Last night I received a letter from Maggie Cushing. Answered it tonight.

### **January 15**

Up until today I have worked steadily at the transports with little or nothing to record. See Dick [[Beaumont](#)] occasionally and interchange visits. He is trying to get me on his job.<sup>47</sup> This morning Graybeard kicked me in the stomach while I was grooming him. Did nothing else all day. Feeling rather sore.

### **January 16**

Feeling better today. Working as usual. Cough getting steadily better. Reg. [registered] letter with F25 [25 francs] from Aldine St.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Evidently Frank was not impressed by the meal!

<sup>45</sup> The Comedy Company had been preparing for weeks, and although Lt. Col. [Adamson](#) did not mention the performance of Dec. 31, he was very much involved, or rather his wife and her friends were. On Dec. 5, he thanked his wife Mabel for her trouble "over the Comedy Company's dresses, etc.," and on Dec. 22, he mentioned that "The Boudoir Cap and 3 nighties arrived" for which he was going to write and thank "Mrs. Stratting," adding that "All the theatrical things have come and from an account of them, I hear they are delightful, the wigs are very fine." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 242, 248.

<sup>46</sup> Frank was still on light duty in transport, looking after a team of horses, but he feared that he could be sent back anytime to his company.

<sup>47</sup> Dick was still a control policeman under the Provost Marshall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division.

<sup>48</sup> During January, the PPCLI was either in the trenches or in reserve providing work parties for the front lines, except for January 18-23, when the battalion went into divisional reserve and rest at Mont St. Eloi. The lines were relatively quiet, although a couple of successful raids were conducted on the enemy. Adamson described the raid of January 26 as follows. "At 8 this morning in broad daylight, we pulled off a really wonderful raid. Completely destroyed 2 posts, bombing 5 dugouts and bringing back 2 unwounded

## February 5

Still at Ecoivres in P.P. [Princess Patricia's] Transport. All Y.M.C.A.'s estaminet canteens closed on account of mumps that have broken out.<sup>49</sup> Rumors of big naval battle.

## February 6

Writing account of battle on Sept 15<sup>th</sup>.

## February 10

Moved from Ecoivres to Bruay – seems to be a large mining town. Billets scattered and transport all over the place.<sup>50</sup>

## February 11

Our billets – packmen and a few teamsters are in the loft of a house – very draughty.

## February 16-18

Moved into private house. Very comfortable and clean. Am having the deuce of a time the last few days trying to keep out of trouble. Wouldn't be surprised if my luck would not put me back into the company in time to take in the coming offensive.<sup>51</sup> There is an awful cute little maid in this house and a great favourite with all us boys. Refugees from Sens.

## February 24

Strong rumor going around the transport that six pack horses are to be turned in to the pack corps also that some will go with the horses while others will be returned.<sup>52</sup> Learn from MacWilliams that Alphonse arrived safely and now

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prisoners. Many were killed and wounded by our blowing up dugouts." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 242, 257.

<sup>49</sup> Will Bird had mumps at this time and missed the Battle of Vimy Ridge as a result. See Will Bird, [Ghosts Have Warm Hands](#), 23-25.

<sup>50</sup> Located 40 km northwest of Arras, Bruay-la-Buissiere was a coal-mining town where the Corps rest area was located. The PPCLI remained there the entire month engaging in award and inspection parades and training, as well as football matches and other entertainment. According to the PPCLI War Diary, the battalion left for Bruay on February 11. On January 15, Major [Adamson](#) explained, "The 3rd Division is being taken out of the line on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February and going for three weeks so called rest to Bruay. We are to be specially trained as storming troops by a new method in accordance with the new Infantry re-organization. Our job then will be to be rushed in for special attacks, drawn out again and put in where and whenever any attacking called storming is required to be done. It seems rather a compliment, picking out this Division for important work." *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 254-255.

<sup>51</sup> Frank was enjoying the rest camp, but was apprehensive about being sent back to No. 2 Company and the front.

<sup>52</sup> The rumour was that the six pack horses belonging to the PPCLI Transport were going to be transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Pack Corps. This was partially true, but the reorganisation did not occur until the beginning of April. On April 1, a war diary entry stated that "In view of coming operations a Divisional Pack Mule Co. has been formed." War Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, Administrative Branches of the Staff, April 1917, [p. 3](#). What Frank feared was that this change could mean a reduction in the size of PPCLI Transport and that he might be returned to his unit and the frontlines.

reposed in the museum with a glass tube through his bean showing directions of bullet.<sup>53</sup> Letter last night from the Misses [Gretta] Lyon & T Thompson Mr. A.T. [Archie [Thompson](#)?] Commiserations on wound. Bath parade today.<sup>54</sup>

### **March 3**

Parcel from Mr. A.C. & Thanet Rd. Letters from Ambleside, Jean [Irving], McWilliam, Montreal. Paid 50F to buy underwear. But do not need it. Bought a badge carved in wood from Neuville St. Vaast from Bert D. [Miles](#) for 10F. Mailed it home. Bought mother some flower bulbs.

### **March 21**

Left Bruay today for place north of Mont St. Eloy.<sup>55</sup> I was on G.G. [G.S.] wagon<sup>56</sup> as packman, rode part of the way, got to camp about 10 P.M. & pretty hungry. Seem to be making preparations for a big attack here.

### **March 27**

Am 25 years old today.<sup>57</sup> Tonight a big bombardment started up and continued for four or five hours.

### **March 28**

Very quiet all day. We are in tents here and throughout forest horses are tied out. They are in a good shelter now. I clean harness nearly every day now for someone. Boys came out of the trenches last night but have seen none of them yet to learn the casualties. Understand however there has been two or three killed and ten or so wounded in the four days they have been in.<sup>58</sup>

### **April 4**

Joined the pack corps today.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Alphonse was on display in the "museum" at the Manitoba Agricultural College.

<sup>54</sup> The Bath Parade to Houdain, four km south of Bruay, occurred on February 26.

<sup>55</sup> They went east 11.5 km to a small place called Gouy-Servins, which was almost 7 km north of St. Eloi. The PPCLI makes no mention of Transport leaving on March 21. However, it may have gone ahead with equipment before the rest of the battalion left on March 22 and March 23 for Villers-au-Bois, which was about half way between Gouy-Servins and Mont St. Eloi. The trenches at Bois des Alleux were nearby.

<sup>56</sup> "G.G." may be a mis-transcription of Frank Whiting's diary, because his writing was difficult to read at times. According to Captain Michael O'Leary of the [Regimental Rogue](#), it may be "G.S." or "General Service" Wagon. Email correspondence between Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont and Captain Michael O'Leary, 13 December 2010.

<sup>57</sup> According to his attestation paper, Frank was born 26 March 1892.

<sup>58</sup> The War Diary of the PPCLI indicates that there were 2 killed and 9 wounded in raids conducted on March 26 and March 28.

<sup>59</sup> The rumour that Frank heard on February 24 had become a reality. He was now a member of the "Pack Animal Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division". The details connected with its creation can be found in the War Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, Administrative Branches of the Staff, April 1917, [p. 3](#). Frank must have felt very lucky indeed to be included among the ninety-seven men of this company. On the same day, No. 2

### **April 5 VIMY**

Took pony to Barlin today for rations and pack saddles.<sup>60</sup>

### **April 6**

Good Friday. Worked as usual.

### **April 7**

Expecting us to start and attack here within a day or two. Roads crowded with traffic night and day.

### **April 8**

Easter Sunday. Went up the line with rations tonight. Our boys are in the trenches again. They are going over the top in the morning. By all appearances this will be a bigger affair than even the Somme was.<sup>61</sup>

### **April 9**

Rumors coming through all day. Evidently our attack was a success whatever the cost in men.<sup>62</sup>

### **April 10**

Pack corps moved up to Mont St. Eloy today. Snowing and raining intermittently all day. While waiting for our leaders to decide where to hold the camp an aeroplane tried to land during a heavy snowfall, but it got tangled among telephone wires and turned upside down. We helped both men out and righted the machine. Damage slight. Men uninjured. Went up with rations before we had our supper and heard more details of the scrap. [D.E.M.] [Donnelly](#) is killed, F. [Mabson](#), [F.] [Gillingham](#) wounded from our old platoon. Boys still up there and expected to make another attack during the night.<sup>63</sup>

### **April 11**

Went down to the dump for rations this morning. Back by noon. Erected tent in

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and No. 4 Companies of the PPCLI relieved the 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion in the trenches, and five days later, the Battle of Vimy Ridge commenced.

<sup>60</sup> Barlin was about 11 km north of Gouy-Servins.

<sup>61</sup> The Battle of Vimy Ridge commenced the following morning, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Companies on the first line and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on the second line.

<sup>62</sup> The PPCLI successfully achieved the two objectives it had been assigned, but the cost was high. 3 officers were killed and 8 wounded and 54 other ranks were killed, 6 died of wounds, 10 missing, and 143 wounded, for a total of 224. No. 2 Company was particularly hard hit. By the afternoon of April 9, it had lost all its corporals and sergeants, except Sgt. R. C. M. [Fergus](#), and two NCOs had to be sent up to reorganise the company. Of the 228 casualties initially reported at that time, 42 were from No 1 Company, 86 were from No. 2, 68 from No. 3, and 32 from No. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Frank never mentioned where "our leaders" had decided to locate the camp, but on April 21 the PPCLI War Diary reported "Transport lines at La Targette." La Targette was on the edge of Neuville-Saint-Vaast, which was a little over 4 km east of Mont-Saint-Eloi toward Vimy Ridge.

the afternoon. Ground soggy with moisture. Our bed is little better than a bog. Going up again tonight at 7. Dropped a line home this afternoon.

### **April 12**

Tried to get my boots mended but couldn't make it. Went down for washing. Washing not finished. Bought a paper and read with appreciation of the advances we made on the ninth. Tipped the kid [A.A.] [Johnston](#) off for a job on the pack corps. He told me that C.D. [Richardson](#) died of wounds during the battle. Many other old friends have gone west.<sup>64</sup> Snowing and thawing all last night and today. Roads almost impassable for mud and snow.<sup>65</sup> Up the line as usual tonight.

### **April 14**

Saturday. Up the line with S.A.A. [small arms ammunition] first thing this morning. Craters almost impossible to pass owing to mud. Back to camp by 2:30 P.M. but ordered out again immediately with rations. Hear the Germans are retiring faster than we can follow them up. This afternoon went up with rations to the town of Vimy. During the day the ground dried wonderfully and our troops made roads, ran light railways and guns right up to the crest of Vimy ridge. From there we have a great view to the east, west and south. Considering the amount of ground gained there are very few dead laying about. Plenty of dead horses thought. This hard work is very satisfactory after all the shiny stuff and time killing we put in with the P.P.'s. Moved camp during the day and things are badly balled up tonight but the weather has set in fine and the spirit of the troops is fine. This morning I ran my foot on one of Fritz's sharp pointed entanglement stakes while rambling around in the mud around the craters. Rather sore tonight.

### **April 15**

Raining again. Out tonight again for a while.

### **April 17**

Tonight left camp 7:30 and loaded our horses on the plank road. Took rations up to 5<sup>th</sup> C. M. R. [Canadian Mounted Rifles] in Vimy. Had a fearful trip. Guide got lost. Trail blocked for hours. Mud, shell holes and inky darkness the whole time.<sup>66</sup> Fritz shelled all around us but the only casualty was my waterproof cape. A piece

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<sup>64</sup> "Dick" Richardson was certainly one of those "old friends." He and Frank had gone to university together, belonged to the same regiment, served in the same section of the front, and faced death together at the Battle of Sanctuary Wood. Now Richardson was dead. Would Frank be next?

<sup>65</sup> Lieut.-Col. Agar [Adamson](#) wrote, "Our roads in the new area are very bad, having been smashed by our shell fire. We are having great difficulty in getting guns, etc., up." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 274.

<sup>66</sup> The weather was terrible. In a letter dated Gouy Servins, 18 April 1917, Adamson wrote, "Our move today is held up on account of most awful weather, snowing, raining and bitterly cold, for the last 36 hours. [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 275.

of shell ripped through it within six inches of my shin. I swore! Got back to camp 4:30. In bed 5 A.M.

### **April 18**

Raining again.

### **April 19**

Fine. Stayed in for last two days. Other fellows doing their turn.

### **April 21**

Up again to Vimy. Going down the hill from Vimy ridge Fritz has the road marked exactly and a long string of smashed timbers, horses and things testify to his good marksmanship. Back by 12.

### **April 22**

Sunday. To Petit Vimy with rations again tonight. Had a good trip. Got away early and back before dark – 7 P.M. All down Vimy hill are pools of blood. One place where they had cleaned away the mess they left a man's brains on a lump of dirt. Got through safely.<sup>67</sup>

### **April 23**

Got my boots fixed today, they were pretty bad. Reg. letter from Aldine St. Floss getting married in August.

### **April 28**

[Ellison](#) came back with a draught from England. Also [[W.J.](#) or [A.](#)] Rennie & Archie Gray [[Grey](#)] sent to La Folie Farm this morning for German bombs.

### **April 29**

Sunday. More letters today from Alec McW[illiam]. Flo, and Ethel.

### **April 30**

Answered letters read yesterday. Up to Petit Vimy tonight with 116<sup>th</sup> rations. Back by nine.<sup>68</sup>

### **May 1**

Wrote to L. [?] [Donnelly](#)'s father. We are having great weather these days. By the way our aircraft these days seem to be lacking in something or other. This morning we noticed one of our planes in full flight pursued by a Fritz. The latter

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<sup>67</sup> In the meantime, the regiment had moved up into the frontlines. In a letter dated, Vimy Ridge, 22 April 1917, Lieut.-Col. [Adamson](#) wrote, "Just a line after a forced march with mud up to almost our knees as we would not use the roads. They were being so badly shelled. We landed in advance Boche dugouts and here we are, wondering what the next German move will be." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 277.

<sup>68</sup> Frank did not indicate just how dangerous these trips were. In a letter dated, Mericourt 24 April 1917, Adamson wrote, "All our horses are now working as pack horses and carry everything, but one can only count on half arriving owing to casualties." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 278.

was overhauling him every foot and firing his machine gun. The only thing that seemed to save our man was the fact that they ran into five of our battle planes. Fritz retired while our planes never even pursued.<sup>69</sup>

### **May 2**

Fast night as had to get our horses out at one o'clock on account of Fritz shelling the camp. Three slight casualties. It only lasted a few minutes.

### **May 3**

Two German planes bombed the camp tonight. Four bombs were dropped killing six horses and a man besides wounding a large number.

### **May 4**

Tonight a gas alarm was sounded but we got none back here.<sup>70</sup> Letter from Dad with yearly report enclosed. To my credit with Dad - \$775.11.

### **May 5**

Figured out that Dad made a mistake or two in his bookkeeping. Revised credit due me is \$4,175.00. Fritz tried to get an observation balloon just north of camp tonight. Observers escaped in parachutes and the plane returned without doing any visible damage.

### **May 7**

Went down to Villiers au Bois today alone for coal. Saw some of the boys. Found out a few things about poor Dick [Richardson](#)'s end. He was hit in the abdomen one piece piercing the bladder. Died in fearful agony. Wrote to his mother.<sup>71</sup>

### **May 8**

Tonight while I was writing a letter to H.C. [Walker](#) the S.M. [Sergeant-Major] came in with a notice that I was to report at the orderly room at once and proceed to Paris on leave.<sup>72</sup> It was a deuce of a shock as I was not expecting it for another month at the least. However I packed my mill-sack with my essentials and got 500F from the pay office said goodbye to the boys and with Serg. [F.C.] [Dohaney](#) started for Aubigny. Carried my rifle a ways but soon ditched it. Can

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<sup>69</sup> Frank was observant. The superior German-made airplanes clearly dominated the sky in the latter stages of the war. See [Airplane Warfare in WW1](#) for further information.

<sup>70</sup> On May 1, [Adamson](#) wrote about the effects of the gas. "I came out last night by daylight, feeling distinctly ill from the effects of the gas of the day before. There were two different kinds of gas, one quite visible and smelling of violets, the other quite invisible and no smell. I kept the men moving but they suffered a good deal and this morning some of them died. I did not wear my helmet as much as I should and was very sick all day and could not breathe without pain. [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 278.

<sup>71</sup> That letter, dated 8 May 1917, can be found at [The Canadian Letters And Images Project](#).

<sup>72</sup> Paris Leave provided temporary relief to many a war-weary Canadian soldier. For comparative purposes, see the account of H. W. [Winkler](#), another soldier from the Manitoba Agriculture College, whose "Paris Leave" appeared in *Managra*, in February 1918.

easily get another when I come back. Got a ride on a train going from Ecoivres to Aubigny but found on getting there that train did not leave until 11 in the morning. Stayed all night in E.F.C. [Expeditionary Force Canada] restrooms.

### **May 9**

Took train and changed at Frevent for Amiens. Changed again at Amiens and arrived in Paris 11 o'clock.<sup>73</sup> Stayed at Monopole Hotel.<sup>74</sup> Rates deuced high – in fact everything is high. I doubt whether my 500F will last out or not.

### **May 10**

Reported at the Commandant's office this morning.<sup>75</sup> Spent the early part of the day getting cleaned up. Went to comic opera alone at night but after the 2<sup>nd</sup> act pulled out – not enough musique and too much garlic<sup>76</sup> in the next seat. Went for a good long walk. Plenty of painted ladies about, but am rapidly sickening at the sight of them. Went to bed at 10:30 and forgot to lock the door.

### **May 11**

Rose at 8 and cleaned up. Discovered someone had paid me a visit during the night. One 20F bill and several fives missing. This hotel is too interesting. Think I'll beat it. Took Metro for Maillot<sup>77</sup> but lost my way and wandered away to the south in the search for Bois de Boulogne where I understand the loafing is good. Discovered a quiet little family hotel.<sup>78</sup> Rates reasonable and within easy distance

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<sup>73</sup> Frank travelled by train from Aubigny northwest [21 km] to Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise and south [12.5 km] to Frévent, which was 39 km directly west of Arras. He changed trains at Frévent and proceeded south [46.1 km] to Amiens, where he changed trains again and continued his journey south [142 km] to Paris. This rail line no longer exists. In the years since 1916, many of the railroads have disappeared, including the one that went through Frévent.

<sup>74</sup> The [Hotel Monopole](#) was near the railway terminal and less than 4 km northeast from La Place de la Concorde, a famous square near Rue de Rivoli along which Les Tuileries Gardens and other famous Parisian landmarks were located.

<sup>75</sup> Soldiers could not travel without leave papers, which had to be presented to the appropriate military authority at their destination. Frank probably presented his papers to the Provost Marshal of the British Provost Guard in Paris, which was billeted in barracks at [Saint-Augustine](#), Place Saint-Augustine was centrally located near all of the sites that Frank mentioned in his war diary.

<sup>76</sup> Although garlic is a popular ingredient in cooking today, it was generally shunned by people of British origin in Frank's day. One of the reasons for this revulsion was the fact that immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe, often reeked of it, thereby reinforcing existing prejudices against its use.

<sup>77</sup> Porte Maillot was a Metro station near the entrance of the Bois-de-Boulogne and 3 km north-northwest of Trocadéro.

<sup>78</sup> Frank never named the hotel, but it may have been the Grand Jardin. No postcard of this hotel has been located, but it must have been somewhere along the 4 km route that ran northwest between La Place de la Concorde and Maillot Station at the entrance to Bois-de-Boulogne.

of Trocadero<sup>79</sup>, Eiffel Tower<sup>80</sup> and a number of other interesting places. Think I'll move. Eventually found a piece of wood and some shade where I am now writing this diary. Reckon I had better go back to Magenta and get my kit and in future go to these places with a guide. I am losing too much valuable time asking questions in very bad French. Went down and dined en famille with the rest of the pensioniers. Met a very decent English kid who explained many of the customs of the French that had me guessing. Among others that the waiters in this country receive no other wages than what they get in tips from the customers.<sup>81</sup> They even pay the patron a certain sum per day in certain places. This lad and I went to a picture show tonight.

## May 12

This morning took a stroll along the Seine up towards the Palais Royal.<sup>82</sup> Looked around then visited the building where the president lives.<sup>83</sup> Strolled around the gardens of the Tuilleries<sup>84</sup> and visited the place of the Concord.<sup>85</sup> While there I

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<sup>79</sup> Frank sent his friend Harry Beaumont a postcard of the [Trocadéro](#) as seen from the Eiffel Tower. The [Palais du Trocadéro](#) was located 2.5 km west of the Place de la Concorde and Le Jardin des Tuileries and 1.4 km from the Eiffel Tower, which was situated in the Parc du Champs de Mars across the river to the southeast. The Trocadéro was built for the 1878 World's Fair in Paris and demolished in the 1930s to make way for the new Palais de Chaillot.

<sup>80</sup> The [Eiffel Tower](#) is located 2.8 km from La Place de la Concorde via the bridge [Pont de la Concorde] to the south bank of the Seine and west to the Parc du Champs de Mars. The Tower was completed in 1889 for the centennial celebrations of the French Revolution, and though it was intended as a temporary structure, it has become an enduring symbol of the city. Frank undoubtedly sent home a contemporary [postcard](#) of this famous landmark to his family.

<sup>81</sup> Although tipping was customary in Paris, it would have been an unfamiliar practice to Frank Whiting. It has only been in the last fifty years or so in Western Canada that tipping has been accepted generally, and only in restaurants. Formerly, people expected to pay the price listed on the menu and considered it the responsibility of the owner of the establishment to pay his worker's wages. In Paris, tipping was a mark of sophistication and could be quite lucrative for the recipients. However, in today's French restaurants, the tip is included in the cost of the meal, so there is no obligation to pay it, even though a little extra for good service is always appreciated!

<sup>82</sup> The [Palais Royal](#), which was built in the early 1600s, is located next to the Louvre and 1.5 km southeast of the Place de la Concorde via Rue de Rivoli. The Palais Royal is famous for its [interior courtyard](#). An [old print](#) dating to the 18th-19th century provides a bird's eye view of its layout, and an [1863 print](#) gives an impression of the gardens as they appeared in the inner courtyard at that time.

<sup>83</sup> The president's residence was the [Elysée Palace](#) which is located less than 1 km north of La Place de la Concorde. Like the Palais Royal, it was built around a [central courtyard](#), the [entrance](#) to which from rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré provides a splendid view of the [palace](#) on the side opposite. That same morning Frank probably saw [Le Grand Palais](#), which was just under a km from both the Elysée Palace and la Place de la Concorde. This exhibition hall was built for the Paris Exhibition in 1900 and must have impressed Frank because he included a [postcard](#) of it when he wrote Harry Beaumont about his trip.

<sup>84</sup> The [Palais des Tuileries](#) no longer exists, but its [gardens](#), which border La Place de la Concorde, are still popular destinations for Parisians and the tourists who flock to Paris each year. Frank sent a [postcard](#) to Harry Beaumont of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées viewed from the entrance to the Tuileries with the Arc de Triomphe at the far end 2 km away. Although replaced in 1986 by copies, [Les Chevaux de Marly](#), the sculptures on either side of the Gates, would have been the originals seen by Frank. Le Grand Palais was located on a side street to the left of the photograph.

<sup>85</sup> The [Place de la Concorde](#) is a major square in Central Paris at the eastern end of the Champs-Élysées.

picked up a guide who took me to the Grande Markets,<sup>86</sup> the Notre Dame Cathedral,<sup>87</sup> the prison where Marie Antoinette was kept before being guillotined in the Place de la Revolution (now Concord).<sup>88</sup> He seemed well versed in the history of everything. Also saw the house where Gabrielle Estreas<sup>89</sup> [mistress] of Henry IV lived, also the tavern where they used to have their tete-a-tetes.<sup>90</sup> Got back to Grande Jardin in time for lunch.<sup>91</sup> This afternoon went out with the English boy Roy Wrate I believe his name is also a few others of the “family” and went to the Athletic Club<sup>92</sup> where they played tennis all the afternoon and I loafed luxuriously and looked on. Went to pictures tonight and heard a very good orchestra with Roy.

### May 13

Sunday. This morning went to a Methodist Church with Wrate. Preacher of the old type. Platitudes, platitudes, toujours platitudes. This afternoon went to the Bois de Boulogne a pleasure resort of all Paris.<sup>93</sup> Where one sees the latest styles in lids, the most and prettiest girls on earth. Wandered about and went over on the island.<sup>94</sup> Coming back we met [F. W.] [Crawford](#) and [H. S.] Redding [\[Reading\]](#). Crawford is going to England right away for a commission. We tried to

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<sup>86</sup> The Grande Markets, known locally as [Les Halles](#), were located about 1 km to the northeast of the Palais Royal and the Louvre. [Les Halles](#), as seen by Frank Whiting, were demolished in 1971 and replaced by a [modern shopping centre](#). A redesign of [Les Halles](#) commenced in 2010 with a project completion date of 2016.

<sup>87</sup> [Notre Dame Cathedral](#), seat of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Paris, is located about 3 km from La Place de la Concorde via Rue de Rivoli and a bridge to the Ile de la Cité in the Seine River. Considered one of the best examples of French gothic architecture in existence, the [building](#) probably impressed the young Saskatchewan farmer/soldier as much in 1917 as it impresses the average tourist today.

<sup>88</sup> The [Conciergerie](#), which contains remnants of the Palais de la Cité, the oldest royal palace in Paris, is located near Notre Dame Cathedral on the Ile de la Cité. Still part of the Palais de Justice, it was the place where thousands of people were condemned during the French Revolution and then guillotined at La Place de la Concorde.

<sup>89</sup> Gabrielle d'Estrées, Duchess of Beaufort, was the mistress of Henry IV of France.

<sup>90</sup> It may have been while he was sightseeing in this part of Paris that Frank saw [La Place de la Bastille](#), a square a little over 4 km east-southeast of the Place de la Concorde. Frank sent Harry Beaumont a [postcard](#) of La Place de la Bastille, which was the site of the Bastille Prison destroyed during the French Revolution in 1789-1790.

<sup>91</sup> This may be the name of the hotel where Frank stayed after he left the Monopole.

<sup>92</sup> This may have been the [Standard Athletic Club of Paris](#), which was founded in 1890 by British expatriates. In 1906 it was located at Val d'Or in Suresnes, which was about 1 km west of Bois de Boulogne, so it may still have been at that spot in 1917 when Frank was in the vicinity. In 1922, the club moved to the Forest of Meudon about 13 km south of Bois de Boulogne.

<sup>93</sup> [Bois de Boulogne](#) is a large park in Paris about 2 km northwest of the Arc de Triumphe via Avenue Foch and 4 km northwest of La Place de la Concorde. When Frank Whiting visited here in 1917, the Avenue Foch was named Avenue de Bois de Boulogne, as illustrated in a [1910 postcard](#), but it was renamed in 1929 to honor Maréchal Foch, a brilliant general and supreme commander of the allied forces in Europe at the end of World War I.

<sup>94</sup> The “island” was in a small man-made lake within the park boundaries.

get a boat to go out on the lake but the existing crowd was too dense. We had an early dinner and then went to the opera.<sup>95</sup> Hamlet was played and I never want to witness a more beautiful interpretation of Shakespeare than I saw tonight. The building itself is wonderful there being a huge hall in the rear<sup>96</sup> where the Parisiennes in pre-war days were wont to dance during the entre-actes. The statuary, the pictures and everything was marvellous. And the play itself was simply grand. I knew enough of the story of Hamlet to be able with the aid of my slight knowledge of French to get quite a bit of the beauty of the piece. Unfortunately we could not see the last act on account of the Metro closing down at eleven. So they cut short the play.

## May 14

Have decided to write this a little fuller and mail it home instead of writing a long letter. Time is valuable and it is as much as I can do to keep this diary up. Started out for the Invalides this morning.<sup>97</sup> Saw the tomb of Napoleon and war souvenirs around the Invalides. From there made my way down to the Luxembourg Gardens.<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately the museum and picture galleries were closed today so I could only walk round the gardens. They were lovely. Bought a whole armful of P.C.'s [postcards] to send home to the folks. Am getting more onto the hang of working these Metros and tramcars. This afternoon went south west out to St. Cloud. I understand the paymaster at the Can Amb. out there gives us fellows money if we run shy but it was too late before I started hunting him up.<sup>99</sup> Spent all the afternoon roaming round the park and wondering why on earth anyone ever wants to start a war when there are so many beautiful things that one can construct instead of destroy.<sup>100</sup> Bought more post cards and back in time to write this before dinner. I am getting into the habit of calling the third meal dinner. Evidently I am rising in the world. Tonight it took us so long to decide

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<sup>95</sup> The Paris Opera, now known as [Palais Garnier](#), is located at the end of the Avenue de l'Opéra about 1 km north of the Palais Royal and the Louvre. Built in 1874, this architectural masterpiece in a neo-baroque style remained the centre of operatic theatre in Paris until late into the twentieth century.

<sup>96</sup> Undoubtedly the "hall" Frank described was the [Foyer de la Danse](#), a place behind the main stage used now as a rehearsal and reception area, but notorious in the 19th century as a salon where members of the [Jockey Club](#) could meet dancers. The room was immortalised in the [painting](#), *La foyer de la danse à l'Opéra*, by Edgar Degas.

<sup>97</sup> [Les Invalides](#) is on the left bank of the Seine River a little over a kilometre from the La Place de la Concorde via Le Pont de la Concorde. It includes museums and memorials pertaining to French military history, as well as a hospital and retirement home for veterans. Frank probably purchased postcards of [the Invalides](#) and the [tomb of Napoleon](#), as memories of his visit there.

<sup>98</sup> The [Jardin du Luxembourg](#) is a public park located on the left bank of the Seine next to the Sorbonne University and about 2 km southeast of Les Invalides.

<sup>99</sup> Saint-Cloud was a suburb of Paris about 10 km southwest of the city centre where Frank was staying. Evidently a unit of the Canadian Field Ambulance was stationed there.

<sup>100</sup> The Parc de Saint-Cloud is a public space that once belonged to the [Palace of Saint-Cloud](#), which was destroyed during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.

which theatre to go to that we waited around too long and eventually had to go to the cinema. Sat up till one in the morning yarning to the kids – Jean and Roy.

### **May 15**

Went down to the Luxembourg again this morning to see the museum but it did not open until one so sat around the gardens and watched the kiddies play. Was there for about half an hour when I heard the sweetest little voice in the world at my elbow and there was two wee girls about four and six years and a boy about seven. All three of them could speak excellent English and they told me their governess was English and sitting on a bench a little way over. So nothing must do but they take me in tow to show governess what they had found. Personally I discovered two very nice English girls and spent the rest of the morning talking with them. Came down in the afternoon and saw the museum.<sup>101</sup> The statues are positively wonderful. They almost seem alive. Of the statues the one that struck me as the most powerful was named “The Kiss Divine.” The French gives it a little different from my interpretation. The statue was in the form of a couple in the act of kissing. The woman’s face is very beautiful but her body below the breasts is of a beast. Her arms, which changed to paws at about the elbow are about the man and her talons are fastened in his flesh. The meaning of the work is very obvious. Of the pictures the one entitled Salome by Rodin I believe was the best. Her face looks out of the corner as if it would almost speak. The colouring is marvellous. After spending an hour or two enjoying the exhibits I took off through the gardens in the hope of finding the kiddies. I had a pretty good idea where to look of course and sure enough there they were. They are of Russian parentage and the governess has been with them ever since they were tiny. They are both very pretty wee things and I like nothing better than to listen to their pretty chatter. Their names are Joan and Renee Kleymen. After dinner Wrate and I started out on the war path for a theatre but the only one we found was a sort of Revue named Hip Hip Hurrah! I did not think much of it myself although Wrate said it was alright. In bed by twelve because we had to walk back owing to the Metro and cars being closed so early.

### **May 16**

Yesterday I had photo taken and today I went down to see that the negative was O.K. In the afternoon Roy got off work for half a day and we went to a cinema as it was raining a little. At night we went to the Folies Bergere.<sup>102</sup> It is a leg show on a large scale. The colors and beauty were wonderful, but I believe that what delighted me most was the sinful Parisienne abandon that everyone seemed to exhibit. The most beautiful in the world would stop and invite one to everything from a cup of coffee to a wife for the duration. While there during the fifteen minutes entre acte – I met the Padre and another officer. He seemed to be enjoying himself too. At that time the two of them were alone. Later I met Capt.

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<sup>101</sup> The [Musée du Luxembourg](#), near the Jardin du Luxembourg, once housed paintings and sculpture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of which were moved to the Musée d’Orsay in 1986.

<sup>102</sup> [The Folies-Bergère](#), located about 2.4 km northeast of la Place de la Concorde, was a Parisian music hall that was at the height of its popularity between the 1890s and the 1920s. Frank was impressed.

Plunket [[Plunkett](#)] and the little fellow who censored Alphonse.<sup>103</sup> They are of the Y.M.C.A. They also were alone. Later Roy and I walked home alone. To bed by twelve. I have got hold of another French phrase. It sounds like “C’est la vie” and aptly describes ones impressions of this naughty old town.

### **May 17**

Strolled down to the Luxembourg again this morning. Invited two of the girls Misses Day and Andrews to come to La Tosca tonight. In the afternoon went to the Bois de Boulogne with Wrate and after waiting for nearly an hour and a half finally got us a rowboat.<sup>104</sup> Roy rather fancies himself as a rower tho for the life of me I could not see on what particular grounds. Anyway he rowed most of the time and succeeded in blistering his hands. I notice most of the people give me a sunny smile nearly everywhere I go and one of them – a very pretty girl in black rowing alone – beckoned me to come into her boat. I was not very anxious myself but Roy was smitten absolutely grinless and nothing must do but we about ship in pursuit. Unfortunately the girl could not speak English and anyway Roy – who speaks French well – swore she beckoned to him. She was not very hard to catch and Roy started in to invite himself to row for her but mademoiselle was not having any. I rolled into the back of the boat and looked on. After some more conversation on Roy’s part and a few more “nons” from mademoiselle we parted company and I made his life miserable for the rest of the afternoon and evening. Tonight we took the young English girls to La Flambee – a French play.<sup>105</sup> The seats for Tosca were all sold out to my sorrow. However we discussed the girl in black considerably and had a very good time. I could hardly understand a word of the play so that to me the time spent in the theatre was wasted. We just managed to catch the last metro and got home around 11:30.

### **May 18**

This morning I wandered off to the Bois de Boulogne and eventually ran across the Gardens of Acclimation where they have a list of museums and a menagerie. There were only a few about and those mostly men so I did not enjoy the scenery very much. The trees in the wood are most beautiful now. Every horse chestnut, lilac and hawthorne is all ablaze with blossoms and the scent is lovely. I could not

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<sup>103</sup> Whatever “Alphonse” was, he had to be “passed” by the censor, whose usual job was to read and “pass” all correspondence that soldiers sent home from the front lines.

<sup>104</sup> Frank did not name the lake, but it was probably [Lac-Inférieur](#) where one can still hire rowboats today. The other lake is [Lac-Supérieur](#).

<sup>105</sup> La Flambee by Henri Kistamaecker was a French melodrama about a lieutenant colonel who murdered a foreign spy attempting to buy state secrets. He was successfully defended by a barrister, who was in love with the lieutenant-colonel’s wife, but believed that love of country trumped any other consideration. The wife also realised her patriotic duty was to stand by her husband’s side, even though she no longer loved him. As one English critic wrote at the time, the play had become a “trumpet call to patriots.” After the German invasion, its popularity among the French only increased. An English version, “The Turning Point,” was the work of Sir George Alexander, and an American version, “The Spy,” was produced by Charles Frohman.

have picked upon a better time of year for my visit.<sup>106</sup> In the afternoon Jean Aime and I went out on the lake for a row. After an hour or so he had to go on home so gathered in a couple of girls – very nice ones – and paddled around some more. Left the girls at the lake with a soldat reformee friend of theirs and came down to dinner. There a friend of the family named Miss Meakin – English – invited us to tea on Sunday. I don't think I'll go. We took her to the cinema show and she sat and chattered the whole time. Asked the most obvious questions fretted because she had taken off her hat and the woman behind had not and by the time we came out had me so sore at her very English silliness that every word I said was sour enough to curdle milk. After seeing the good woman home we – Roy, Jean and myself – came back and had some excellent chartreuse up in their room. Got to bed about one thirty.

### **May 19**

This morning bathed and cleaned up. Went to barracks near St .Augustine and reported to commandant.<sup>107</sup> Leave for the front again at 11:40 P.M. Went down to the Luxembourg and said goodbye to all our lady friends. Kissed the babies and back for lunch. Am now picking up my souvenirs preparatory to sending them home. Will include this diary as it is nearly full anyway. This afternoon I am going for a walk in the park and tonight before leaving may go to a show or something. Last night a friend of Roy's gave me a good bottle of whiskey to take back for the fellows.

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<sup>106</sup> [Le Jardin d'Acclimatation](#) is still an amusement park and menagerie on the north side of Bois-de-Boulogne.

<sup>107</sup> All soldiers on leave had to report to the Provost Marshall at Place St. Augustine prior to their return to duty at the front.