

To continue my narration, I must confess that the time spent in studying the art of first-aid, and the rudiments of 500, (the latter was more attended to) was a good rest for your truly, & in fact I nearly bleached on Coy. Dog, nearly!! Then, after a little training, of the line we toddled, your humble servant, bearing a stretch, and devoutly hoping that it would never be filled. May a time I swore off at that contraption of wood & canvas. We located in Arras, again, in cellars, lovely cool places, and of what a warm corner that was. Across the square, the wall of a huge hotel was blown away, and we could see bedrooms with bed still in them, exposed. I slept up there one night, and a shell passed through the floor below, after which I lit out for the cellar, with one eye on the sewer, below that again. I did little here, for a week or so, except lit out bottles on the heels of the men who were working up the line. I always put iodine on these places, and oh, the lurid comments of the victims. I remember one house in Arras, it had never been hit, and the furniture was lovely. A huge billiard table stood in one room, on Flavis, & I decided to have a game. Now this man was Vertebrated to us traps, and suddenly an M.P. put his face in at the window. We retired into the dark recesses of the invisible cellar, and escaped him. Then someone discovered that John Beaumont, S.B. was ill, so next day, of the line I went, carrying my little stretch, & a gallon of iodine, plus some miles of lint. My party was engaged in digging a tunnel, & I, of course did not have to labour, I simply waited for someone to get hit, or, the Nicotina, for something to turn up. At noon, I made tea, divided up the rations, taking the lion's share, of course, & the catch of the weary ones. They told me what poor tea it was, threatened to 'napoo' me, unless I produced ham & eggs, & then decamped into the depths again, to loaf away the afternoon. I sat on top, (in a trench of course) smoked my pipe, and listened for a chosen shell, in which I used to jump for company & scrape out the legs.

Just a word about tunnels. Each side did this business, and the object was two fold, as living quarters in winter, and the real deep one, extending under no-man's land & under the enemy trenches. When the tunnel was completed, a large stack of explosives was placed there, touched off with electricity, & it went a bunch of the way. Horrible, of course, but legitimate war fare. Whenever the Germans suspected us of digging a tunnel, they would also commence on, and as the ground is a good conductor of sound, it became a race, as to who would ~~tunnel~~ <sup>blow</sup> off first. Then long passages were all shored up with heavy timber, and had air pipes into them. Some were fitted out in great style, proper rooms, and even pianos & carpets. The earth was put into small jute bags, left in the tunnel during the day, and the night shift had to empty them. I was on both day & night parties, but give me the day work, its a ticklish job, prancing around a top, and emptying little sacks of clay, with an orchestra of Calliope's "May. Arise, flying the Dead March."

You see, on any of our jobs, previous to this, we had so much work to do, before we could go out, and if any of the men were wounded, and stopped every time a shell came over, we would be killed up. One night we had to shovel the soil back from the top of a newly dug tunnel, and every time a machine-gun would rattle, down would flap there a few of the yellow men.

Well, we had done our share (for one,) and along came our officer. He was sitting down, and he said, "Are you done?" We said "je suis," so he said "Come along with us," and then we had to finish the part where these tunnel men were playing around.

The next night, we worked so slow, that it was a wonder we even did first, but it never was a policy of mine to talk out the war, by doing a soap man's work than necessary. Lazy?!

One calm, peaceful night, we were suddenly and severely awakened by a regular salvo, we retired, and our spades & picks were converted to heading wood. Blessed relief, we had to go home. Our party was split up, all the U.C. we had gone, and the senior man had to lead us out. Now I was all for speed, because if we stayed in one place

too long, a shell was sure to hunt us up. So when the  
 Verget light flared up, away we tore, falling over wire, and  
 digging our noses into the lumpy soft mud. We had to cross  
 a road from the end of one trench into another, and every  
 minute a shell hit it. How we ever escaped that night, I  
 don't know, the shells landed between us, (duds, fortunately)  
 and we had all creased into the trench except English. Just  
 as he creased, bang went a shell right behind him, and  
 he landed in the middle of us, head first. Of course I had  
 to laugh, he looked so funny, scattering across the road, but I  
 was ready to crawl in if such, just the same. When I look back,  
 now, it seems to be all part of a nasty dream, and yet, much as I  
 hate it, I would not have missed it for worlds. I had to fly  
 a grand one in a while, to hot for going crazy, for instance, one  
 wet night, when gas shells were going a mile or so behind us, I  
 told a new man that the was gas. Magic word, after a thorough  
 training in England. He kept his mouth a for 15 min, and being a  
 dark night, the corporal never saw him, and I had a cat-fit,  
 every time I looked at him. Then we moved to Agny, and there  
 I ended of course in the front line. The first night, all was well,  
 beyond a little gas coming over. A battery of field guns was in  
 position about 200 yards from our bivouac, and the gas was really  
 intended for them. The second night, however, we were given a  
 proper clean-up. We had just settled down for the evening,  
 I was reading the "Daily Report", and thinking what a soft job  
 it was, being a stretcher-bearer, when, presto - that, it etc etc.  
 Over came gas shells, nicely mixed up with H. E. shells, and  
 for an hour or so, you would have supposed the world had  
 come to an end. We had a sheet of  $\frac{1}{2}$  in iron between us &  
 the sky, and the shells were mighty slow, so I just waited  
 for the end. Just when it seemed that not one more shell  
 could miss our roof, I heard a cry of "Stretch-Bearer!"  
 I grabbed my kit, gas-helmet, and inwardly blessed the  
 man who would ask me to wander round looking for a  
 case on such a night, but the runner led me

night to the east. Then was on gallant head-stagger,  
 groaning something awful. I had an awful time trying to find  
 out who he was hit. In the excitement, I pulled off my  
 mask, and then he had a tiny little scratch on the leg.  
 So he looked. I gave him a proper long lecture, (but by this  
 time, I had swallowed some gallons of gas. When the  
 excitement died down, I returned for my mess tin, and made a  
 hearty breakfast of gassed porridge, coffee, (save the meal)  
 and bacon. But what a morning that was, the stinks of the  
 company were gassed. I took a lunch on stretcher to the first  
 aid station, and felt pretty good. Then my eyes gave out, &  
 of last trip, I escorted two fellows who were totally blind,  
 and I could only see my eyes for a minute to get my bearings,  
 then I had to shut them again. They felt as though  
 there was a few grains of wheat in them, and I wept  
 copiously all the time. We were driven in cars for the  
 station, finally arriving at Frenicourt. I was blind for several  
 days, when I did get on my feet, and saw my face, I was  
 glad to shut it, again. I shall never forget my first show  
 when I did get up. One eye open, a good healthy growth of  
 black stubble, and a very dull gaze. Wow. From here I  
 was taken to Boulogne, nice military hospital, your afternoon  
 tea of 30 year old hard boiled eggs, and stale bread & sweet  
 smelling meringue. And a severe looking old nurse who said,  
 "Open your mouth," and passed a thermometer half way down  
 your neck. It also washed my ears out, at 4 or, just when  
 I had managed to fall asleep. Gentle nurses, watched as  
 they flitted around the wards. Perhaps. The matron was a  
 bear, though, she tried to make all the well patients  
 stammer at attention when she came in. The first day I was  
 up, she marched in, and up among the beds to attention,  
 but as luck would have it, I fell sound asleep, just  
 before she reached my bed, and I snored right lustily,  
 until she went out. After that, I got into the habit  
 of going out, whenever she came in. Oh old cat.

When I left the Hospital I was sent to a local camp. Then we did a few parades, skinned a whole lot more, and made ourselves a general nuisance. I was crissed here, and was awarded 3 days C.B. The first evening I scrubbed out the guard room, but the next two nights, I managed to evade such menial work. Then I was deemed fit to move towards the line again, so was sent to a camp at Aulin-St-Vaast. This camp was situated on the edge of a large beech forest. Of all the long trees, a beech is hard to beat. (I often beat it in the trench work.) For a time all was well, we drilled + learned to put gas-marks on, found out what end of the rifle to put the shell in, and so on, I was sick of it. Then we had a little riot, to stir things up. There were about 1500 or 2000 conscripts in the camp, and their N.C.O.'s were giving us fellows the drill. So on five days, our company were doing rifle drills, and we all stopped, laid down the arms, and refused to budge an inch. The sergeant roared and swore, and we stood unmoved. The sergeant-major came, he tore his hair, and talked of mutiny, arrest and so forth, and we still remained impassive. Then the R.S.M., a mighty man of valor, and an old soldier to boot, came along. "Why and wherefore," quoth he, in a voice of thunder, and fixing his soul-inspiring eye on me (being the smallest). I explained that we were averse to being drilled by the conscripts. Then he called for volunteers among the casualties, to take strips, and I got one. He, a Lane-Jack. Ha. Ha. I was given charge of a hut, containing some 30 or 40 men. I was made march for parades. I shall never forget one misty morning, we were to go on a route march, and I was sent to the field to represent my company. The S.M. placed us in position, and when the fog lifted, there were two males grazing along side of me. So, counting myself, there were three of us, and I felt like saying, "When shall we three meet again."

Had a good time here, until one fatal day. I took the  
 flu. Down the line again, to some hospital or other. The  
 first night I arrived there I wandered around the hut, and  
 in case of "soft of mercy", found my bed empty, and hunted me  
 up. "What do you mean by running around with that temperature",  
 she said. "What is it," I asked, with a sinking heart.  
 "Well," she said. "It was 104", and by this time will likely  
 be high. I hopped into bed and then for 10 days I was  
 a wee bit queer. Sometimes I felt as though I was too tired  
 to live, and then, out would go a bed and patient to the  
 "Death Ward", and I would hang on a bit longer. I heard  
 of all these beds, only 4 of us refused to die, and we had  
 our own time. Then my bed was moved into the open air,  
 and at once I felt better. Soon I could eat the Pre-Historic  
 eggs, and the tea ceased to taste like poison. When I was  
 about better, the order came to clear all patients to England.  
 We never slept that night, and finally we were moved on stretchers  
 to the ambulances, and thence over rocky roads to Boulogne.  
 There were a lot of stretcher cases, and many of them got up and  
 danced a hump. When the boat pulled out from harbor. On  
 the way over I slept in a comfortable bunk, only when the boat  
 would dip, my seat of pillow, and on the return trip, it  
 hit me under the ear. We were carried from the boat to the  
 train, and I was glad when we reached it, being slightly  
 dead, and there was a frosty air. I was sent to Southport,  
 a seaport town in Lancs, near Liverpool, and not so far  
 from my birthplace. Were taken in an ambulance from the station  
 to the hospital, and my I was cold, when they finally put  
 me to bed, I was shivering so much the nurse could not  
 wash my face. That night a man across the room died, &  
 from my bed I could see a dozen funerals go by. Which  
 of course cheered me up mightily, and I had to pretend  
 to sleep, during the day, in order to avoid seeing them.  
 The 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> day. I was allowed to walk out, I was  
 very shaky, but felt better. Then came the Armistice, &  
 I improved after that. We had a great time in

the hospital, and larked around to our hearts content. We had concerts, an occasional dance, what drives, etc. One fancy dress ball, I dressed up as a nigger, blacked my face & hands, and wore a yellow suit with a tall hat. All next day I tried to remove the black, at by, went I a mess. And of course, during the evening, the cold cream under the coat of black melted, and ran down, until I looked like a zebra. We did some awful jobs on each other, too, made French beds, put lolly, coal etc in the beds, and may a smothered anethema was heard in the dead night, when some poor beggar would ~~come in late~~, and discover that his bed required overhauling. I left the hospital in Jan of 1919, and was sent to Epsom. My, I did hate Epsom. This is when one of the famous English races is held, every year. We had a race of our own, then, had 2 hours of P.T. every day. Our usual plan was, to fall in and march our rooms, then, when the band moved off, to march away, and go into a hut or reading room. Also, on fine days, the vigilant N.C.O. called the roll, after reaching the recreation room, and found 30 good men & true, missing. We had to make our beds every morning, fold all the clothes, and roll up the mattress, also, sweep under the bed. After the inspection we could unroll it, and sleep again, but with a shiver, we had a dog life. We wore blue uniforms then, of course, or was a long looking crew, some with trousers a mile too long, and small tight coats, another, with short trousers, huge, flapping. Then I dropped my military clothes again, and of course my little dog leg, came into action again. We had an awful time, here, every morning they would fall us in, and detail us to different tasks, and several times I had 10 or 12 men handed over to me, to do something or other, and arrived with 5 or 6. We were all anxious to get home, and the period of waiting seemed endless. Before I close, let me take you back to France, and try to describe the beauties of the much talked of Poppo. To be exact, it is a bad weed over there, and although, like many another weed, it looked very pretty in the fields.

In many of these shattered villages, and in the old towns that had been abandoned, you would see these flowers growing, it would seem to me that Nature was covering up the destruction wrought by the hand of man. In such a way, and given a little time all these ruins would be covered, and in a century, there would be nothing to show that man had ever lived there. I, also, have seen these rows and countless hundreds of little crosses, and it is a sad thing to think of, all these young men & women left there in a foreign country. War is inevitable, so long as this old world exists, there is no use in trying to reach a lasting peace in any way except —————. Every individual is violent and extremely passionate nature, the Latin races are of look at the vast difference between an Italian & an Englishman! You could not law appeal to both, and so we may expect these eternal wars until, and again I prefer to pause. Finally we moved to Rhyl, a town in North Wales, and so home, an uneventful trip, albeit, a large number of meals were taken and released, with more speed than relief!! There is absolutely nothing on earth to compare with sea-sickness for pure unadulterated misery. And as to Winnipeg, discharge, civilian suits, and peace & this is not all, my dear, but it will give you some idea of what it was, and although one has to see to appreciate, it is something that I never wish to see again. I know what fear was, may & may a time, have felt that old man there was whetting up his teeth for me, and yet I was spared. And to be honest, fear is a terrible thing to see, in a full grown man, perhaps that is why I tried to hide mine under a jacket or two. Life is very good, we abuse it, take foolish risks with it, and when we feel it is going, we sit up and fight to retain it. Now I will close, and being close to Christmas, I can heartily endorse that old saying! Peace on Earth, Goodwill, between All Men.

Pte. J. Beaumont.  
722495.

Veni.

Vidi.

C. E. F.  
Vici.

FINIS.