

Vexed, very vexed and couldn't help thinking on it. Evg. while seeking sleep my brain was active and forelimned an opening that should shape itself to the new need. Difficukt ridin g in mist 31-1-18 and 1a2-18.

FEBRUARY 2 1918.

This morn found belt-rim spokes, three, broken. Took bike to shop outed wheel and cover and cleaned, mended punc and did 1 hrs writing. Tried to get the Irish boy to fir new spokes by going with Paul and being pleasant and waiting mildly. L hrs writing. Bright day and mist cleared. Aft replaced cover and whell--aft gone and day spoilt for writing. In one week these things had happened:-- Hndlebars and frame broken, Junction bolt and now beltrim. My usual luck with bikes. Evg wrote at re-adapted sketch.

FEBRUARY 3 1918

Motn, headspring broke loose again. Tried packing it in my slipshod style with rubber. Lost scissors mending same, then broke headlight bolt whilr fixing lamp. Got em to drill the bolt out and cut a new thread---surrised that they did it for me without barracking. Finished bike at dinner after expecting clear morning. Aft. read (Jude the Obscure--2nd time) and dozed. (Previous night had had generztor trouble and not back till 10.45. Emptied generator, to see in KCO Signal Office. The cries of disgust from Polkley. Good ride.

4--2--18.

Good ride morn. Bike and wrote. Aft. wrote, tho' tempted to stay in and read. WEATHER FINE AND OPEN. On night run puncture at Forgw revealed as certain. Got home by pumping and riding fast.

5--2--18.

Had supper with Paul. Heard of Albert Hurst's bad luck. He was with a div. up on coast, up against a sergt. who didn't like him. Various acs ran: that Albert was shit out of luck: the he was fed up with his crush and said before he started out "I'm going to have an accid nt. " He did, but it was no what he thought. Either skidded or sidel-slipped on the sand or hit something and came down, concussion, and now lying paralysed on one side, numerous X ray experiments. I believe he wrote to Bendle from hospital in England and said he would ,like any of the boys to write. I half promised but dont believe I wrote.

FEBRUARY 6 1918.

Borrowed Paul's bike, but it wouldn't start, so sweating, took his back wheel out Retng., mended puncture Wrote. Aft. new spring. This aft. was handed buff letter foolscap of HMS. Dreaded opening it. It was from G. Staff intelligence, and signed Camp Commandant, regretting that by Army Order So and So Officers nor men could not send MSS direct for publication to the press, but must apply, with duplicate MSS sent and accompanied by signed permission of Oc. to OFFICIAL PRESS BUREAU, Whitehall. They said, however, there was nothing in the article they could object to. Hastings who gave it me, knew, I believe, what was in it, as he had spoken to a group and they had cast glances at me. Evg. slept. Good ride. How I used to come in thankful, have a smoke a cup a read and sleep straight.

FEBRUARY 7 1919.

WEATHER AT LAST BROKE. Overall s on. At 11.30 wrote. Aft. to Corps. back tea. Crowded concert and risque wit. Cow back.

FEB 8 1918.

Evg kick strter failed. ran bike sweating and kept going on stand to warm up. Aft slept. Evg to Mavaut's. Bodley, red-faced and asking Mavaut to play repeatedly her valse and "Some blue in your ye." His brother the barnsle-scraper. Though his bike was always to be seen undergoing wayside repairs as soon as he had started "Old Bod's at it again", he posed affably and with heavy serenity as expert on "wheel-base," etc. He was a giant and his bike always looked puny. There, too, was Wilmot, the replics of Dixon the third army DR swell sergeant. He leant over the piano as if he were Jeanne's new Fiancee, inviting out approval. Kelly the router who started talking to me about his "Pigeon days" when he'd carried 8 pigeons per time. The faulty kick started cured for time by kicking smartly the shaft.

FEB 9 1918.

Morn wrote. Paul draws me. Aft. nap. Evg tea shop. Quick rides. Strong winds. Roads dried.

Flood coming in drunk. My room-mate dared to go out in his shirt only or at least in vest and pants and did so. MED COLD & MILD.

FEB 11 1918.

Morn, in workshop re-coned back wheel, Irish tiffy, having secured shells, knocking out old shells and driving in new and leaving me to put in greasse and balls, etc. I didn't know that it was so bad to ride with loose cones resulting from chewed up conesHELLS, but Peter great crit "Thosre are no good. Bound to skid." Paul was always saying how the movable cone head got caught in thread burr of cone, and paid particular attention to the head of machine, this, he said, must be tight, otherwise couldn't steer and trouble. But he had as many spills as anyone and more than most.

Aft. Odd jobs. Paul drew me. Dv. Peter's birthday, to celebrate which he borrowed money. Walked with him and Paul to Oxelaere to see two girls Peter was enthusing about. A nice clean neat estaminet where they charged heavy for wine, but couldn't see anything in the girls. A fixing walk in the shadows and being overtaken by "Old Rosey, pottering abt?"

FEBRUARY 12 1918.

Today at 10.30 sat for two hours to Paul. Aft ditto when Peter burst into our study saying: "There's a Dr come to replace you-- a great clumsy brute of a fellow--cokes bursting into Caton's room knocking petrol tins over and leaving a trail of tubes and generators. He'll have stop chuckin his weight bout. Who is he?"

"No idea....didn't know I was wanted avk at:corps." Iaghast. All our arrangements upset. At tea met Gillam the "brute." "They want you to return for pigeoneering, I think." "At once? Did nt say so." So d cided to to stop evg. Good pictures.

FEB 13 1918.

Rose art 6 to sit for Paul. The pink and crisp and robust air fine. But he not ready so shaved and brekkered first. Walked up the main street Cassel to mess for the last time--what happy hours I'd had there--peace in war. At 7.30 sat. At 9.30 ceased.

Too moved at parting to complete well the "Gates of Leave" but I did so. At billet when packing ( I haf slept in the room of that dark-moustached small man who was in a room between all comers, yet so precise in keeping his room beautiful and tidy with photos and pictures.

Key. While I was sweating and footling and fozzling in my best stuytle (I hated packing and moving) first Lang (cool) and then Hastings (worried and fussing) upset me by saying there was a wire from Corps AD Sigs enquiring where was I? When Hastings came I said, "well it's not your fault You've warned me to get off."

I accept full responsibility for delay and will face the music. I expect they they'll just want me to pack off to Boeschepe again. Sweating fearsomely, I at last got off at 11.30 just as it started to rain,, first posting at Army Post Office my "Gates of Leave." Rode thro' rain. All accepted quietly--no fuss. Nice to be back in the atmosphere of the men I knew with all their faults--Leonard, Polkley (windy sod) After dinner was peeping over Palmer's shoulder at his "London Daily Mail" and saw "There is an establishment of DR.s"--the sentence rang with a dreamy familiarity, it came to me like light that it was my article. At Cassel in our studio I had said "Miracles don't happen," as Paul made up his drawings for the "Bystander," but they do and here was proof. Out of defeat I had brought victory. I overjoyed and sat in the cosy inn, the boys playing cards, and success was sweet. Evg we went to pictures and singing contest. There was one, a batman, who sang sentimental song with awful accents--and the cook, that little man with a piping voice--a great favourite--they cheered him on. I told the boys who were pleasef. RAIN.

FEBRUARY 14 1918.

Paraded and got permission from Lilley to go to see Paul and old Pip who was in hospital at Wisques, just outside Arques, he havin fallen twice, the last time having caught on frozen ruts and lain in road, and just being missed crushed by a lorry after some half hour there. Pip's nerves appear to have been suffering after successive smashes. As setting off told to "stand by". Mended breeches "You's better get those breeches mended, Davis," told by O.C. Aft to Quarter and mended punture. Back to our little canteen in estaminet at side of bridge. (Dont forget the estaminet where Glenny took me and there were plenty of liqours and Mc-Guinness was drinking stout--the singer of my old days)

Took coats I was exchanging for Irish Tiffy and arranged my spares. In canteen saw Mail on counter, and saw the title, as I just turned it up "Here, we haven't read that yet/ "Army Pigeons How they work." My first two articles straight in. I was amazed Stan Brown came up. Can I borrow this? "well..." "There's an article of mine in--I just want to read it and I'll bring it back in half an hour--soon as I've had tea.@ To Mess, tea, and then brulant to Wormhoudt to the shop where the scented and pale and exuberant of flesh giel always smiled at you invitingly and igled officers who one by one were to be found there on differing days. I got about 8 copies of the mail, but cij dn't get copie of the Pigeon article except 1 on.y. Evg sent off copies of DR rticle to freidns and mother.

FEBRUARY 15 1918.

Motn, packed etv. At aft pay parade in sun:lea nt off at 3.30 by car as I had no bike. Fine Dy. Waited in sun with kit for car by sleep billet. We started at at 4 with Billy Milne who was going to fetch his bike borrowed bt Walla Jones who'd gone to Beoschepe too to do some designing. Went round nice ride but getting cold via those curving villages on the left to Watou--just little grey and trafficed villages with cone-spires tall, an Are Commandant's, and here and there small marquees, lorries or workshops set up on field or rosdld. Cdnt get papers at Watou or Abeele (66) with pigeon article. Billy Milne carted us into that little tea -room where the DRs used to go for cakes and tea after dinner. Showed what a sport he was by insisting on apying for all 20 cakes we had tho' only 18 were consumed. A thing a Frenchman would never do--Billy was from Scotland. At Boeschepe tea in mess, then helped Billy with bike. He was arranging to spend at the night in Abeele with some girl or family he knew, and Jonah phoned thro' to Corps saying he was having trouble with his bike so as to set that right. Then coffee (foul) in Simonde's the very slim and waxen white pinky girl, who moved about like a budding ueen in that red-headed and dirty family where the room, dirty and ill-favoured, abd badly furnished, stank, where the old "cow" in a mop of ginger hair slopped about cheery and toothless but vile (45) nd the old man sat like a mumm y at stove , while the kids chattered and talked.

FEBRUARY 16 1918.

Morn. Had slept on floor near Wallace that night. After this next to the Old sweat, fat and decent but windy. Who had known Pip at Musketry Camp. Was told I must get timetable charts, find where Pigeons was put down on this and arrange with the sergeant running the squad to fix up for the lecture. Aft. fine, frosty, walked to Westoutre to arrange for Pigeons, but Tom away and saw Sam who could fix nothing definite. Met Sutherland, the nice Tiffy I had known and Ponsford the one who carried Posh fur gloves and swanked it everywhere. They were twentieth Div and had got a mess in terraced glass back of that restaurant where in the window they used to expose for sale custards in large variety. (Recall meeting the twin Stapleton, with wid up and nerves gone after his brother had had his foot blown off. He was at the Westoutre hospital. I contrasted his misery with my happiness. Aea in the mess --an egg given me. Trush about Cambrai. To d to ack up and shift. "Had heard that yarn before. Panic. Confusion." Walked to St n Martin via the Ren-Abeele Road. Paused at a little house I had often looked at riding. One where vigs sold and hone with porch and balcony-shelter outside. Walked in. Bench two sides of mud-floored room. On left and facing me as I sat a huge mechanical organ-piano, about which climbed a girl as pennies were stuck in and it was churned into music. One girl who looked like a Fancy dress ball g.psy, powdered, and another younger all bosom. Cloth curtains of dirty dimity separated this room from the family room where children and mother could be seen eating in dirt and squalor. My meal of chips and peas was not bad and pork. Another soldier entered. Walked back from the Margin.

SUNDAY (?)

FEB 17 1919.

FINE FROST COLD. No fire in hut this time--no wood. Wrote. Read in sun at hut door then in Simond's when too cold altho' this was supposed to be out of bounds. Evg. free and easy in mess-room. The fair-moustached good-looking slipping man who sang in touching tenor that song. . . . S.M Taylor with precise manner and clean-cut face who argued about the simplicity of magnetic variation and math problems. Sergt. Major Green. COLD FINE.

MONDAY FEB 18 1918.

Lectured twice morn. Aft. wrote. Evg conference with O.C. in our mess-room. We all stood up. He entered smiling and drew round him the NCO's. I was questioned re pigeons. Cold fine.

FEB 19 1918.

Lectured twice. Aft. got bike from yarter Burke who sat in his hur with stove comfy but hardworking issuing instruments all day. Biked to We toutre, but wjen I got there Sam had all his birds ous and couldn't spare one. To Smith's,. Puncture on the way by lorries on right and found push-bik trye more wakward to men than motor-bike tyre, esp. as I hadn't outfit. A man, quite chatty,, lent me an outfit left behind by DR then gave it me. Hour to men. "Tht all you got to do?" asked a passing mate to lender. "Some chaps do have a pew-job." "Not such a snip as the man's who does nothing but fetch rum from a railhead, snd drops it into the lap of a scarlet woman." The man on the G.S. wagon roared. Smith indifferent instead of cordial and gave me a halt and a blind pigeon. Rode on to the Abeelee Boeschepe roaf and was waiting indetermined because of csrrying birds in inf. basket back of bike, when a New XZealander came up to me, his slouch hat of the felt type with the N.Z. red cloth band round it. He ws just

d fted out from Salisbury and in Camp behind switch road. About 40, decent, nice-spoken although not of educated note, clean-mouthed, modest and of quiet character. Thus decided me to go to San Martin and we talked. Curious recruit questions he answered me: "How far the front line?" "Any need to wear gas helmets anywhere about here?" "Anything doing?" Wages 5/- per day, 7/- if married. Paid daily. In the inn were some West Indians, grinning and swanking gaily and using the word J--- C---- a loa. Large talk with their large moths, the pre-e,inent one being a half caste. Wind up the Martin people: lest a row wd start. The big one--"You gopra drink nather bottle with me. By--- I don have a barthday every Jews' Sunday. " Wine flowed--cham-pagnea--like water, quite a lot being tippled on to the table while pouring.

FEBRUARY 20: 1918

Dmonstrated Took back birds by anor bike and jolly hard graft it was. wrote a little rain. RAIN, that turned the field into quagmire. Fine orchestral concert in the revreation hut after waiting half an hour because the party had got stuck in the lane in the mud. The musicians were some Middlesex Regt Employmetrn Co. from Boeschepe made up of aliens with repytations dubious to our NCOs and Tommies. Pedlar Palmer and his Brummagem alk and thick phlegmy voice to big Anzac who'd taken up a seat reserved for NCO's. A A

Palmer called this concert a "gaff".

FEBRUARY 21 1918.

Lectured. Dry again. Wrote 2 hours. Evg. read E.M. Forster's "Room with a View." a delightful book that was a new realm to me. A find. Mentioned by A.B.

ZZ -2-18.

After lecture to W.O. by foot for birds. Hard graft. Got back 1.40. Dinner. Demonstrated. All the aft. volunteering to do so, because I had missed a squad from 4 to 5 on the twentieth, while the OC kept me waiting in the rain as he skipped from hut to hut approving and testing joints" etc.

ZX--Z--18.

Warmer. Fine but dull. Demonstrated. Wrote. "Khaki religion" and Bill Adams came in and I asked him for a title and read him the article asking if it was true. Sft walked to W.O. Ploughs about. Sparrows in hedges. Crows, manure being dispersed. Evg bathed in the one round zinc large basin we had. Remember how we had to keep this hidden under table and when finished with throw the water out of the back end of hut, thro window so as not to be seen by OC., as it was against regulations to wash anywhere but in appointed place, which I never found. There was no washing water laid on in camp and the men used to wash in a fouled pool in one of the fields, visible to us iced and snowy. We used to pay a man a penny for two a tin to bring us petrol tins of water, sneaked from the cistern used for cooking. The brawny cook, hearty with a voice he hadn't been able to train, the lame and the halt and the blind, employment: coy people and category men who were on the camp. They used to be drilled outside and some were deaf and some were crippled and used to looj like stuck scarecrows when orders they couldn't hear were shouted at them.

Walter used to work, very very leisurely in the recreation room end of our mess. The first motnings he had a five, but wood was so scarce and issue prohibited that despite his scrounging cheek and push and obstinacy after a week there was none. At this Walla chucked work altogether, and slipped over to Simond's and later got a deal in the S.M.'s (Green's) room.

"Here am I making drawings of D3's and Fullerphones and most delicate mechanism, in a room where I cant feel my own fingers.

If I put em in my moush i should start chewing 'em without knowing it. They're too bloody mean to have a proper draughtsman down and when I offer to fill the gap, they're too close to sport a bit of wood. Whp's going to work for stingy sods like thst.

He's Scotch--I bet he dont go without fires."

The officers were not a bad crew--some were very decent



Some used to come in the mess and order or bring whiskey, but Mac didnt like orsifers fraternizing with men.

FEB 24 1918.

Morn up early for clssses at 8.30. Two classes cancelled then re-  
vived. Wrote aftn. Headache started but I went on. STORMY RAIN.

FEB 25 1918.

Z 2 morning classes. Aft rewrote P articlee. CHANGEABLE.

FEB 26 1918.

Morning, classes . I used to have the men either in the big huts. or in their orn Mi sen's. One hut was in quarantine from measles or influenza and here I went in. The men sat with a fire, reading, or studying or messing with D3's. The bulk of them were keen and listened attentively All Snzacs. Many of the boys after a day's work used to work practising on the D 3s.

I had no difficulty in getting the work done. Some, especially of the Imperials were very persistent. The OC was good to his men in respect of food and fires but he would have them smart on parade.

The time the OC caught mr out with his horrible Triumph and got me to start it and bring it bac. Front wheel rumblinz out the nuts loose, no ballbearings, the kick starter nappoo, the gears spoilt, and the mixtures wrong.

Wanted me to use it to fetch my pigeons but I was not risking my life on that. Knew too much about motor bikes.

FEB 26 1918.

1 morning class. Aft lectured to officers. Evg fetched birds from Tom Hardacres', who was very f good and walked bafk in the dark, telling me how to brace birds and other wheezes. Even keel.

FEB 27 1918.

Aft over to officers' field and waited while officers assembled slowly, and SM Taylor got em together. The Missen huts made two sides of a sq field, and batmen were in the end hut, talking scandal. At last got gjing. They were very funny.

When ther was a big officer putting clip on, they said "Don't do the half Nelson on a blighted canary." "It's noatHackenschmidt you're up against." To another--"Cosh him

one on the neck, first, uncle, then he'll keep still."

"Get yer foot on his back," to a staid one. grey-moustached.

"Steady. Go tenderly. That' pigeon's got piles." "Whoa-- the

bird's egg-bound."

Evg to Ginger's and read.

Glenny brought over 2 T spts and Press Bureau return for compliance with Army Order 212 of 1916, and KR 453. (Polite ly returned.) Delayed by talk with Glenny and Jones, and got across where s quad just waiting in Lane , and met ADS and Oc as I carried my baskets. They were walking across field back from huts. Read in Ginger's and wrote letters.

FEB 28 1918.

I took eo-day the Isolateds and the two "duds" to whom I repeated over and over again, while they repeated vacantly. Aft. "A" course again. Evg with wireless sergeant, scotch, who fter I had paid for drink went out. This was the estaminet where the crippled plump man sat by the polished gramophone, carefully dusting each record, and handling the instrument like a cherished child. Here sang the two men back from leave as recorded in my article on "The Estaminrt" censored by the Mail of "Piccaninnies" talk. The phropreitor was old gouty, and with duster for records and his envelopes for sme was all for the rigour of the insstrument. Fine. Bombardment at night visiblr from the Mill in the Frost.

On the sky-lige intense pink flashes and, anf dim stars floating ai mlessly then out. There's going to be troublr round here," said the boys. "Hope to God's it's over before i get back.

MARCH 1 1919.

Morn wrote and lectures. Aft arduous ride through grease to West-outrre back with birds. Evg. Concert, got up by ourselves and a melancholy failure to be funny, except that spörty officer. HEAVY BOMBARDMENT. Watched by Mill again. Pink flashes dancing on horizon like tinted baccarappers. baccarappers of sound, and melancholy stars, and Very lights.

SATURDAY MARCH 2.

Freezing cold wind, too cold almost to write. Before could go out, had to wait pay parade in one hut while table was spread in other hut. All round the wood vurving walls were marvellous relief drawings like bas-reliefs in copying pencil--A leave train and loc o, a file of men going up into trenches with rations and re stores, and the same voming out. The men did not curse much, but the sang the song in my article ARMY GAGS". They were a war-wise disillusionised crew.. Our sentiments in that hut were:

Some incredible miracle might happen which could shorten the war but it looked like goin on for ever. No use worryin--just push is off as long as possible and trust for the best--but a dubious future